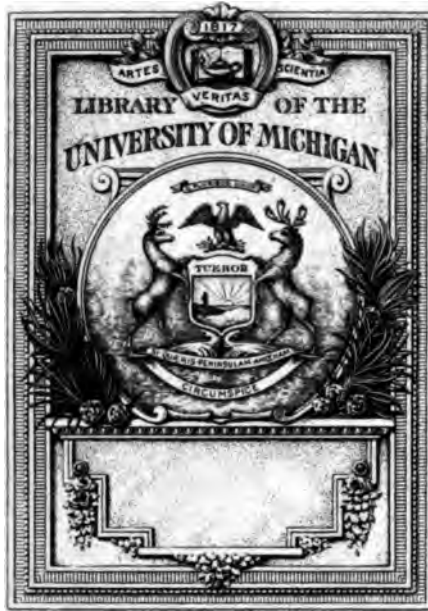


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THE EXPLORATION OF AUSTRALIA

FROM 1844 TO 1896.

The
Exploration of Australia

From 1844 to 1896.



BY

Albert J. Calvert,



London:
GEORGE PHILIP & SON, 33, FLEET STREET.

Liverpool:
45 TO 51, SOUTH CASTLE STREET.

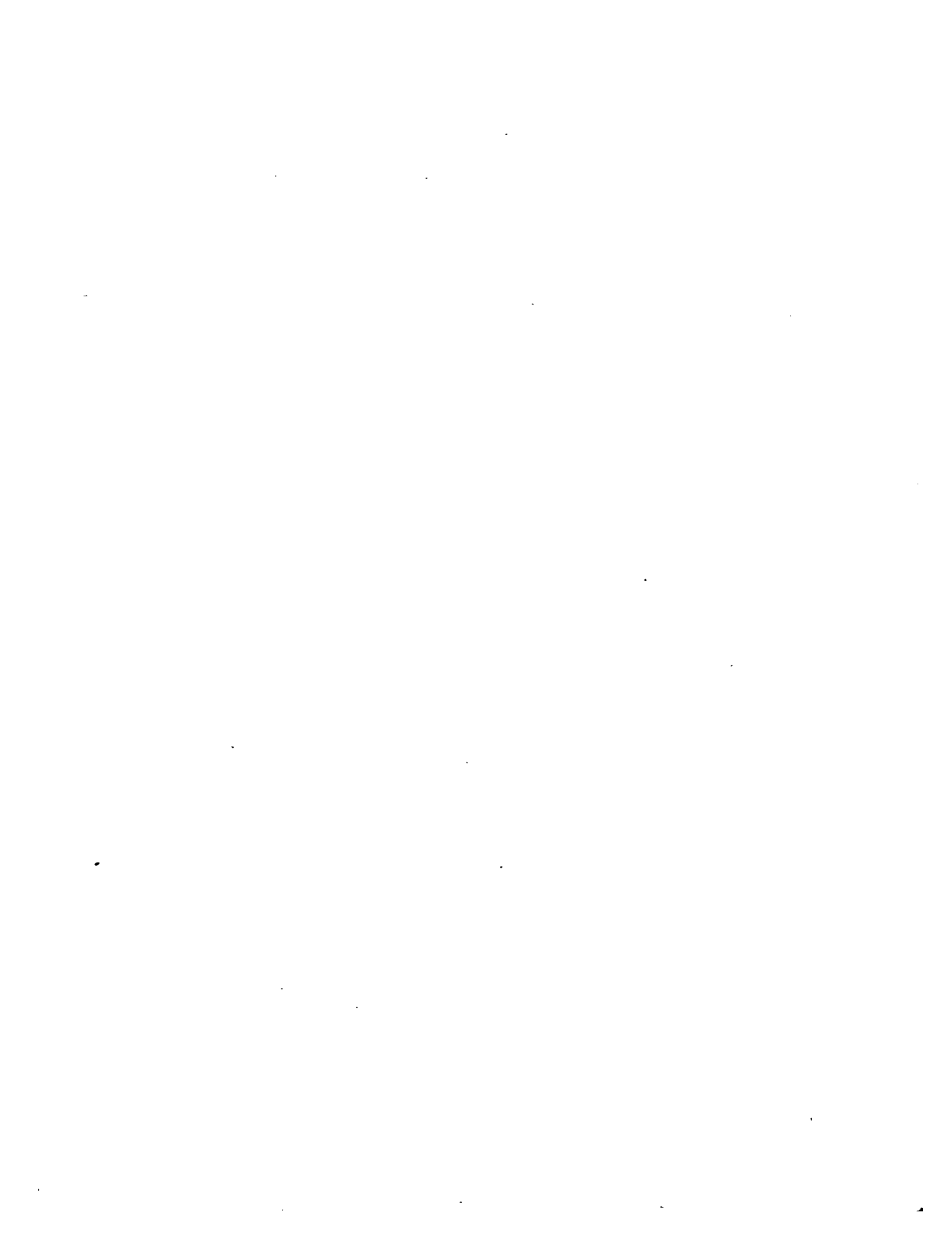
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PHENIX PRINTING WORKS, NORTH STREET,
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TO THE
Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HER MAJESTY'S COLONIES;
WHOSE STATESMANSHIP HAS WON FOR HIM
THE CONFIDENCE OF THE
BRITISH NATION,
This Book is Dedicated,
WITH MUCH RESPECT
BY
The Author.





Preface.

My book:—"The Exploration of Australia, from its first discovery till the year 1846," is already before the public; and has been received with more favour than I could have hoped for, both in the United Kingdom and the Colonies. The subject being as wide as the great Island Continent itself, I was compelled to divide my work into two periods, and in the present Volume I have endeavoured to give a true account of the Exploratory Enterprises which have been undertaken from the date of Dr. Ludwig Leichardt's disastrous journey, till the unfortunately abandoned Elder Expedition, conducted by Mr. David Lindsay. So much for Exploration in the past. The routes of the various Explorers of bygone days are laid down in their maps and charts; and the results are in the hands of the various Geographical Societies. In some cases, it will be seen that the benefits gained by the heroic exertions of the men who risked—and in many cases laid down—their lives, in unfolding the mysteries of the Australian Continent, are sadly disproportioned to the courage

and skill displayed, and the privations endured. Some had costly outfits, yet only found barren deserts; while others, though poorly equipped, discovered magnificent pastoral and agricultural lands, bounteously supplied with lakes and streams. Such are the fortunes of war in the great field of Exploration.

In my last chapter it will be observed that I have ventured to foreshadow the future Exploration of Australia. The included map, prepared by the South Australian Branch of the Geographical Society of Australia, illustrates my object. It will be noted that large areas yet remain unexplored; and I am at present fitting out a Scientific Exploring Expedition, so that these regions may not remain as now—practically “terra incognita.” The unmapped districts all lie within the boundaries of Western and South Australia—the greater proportion being in the former. My scheme is fully set forth in Chapter 36.

Trusting that my design will meet with success, and that this record of the achievements of Australian Explorers will merit a measure of approval, I send forth this Volume.

It goes without saying, that I am, in some degree, indebted to previous writers on the same subject. Chiefly, however, I have gleaned my matter from the original journals of the Explorers; but to those authors from whom I have borrowed information, I hereby tender my acknowledgments, my apologies, and my thanks.

Albert F. Calvert.

Rogston, Eton Avenue,

London, June, 1896.



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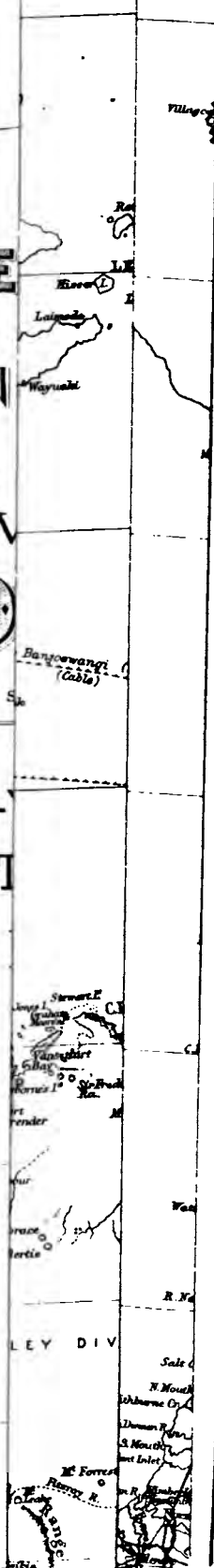
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"THE EXPLORAT

BY ALBERT

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CHAPTER I.

Leichardt's First Expedition.



U P till 1844, the task of unravelling the mysteries of the great Australian Continent was committed to men of the British race, as recorded in my first volume. It is now my duty to chronicle the exploits of the first explorer of foreign birth who entered the field. Dr. Ludwig Leichardt was a German by birth, although he had become—through his associations—an Englishman by adoption. He was a distinguished botanist, geologist, and astronomer, and had already shown his capabilities as an explorer, by making a journey overland to Moreton Bay, besides many excursions throughout the districts lying beyond the Darling. He was born in Baskow, near Berlin, and, having made his escape from the three years' compulsory military service, he was condemned as a deserter *in contumaciam*. His services to science, however, having been represented to the King of Prussia by Von Humboldt, he was pardoned for the offence; but his untimely death prevented his availing himself of his Sovereign's clemency. The command of the expedition now to be described naturally devolved upon him as being the best man available. The project was formed owing to the following circumstances:—Australia's northern coast had been pronounced uninhabitable, settlements on Melville Island and Raffles Bay having

proved abortive. Still, for the security of vessels threading the Torres Straits, the Home Government resolved on establishing a military post at Arnhem's Land. Port Essington had already been tried and given up in 1823; still, it was determined to form a settlement there at all costs. Hence Sir Gordon Bremer, in 1831, founded a town on the Bay, which was named Port Victoria.

Thus far having been accomplished, it was ardently desired that an overland route should be discovered between the new settlement and Moreton Bay; for, if this could be found, Port Victoria would probably develop into a valuable trade depôt on the line of connection between Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and the Islands of the East Indies. Such, at least, was the opinion at the time. The Legislative Council thereupon voted a thousand pounds towards the expenses of an overland expedition, and a further considerable sum was raised by private subscription.

Many of the Colonists had grave forebodings regarding the success of the expedition; but their doubts do not seem to have been in any degree shared by Leichardt, to whom such an undertaking offered the strongest fascination. He was brimming over with an adventurous spirit of enterprise and discovery; besides which, the journeys he had already made, and the privations he had endured, made him feel perfectly confident as to the issue. Accordingly, on the 13th of August, 1844, the party set out from Sydney. The leader was accompanied by Messrs. James Calvert, John Roper, and John Murphy—the latter a lad of sixteen, William Phillips—a convict, and Harry Brown—a native; making in all six persons. They travelled by steamer to Brisbane, where the party was augmented by Messrs. Pemberton, Hodgson, and Gilbert—the latter a zoologist. They also enlisted the services of Caleb—a negro, and Charley—another native.

On starting from the outskirts of civilisation on the 1st of October, 1844, the party consisted of ten individuals; and they had with them sixteen head of cattle, seventeen horses, two hundred pounds of sugar, eighty pounds of tea, twenty pounds of gelatine, and twelve hundred pounds of flour. Their stores were so ample, indeed, at the outset that the pack saddles were overloaded, and all had to travel on foot. They had likewise an abundant supply of ammunition—relying on their guns and the cattle for their supply of animal food. Having left Jimbour on

the Darling Downs, they travelled in a north-west direction, and formed their first encampment after crossing Jimba Creek, and Waterloo Plains. Passing through plains of scrub, which much obstructed their progress, and skirting lagoons full of shell-fish and Murray cod, they pushed on in a south-west direction.

On the 7th, they arrived at the Condamine River, the banks of which were covered with verdure, and many signs of aboriginals were noted. Dense scrub still hindered their progress, and they were often obliged to take to the river-bed in order to make headway. Leaving the Condamine, which took a westerly course, they steered northward. For a time the travelling was good, and the country fertile; but they soon found themselves in a horrible, swampy, waterless district, surrounded on all sides with *brigalow* scrub. Having encamped on the 8th, however, they came upon a creek at a distance of two miles, and a beautiful valley which led to open country. A chain of lagoons intercepted them, after skirting which they reached flat plains, and then more scrub. This next thicket they tried in vain to penetrate, and had to return to the nearest lagoon; meantime having lost a tent and a quantity of flour, besides seriously damaging their pack saddles. Heavy rains now completely arrested their advance for ten days; during which time, however, Hodgson's Creek was discovered in the course of a short reconnoitring trip. Leichardt was likewise much troubled and impeded by the conduct of the blacks, who had to be expelled from the party, but were subsequently re-admitted on promise of amendment.

They now continued on a north-west course, passing below the northern watershed of the Condamine. From thence, they passed many creeks; Acacia and Dogwood Creeks were thus named, and the country was found to be well grassed, but thickly covered with scrub. It soon became evident to Leichardt that their stock of provisions would prove quite inadequate at their present slow rate of progress. Two men (Mr. Hodgson, and Caleb the negro) were therefore sent back with despatches, thus somewhat lessening their number. The daily allowance of the eight travellers was now fixed at six pounds of flour per day with three pounds of dried beef, "perfectly sufficient to keep up our strength," says Leichardt in his journal. I should rather think it was! Travelling along the table land, from whence sprung the Condamine River, they came

upon a fine stream, which was named the Dawson. Down this they journeyed until the 14th November, their advance being much impeded by dense, scrubby thickets. About the 25th parallel of latitude this river took an easterly course, and the leader resolved to abandon the stream, and travel north-west. They eventually reached a tributary of the Dawson; but, on pressing forward, found the scrub an impassable barrier. Whereupon, Leichardt ordered a halt, and went forward alone to investigate. At length a passage was discovered, and Gilbert's and Lynd's Ranges were given their respective names.

Until the 25th November they followed the course of Robinson's Creek, when they came upon a dividing range, which, having ascended, they reached another which was higher, and was named Expedition Range. This they climbed two days later, and from its summit had a view of some fine mountains, two of the highest peaks being named Mounts Nicholson and Aldis. Leichardt was charmed with this prospect, hoping to find, as he says, new rivers and rich lands under their shadows and on their slopes.

Here I pause for a moment to claim the reader's indulgence. Leichardt's narrative is most monotonous and uninteresting. His own details are bald and meagre, consisting very largely of botanical and other information, which, however valuable from a scientific point of view, would prove dry and distasteful to the general reader. This fact becomes more and more forced upon me as I wade through the traveller's journal, which, although the record of a splendid and notable achievement, is singularly devoid of incident and interest. I shall, then, endeavour to condense the salient facts of the journey into as small compass as is consistent with fair treatment of this heroic explorer's arduous journey, which extended to about 3,000 miles, and lasted 18 long months.

To continue: on the 5th of December, Bigge's Mountain was discovered and named; and a few days later Christmas Ranges. On the 15th, the party encamped by Brown's Lagoons, where they stayed until the 22nd, meantime killing and drying the flesh of a steer. Having moved on, a box flat was named Albinia Downs, and a creek, Comet Creek, because at this point was first seen the wonderful comet of 1844. Tracing the course of the creek downwards, natives were seen, but decamped in terror from the travellers, warning one another by calling

out "White-fellow!" It is evident they had previously seen, and probably suffered at the hands of Europeans. About this time, Leichardt was lost in the bush for a couple of days, accompanied by the black boy Charlie. Fortunately, they regained the main party, having suffered pretty severely from hunger and anxiety. Leichardt should have remembered this, and profited by the lesson.

The devious course of Comet Creek was, it appears, very perplexing to the travellers. At length, however, they emerged on a fine, broad river, into which it flowed. It was not really flowing, by the way, but there were many reaches in which water lay, several miles long, and a hundred and fifty yards broad. This stream was named the Mackenzie River. Until the 14th they followed its course, and noticed, at its junction with another river, seams of coal shale running through sandstone rocks. It being evident that the Mackenzie's course would take them too far to the eastward, they left it, and proceeded in a N.W. direction.

Soon afterwards they formed an encampment, and Leichardt went forward with a native to reconnoitre. Having sent the guide back with instructions to his party, he rode towards some hills in the distance. Ascertaining that progress was feasible in this direction, he essayed to return to the camp. He again lost his way, and only after three days of wandering and starvation succeeded in joining his comrades. Making a slow advance, intercepted by numerous creeks, bogs, and scrubs, they at length reached a table-land, out of which rose single high hills, which were named Roper's, Scott's, and McArthur's Peaks—the main range being called Peak Range. The valleys were, however, almost destitute of water, and it was only on the 2nd of February that the main body were able to encamp between Scott's and Roper's Peaks, where a scanty supply of water was discovered. After a short stay, they moved northward, sometimes crossing basaltic ridges covered with verdure, and often creeks separated by scrubby flats. Phillips Mountain was discovered and named; also Hughes, and Tombstone Creeks. The latter received its odd title by reason of its course lying amid large blocks of sandstone, squared like gravestones, which made the glen resemble a cemetery. At least, Leichardt says so.

Still advancing northward, lagoons were found in lat. 22° 20'. There

was also a dry river, which was named the Isaacs. Having ascended a range named Coxen's Range, Leichardt scanned the surrounding country. All around him were mountains, save to the south, which was level to the horizon. On the 28th February, having dried their beef and moved their camp, and suffered from scarcity of water on the journey, they entered a fertile and picturesque country, inhabited by natives whose demeanour was most friendly and communicative. Reaching the head of the Isaacs River, they advanced, and, after a short journey, came upon a creek, which was called the Suttor River. Having followed the course of the Suttor in a S.S.W. direction, on the 17th March, Leichardt discovered a fine lake in its channel, which afterwards became much wider. Suddenly, however, the water disappeared, with the exception of small pools separated by two or three miles. After travelling a dozen miles or so, the Suttor re-appeared in its old character. In lat. 20° 49' the stream was joined by another one, called the Cape. On the 28th, they halted near a high hill, which was sighted and named Mount McConnel. A few miles further on, the Suttor mingled its waters with another stream flowing N.W., which was named the Burdekin. Travelling along its course was no easy matter, and, moreover, the surrounding scenery was of quite a different kind from any hitherto met with. Leichardt was surprised. He seems to have forgotten that he was within the tropics. Of course it was a tropical country, with palm trees and bamboos; and yet, curiously enough, almost devoid of game. They saw no natives in this neighbourhood, although it seemed well fitted for the habitation of man.

On the 18th of April the ranges were reached, which had been for several days in view, and they continued on a N.W. course. Several tributary rivers were discovered between this date and the end of April, among others the Clarke and the Perry. Leichardt and his men were now about lat. 19°, and it seemed doubtful whether they would be able to reach even the head of the Burdekin. Towards the beginning of May, however, it was evident that a table-land, which they managed to reach, formed the watershed between this river and others to the northward. Having found a passage through the range, they crossed it with considerable difficulty, subsequently discovering Big Ant-hill and Separation Creeks.

After a laborious and long-continued search among the valleys for a stream which would lead them to the north-west, Leichardt at length discovered a chain of ponds, which gave promise of being the head of a river, flowing in the desired direction. It was named the Lynd. Still, for several days their advance was much hindered by the rocks and boulders which fringed its banks. At last a gap was reached, which led them into sandy flats. Having halted to kill a bullock, they were molested by hundreds of ravenous kites, whose demands were not to be denied; for we are told that they would actually swoop down and tear a piece of meat off the fork as it was being lifted to the traveller's mouth.

About this time occurred the anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Victoria's birthday, an account of the celebration of which I quote from Leichardt's journal, partly because it forms a break in a dry, monotonous narrative, and also because it gives an insight into the peculiar metaphysical bent of the explorer's mind. The record runs thus:—"May 24th: It was the Queen's birthday; and we celebrated it with what—as our only remaining luxury—we were accustomed to call a 'fat-cake,' made of four pounds of flour and some suet, which we had saved for the express purpose, and with a pot of sugared tea. We had for several months been without sugar, with the exception of about ten pounds, which was reserved for cases of illness, and for festivals. So necessary does it appear to human nature to interrupt the monotony of life by marked days on which we indulge in recollections of the past, or in meditations on the future, that we all enjoyed those days, as much and even more, than when surrounded with all the blessings of civilised society, although I am free to admit that 'fat-cake' and sugared tea *in prospectu* might induce us to watch with more eagerness for the approach of these days of feasting. There were besides several other facts interesting to the psychologist which exhibited the influence of our solitary life, and the unity of our purpose on our minds. During the early part of our journey, I had been carried back in my dreams to scenes of recent date, and into the society of men with whom I had lived shortly before starting on my expedition. As I proceeded on my journey, events of earlier date returned into my mind with all the fantastic associations of a dream, and scenes of England, France, and Italy passed successively. Then came the recollections of my University life,

of my parents, and the members of my family; and at last the days of boyhood, and of school—at one time as a boy afraid of the look of the master; and now with the independent feelings of a man communicating to and discussing with him the progress of my journey, the courses of the rivers I had found, and the possible advantages of my discoveries. At the latter part of the journey I had, as it were, retraced the whole course of my life, and I was now in my dreams almost invariably in Sydney, canvassing for support, and imagining that, although I had left my camp, yet that I should return with new resources to carry us through the remainder of our journey. It was very remarkable that almost all my companions were invariably anticipating the end of our journey, dreaming that they had reached the sea coast, and met with ships; or that they were in Port Essington, and enjoying the pleasures of civilized life, whilst I, on awakening, found my party and my interest in the place where I had left them in my dreams." This latter fact may, I think, be accounted for by the fact that, as leader of the expedition, Leichardt felt a sort of paternal solicitude for the safety of his companions, whereas each of the subordinate members of the party naturally enough confined his thoughts to his own ultimate safety, and longed for release from the irksome bondage of fatigue and privation. Leichardt's sentiments compare unfavourably with those of his predecessors.

Nevertheless, down the course of the Lynd they pursued their way, for a time meeting with no serious obstacles. On the 3rd of June, ranges and chasms barred their path, and Leichardt tells us his men began to grumble and lose heart. It is little wonder. He encouraged them to persevere, however, and in lat. 16° 30', a fine stream was reached, which was named the Mitchell. Its course was followed until the 25th, when they found themselves in lat. 15° 51'. The leader now turned westwards, and for a time their path lay through fertile plains of grass, interspersed occasionally by creeks and thickets.

Here I have to chronicle one of those terrible tragedies which shed a lurid glare over the pages of Australian exploration. It was the evening of the 28th of June, and the travellers had encamped in one of these thickets—chosen by way of protection from the wind, and security from the natives. A most unwise and imprudent selection, as it turned out; and what made matters worse, no night watch was kept. I now quote

from Leichardt's journal — the following being perhaps the most interesting pages which it contains:—"Our fireplace was made outside the trees on the banks. Brown had shot six whistling ducks and four teals, which gave us a good dinner, during which the principal topic of conversation was our probable distance from the sea coast, as it was here that we first found broken sea shells of the genus *Cytherea*. After dinner Messrs. Roper and Calvert retired to their tent, and Mr. Gilbert, John, and Brown were plaiting palm leaves to make a hat. I stood musing near their fireplace looking at their work, and occasionally joining in their conversation. Mr. Gilbert was congratulating himself on having succeeded in learning to plait; and when he had nearly plaited a yard he retired with John to their tent. This was about seven o'clock, and I stretched myself upon the ground, as usual, at a little distance from the fire, and fell into a doze—from which I was suddenly roused by a loud noise and a call for help from Calvert and Roper. Natives had suddenly attacked us. Doubtless, they had watched our movements during the afternoon, and marked the position of the different tents. As soon as it was dark they sneaked down upon us, and threw a shower of spears at the tents of Calvert, Roper and Gilbert; and a few at that of Phillips, and also one or two towards the fire. Charley and Brown called for (percussion) caps, which I hastened to find; and as soon as they were provided they discharged their guns into the crowd of natives, who instantly fled, leaving Roper and Calvert pierced with several spears, and severely beaten by their *waddies*. Several of these spears were barbed, and could not be extracted without difficulty. I had to force one through the arm of Roper to break off the barb, and to cut another out of the groin of Mr. Calvert. John Murphy had succeeded in getting out of the tent, and concealed himself behind a tree, whence he fired at the natives, and severely wounded one of the blacks before Brown had discharged his gun. Not seeing Mr. Gilbert I asked for him, when Charlie told me that my unfortunate companion was no more. He had come out of his tent with his gun, shot, and powder, and handed them to him, when he instantly dropped down dead. Upon receiving this afflicting intelligence, I hastened to the spot, and found Charlie's account too true. He was lying on the ground at a little distance from our fire, and, upon examining him, I soon found to my sorrow that every sign of

life had disappeared. His body was, however, still warm, and I opened the veins of both arms, as well as the temporal artery, but in vain. The stream of life had stopped, and he was numbered with the dead.

"As soon as we had recovered from the panic into which we were thrown by this sad event, every precaution was taken to prevent another surprise. We watched through the night, and extinguished our fires to conceal our individual position from the natives.

"A strong wind blew from the southward, which made the night air distressingly cold; it seemed as if the wind blew through our bodies. Under all the circumstances that had happened, we passed an anxious night, in a state of most painful suspense as to the fate of our still surviving companions. Mr. Roper had received two or three spear wounds in the scalp of his head: one spear had passed through his left arm, another into his cheek below the bone, penetrated the orbit and injured the optic nerve. Likewise, another in his loins, besides a heavy blow on the shoulder. Mr. Calvert had received several severe blows from a waddy: one on the nose, which had crushed the nasal bone; one on the elbow, and another on the back of the hand; besides which a barbed spear had entered his groin, and another pierced his knee. As may readily be imagined, both suffered great pain, and were scarcely able to move. The spear that terminated poor Gilbert's existence had entered the chest between the clavicle and the neck, but made so small a wound that for some time I was unable to detect it. From the direction of the wound, he had probably received the spear when stooping to leave his tent.

"The dawning of the next morning, the 29th, was gladly welcomed, and I proceeded to examine and dress the wounds of my companions more carefully than I had been able to do in the darkness of the night.

"Very early in the morning we heard the *cooes* of the natives, who seemed wailing as if one of their number was either killed or severely wounded, for we found stains of blood on the tracks. They disappeared, however, very soon, for on reconnoitring about the place, I saw nothing of them. I interred the body of our ill-fated companion in the afternoon, and read the funeral service of the English Church over him. A large fire was afterwards made over the grave, to prevent the natives from detecting and disinterring the body. Our cattle and horses fortunately had not

been molested." This terrible disaster filled Leichardt with dismay and sorrow. No wonder; for the leader could scarcely fail to blame himself for his lack of vigilance and foresight. Very rightly he decided that his safest course now lay in reaching their destination as soon as possible. The wounded men, we read, suffered great agony in being moved, but there remained no other alternative. To his credit be it said, Leichardt acted wisely on this occasion.

Taking a south-west course round the Gulf of Carpentaria, on the 7th of July, they crossed the river marked on the Dutch charts as the Staten, and on the 9th they forded the Van Diemen. Rather a singular incident occurred on the evening of the 7th, which may be noticed in passing, since it forms a somewhat ludicrous passage in a narrative the sameness of which is scarcely the fault of the explorer. It was in the dusk—" 'tween the gloamin' and the mirk"—and Charlie had brought the horses into camp. Suddenly, the form of an aboriginal was observed, gliding like a ghost through the trees. He walked directly to the fire, taking no notice of anyone. John saw him first and called out, 'A black-fellow! Look there, a black-fellow!' I again quote from Dr. Leichardt's journal:—"In an instant every gun was ready. But the stranger was unarmed and evidently unconscious of his position; for when he saw himself suddenly surrounded by the horses and ourselves, he nimbly climbed a tree to its very summit, where he stood between some dry branches like a strange phantom or a statue. We called to him, and made signs for him to descend; but he not only remained silent, but motionless, notwithstanding all the signs and noise we made. We then discharged a gun; but it had not the intended effect of inducing him to either speak or stir. At last I desired Charlie to ascend the neighbouring tree, to show him that we could easily get at him if necessary. This plan was more successful; for, no sooner were Charlie's intentions perceived, than our friend gave the most evident proof of his being neither deaf nor dumb by calling out most lustily. He *poohed*, he *birrrhed*, he spat, and *cooeed*; in fact, he did everything to make the silent forest re-echo with the wild sounds of his alarm; our horses, which were standing under the tree, became frightened, and those which were loose ran away. We were very much afraid that his *cooes* would bring the whole tribe to his assistance, and everyone eagerly proffered his advice. Charlie wished to shoot him,

'or,' said he, 'you will all be killed; I do not care for myself, but I care for your being killed and buried.' Others wished to remove from the spot, and so give him an opportunity of escaping. I was, of course, horrified at the idea of shooting a poor fellow, whose only crime—if so it might be called—was in having mistaken our fire for that of his own tribe; so I went down to our fire, which was at a short distance, where he could see me distinctly, and then made signs for him to descend and go away. He then began to be a little more quiet and to talk, but soon hallooed again, and threw sticks at myself, at my companions, and at the horses. We now retired about eight yards to allow him to escape, which we had not done before, because I feared he might imagine we were afraid of his incantations, for he sang most lamentable corrobories, and cried like a child, frequently exclaiming, 'Mareka! Mareka!' After continuing his lamentations for some time, but of which we took no notice, they gradually ceased—and in a few minutes a slight rustling noise was heard, and he was gone, doubtless delighted at having escaped from the hands of the pale-faced *anthropophagi*."

Although natives were numerous in this neighbourhood, the little band were unmolested; but their enemies, the kites, were met with in great abundance; the latter seem to have been more bold and larcenous than ever.

Passing over some fine country, the travellers came upon a river, which they crossed, and named the Gilbert, after their dead comrade. Roper still suffered exceedingly from his wounds; but although his pain was aggravated through lack of water, he showed promise of ultimate recovery. By the 17th Calvert was almost convalescent. The party were much delayed and distressed through having to search for water, being unable to gain any information from the blacks, who, although numerous, fled on their approach. On the 6th of August, they reached what Leichardt believed to be the Albert River, previously found by Stokes. Subsequent investigation proved him to be mistaken, however; and Gregory, some years afterwards, gave the explorer credit for having discovered a new river, which was named the Leichardt. Reaching some plains, the explorer thought that they were Stokes' Plains of Promise. Here, again, he fell into error. On the 18th a small stream was met with and called Beame's Brook, and a river was named the Nicholson.

Passing over a wretched scrubby country with a few water holes at long intervals, they passed another small river named the Marlow, and a salt water creek which was called Turner's Creek.

By the 5th of September, they had reached lat. $16^{\circ} 41'$, where they met with a fine river, supposed to be the Van Alphen of the Dutch charts, and some twenty miles further on they reached another stream, which was called the Calvert. After a weary tramp over a sandstone table-land, they reached the Abel Tasman River, in lat. $16^{\circ} 28'$, and during the succeeding hundred miles of their journey many rivers and creeks were crossed. Among these were the Cycas, the Robinson, the MacArthur and the Seven Emus Rivers.

The travellers had now been more than a year on the march, and their stock of clothing was in a wretched condition. Their boots were likewise almost worn out—even a more serious matter than their clothes. Their cattle were so much reduced in number that Leichardt had to abandon a very large portion of his mineralogical and botanical collection. This was a source of great grief to the enthusiastic scientist; but stern necessity demanded the sacrifice. We are told that they were now among an entirely strange section of the vegetable world, the only tree familiar to them being the *Banksia*, which is common to all parts of the Australian Continent.

An arduous journey they had through a miserable country, until the 13th of October, when they struck the Limmen Bight River, and soon afterwards sighted a range with four isolated peaks, which were named the Four Archers. Water was certainly scarce; but they experienced no such sufferings as fell to the lot of Grey or Eyre. Still the tropical heat was terribly exhausting, and towards the end they could scarcely drag their weary limbs along. Fortunately, the two wounded men made a most marvellous recovery under these most adverse circumstances. They must have possessed magnificent constitutions, and extraordinary recuperative powers. Leichardt tells us the country through which they passed was now extremely beautiful, capable, he thought, of supporting almost any living creature. A fine fresh water river, over five hundred yards wide, was reached. A stream of evil omen, however, for the explorers; for no less than four of their horses—including the leader's favourite—found a grave beneath its waters. Hence, again a large

quantity of Leichardt's botanical, mineralogical, and zoological specimens had to be left behind, owing to their reduced means of transport. They named the stream the Roper River, and followed its course as far as lat. $14^{\circ} 45'$, where the Wilton Creek joined it; tracing it up till the 28th of October, when they reached its head. After this they endeavoured to push on without any river to aid them. They fortunately met with another small river on the 30th, flowing from the north-west, which indicated that they had not yet passed the Carpentaria watershed. Another horse died while they camped by this stream, either through snake bite or poisonous herb: they knew not which.

Ranges, creeks, gorges, chasms, table-lands, scrubs, and rocky sandstone country had now to be crossed, to the infinite distress of the worn-out band. It seems a marvel how they ever accomplished their journey in the face of such frightful obstacles. On the 17th November they reached the edge of a table-land, and saw stretched before them a valley of exceeding magnificence and beauty. But, like as Moses looked from Mount Nebo's summit upon the Promised Land, so did Leichardt gaze upon this lovely valley; for it seemed as inaccessible to him as was Canaan to the mighty Jew. A precipice, eighteen hundred feet in height, separated the explorer from this beautiful glen, and from the top he could see a river winding along in silvery brightness, until it disappeared in the distance, amidst verdant tracts of richly-grassed country. For five days they endeavoured to find means of descent. Meantime their provisions were becoming exhausted, and their ammunition was expended almost to the last grain of shot. Every portion of a slaughtered beast had to be eaten, even to the intestines and the raw green hide, a piece of which boiled was devoured with avidity as their daily allowance. At last they managed to reach the valley, and recognised the stream as the South Alligator River. Down its course they travelled until the 29th of November, when they took a westward course. Their troubles were now nearly at an end, for they met friendly natives, who led them to water and gave them food. They were also supplied with a guide. Reaching the East Alligator River, on the 3rd December, they were obliged to make a detour, since it was too broad and deep for fording. On the 6th of the month they rounded the head of the stream, and after a week of very hard travelling they sighted Mounts Bedwell and Roe. They now knew

that they were close to their destination, where they arrived in a pitiable plight—famished, and with barely sufficient rags to hide their nakedness—on the 17th of December, 1845.

Captain MacArthur, the Commandant at Port Essington, gave the party a hearty welcome, and they remained a month at the settlement before embarking on a coasting schooner for Sydney, where they arrived in safety on the 29th of March. A public subscription was set on foot for the party, and in a few weeks some £1,500 was collected, whilst the Government added a contribution of £1,000.

Beyond the discovery of rivers and mountains, together with certain useful information regarding the country, Leichardt's expedition, lasting eighteen months, and traversing over 3,000 miles, was not productive of any very great benefit to the Colony at large. Squatters now pasture their flocks and herds on the banks of the Burdekin, Lynd and other rivers; but Port Essington had to be abandoned owing to the climate, soil, hurricane, pestilence, and earthquakes. Nevertheless, Leichardt accomplished his purpose, and discovered a well-watered route from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, although it has never been used or been of any great value to the Colony.

In concluding this chapter, I must not omit to mention that the late Rev. W. B. Clarke, whose name will always be honourably associated with Colonial literature, tried to dissuade Dr. Leichardt from several of his projects. He was deaf to advice, however. Four years later we shall know the sequel.





CHAPTER II.

Sturt's Last Expedition.

AGAIN appears on the scene the indomitable Charles Sturt, whose achievements on the Darling and the Murray have already been recorded. In recognition of his signal services to the Government, he had been appointed Surveyor-General of South Australia; and he might well have left the as yet unsolved problems of the interior to younger men. But the passion for further elucidation of the question was strong in this man, who has been well called "The Father of Australian Exploration." And so we find him in 1843 writing to Lord Stanley, then Secretary of State in England, offering his services for a new attempt. The interest he took in the subject seems to have been deep and all-absorbing. During ten years of leisure he had been forming theories regarding the interior, and the one pet desire of his life was to demonstrate their truth. The huge area of Australia's interior had once, he thought, been an archipelago of islands, and the great tracts into which he had descended from the hills during his former expeditions composed at one time the bed of an ancient sea. In bygone ages, he believed that the ocean rolled over these seemingly boundless plains, the ranges and table-lands forming islands. I quote his own words regarding the views he had formed:—

"It was impossible," he says, "to traverse them, as I had done, and not feel convinced that they had, at one period or another, been covered by the waters of the sea. It naturally struck me that, if I was correct in this conjecture—the difficulty, or facility with which the interior might be penetrated—would entirely depend on the breadth and extent of these once sub-marine plains, which in such case would now separate the available parts of the Continent from each other, as when covered with water they formerly separated the islands. This hypothesis—if I may so call it—was based on observations which, however erroneous they may appear to be, were made with an earnest desire on my part to throw some light on the apparently anomalous structure of the Australian interior. No one could have watched the changes of the country through which he passed with more attention than I did, not only from a natural curiosity, but from an anxious desire to acquit myself to the satisfaction of the Government by which I was employed."

Although Sturt was eminently a practical man, he apparently dealt largely in theories. The migration of birds was one of these, and, as will be seen, he clung to this idea with the strong tenacity which was one of his chief characteristics. Delay always marked the action of the Home Government of those days, and it was not until eighteen months after Sturt's application was despatched that he knew his offer was accepted. This was in May, 1844, after which active preparations were entered into. Just a month after Leichardt had started on his long and weary journey, Sturt's cavalcade was in readiness for the road. Had it not been that the celebrated explorer—whose deeds have already been recorded—Sir George Grey, happened to be Governor of the Colony, it is quite possible that the expedition would have been still further postponed—if not indeed, altogether abandoned. Sturt was, however, instructed to proceed due north, by way of Mount Arden, a route which Eyre had already proved to be impracticable. This direction amply illustrated the ignorant officialism of the Home Government, who seem to have resolutely closed their eyes to established facts. Like Nelson, Sturt put his blind eye to the telescope, and, ignoring the absurd command, elected to proceed by the Darling. Had he not done so he would have led his party right into the circular bend of Lake Torreno, from which position progress either to the east or west would have been impossible. My readers will remember that

eleven years previously Sir Thomas Mitchell turned back, partly through lack of provisions and likewise in a great measure owing to the hostility of the natives. The locality had been named Laidley's Ponds, where the last-named explorer believed that the Darling was joined by a stream which seemed to emanate from a range in the north-west distance. An open plain intervening between these mountains and the rivers, Sturt hoped that, having gained the range, he would reach the centre of Australia—the goal of his hopes—and this by aid of streams rising in these hills. It was about a week before Ludwig Leichardt had finally left behind him the outskirts of civilization that the party were assembled at the Darling. They numbered sixteen all told—the leader being accompanied by Mr. Poole, Assistant-Surveyor, who was second in command; Mr. J. H. Browne, Surgeon; also Mr. John McDouall Stuart, Draughtsman; and twelve men. They had likewise with them eleven horses, thirty bullocks, two hundred sheep, and six dogs, together with a boat and boat carriage. In all respects it was an expedition well and adequately equipped, carefully planned, led by probably the most experienced explorer of his day, and it yet terminated in a record of unparalleled suffering and disaster.

Mr. E. J. Eyre, whose exploits have already been recorded, had meantime returned to his Black Protectorate, at Moorundi. Taking, as was natural, a deep interest in Sturt's scheme, he accompanied the party during almost their entire water passage, leaving them in the neighbourhood of Lake Victoria. On the 8th of October they reached Laidley's Ponds—the aboriginal name of the place being *Williorara*. This chain of so-called ponds was disappointing in the extreme. Their beds were dry, and it was only by digging that any water could be obtained. Anxiety rose high in the heart of Sturt, for he had expected something entirely different. They were now in a miserable country, chiefly composed of mud and salt marshes.

Poole and Stuart were despatched to the ranges, and after four days they returned with a most dismal report. No water, no feed—truly a wretched prospect! A member of the expedition thus describes this most hopeless and impracticable territory:—

“Suppose to yourselves,” he says, “a great boundless unlimited meadow, which has just been run over with the scythe, the swathes of

grass now lying in pretty and parallel rows. Only there was no grass at all, not even a green thing; nothing but sand, sand, sand, arranged in interminable ridges. And all this on a most stupendous and Brobdignagian scale. Thus the ridges are nearly as high as a man, about sixty feet broad at the base, narrowing to half that distance at the top. At the very shores of the lake district these ridges were suddenly chopped off as with a clean cut; and we gazed down on that vast and level expanse of brine-pits and salty incrustation.

“From this you may have some idea what a task it was to toil over these ridges and troughs of loose, hot, burning sand, giving way with each step, and flying in your face with every gust of hot wind, smarting you very considerably. But after all it told most on the horses; for the district I am describing contained no forage at all; and when we returned to the main party on the banks of the Williorara, there was not over much to recruit them. In fact, the further we proceeded into this promised inlet, the greater was the disappointment of our leaders.”

It may be noted that the party started in winter, with the special object of taking advantage of the spring herbage, and yet forage there was none.

From the top of the range which he ascended, Poole declared that he perceived a large lake, studded with islands. We are reminded by Mr. Favenc, in his scholarly work on Australian Exploration, that although in his published journals, written long afterwards, Sturt seems to have doubted the accuracy of this statement, which Mr. Favenc attributed to the false impression caused by a mirage; nevertheless, in a letter to Mr. Morphett, of Adelaide, he writes as follows:—

“Poole has just returned from the ranges. I have not time to write over again. He says there are high ranges to the N. and N.W., and water—a sea extending along the horizon from S.W. by S., and ten E. of N.—in which there are a number of islands and lofty ranges as far as the eye can reach. What is all this? Are we to be prosperous? I hope so; and I am sure you do. To-morrow we start for the ranges, and then for the waters—the strange waters on which boat never swam, and over which flag never floated. But both shall ere long. We have the heart of the interior laid open to us, and shall be off with a flowing sheet in a few days. Poole says the sea was a deep blue, and, that in the

midst of it was a conical island, of great height. When will you hear from me again?"

On the 24th of October, they were journeying N.W., along the foot of the northern range. Sturt was in the habit of riding forward from the main body, and after completing his investigations returning to camp. This caused considerable delay, and involved extra fatigue to the horses. Leichardt's system of sending back a companion immediately on reaching water, seems to have been a better one; but who shall venture to dictate to men a course of action when in such sorry plight?

They were now in about the same parallel of latitude as Mount Hopeless, the furthestmost point to the northward reached by Eyre, and the leader, having pushed on to the N.W., he reached a fine creek, from whence the water tank was replenished. They returned to camp on the 12th, after which the main body moved along the western gorge of the range. These hills were now named the Stanley, or Barrier Range. Poole was sent forward on the 20th November in the same direction which Sturt had previously taken to reconnoitre, but returned in a fortnight with the report that a westerly course was impossible.

Flood, the stockman—who was well acquainted with bush life—was now sent ahead, and by a lucky chance came upon a fine creek, some forty miles ahead. This was named Flood's Creek, in honour of the finder, and to this spot the whole party moved on the 10th of December. From here Messrs. Poole and Browne went forth on a bootless search, which lasted some ten days, and ended in the news that nothing but a sterile and hopeless desert surrounded them.

Meanwhile the thermometer was steadily rising, ranging between 100° and 120°. Sturt had fondly hoped that if the Barrier Range proved of any considerable extent and altitude, it would throw sufficient water towards the interior to enable the expedition to proceed, if, indeed, the streams did not, as was possible—he thought—connect with the Victoria River. Poole and Browne now reported the termination of these hills, although, after an interval, another range succeeded.

Knowing the terrible risk which he ran of being utterly cut off from either advance or retreat, with a full knowledge of his danger, and yet with that strange belief in ultimate safety which has undoubtedly largely contributed to successful exploration—on the 28th of December Sturt

gave orders to move on. That he had very serious misgivings is clear from the tone of his narrative. From one of the summits of the Barrier Range he gazed upon the scene stretched before him, which he thus describes:—

“We stood, as it were, in the centre of barrenness. I feel it impossible, indeed, to describe the scene, familiar as it was to me. The dark broken line of the Barrier Range stood behind us to the south-eastward, the horizon was bounded by the hills I had lately visited, and from the south-west round to the east the whole face of the country was covered with a gloomy scrub, that extended like a sea to the distant horizon.”

No sooner had the expedition started, than Sturt's worst fears became realised. Horses and bullocks fell dead, stricken down by heat and thirst; the rank and file of the party likewise suffered exceedingly. By the 1st of January, 1845, they arrived at a creek which Poole and Browne had previously discovered. Superstitious feelings arose in the breasts of many, when the comet of 1844 became visible. The creek on which they were now encamped received the name of Mr. Browne; and likewise Mount Arrowsmith and Grey's Range received their designations. Tracing up Browne's Creek it became waterless, and gradually all the waterholes dried up. Diligent search and careful survey on the part of the leader, Browne and Poole, led to but one dread conclusion, viz.: that they were in the midst of an absolutely unconquerable desert. The thermometer rushed up to 131° , and the leader could no longer press forward. They were now in latitude $29^{\circ} 14' S.$, longitude $141^{\circ} 14' E.$ North-east, north, and west he had explored without avail, and after eleven days of heart-breaking search he returned to camp.

It so happened, however, that Mr. Poole, who had conducted an independent exploring party, had found a chain of rocky basins to the westward of a range which he had passed, and these gave promise of permanence. Thankful, indeed, must have been Sturt and his companions to hear this cheering news, which meant respite from the most terrible of lingering deaths.

To this locality the whole party adjourned on the 27th of January, 1845, little deeming how long their sojourn was to last. Regarding the place and the situation of the travellers, Sturt's journal runs as follows:—

"It was not, however, until we had run down every creek in the neighbourhood, and had traversed the country in every direction, that the truth flashed across my mind, and it became evident to me that we were locked up in the desolate-hearted region into which we had penetrated, as effectually as if we had wintered at the Pole. It was long, indeed, ere I could bring myself to believe that so great a misfortune had overtaken us; but it was so. Providence had, in its all-wise purposes, guided us to the only spot in that wide-spread desert where our wants could have been permanently supplied; but had there stayed our further progress into a region that almost appears to be forbidden ground."

The explorer further describes the locality in which he was thus held prisoner:—

"The creek," he writes, "was marked with a line of gum trees from the mouth of the glen to its junction with the main branch, in which, excepting in isolated spots, water was no longer to be found. The Red Hill (afterwards called Mount Pole) bore N.N.W. from us, distant three and-a-half miles; between us and it, there were undulating plains, covered with stones or salsolaceous herbage, excepting in the hollows wherein there was a little grass. Behind us were level stony plains, with small sandy undulations bounded by brush, over which the Black Hill was visible, distant ten miles, bearing S.S.E. from the Red Hill. To the eastward the country was, as I have described it—hilly. Westward, at a quarter of a mile, the low range through which Depôt Creek forces itself, shuts out from our view the extensive plains on which it rises."

They had now reached a point about a hundred miles northwards from their last camp at Flood's Creek, and they were under the impression that their stay would be of brief duration. The commander and his officers were, however, gradually succumbing under the fearful exertions which had been forced upon them. It became evident to Sturt that, for a time at least, he had reached his limit. And yet, as the prospect of a long weary imprisonment became more and more forcibly impressed upon him, he redoubled his efforts to break the bonds which held him as in a grasp of iron. A recent publication, ostensibly from the pen of one who was a member of the party, gives the following description of the very last attempt to force a passage to the eastward before finally settling down

at Depôt Creek, until the brazen skies would again be clouded over, and the streams once more flowed with water.

"There was," says the writer—to whom I express my obligations—"only the Captain, Punch (the leader's horse), and myself. We took as much water as the horse would carry, portions of which we took the precaution to leave on the way, to aid our return to camp. For as such excursions were made to the extreme extent of human and animal endurance, to attempt such a return without such provision, would be to face an impossible task. Thus, too, we lightened the horse's load.

"Previous excursions towards the west had revealed the existence of an extremely low and level expanse of country, where the long and parallel lines of sand-ridges had ceased, and where an ocean itself, in all but water, lay beneath us. In fact, I knew that our leader was himself impressed with the opinion that he was not very far from the *long sought inland sea*. For the present, the north was closed against us, and, as far as investigation could reach, showed no cessation of sand-ridges, though a very plentiful lack of water. On our right hand, however—that is, towards the east—there had been observed indications of a change in the character of the country. Hence the desire of the Captain for a nearer and better acquaintance. The Doctor and Flood accompanied us a day's journey out of camp, and were to meet us with supplies on our return, when we expected, and quite correctly, to be dead beat.

"On the next day, after parting with the Doctor and Flood, we were somewhat cheered by the appearance of some curious flat-topped hills in the distance, and towards evening we were among them. The country, too, had looked up a bit, although for water we were wholly dependant on what we had brought with us. Fortunately for Punch, some rice-grass grew about the base of these hills. More fortunately for ourselves, its seeds had attracted a new kind of pigeon. We succeeded in shooting a few, the flesh of which furnished a delicious repast. These flat-topped hills were chiefly composed of quartz, the detritus of which liberally strewed the intervening valleys and flats. Years after, when amid the gold diggings of more recent date, my mind has carried me back to those quartz hills of Central Australia. What if this region should be auriferous too? Water was, however, what we really sought for now, not gold. With water we could return to the main expedition with light hearts, and

tell it to come on, but we found no sign of the essential element. Gradually, too, the hills deserted us. We found ourselves in a succession of low sandy flats, most tiresome to man and horse. The heat was now excessive, without the possibility of shelter or interposition from the sun's rays, or what was really worse, the hot atmosphere, which moved in palpitating currents over the surface. Take it all in all, the region was the most glowing, and yet the most gloomy we had yet approached; all signs of life had disappeared, and the very stillness of death reigned around us."

I may seem to quote too profusely, but not having been in these regions myself, I eagerly welcome the words of a man who evidently made one of that memorable party.

To move in any direction seemed, even to the intrepid Sturt, ridiculous and impossible. He saw a hill in front and climbed it. What he saw settled the question. Sand-ridges to the horizon. Poor Punch, who had been pressed into this service, was given his last pound of oats, and his last drink of water, and then they made back for the depôt, which the writer—Mr. Thynne—calls Rocky Glen. A few sticks were gathered together, a fire lighted, and some tea made. This was after the travellers had skirted the ranges on their way home. Home it might well be called, being an oasis in the heart of a dry and dreary desert. How Sturt's steps were led to this spot, heaven alone can tell!

We are told that while partaking of this frugal meal the poor horse kept sniffing at the keg, and even endeavoured to draw the cork with his teeth.

Silence, desolation, and solitude now surrounded them on all sides. Nature seemed to have sounded the last chord of her great diapason. Something now appeared in the sky. Not a cloud like a man's hand, but in the form of dark specks. Sturt's story runs thus:—

"As we rode across the stormy plains lying between us and the hills, the heated and parching blasts that came upon us were more than we could bear. We were in the centre of the plain, when Mr. Browne drew my attention to a number of small black specks in the upper air. These spots, increasing momentarily in size, were evidently approaching us rapidly. In an incredibly short space of time we were surrounded with hundreds of the common kite, swooping down to within a few feet of us, and then turning away, after having eyed us steadily. Several approached us so closely that they threw themselves back to avoid contact, opening

their beaks, and spreading out their talons. The long flight of these birds, reaching from the ground into the heavens, put me strongly in mind of one of Martin's beautiful designs, in which he produces the effect of distance by a multitude of objects vanishing from the view." And the explorer further remarks:—"Whatever the reader may think, these birds had a most formidable aspect, and were too numerous for us to have overpowered, if they had really attacked us. That they came down to see what unusual object was wandering across the lonely deserts over which they soar in the hope of prey, there can be no doubt—but seeing that we were likely to prove formidable antagonists, they wheeled from us in extensive sweeps, and were soon lost to view in the lofty region from which they had descended."

I cannot but wonder how hundreds of ravenous birds of prey could ever contrive to get a square meal in such desert solitudes. Doubtless, however, their rapid flight, their keen powers of vision, and, above all, the instinct with which the Creator has endowed all the lower animals, together combined to guide this winged multitude to the spot where the kangaroo, the ox, the horse, the sheep, or even perchance the man might haply lie dead or dying. Wonderful indeed are the ways of Nature!

If I could in any way reproduce in my own language in which the description of the migration of the birds proceeded, I would. But I cannot. I therefore refer again to the word-picture of a writer who was there. He will, I am sure, excuse me for perpetuating those words, which give a vivid description of the scene. Simple and pretty language, well suited to the strange background. How daintily these creatures of flight mocked man's madness is thus recorded:—

"Parrots and parraquets were in shoals. These pretty little parraquets were of all colours, red, green, blue, and yellow, and each a colour of lovely tint. When a flock of these chatterers flew into a gum sapling, the effect was extremely good. The tree absolutely glowed and sparkled with innumerable gems, so bright and restless were the little creatures."

The rank and file of the expedition had hitherto maintained fairly good health. They had taken their turn in the desperate forced marches, but had intervals of repose. Not so the leader and his officers, who seem to have vied with one another in their extraordinary and almost superhuman efforts. These excursions in all directions, scouring all the adjacent

country, began eventually to tell upon them. They kept up as best they could for a time; but at last Mr. Poole fairly broke down. That horrible disease, scurvy, had put in an appearance, and, in spite of every possible attention on the part of Browne, the surgeon, he grew worse and worse.

By this time Sturt had made up his mind to stay where he was until the rains set in. They were indeed marvellously fortunate to have hit upon a spot in Central Australia, where life was possible for human beings. Their beasts of burden, and the sheep, seem to have thriven fairly well, in spite of the terrible and ever-increasing heat. Sturt thus describes it:—

“The mean of the thermometer for the months of December, January and February, had been 101°, 104°, and 101° respectively, in the shade. Under its effects every screw in our boxes had been drawn, and the horn handles of our instruments as well as our combs were split into fine *lamina*. The lead dropped out of our pencils, our signal rockets were entirely spoiled, our hair, as well as the wool on the sheep, ceased to grow, and our nails had become brittle as glass. The flour lost more than eight per cent. of its original weight, and the other provisions in a still greater proportion. The bran in which our bacon had been packed was perfectly saturated, and weighed almost as heavy as the meat. We were even obliged to bury our wax candles; a bottle of citric acid in Mr. Browne's box became fluid, and escaping, burnt a quantity of his linen; and we found it difficult to write or draw, so rapidly did the fluid dry in our pens and brushes.”

Poole grew worse, and was at length on his death-bed. His skin had become discoloured, his muscles rigid, and his lips blackened. Browne, we were told, exercised his limbs in order to avoid the dreaded paralysis, which was the harbinger of death. Daily and hourly, so long as in camp, did Sturt continue to visit his sick comrade, and every method within the power of the wanderers was resorted to in order to keep life in the man. Month succeeded month, and still the awful drought continued. The cattle had eaten up all the herbage within reach, sometimes roaming to a distance, and returning to the creek for water.

Strange to say, into this solitude stepped a visitor, a man—a black—one of the original possessors of the soil, which Sturt was vainly invading. He turned up one morning and gave token that he was both hungry and thirsty. He was supplied with food, and ate a most astonishing quantity

of mutton. Then he went to sleep. Crows happened to be plentiful, so when he woke up with an appetite, he was offered some crow. He preferred mutton, however, and so they gave him some more. Upon this he grew quite fat in a few days. He seemed friendly and intelligent, which made Sturt have strong hopes of availing himself of his bushcraft and so forth, but after ten days he departed and never was seen again. Sturt was very much disappointed, and sets down his thoughts thus:—"With him all our hopes vanished, for even the presence of this savage was soothing to us, and so long as he remained we indulged in anticipations as to the future. From the time of his departure a gloomy silence pervaded the camp. We were indeed placed under most trying circumstances. Everything combined to depress our spirits and exhaust our patience. We had witnessed migration after migration of the feathered tribes to that point to which we were so anxious to direct our way. Flights of cockatoos, of parrots, of pigeons, and of bitterns, birds also whose notes had cheered us in the wilderness, all had taken the same high road to a better and more hospitable region."

It seems to have been a dread and dreary place—this desolate heart of Central Australia!

Five months passed away, and although clouds from time to time darkened the skies, sometimes accompanied by thunder and lightning, no rain fell. On the 12th of July—the Australian midwinter—the welcome showers began to fall. Meantime, Mr. Poole's condition had become so alarming, that the leader resolved, as a last chance of saving his life, to despatch him forthwith to a settled district. He was tenderly lifted into a cart, which thereupon started for Adelaide. The Doctor accompanied him for a day's journey, and on returning, gave a somewhat favourable report. Two days later, however, the dray returned, bearing the corpse of Poole, who had passed away on the afternoon of the 16th. "We buried Mr. Poole," writes Sturt, "under a *grevillia* that stood close to our underground room; * his initials and the year are cut in it above the grave—'J. P., 1845'—and he now sleeps in the desert."

The storekeeper—Piesse—and two men were now sent to Adelaide with reports, and the main body took a north-west direction. A depôt was formed, and named Fort Grey, from whence Sturt took a

* They had excavated a sort of cave, to save them from the sun's rays.

reconnoitring excursion to the westward. He was soon convinced of the absolute impossibility of advance, and was naturally compelled to return. After a few days rest, Sturt, Browne, and three men, with fifteen weeks' provisions, started again in a north-west direction. For a time their hopes were raised, only to be crushed as their progress continued. The 26th of August found them in a stony desert, more desolate and miserable than any of the ground hitherto traversed. Not a blade of grass for their wretched horses could be found; and they had been forty-eight hours without food. It was an apparently boundless area of bare earthy plain, and is thus described by Sturt:—

“Subject,” he writes, “to be laid under water by the creek we had just left, and to the effects of an almost vertical sun, its surface was absolutely so rent and torn by solar heat, that there was scarcely room for the horses to tread, and they kept constantly slipping their hind feet into chasms from eight to ten feet deep, into which the earth fell with a hollow rumbling sound, as into a grave. The poor horse in the cart had a sad task, and it surprised me how we all at length got over the plain, which was between five and six miles in breadth. But we managed it, and at that distance found ourselves on the banks of another creek, in the bed of which there was plenty of grass, but no water. I was, however, exceedingly anxious to give the horses a day's rest; for several of them were seriously griped, and had either taken something that disagreed with them, or were beginning to suffer from constant work and irregularity of food. Is it any wonder Mr. Browne, too, was unwell, and Lewis complaining, so that it was advisable to rest ourselves if possible. I therefore determined to trace the creek downwards in the hope of finding water, and at a mile came upon a shallow pond where I gladly halted; for by this time several of the horses had swollen to a great size, and were evidently in much pain.”

The leader had now ample opportunity of studying the migration of birds. Parrots, and others of their family—green, blue, yellow, and red—visited a creek which he discovered and named Eyre Creek. They assembled in vast numbers to take their *last drink*, and get themselves into condition for a long, long flight, whither no one knows. Hawks hovered on the outskirts, and occasionally darted in and seized a victim and a dinner.

All the birds, indeed, seemed to be winging their flight to some other

oasis which *they* knew about, and from their long delay and copious refreshment, it appeared as if they had a long journey before them.

Sturt was loath to give way; nevertheless, he had to yield, and this is what he says in his journal:—"I saw clearly, indeed, that there was no help for this measure. We had penetrated to a point at which water and feed both failed. Spinifex, and a new species of *mesembryanthemum*, with light pink flowers on a slender stem, were the only plants growing in that wilderness, if I except a few withered acacia trees, about four feet high. The spinifex was close and matted, and the horses were obliged to lift their feet straight up to avoid its sharp points. From the summit of a sandy undulation, close upon our right, we saw that the ridges extended northward on parallel lines beyond the range of vision, and appeared interminable. To the eastward and westward they succeeded each other like the waves of the sea. The sand was of a deep red colour, and a bright narrow line of it marked the top of each ridge, amidst the sickly pink and glaucous coloured vegetation around. I fear I have already wearied the reader by a description of such scenes; but he may form some idea of the one now placed before him when I state that, familiar as we had been to such scenes, my companion involuntarily uttered an exclamation of amazement when he first glanced his eye over it. 'Good heavens!' said he, 'did ever man see such a country?' Indeed, if it was not so gloomy, it was more difficult than the Stony Desert itself, and I turned from it with a feeling of bitter disappointment. I was, at that moment, scarcely a degree from the tropic, and within one hundred and fifty miles of the centre of the Continent. If I had gained that spot my task would have been performed, my most earnest wish would have been gratified; but for some wise purpose this was denied to me; yet I may truly say that I should not thus have abandoned my position, if it had not been a measure of urgent and imperative necessity.

"After what I have said, the feelings with which, on the morning of the 8th of September, we unloosened our horses from the bushes to which they had all night been fastened, will be easily imagined. Just as we were about to mount, a flight of crested parraquets, on rapid wing and with a loud shriek, flew over us, coming directly from the north, and making for the creek to which we were going. It was a

singular occurrence just at that moment, and so I regarded it; for I had well nigh turned again. It proved, however, that to the very last we had been following the line of migration with unerring precision. What would I not have given for the power of these swift wanderers of the air? But as it was, I knew not how long they had been upon the wing, or how far it was to the spot where they had last rested."

To go back a few days, by the 1st of September they had reached a point four hundred miles from Fort Grey. Their further advance was simply impossible. Sturt, therefore, reluctantly resolved to retrace his footsteps. On their homeward journey a hot wind rose, and assailed them with unparalleled fury. They had been following Cooper's Creek, and were beginning to doubt whether the water in Strzelecki's Creek would have dried up. There was, however, just sufficient muddy fluid to sustain life. There they experienced the sirocco which forced them to stop. Sturt thus describes its power:—"We had scarcely got there when the wind, which had been blowing all the morning, hot from the N.E., increased to a gale, and I shall never forget its withering effects. I sought shelter behind a large gum tree; but the blasts of heat were so terrific, that I wondered the very grass did not take fire. This really was nothing imaginary: everything, both animate and inanimate, gave way before it; the horses stood with their backs to the wind, and their noses to the ground, without the muscular strength to raise their heads. The birds were mute, and the leaves of the tree, under which we were sitting, fell like a snow shower around us. At noon I took a thermometer—graduated to 127°—out of my box, and observed that the mercury was up to 125°. Thinking that it had been unduly influenced, I put it in the fork of a tree close to me, sheltered alike from the wind and the sun. In this position I went to examine it about an hour afterwards, when I found that the mercury had risen to the top of the instrument, and that its further expansion had burst the bulb, *a circumstance that, I believe, no traveller has had to recount before.*" After eight hundred miles of weary travel, Sturt finally reached the depôt at Fort Grey on the 2nd of October. He had penetrated, as he has said, to within about a degree from the tropics; and but a hundred and fifty miles lay between him and his goal—the centre of Australia. Latitude 24° 30', and longitude 137° 58', marked the limit of his exploration to the north-

ward. His narrative regarding his return runs thus:—"We reached the plain just as the sun was descending, without having dismounted from our horses for fifteen hours; and as we rode down the embankment into it, we looked around for the cattle, but none were to be seen. We looked towards the little sandy mound on which our tent had stood, but no white objects there met our eyes. We rode slowly up to the stockade, and found it silent and deserted. I was quite sure that Mr. Browne had had urgent reasons for retiring, and had, indeed, anticipated the measure. I hardly hoped to find him at the Fort, and had given him instructions on the subject of his removal. Yet a sickening feeling came over me when I saw that he was really *gone*. Not on my own account, however, for with the bitter feelings of disappointment with which I was returning home, I could calmly have laid my head on the desert never to raise it again."

Another desperate attempt was soon arranged, the lust of discovery being strong in Sturt. This time he resolved to make for Strzelecki Creek, which he had previously visited, and named after the valorous Count. Unwilling to risk more lives than necessary, he offered to leave Dr. Browne with the main body, taking three men as his companions. Browne endeavoured to dissuade his leader from further rash attempts; but Sturt was determined on this final assault upon the grim barriers which Nature had stubbornly interposed. Accordingly, on the 11th of October, the little party, consisting this time of the afterwards celebrated explorer, J. McDouall Stuart, together with two men, started, taking with them provisions for ten weeks. After two days they reached Strzelecki's Creek, which was well filled, and raised their hopes considerably. Tracing it up to the northward, a splendid creek was discovered, and named Cooper's Creek, in compliment to Sir Charles Cooper, the first Chief Justice of South Australia. Referring to this watercourse, Mr. Tenison Woods makes the following wise observations:—"It is necessary, however, to warn the reader that this name is not preserved in the rest of this work (*Discovery and Exploration of Australia*). The stream in question has been a most important point in connection with various explorations, and has received very many names. Mitchell called it the Victoria River; but we have one already in Australia. It was also proposed to call it the Cooper's River, and the Gregory. Sturt's

name, however, has been the one most used, and that is open to the objection that we have here to deal with a large river, which is sometimes two miles wide. The natives call it the Barcoo, and this is the name by which it will always be alluded to in this volume." I need not further comment on the immense advantage which, to my apprehension, attaches to the using of aboriginal designations.

Unfortunately for Sturt, the Barcoo flowed east and west, and the explorer's uncertain destination lay due north. He left the river banks and steered in the direction just indicated. Grassy plains were reached, which were called the Plains of Hope. Soon these were crossed, and then succeeded more of those miserable, endless stretches of sand-hills, which well nigh broke Sturt's heart.

At last, beaten down and vanquished, Sturt ordered a retreat. Browne was seriously ill, and the leader himself thus describes his own lamentable condition:—"I was," he writes, "myself laid up—a helpless being—for I had gradually sunk under the attack of scurvy, that had so long hung upon me. The day after I arrived in camp, I was unable to walk. In a day or two more my muscles became rigid, my limbs contracted, and I was unable to stir. Gradually also my skin blackened, the least movement put me to torture, and I was reduced to a state of perfect prostration." Reluctantly then this small band of intrepid men turned their faces homeward. When they reached Carondilla a letter was found nailed to a tree, which announced that the store-keeper—Piesse—was in search of them, bringing much needed supplies. Fortunately Flood's Creek held sufficient water to enable them to reach the Murray. They had been nineteen months absent, and their friends in Adelaide deemed them to have fallen victims to the perils of the interior. The aboriginals of the Murray and the Darling had borne home the news ahead, and carriages came out to meet them as they approached the capital. At midnight on the 19th of January, 1846, Sturt arrived. He says, "I reached my home at midnight, and on crossing the threshold, raised my wife from the floor on which she had fallen, and heard the carriage of my considerate friends roll away." The Darling, the Murray, Eyre's Creek, Cooper's Creek, all stand to the credit of Captain Charles Sturt, giving him undoubted right to the proud title of "Father of Australian Explorers." His hopes of reaching the central point of the great Australian Continent

were doubtless defeated; but no man could have battled more bravely against overwhelming odds. His health was practically undermined by this last great effort, and his sight was permanently impaired. He returned to England, and on June the 16th, 1869, breathed his last at Cheltenham, receiving on his death-bed the intimation that his Sovereign had seen fit to honour him with the dignity of K.C.M.G. It came too late, however, and Sir Charles never assumed the title. The authorities of the Colonial Office procured the honour for his widow, who died as Lady Sturt on the 5th of June, 1887, aged eighty-five. His character, achievements and aspirations are thus well summed up in his own words:—

“Circumstances may yet arise to give a value to my recent labours, and my name may be remembered by after generations in Australia as the first who tried to penetrate to its centre. If I failed in that great object, I have one consolation in the retrospect of my past services. My path amongst savage tribes has been a bloodless one; not but that I have been often placed in situations of risk and danger when I might have been justified in shedding blood; but I trust I have ever made allowances for human timidity, and respected the customs of the rudest people.”





CHAPTER III.

Mitchell's Last Expedition.



HERE were now four distinguished rivals in the field of Australian exploration: Captain Sturt, Sir Thomas Mitchell, Edward J. Eyre and Ludwig Leichardt. During the absence of the last named, the command of an expedition was assigned to Sir Thomas Mitchell, although Eyre strenuously advanced his claims. Certainly the latter had performed extraordinary feats of endurance, and shown almost superhuman courage; but the former was the Surveyor-General, and, above all things—he had been successful. A son of the Surveyor had already conducted an expedition towards the junction of the Macquarie and the Castlereagh Rivers with the main stream, and discovered two new tributaries of the Darling, named the Narran and the *Bokhara. He then found the stream which the natives call the Balonne, and soon afterwards the Culgoa.

Doubtless, these discoveries set Sir Thomas thinking about another expedition. Two years previously he had offered his services to the Government, proposing to conduct a party into the interior by tracing the Darling to a dividing range. Matters were, however, delayed, possibly owing to his pressing duties as Surveyor-General; but more likely through the procrastination of the Home Authorities.

* It seems curious that the natives should have chosen the designation of a district in India.

On the 5th of September, 1845, we find the Surveyor writing to the Governor as follows:—"In attention to your letter of yesterday, I have now the honour to submit the outlines of my plan for the exploration of the northern interior.

"I would, therefore, first beg leave to observe that my proposed line of route is founded on views which I have always entertained respecting the interior; but not more so than on the expediency of ascertaining the character of that portion of the Colony to the north-west of the River Darling. To avoid unnecessary repetition, I shall annex a quotation here from my despatch—dated Peel's River, 29th February, 1832—in which my reasons for believing that there is a dividing range beyond the Darling, and that a great river may be looked for beyond it, are stated at length. I have had no reason to alter my views respecting the interior since that time. On the contrary, subsequent experience has rather tended to strengthen these views. The course of the Condamine being now better known, affords a better indication that the high ground is in the situation I supposed. And I annex also a communication from Walter Bagot* respecting the portion of the country beyond the Darling which is nearly opposite to Fort Bourke, affording additional evidence of the existence of a lofty range to the north-west, and a great river beyond it. The overflowing of the *Waramble* agreed so well with what I observed at the upper part of the Darling in 1831, and near Fort Bourke in 1836; and the situation of the range and river beyond, accord so well with all that can be reasonably assumed, as to leave no doubt in my mind as to the accuracy of Mr. Bagot's statement, even where it is founded on those of the natives, &c."

To the letter, of which above is an extract, was appended a characteristic minute by Sir George Gipps to the following effect:—"Acknowledge receipt, and inform Sir Thomas Mitchell that, desiring to leave him as far as possible free to act upon his own judgment in the arduous undertaking in which he is about to embark, I do not consider it necessary to do more than communicate to him my approval of the course which he has proposed. Mr. Townsend will be authorised to accompany him, and act as his next in command, and Mr. Stephenson may, should Sir Thomas himself approve of it, be engaged

* See Appendix.

at a salary of 7s. 6d. per diem, from the day of his leaving Sydney. He must, however, find his own horse.

“Mr. Townsend will, during his absence, as well as Sir Thomas Mitchell himself, continue to receive his usual salary from the land fund; but every other expense will be charged against the sum voted for the purpose by the Legislative Council, which is now increased to £2,000.”

Matters having thus been satisfactorily adjusted, on the 17th of November, 1845, the party started from Paramatta. The leader was accompanied by Mr. E. B. Kennedy—whose sad fate will be recorded in a succeeding chapter; Mr. W. Stephenson, surgeon and naturalist, besides twenty-eight men. Sir Thomas believed in the “big battalions.” He was one of the imperious soldiers of the old school, a strict disciplinarian, and his method was to conquer the desert by sheer force. What a contrast was his cavalcade of soldiers and others—each with his special post—to the meagre numbers that accompanied Eyre, Leichardt, and others! The Surveyor was of Stanley’s and not of Livingstone’s mind, regarding the best method of penetrating unknown regions. But it must be remembered that he not only explored the territory through which he passed, but conducted a strict Government survey. Hence his large retinue and military appendages. Leichardt was more of a Livingstone in temperament, and considered one experienced bushman worth a dozen soldiers. Probably the best method lies in the happy medium of going forth with a small and perfectly equipped party.

They had eight bullock drays, no less than eighty bullocks, three light carts, two hundred and fifty sheep, and a year’s provisions. Also three horse drays and two boats. Truly a goodly party!

In this fashion Sir Thomas entered on his last expedition. Despite his elaborate preparations, he was considerably bothered during the first months of his progress. The interior of Australia is not to be either forced or trifled with. On the banks of the Macquarie they had to stop. Lack of water forbade their advance, so they had no alternative but to halt, and wait for the rains. It was not until March that the Surveyor was enabled to reach the Narran; and then the party had great difficulty in crossing the morasses, which lay between that stream and the Upper Darling. He was on his son’s tracks, however, and, by the 1st of April, he managed to reach the Balonne, after traversing a most difficult, flat,

barren country. Then he struck the Culgoa, which he found to be a chain of ponds, and his ridiculously large train could scarcely make headway. They got into a sort of quicksand or quagmire, which was already so overloaded with water, that any more of that precious fluid would have brought their journey to a speedy and final termination. It so happened, however, that nature favoured them. No rain fell, and somehow or other they pulled through, and eventually reached the junction of the Upper and Lower Balonne. Here they formed a depôt, which—with the Surveyor's usual military precision—was marked in letters upon a tree, "Camp I."

Here both Mitchell and Kennedy were much distressed with disease of the eyes, which naturally impeded their progress. After a rest, they seem to have in a measure recovered, and Kennedy was sent forward with a small party to reconnoitre. Mitchell himself had taken a few men with him to make a survey in another direction, because it was simply impossible to move the cumbersome main body. At last, a depôt at St. George's Bridge was determined upon (where now the township of St. George's stands); and the Surveyor made up his mind to leave the river, and advance in a N.W. direction. He started with six men and a supply of water, travelling over dry polygonum flats. Camping on the second night, strange to say, a messenger brought news from Sydney. Leichardt had returned, and reported his experiences. Mitchell at once made up his mind to advance no further in that direction. I do not wish to throw a shade of dishonour on Mitchell's character, or discredit on his splendid achievements, but he certainly was prone to take advantage of other men's labours. I should not blame him for that very natural failing; but he seems to have regarded every other explorer with strangely jealous and disparaging eyes. And yet he had no reason for it, because his reputation was made, and while other men had happened to meet with unparalleled difficulties in regard to the country, Mitchell had met, comparatively speaking, none to contend with. He had that unfortunate faculty—not altogether uncommon—of despising the work and opinions of his rivals. It was a pity, because he was a brave, resolute, humane, and marvellously fortunate explorer.

At all events, Leichardt's report convinced Mitchell that there *must* be a watershed between the streams which flowed into the Gulf of

Carpentaria and the south coast. Therefore, he planned the grand scheme of finding some of these streams, and by their aid, of performing the as yet unaccomplished feat of crossing the Australian Continent from north to south.

His immediate object was to trace the Balonne upwards, until the supposed mountains in the north-west were reached, and then to judge as to the possibility of pushing forward towards the north. On the 23rd of April, the Surveyor started, taking with him eight men, two natives, fourteen horses, and eighteen weeks' provisions.

This move was unsuccessful, however, for after two days' journey drought compelled them to turn back.

After reaching the Balonne prospects looked somewhat brighter for a time, and, having travelled up-stream for ten days, seeing signs of natives on their way, they reached another stream called the Cogoon, in lat. $27^{\circ} 15'$. It was now the 1st of May, and Mitchell had passed through some very troublesome country. Kennedy had been warned by a messenger of the difficulties which the leader had encountered, lest he should take the same track.

The Cogoon, in true Australian riparian fashion, divided itself into perplexing channels, leaving Mitchell in a quandary which to follow.

Plains, rocks, and gullies followed in wretched sequence, making his journey an almost hopeless task. "Mulga" scrub also seemed to prove a formidable enemy to progress.*

Having eventually reached Mount First View—so called because it was the first hill they had encountered among the many rivers they had met with—they saw high ranges to the N.W., which made Mitchell more hopeful. The country, moreover, began to rise in altitude as they passed on, and, in the midst of a fertile, well grassed country, a hill was discovered, and named Mount Abundance. Within a hundred miles or so of the tropics it is astonishing to note, by the Surveyor's journal, that the weather became intensely cold; and it is almost incredible to read of a creek, which they named Frosty Creek, because, when they went to draw water in the morning, it bore a thin sheet of ice on its surface. Nature's eccentricities in Australia can scarcely surpass the strange sight of a

* "Mulga," often referred to, is an acacia. It grows with thick bushes and thin twigs. It is the tree most extensively distributed throughout Australia.

bright frosty morning, the ground white, and hoar frost visible in the very heart of this notoriously torrid Continent. Fertile plains of grassy verdure were passed over, and named the Fitzroy Downs, in honour of Governor Fitzroy, and, as they pushed forward, the vegetation began to change in character as they neared the tropics.

Having again reached the Cogoan River, they left its course, and on the 11th they discovered a hill, which they ascended, and viewed the surrounding country. As a result of this survey, the leader steered his course to the N.W., discovering a river, called by the natives the Amby. This they traced up until it disappeared, in the orthodox Australian fashion, leaving the party perplexed and waterless. Soon afterwards, however, they came upon a fine stream which was not flowing, but whose channel was in breadth equal to that of the Darling. This was the Maranoa. Although its course lay north and south, it was impossible to say whether it was a northern or a southern water. Mitchell was at first inclined to the former opinion, but he soon altered his views. Although they were now in lat. $26^{\circ} 12'$, some of the pools in the Maranoa were found to be frozen in the early morning. The leader now resolved to form a depôt, and wait the arrival of Kennedy. Meantime he conducted an excursion in the neighbourhood, making various observations, naming Riverhead Range and Mount Lonsdale. Their provisions having dwindled to a low ebb, they anxiously awaited the arrival of the drays.

Kennedy joined him on the 1st of June, and, taking with him four months' supplies, Mitchell started off with a small party on the 4th of June, determined, if at all possible, to reach the Gulf of Carpentaria. By this time, the leader had come to the conclusion, from the lie of the land, that the Maranoa was a southern water; and he left Kennedy behind with the main body and the drays. Mitchell and his party followed the channel of the river until the 15th, when they struck out in a N.W. direction, and passed through rocky gullies, sandstone table-lands, and volcanic cones; leaving behind them a plain of heavy sand, through which they with difficulty made their way. Mount Owen, which attains an altitude of seven hundred feet above the plains, and nearly three thousand above the sea, was climbed, and the surrounding country was seen to be most uninviting.

The water problem now stared this most fortunate of explorers in the face; and they had to search until the 26th of June before a northward passage could be found. The country was of volcanic origin, and, though the land was fertile, rocks and hills abounded, interspersed with sandstone gullies. To a man of Mitchell's temper these delays seem to have been especially galling, and the remarks in the Sydney newspapers, which had been sent with the despatches already mentioned, were not of a nature to soothe his troubled soul. It certainly was not pleasant for the Surveyor to read:—"Australia Felix and the discoveries of Sir Thomas Mitchell now dwindle into comparative insignificance. . . . We understand that the intrepid Dr. Leichardt is about to start another expedition to the Gulf, keeping to the westward of the coast ranges." The fact that Mitchell quotes these extracts in his journal, shows how keenly he felt the sting. Nevertheless, these remarks made him all the more resolved to distinguish himself; and he did so.

A creek leading from Mount King was reached, named the Warrego, and was afterwards explored by Kennedy. From this point the leader steered due north, travelling over scrubby country. Then some rocky country had to be crossed; and at length, with the Surveyor's usual good fortune, a stream was reached, and the country became a panorama of surpassing beauty. Mitchell goes into raptures over the scenes which met his view. His journal runs thus:—"We made sure of water for the rest of our journey. The hills overhanging it (the stream) surpassed anything I had ever yet seen in picturesque outline. Some resembled Gothic cathedrals in ruins; others forts; and contrasted with the flowery outlines of evergreen woods; while a fine stream in the foreground gave a charming appearance to the whole country. It was a discovery worthy of the toils of a pilgrimage. The better to mark them on my map, I gave the name of Salvator Rosa to the valley. The rocks stood out sharply from thick woods, just as Martin's fertile imagination would dash them out in his beautiful sepia landscapes. I never saw anything in nature come so near the creations of his genius and imagination." I cannot but here remark that it seems strange that Martin should have painted rocks and thick woods "out of his head," as the phrase goes. Most landscape painters draw their inspiration direct from nature, and *not* from their fertile imaginations. The Surveyor's remark that he never

saw anything in nature come so near the creations of Martin seems a reversal of the usual order of affairs. Most people would be inclined to think that Martin would follow Nature ; and not Nature, Martin.

However—be that as it may—Mitchell named the range to the west after his favourite artist, Martin's Range ; and an adjacent lake, Lake Salvator. The latter was of great extent, and made Mitchell's heart beat high ; for he thought it might lead him to Carpentaria. Disappointment, however, awaited him, since no river led from it ; and so they had to push on through dense scrub, taking their chance of water. The Nogoia was reached, but its direction was easterly, and therefore useless for the purpose. Traversing dense scrub to the N.W., they came upon a stream which they named the Claude, with fine land on its banks. It turned out, unfortunately, to be a tributary of the Nogoia. The land here was covered with fragments of fossil wood, agate and chalcedony. In one place, we are told, lay a heap of ruins, the dilapidated fragments of a petrified tree. The travellers now found themselves amidst impassable rocky gullies, completely cutting off their passage to the northward. It was not until the 17th of July that an opening was found, which led them to a watercourse proceeding from ranges to the westward. A pass was discovered by the doctor of the party, and named after him Stevenson's Pass. They were now amidst mountainous scenery of strange and weird grandeur. A sort of natural watch-tower was named Tower Almond, and pointed roofs, turrets, minarets, and domes made them almost fancy that they had found the handiwork of some extinct race of giants.

From one of the peaks, named Mount Mudge, they discovered a watercourse to the westward. The latter they reached on the 21st July. It was called by the natives the Belyando, and the party followed it until within the tropics, at lat. $21^{\circ} 30'$ long. $147^{\circ} 10'$. Thick brigalow scrub impeded their progress, and the stream divided into many channels. Mitchell began to see that if he continued on his present course he would only reach the regions explored by Leichardt, which was the very last thing he wished to do. He therefore gave the order to retreat, and on the 5th of September again reached the Salvator. After a short rest, and having sent a despatch to Kennedy, the Surveyor resolved to start with two men and a native guide, taking one month's provisions. After

reaching Mount Pluto, and travelling over ground covered with brigalow, matted vines and young pines, they at length reached a chain of ponds, and struck a river which the sanguine explorer imagined would lead him towards the N.W.; but it turned in an opposite direction and soon ran dry. There was nothing for it now but to steer through the scrub in the desired direction, trusting to that good luck which never deserted the Surveyor. As usual, he found water almost immediately, and, having passed through a gap in a brigalow ridge, his eyes were rewarded with a magnificent landscape. Downs and plains extended westward to the horizon, bounded on the S.W. by woods and low ranges, and on the N.E. by higher ranges. The whole country inclined to the N.W., in which direction a line of trees denoted a river flowing towards that point as far as the eye could reach. Mitchell was again overjoyed. He says in his journal: "Ulloa's delight at the sight of the Pacific could not have surpassed mine on the occasion. From the rock where I stood the scene was so extensive as to leave no room for doubt as to the course of the river, which then and there revealed to me alone, seemed like a reward direct from heaven for perseverance; and as a compensation for the many sacrifices I had made in order to solve the question as to the interior rivers of tropical Australia."

That Mitchell was both rhapsodical and self-complacent will readily be seen from the above outburst. He at once proceeded to follow down the course of the stream on which he had pronounced so authoritatively. It was the Upper Barcoo, the lower outflow of which Sturt had already found and strongly condemned. The channel led at first through rich grassy downs. It was dry, and joined by many small watercourses from the eastward, its general direction being W.N.W. Long reaches of water with numberless ducks and other game were encountered on the 17th September. Day after day the party rode forward over a very fine country, occasionally interrupted by brigalow scrub. On the 23rd a large stream, with three channels, joined the Barcoo from the N.E., and was named the Alice after the Queen's second daughter, the Upper Barcoo itself being named the Victoria* by the loyal Surveyor. Natives were met with, and the leader was much surprised to find one with

* This name was not retained. It will be remembered that Stokes and Wickham had already adopted this designation for a stream which they discovered.

an iron tomahawk.* Mitchell's provisions at length becoming low, he resolved to return, being so far well satisfied regarding his discovery. One day's rest was allowed, and on the 28th they turned their faces towards the depôt. On the 4th of October they reached the junction of the Nive and the Nivelle Rivers, having been able to cut off the windings of the stream on their return journey. Water was now very scarce, and it was with no small satisfaction that they reached the Salvator Rosa Valley on the 6th, where they had formed a small depôt camp near some hills which had been named the Pyramids.

After four days' rest they turned their steps towards the main depôt, from which they had been absent four months and-a-half. As their cattle were fresh, and there was no lack of water on the route, they made good progress. From the top of Mount Faraday, which they ascended, they had an extensive view, but saw nothing to encourage any further investigation. Soon afterwards, they struck the Maranoa River, and within five days they reached Kennedy's camp on the 19th of October. The ever-fortunate Surveyor found everything well at the depôt, and in spite of his long absence and his tedious marches through unknown regions, he brought back all his animals in sound, healthy condition, having only lost one horse, which was accidentally killed on the 17th, two days before the leader joined the main body. Sir Thomas now gave orders for the return journey to Sydney, and resolved to follow down the course of the Maranoa. The river was found to be well supplied with water, and the country fertile on either side. The Balonne River was reached on the 5th November without any incident occurring worthy of note, and the party camped at St. George's Bridge. Mitchell now devoted himself to his notes, maps, despatches, and so forth, sending Kennedy to ascertain if, as Mitchell supposed, a river flowed through the country which lay between them and the Darling. In a week's time Kennedy returned, reporting a chain of ponds called the Mooni River, the channel bearing N. and S., the country on either bank being occupied by settlers, sheep and cattle farmers. Having adopted magnetic bearings instead of true ones, he had lost his way, and two horses died through lack of water on this short excursion, besides

* Probably this tomahawk had been given to the native by Sturt when on the lower part of the river. Of course, Mitchell did not know he was on the Barcoo.

which his men suffered much owing to thirst and excessive heat. What a contrast to the surprising luck which attended the footsteps of Sir Thomas! The whole party now advanced down the Mooni River, the journey being interrupted by a terrific rain-storm, which lasted a fortnight, and, had they not gained the summit of a sandhill, the results might have been disastrous. By the 7th of December, however, the rain ceased, and their boats came into requisition, enabling them to cross the Upper Darling.

Mitchell's way was now plain, and, after an absence of some thirteen months, he and his entire band entered Sydney safe and sound. That Mitchell was arrogant and not untainted with jealousy, is perfectly clear from his actions and his writings. Nevertheless, looking at results, he was by far the most successful of the Australian explorers. Bravery, humanity, and prudence, were likewise distinguishing virtues of this able officer. Had some of his predecessors and also his successors been gifted in like measure with the last named quality, many sad pages would have been torn from the history of Australian exploration.





CHAPTER IV.

*Edmund B. Kennedy's First Expedition. Ludwig Leichardt's
Second Expedition; also, his Third Journey and
Final Disappearance.*



SIR THOMAS MITCHELL, as we have already seen, had to turn back before tracing the Barcoo to its mouth. This, however, did not prevent him asserting his positive belief that it flowed into the Gulf of Carpentaria. To quote his own words:—

“I pursued the course of the river through open country for ten successive days. It formed in part splendid reaches as broad and as important as those of the Murray. I was convinced that its estuary was the Gulf of Carpentaria; at all events, the country is open and well watered for a direct route thereto. That the river is the most important in Australia, increasing as it does by successive tributaries, and not the mere product of distant ranges, admits of no dispute; and the downs and plains of Central Australia seem sufficient to supply the whole world with animal food.”

Nevertheless, the Surveyor-General's opinion was not accepted as authoritative. Captain Sturt's maps and reports created a strong feeling of doubt in the minds of the Government and others. The views of the latter explorer by no means coincided with the dictum of Sir Thomas; and it was therefore determined that an expedition should be at once

despatched to explore the Barcoo River, which, it will be remembered, Mitchell had named the Victoria. The command of the party was conferred upon Mr. Edmund B. Kennedy, who left Sydney in March, 1847, with a party of eight men, about a dozen horses, two light carts, and rations for eight months.

Having the advantage of Mitchell's experience, the new leader was enabled, while following the old track, to avoid detours; and so, by a somewhat shorter route, the party reached the limit of the Surveyor's journey down the river by the 13th of August. Within two days the Surveyor-General's theories received a rude shock; for the Barcoo was found to take a S.S.W. course. On reaching lat. $24^{\circ} 53'$, and long. $144^{\circ} 11'$, the supply of water became scarce, and Kennedy began to think that even this stream had exhausted itself. He therefore left the bulk of his party behind, and rode on in advance, accompanied by two men. After a journey of twelve miles the leader found that he was mistaken, for the river not only re-appeared, but was joined by a fine stream from the east. The Barcoo now took a southerly direction until, encountering some ridges, it was turned due west, running through a poor pastureless country. In long. 143° , it was joined by a stream from the eastward, named by Kennedy, the Thompson, in compliment to the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales.

By this time the main party had joined the leader, who, believing that an abundance of water was forthcoming, resolved to explore the Barcoo to its termination; having some slight hope of its bringing him to the Gulf of Carpentaria. He soon, however, was doomed to disappointment, for when the river had turned S.S.W. a barren grassless waste was all that met their eyes. Sturt's description of the red sandy desert was now most fully confirmed. Pushing on in all haste in the hope of again finding feed for the horses, and water for both man and beast, by the 1st of September they reached a sort of oasis, in this dreadful desert. Here they buried their stores and made a final effort, advancing over ground cracked, fissured and split into yawning chasms. Water was daily becoming scarcer, and the river bed divided into countless channels. By the 17th of September they reached a small water-hole, but there was no sign of vegetation. Having advanced a day's journey, the water absolutely disappeared, and Kennedy was compelled to order a halt.

Then, taking one companion, the leader searched in all directions, but his efforts were fruitless. There now was nothing for it but to return. The horses were starving, and the men suffering severely. Kennedy had, however, fully exploded the proudly vaunted theory of the imperious Sir Thomas Mitchell.

On his return journey, the leader found that the flour and sugar which had been buried, had been discovered by the lynx-eyed natives, who, in a spirit of mischief, had emptied the contents of the bags into the hole, and had thus utterly destroyed those provisions. He narrowly escaped losing his carts also, which had likewise been buried; for signs could be observed that the blacks suspected their presence, and had been searching for the vehicles.

Kennedy explored the Warrega River on his way back to Sydney, tracing its course south, through a well-pastured country; but it at last split into many channels, and finally disappeared. A journey of eighty miles across barren plains and scrub brought them to the Culgoa River. It was waterless, but evidently liable to heavy floods. As a well-known writer aptly observes, regarding the contradictory character of Australia and its rivers: "It is either a desert or a deluge." The party eventually reached Sydney without mishap, and this distinguished explorer, whose sad fate will soon have to be recorded, received the congratulations due to him for the successful issue of his first expedition.

I now return to Doctor Ludwig Leichardt, who, encouraged by his Port Essington trip, lost no time in projecting another expedition. His bold conception was to cross the Australian Continent from east to west, and thus solve the many doubts regarding the interior. It was naturally expected that this journey would occupy a long time, more especially as he intended starting west from a point much to the northward of Sydney. Supplies, therefore, were taken to last the party for two years. The intrepid Doctor was accompanied by eight persons, two being natives; together with an enormous quantity of live stock, viz.: one hundred and eight sheep, two hundred and seventy goats, forty bullocks, fifteen horses, and thirteen mules. Such a lot of goats!

Proceeding from the Hunter River to the Darling Downs, they reached their previous station on Harley's Creek, above the Condamine River. It was now the 12th of December, and at this early stage the misfortunes

of the party commenced in earnest. Many of their horses and cattle strayed, and were not recovered until three weeks later. They then set forth on their perilous journey, reaching the Dawson River on the 15th, and Palm Tree Creek on the 24th of January. Expedition Range was encountered on the 9th of the following month. Soon the heavy rains rendered the country marshy, owing to which fever and ague assailed them. Still pushing on, by the time Mackenzie River was reached their condition was indeed deplorable.

It is a strange and almost incredible circumstance that Leichardt, although a medical man, should have neglected to provide himself with a medicine chest. They were also obliged to camp without any shelter but calico tents, and were therefore exposed to fierce storms of rain and wind. Having somewhat recovered, they endeavoured to advance under unparalleled difficulties, and at length the leader, with dismay, saw all his cattle and sheep disappearing for want of necessary attention. Their situation was, indeed, desperate. Advance was now hopeless, and the possibility of retreat doubtful. A great deal of folly seems to have marked Leichardt's conduct during this miserable journey; but we will not refer to it further than to remark that he seemed foredoomed to perish through sheer lack of common sense. After seven months of intense suffering they reached Mr. Chauvel's station, on the Condamine River, on the 6th of July, having accomplished absolutely nothing except to travel over ground already explored, to have incurred immense expense through loss of stock and horses, and to have endured incredible privations.

Leichardt at this point received despatches from Sydney, giving him the results of Mitchell's expedition to the Upper Barcoo district. In order, I suppose, to retrieve his position, he resolved to examine the country between the Surveyor-General's track and that taken by himself when on his Port Essington tour. Accordingly, on the 9th of August, 1847, accompanied by Mr. F. N. Isaacs, Mr. Bunce, Mr. Perry, and a native—the three last named having belonged to his former party—he started again from the Darling Downs. He made few discoveries of any note, but contrived to make a good many mistakes and miscalculations, as a comparison of his journals with subsequent discoveries clearly show. It is important to note, in view of the fate of his next expedition, that on this trip Leichardt records that, on the Horsetrack and Cogoon Rivers,

several trees were seen to be marked with the letter "L." *Regarding this, in connection with the subsequent mysterious disappearance of the explorer and his companions—to which I shall presently refer—Mr. Tenison Woods says:—"This should be borne in mind, when much stress is laid upon the 'L' marked trees found by Hely and Gregory on the Barcoo. They might all have been made by the same person, and if so, not by Leichardt; for here he draws attention to them; not by Kennedy's party, for it had not been there at the time; not by Mitchell's, at least for any reason one can see; for there was not a single man in his party whose surname or first christian name began with the letter L." The object of my drawing special attention to this will be seen later on.

Having returned to Sydney, the indomitable Leichardt almost immediately set about endeavouring to raise funds for another expedition. He had but a sorry tale to tell, and had caused great loss and disappointment to those who had formerly trusted in and supported him. But many a captain loses a valuable ship, and succeeds in getting charge of another. And so it was with the Doctor; for his zeal and energy induced people to give him another chance of carrying out what he calls in his last letter his "darling scheme," namely, traversing the Continent from east to west. It appears that his design this time was to commence his journey by following Mitchell's track as far as the basaltic table-land at the head of the Maranoa. A great deal of doubt exists as to his exact further intentions, and difference of opinion existed among his friends when a search was organised for the missing explorer and his ill-fated companions.

As might be expected, the available funds were by no means so large as for the first expedition; hence the party was smaller, and the equipments less adequate. Nevertheless, the explorer expected to be absent for two years. In commenting upon the matter, the Rev. W. B. Clarke writes as follows:—

"The parties who accompanied Leichardt were perhaps little capable of shifting for themselves, in case of any accident to their leader. The second in command—a brother-in-law of Leichardt—came from Germany to join him just before starting, and he told me, when I asked him what his qualifications for the journey were, that he had been at sea, had

* See Appendix.

suffered shipwrecks, and was therefore well able to endure hardship. I do not know what his other qualifications were."

It is certainly very remarkable that even the beginning of Leichardt's march to his unknown grave should thus, in its inception, be shrouded in mystery. The name of his brother-in-law seems to have been Classen, regarding whom many rumours were subsequently current at various times. A white man was supposed to be living among the natives, and he was supposed to be this ill-starred German volunteer, who was second in command to Leichardt.

So far as can be ascertained, the lost party consisted of eight persons, six white men and two natives. Leichardt, his relative, and the names of three other men have been handed down to us, the latter trio being Hentig, Stuart, and Kelly. They are said to have taken with them a much smaller supply of food, and a modest herd of cattle. Fifty bullocks, thirteen mules, twelve horses, with two hundred and seventy goats, are credited to them. Then their allowance of flour was surprisingly small, eight hundred pounds for two years! They also had, of tea one hundred and twenty pounds, with sugar and salt to match; their ammunition consisting of two hundred and fifty pounds of shot, and forty of powder.

For some inexplicable reason, even the date of the doomed band's departure does not appear to be recorded, and even Leichardt's intended route is not indicated in his last letter from McPherson's station on the Cagoon. This letter runs as follows:—

“MCPHERSON'S STATION, COGOON,

April 3rd, 1848.

“I take the last opportunity of giving you an account of my progress. In eleven days we travelled from Mr. Burden's station on the Condamine, to McPherson's on the Fitzroy Downs. Though the country was occasionally very difficult, yet everything went on well. My mules are in excellent order, and my companions in excellent spirits. Three of my cattle are footsore, but I shall kill one of them to-night to lay in our necessary stock of dried beef. The Fitzroy Downs, over which we travelled for about twenty-two miles from east to west, is indeed a splendid region, and Sir Thomas has not exaggerated their beauty in his account. The soil is pebbly and sound, richly grassed, and, to judge from the Myalls, of the most flattering quality. I came right on Mount Abundance, and passed over a gap in it with my whole train. My latitude

agreed well with Mitchell's. I fear that the absence of water on Fitzroy Downs will render this fine country to a great degree unavailable. I observe the thermometer daily at 6 a.m. and 8 p.m., which are the only convenient hours. I have tried the wet thermometer, but am afraid that my observations will be very deficient. I shall improve them, however, as time goes on. The only serious accident that has happened was the loss of a spade, but we are fortunate enough to make it up on this station. Though the days are still very hot, the beautiful clear nights are cool, and benumb the mosquitoes, which have ceased to trouble us. Myriads of flies are the only annoyance we have.

"Seeing how much I have been favoured in my present progress, I am full of hopes that our Almighty Protector will allow me to bring my darling scheme to a successful termination.

"Your most sincere friend,

"LUDWIG LEICHARDT."

As I have stated, everything connected with this darkly sad episode of Australian exploration is shrouded in impenetrable gloom.

The leader was certainly a scientific and learned man, but he seems to have lacked in the very rudiments of bushcraft. Still, that does not account for his total disappearance off the face of the earth, together with his companions, his horses, cattle, and especially his numerous goats. Nor even can portions of his implements, weapons, or so forth be found. Very probably, somewhere his journals lie buried, and may yet be discovered accidentally in the near or distant future. It is most unlikely that the party met their death at the hands of natives; for then, relics of some sort would have been assuredly forthcoming sooner or later. Mr. Ranken, in his *Dominion of Australia*, advocates the theory that they were swept away by a flood while camped on low ground, but—as Mr. Favenc very justly points out—on the subsidence of the waters, the blacks would certainly have discovered some of their remains and property. The last-named writer is of opinion that *thirst* was the agent of their destruction, and that *fire* caused their utter extinction, abolishing every trace of their existence. Having found themselves in the heart of a delusive and periodically waterless region, during a rainless season, and pushing on from dry creek to barren flat, occasionally coming on a pool of water, only to lose it and aggravate their misery, they struggled forward, growing weaker every step.

Mr. Favenc's language in support of his theory of fire, as opposed to flood—although, of course, only an imaginary picture—is so remarkably graphic, that I cannot resist quoting two paragraphs from that well-known writer and explorer.

“Since leaving the open country,” he says, “even the tireless kites had deserted them; all around was silent, still, and lifeless. It was useless to stop to rest, the ground was blistering to the touch, and there was no shade anywhere. Then came night, but no change; throughout the long watches the radiance of the stars was never blurred by clouds. Some of the men slept, and dreamt of streams of clear, cold water, awaking only to greet the dawn of another day of blinding, stifling heat, heralded by the faint, sultry sigh of the hot wind. And as the day grew hotter and hotter, some lost their reason, and all lost hope. Then came the end. They separated and struggled away in ones and twos, and fell and died. Day after day the terrible and pitiless sun looked down at them lying there, and watched them dry and shrivel into mummies, and still no rain fell on the earth.

“By day the sky was clear and bright, and by night the stars unclouded. Years may have passed, higher and higher grew the spinifex, and its long resinous needles entangled themselves in each other, unchecked by fire—for no black hunters came there in that season of drought—and the men's bodies lay there, growing more and more unlike humanity, scorched by the seven times heated earth beneath, and the glaring sun above; untouched save by the ants, those scavengers of the desert, or the tiny bright-eyed lizards. At last the thunder-clouds began to gather afar off, and when they broke, a few wandering natives ventured into the woods, living for a day or two on the uncertain rainfall. This failing, they retired again, leaving, perhaps, a trail of fire behind them. Then this fire, fed by the huge banks of inflammable spinifex, the growth of many years, spread into a mighty conflagration; the black smoke covering half the heavens. The hawks and crows fled before it, swooping down on the vermin that were forced to leave the shelter of log and bush. The great silence that had reigned so long was broken by the roar and crash and crackle of a sea of flames; and beneath this fiery blast every vestige of the lost explorers vanished for ever.”

It is a curious circumstance that an intimate friend of Leichardt's,

Lieutenant B. Lynd, should have written the following lines some three years before the probable date of the former's death. They are certainly strangely prophetic, for which reason I quote them. The verses are dated from Sydney Barracks, on July the 2nd, 1845, and it will be noted that Leichardt's letter was dated April, 1848. I cannot help thinking that, knowing his friend's rash character, Mr. Lynd felt certain that he would, one day or other, meet with his death in the desert.

LEICHARDT'S GRAVE.

Ye who prepare with pilgrim feet,
Your long and doubtful path to wend ;
If, whitening on the waste, ye meet
The relics of my murdered friend ;
His bones, with reverence, ye shall bear
To where some mossy streamlet flows,
There by its mossy bank prepare
The pillow of his long repose.

It shall be by a stream, whose tides
Are drunk by birds of every wing,
Where every lovelier flower abides
The earliest wakening touch of spring.
O, meet that he, who so caressed,
All-beauteous nature's various charms,
That he—her martyred son—should rest
Within his mother's fondest arms !

When ye have made his narrow bed,
And laid the good man's ashes there,
Ye shall kneel down around the dead,
And wait upon your Lord in prayer.
What though no reverend man be here ;
No anthem pour its solemn breath ;
No holy walls invest his bier,
With all the hallowed pomp of death !

Yet humble minds shall find the grace,
Devoutly bowed upon the sod,
To call that blessing round the place
Which consecrates the soil to God.
And ye, the wilderness, shall tell
How, faithful to the hopes of men,
The Mighty Power he served so well
Shall breathe upon the bones again.

When ye your gracious task have done,
Heap not the rock upon his dust ;
The angel of the Lord alone
Shall guard the ashes of the just.

The Exploration of Australia.

But ye shall heed with pious care,
The mem'ry of that spot to keep,
And note the marks that guide me where
My virtuous friend is laid to sleep.

For O, bethink, in other times
(And be those happier times at hand),
When science, like the smile of God,
Comes brightening o'er that weary land
How will her pilgrims hail the power,
Beneath the drooping Myall's gloom,
To sit at eve, and mourn an hour,
And pluck a leaf in Leichardt's tomb.

(Signed), B. LYND.

I now bid farewell to Ludwig Leichardt and his comrades, over whose melancholy fate the veil of well-nigh half a century has spread. The mystery which enshrouds their end gives them a unique place among the explorers of Australia, and will serve to keep their memory green in every heart which throbs with admiration for true bravery, and mourns for dire misfortune.





CHAPTER V.

The Fatal Expedition of Edmund B. Kennedy.

ANOTHER victim of Australian exploration now appears upon the scene. It will be remembered that Mr. Edmund B. Kennedy made an examination of the Barcoo River, soon after Sir Thomas Mitchell's report had been placed in the hands of the New South Wales authorities. Very shortly afterwards Mr. Kennedy was appointed leader of an expedition with the object of investigating the York Peninsula, it being thought that trade might be opened up between the Gulf of Carpentaria and the East Indies. The discovery of a suitable route from New South Wales to the north coast was a primary essential of the project. Up till 1848, Sydney had been practically the capital of the whole Australian Continent; although other capitals had meantime been created. Sydney felt the pressure of competition, and it occurred to the New South Welshmen that, with its favourable geographical position, an overland route to Indian trading ports would enable them to maintain their supremacy.

The track taken by Leichardt was a palpable failure for all practical purposes, but the possibility remained of an available route being discovered east of Carpentaria, by way of the long peninsula which terminates in Cape York. It was therefore planned that the explorers should reach Rockingham Bay by sea, and thus facilitate the success of the expedition. Accordingly, Mr. Kennedy and his party sailed from

Sydney, in the barque *Tam O'Shanter*, on the 29th of April, 1848. His comrades were Mr. W. Carron, botanist, Mr. T. Wall, naturalist, nine men, and an aboriginal called Jäckey Jackey, who bore an important part in the tragedy which followed. Their live stock consisted of twenty-eight horses, a hundred sheep, and four dogs. Their provisions were one ton of flour, ninety pounds of tea, and six hundred pounds of sugar. With the advantage of previous experience, how they ever expected to exist on such short commons, it is hard to conceive. However, they started, being escorted by H. M. S. *Rattlesnake*, with instructions that she should see them safely landed at Rockingham Bay, and then meet them at Port Albany, on the north-east side of the peninsula. They never reached Port Albany, as the sad tale of their fate will show.

Their sea voyage lasted three weeks, and they had great difficulty in effecting a landing. One horse was drowned in getting him ashore, and various other mishaps occurred. The only redeeming feature appeared to be the apparently amicable frame of mind in which they found the savages, who greeted their arrival with natural astonishment. On the 30th of May they encamped in lat. $17^{\circ} 58'$, long. 148° .

After some short excursions, in order to investigate the nature of the work before him, Kennedy soon became aware of the stupendous difficulties ahead. One of the most pronounced was the terrible shrub known as the lawyer vine (*Calamus Australis*), which, binding together the tea scrub with its strong thongs, made passage well nigh impossible. I quote from Mr. Tenison Woods, who thus describes it, and thus gives us some small idea of the tropical growth of Northern Queensland. Referring to the lawyer vine, he says:—

“It is a strong climbing palm. From the roots as many as ninety shoots will spring, and they lengthen out as they climb for hundreds of feet, never thicker than a man's finger. The long leaves are covered with sharp spines, but what makes the plant the terror of the explorer, are the tendrils which grow out alternately with the leaves. Many of these are twenty feet long, and they are covered with sharp spines curving slightly downwards, so as to support the branches in their rambling growth. The tendrils lay hold of the surrounding bushes, and the branches of the trees, covering the tops of even the tallest, and turning in all directions. It thus forms a thicket like a wall, which is difficult even to cut through.

Kennedy's party found it especially so. Each stem, as it was released by the axe, caught upon the clothes of the assailant by its recurved spines, and it was often hours ere he could rid himself completely from its tenacious embraces."

Another horrible plant is described as having broad leaves, seemingly a dreadful kind of nettle, which so distressed even their horses, that they became infuriated, and several finally died of fever. The record of their vain attempts is simply appalling. Unbroken succession of swamps, morasses, scrub and salt rivers met them on their path in all directions. By the 5th of June they had reached the Mackay River—salt, as usual—and fringed with mangroves. By this time Kennedy had seen the utter impossibility of taking a north-west route. Captain Stanley, commanding the *Rattlesnake*, had meantime sent a boat up the Mackay. They crossed without obstacle. It was of little use, however. Inland they proceeded to seek for water, and, strange to say, found the middle of the river salt, while at the sides it was comparatively fresh—caused, no doubt, by the drainage of the surrounding swamps. I pass over a thousand harrowing details. Some of the men were so ill by the 1st of July that they could neither move hand nor foot. At this juncture a new danger threatened them. Savages appeared, painted with red earth, and armed with spears. One weapon was thrown by the natives, and with great unwisdom Kennedy ordered his men to fire. Nothing could have been more injudicious, and it is hard to see how he could have given such a command with the records of his predecessors before him. One native was killed on the spot, and three others severely wounded. Contrast this action with that of Sturt, Mitchell or Grey. In all probability it led to the explorer's subsequent death.

I pass rapidly on, in case of wearying the reader with a repetition of constant struggles against the almost invincible powers of nature, as exhibited in the wilds of Australia. By the 18th of July, carts were left behind, sheep reduced to fifty, and they nevertheless pressed on with some twenty-five pack horses. Then, to completely consummate their misfortunes, the rains set in. Horses soon began to die off, and it appears that one of the party, Niblet, had extravagantly mismanaged the already meagre stores. Men now became prostrate with ague, and such horses as had not died had to be killed for food. The blacks became more and

more threatening, and it was soon evident to Kennedy that to reach Port Albany with his whole retinue was simply impossible. The last horse killed weighed only sixty-five pounds! "There's a picture for you!"

They, however, managed to reach the coast in lat. $14^{\circ} 30'$, long. $143^{\circ} 56'$. Here H.M.S. *Rambler* was to have met them in August, but it was now October. Rocks, scrubs, and the precipices of the Dividing Range had to be crossed. The ship was not there, and their position became more and more desperate. Water ran short to add to their sufferings, and at last Kennedy saw, to his consternation, that most of his party were doomed to perish. As a last hope, he formed a resolution to encamp at Weymouth Bay. Accordingly, leaving the majority of the men in charge of Mr. Carron, he advanced himself with three men and Jackey Jackey, the aboriginal, with the hope of reaching Cape York, from whence assistance might possibly be sent back by sea from Port Albany. He thought that his party might reach the spot in about a fortnight, and therefore gave Mr. Carron instructions to keep a lively look-out for the *Rattlesnake*.

On the 13th of November, 1848, the advance party started. What they endured on their journey we have no official account of, save such as is furnished by the native guide, Jackey Jackey. The leader, three men and the black boy, moved forward with seven horses. The aboriginal must now continue the story, which was dictated to Dr. Vallack on board the *Ariel*. It is a good specimen of native Australian composition, and it shows the marvellous instinct with which these poor denizens of the Australian Continent are endowed. This is Jackey Jackey's statement:—

"I started with Mr. Kennedy for Cape York. We went until we came to a river which empties itself into Weymouth Bay. A little further north we crossed the river. Mr. Kennedy and the rest of us went on a very high hill, and came to a flat which was on the other side, and we camped there. I went on a good way the next day. A horse fell down a creek. The flour we took with us lasted for three days. We had much trouble in getting the horse out of the creek. We went on, and came out, and camped on the side of the ridges. We had no water. Next morning came, and Luff was taken ill with a very bad knee, and we left him behind, and Dunn went back and brought him on. Luff was riding a horse named Fiddler. Then we went on and camped at a little creek. The flour being

out, this day we commenced eating the horseflesh which Carron gave us when we left Weymouth Bay. As we went on, we came to a small river. We gathered *noondahs*, and lived upon them and the meat. We stopped at a little creek, and it came on raining. Costigan then accidentally shot himself. In putting his saddle under the tarpaulin a string caught the trigger of his gun, and it went off. The ball went under the right arm and came out at the back under the shoulder. We went on this morning, all of us, and stopped at another creek in the evening.

“The next morning we killed a horse named Browney, smoked him that night, and went on the next day, taking as much as we could with us, and went on about a mile, and then turned back because Costigan was very bad and in much pain. We went back again because there was no water. Then Mr. Kennedy and I had dinner there, and went off in the afternoon, leaving Dunn, Costigan and Luff at the creeks. This was at Pudding Pan Hill, near Shelbourne Bay. We left some horse-meat with the men at Pudding Pan Hill, and carried some with us on a pack horse. Mr. Kennedy wanted to make great haste when he left the place, because he wanted the doctor to go down to the men that were ill. This was about three weeks* after leaving Weymouth Bay.

“One horse was left with the three men at Pudding Pan Hill, and we—Mr. Kennedy and myself—took with us three horses. The three men were to remain there until Kennedy and myself had gone round to Cape York, and returned for them. Mr. Kennedy told Luff and Dunn, when he had left them, if Costigan died, they were to come along the beach till they saw the ship and then to fire a gun. They stopped to take care of the man that was shot. We killed another horse for them before we went away.”

Here I pause to remark that a well-known authority on the subject of Australian exploration reminds us that Luff, the man here referred to, was with Kennedy on his Barcoo expedition, and may have marked the trees on the River Warrego with an “L,” erroneously ascribed to Leichardt. This is possible, although we are reminded by Mr. Tenison Woods that it can hardly be supposed that this man would have been allowed to mark two camps in succession with his own initial, and that his should be the *only* letter was most unlikely.

* Probably an error on the black boy's part, judging from the context; ten days is more probably the time.—Ed.

Still Luff *may* have thus perpetuated his memory. Who can tell? To continue the black boy's narrative:—

“Having left these three men, we camped that night where there was no water. Next morning Mr. Kennedy and me went on with the four horses, two pack horses and two saddle horses. One horse got bogged in a swamp. We tried to get him out all day, but could not. We left him there, and camped at another creek. The next day Mr. Kennedy and I went on again, and passed up a ridge, very scrubby, and had to turn back again, and went along gullies to get clear of the creek and scrub. Now it rained, and we camped. There were plenty of blacks here; but we did not see them, but plenty of fresh tracks, and camps and smoke. Next morning we went on and camped at another creek, and on the following morning we continued going on, and camped in the evening close to a scrub. It rained in the night. Next day we went on in the scrub, but could not get through. Then I changed horses, and rode on a black colt to spell the others, and rode on all day. In the afternoon we got on clear ground, and the horse fell down—me and the colt. The horse lay on my right hip. Mr. Kennedy got off his horse, and moved the horse from my thigh. We stopped there that night, and could not get the horse up. We left him there. We had some horse meat left to eat, and went on that day and crossed a little river, and camped.

“The next day we went a good way. Mr. Kennedy told me to go up a tree, and see a sandy hill somewhere. I went up a tree and saw a sandy hill a little way down from Port Albany. The next morning we went on, and Mr. Kennedy told me we should get round to Port Albany in a day.”

Here I must draw attention to Jackey Jackey's miscalculations regarding the horses. Intelligent as the aboriginals are in many respects, they cannot count. Still it is a marvel, and a most interesting and valuable circumstance, that we get from this untutored savage the only account of Kennedy's death. Had it not been for the wonderful endurance of this black boy, Kennedy's fate would probably have remained as dark a mystery as that of his unfortunate predecessor, Dr. Ludwig Leichardt.

I continue in the native's words:—

“We travelled on all that day till 12 o'clock noon, and then we saw Port Albany. Then he said: 'There is Port Albany, Jackey; a ship is there,' pointing to Albany Island. This was at the mouth of Escape

River. We stopped there a little time. All the meat was gone. I tried to get some fish, but could not. We went on in the afternoon about half a mile on the west side, and met a good lot of blacks, and we camped. The blacks all cried 'Powad! Powad!' and rubbed their bellies, and we thought they were friendly, and Mr. Kennedy gave them fishhooks all round. Everyone asked me if I had anything to give away, and I said 'No.' Then Mr. Kennedy said, 'Give them your knife, Jackey.' This fellow on board (who will be referred to hereafter), was the man I gave my knife to. I am sure of it. I know him well. The black that was shot in the canoe (also afterwards mentioned), was the most active in urging the others to spear Mr. Kennedy.

"I gave the man on board my knife. We went on this day, and I looked behind, and they were getting up their spears, and ran all round the camp which we had left. I told Mr. Kennedy that very likely those blacks would follow us, and he said, 'No, Jackey, those blacks are very friendly.' I said to him, 'I know those black fellows well; they too much speak;' and we went on for some two or three miles, and then camped.

"I and Mr. Kennedy watched them that night, taking it in turns every hour. By-and-bye I saw the black fellows. It was a moonlight night, and I walked up to Kennedy and said, 'There is a plenty of black fellows now.' This was in the middle of the night. Mr. Kennedy told me to get my gun ready.

"The blacks did not know where we slept, as we did not make a fire. We both sat up all night. After this day, light came, and I fetched the horses and saddled them. Then we went on a good way up to the river, and then we sat down a little while, and then we saw three blacks coming along our track, and then they saw us. One ran back as fast as he could run, and fetched up plenty more, like a flock of sheep almost. I told Mr. Kennedy to put the saddles on the horses and go on, and the blacks came up and followed us all day. All along it was raining, and I told him to leave the horses and come on without them, that the horses made too much track. Mr. Kennedy was too weak, and would not leave the horses. We went on this day until towards the evening, it raining hard, and the blacks followed us all day, some behind, some planted before; in fact, black fellows all round following us. Now we went into a little bit of scrub, and I told Mr. Kennedy to look behind

always. Sometimes he would do so, and sometimes he would not do so—to look out for the blacks. Then a good many black fellows came behind in the scrub, and threw plenty of spears, and hit Mr. Kennedy in the back first. Mr. Kennedy said to me, 'O, Jackey Jackey; shoot 'em, shoot 'em.' Then I pulled out my gun and fired, and hit one fellow all over the face with buckshot. He tumbled down, and got up again and again, and wheeled right round, and two blacks picked him up and carried him away. They went a little way, and came back again, throwing spears all round, more than they did before—very large spears.

"I pulled the spear at once from Mr. Kennedy's back, and cut the jag with Mr. Kennedy's knife. Then Mr. Kennedy got his gun, and snapped it, but the gun would not go off. The blacks sneaked all along by the trees, and speared Mr. Kennedy again, in the right leg above the knee a little, and I got speared in the eye, and the blacks were now throwing always, never giving over, and shortly again speared Mr. Kennedy in the right side. There were large jags to the spears, and I cut them out and put them in my pocket. At the same time we got speared, the horses got speared too, and jumped and bucked about, and got into the swamps. I now told Mr. Kennedy to sit down, while I looked after the saddle-bags, which I did, and when I came back again, I saw blacks along with Mr. Kennedy. I then asked if he saw the blacks near him. He was stupid with the spear wounds, and said, 'No.' I then asked him where was his watch? I saw the blacks taking away his watch and hat as I was returning to Mr. Kennedy. Then I carried Mr. Kennedy into the scrub. He said, 'Don't carry me a good way.' Then Mr. Kennedy looked this way, very bad (Jackey rolling his eyes). Then I said to him, 'Don't look far away,' as I thought he would be frightened. I asked him often, 'Are you well now?' and he said, 'I don't care for the spear wound in my leg, Jackey, but for the other two spear wounds in my side and back, and I am bad inside, Jackey.' I told him black-fellow always die when he got spear wound in there (the back). He said, 'I am out of wind, Jackey.' I asked him, 'Are you going to leave me?' And he said, 'Yes, my boy, I am going to leave you.' He said, 'I am very bad, Jackey; you take the books, Jackey, to the Captain, but not the big ones; the Governor will give you anything for them.' I then tied up the papers. He then said, 'Jackey, you give me paper and I will write.' I gave him paper and

pencil, and he tried to write; and he then fell back and died. I caught him as he fell back, and held him, and I then turned round myself and cried. I was crying a good while until I got well. That was about an hour, and then I buried him.

“I dugged up the ground with a tomahawk, and covered him over with logs and grass, and my shirt and trousers. That night I left him near dark. I would go through the scrub, and the blacks threw spears at me, a good many, and I went back again into the scrub. Then I went down into the creek, which runs into Escape River, and I walked along the water in the creek very easy, with my head only above water, to avoid the blacks, and get out of their way. In this way, I went half-a-mile. Then I got out of the creek, and got clear of them, and walked on all night nearly, and slept in the bush without a fire.

“I went on next morning, and felt very bad, and I spelled here for two days. I lived upon nothing but salt water. Next morning I went on, and camped one mile away from where I slept; and ate one of the *pandanus* fruits. Next morning, I went on and sat down. There I wanted to spell a little, and then go on; but when I tried to get up again I could not, but fell down again very cramped and tired, and I spelled two days.

“Then I went on again one mile, and got nothing to eat but one *nondah*, and I went on again that day and camped, and on again next morning about half-a-mile, and sat down where there was a little water, and remained all day. On the following morning I went a good way round a great mangrove swamp, and got a good way by sundown. The next morning I saw a very large track of black-fellows. I went clear of the track, and of swamp and sandy ground. I came on a very large river, and large lagoon, about ten miles from Port Albany. I now got into the ridges by sundown, and went up a tree and saw Albany Island. Then, next morning, I went on as hard as I could go, all the way down over fine clear ground, fine ironbark timber and plenty of good grass. I went on round the point, and went on, and followed a creek down till I went to the top of a hill and saw Cape York. I knew it was Cape York because the sand did not go on further. I sat down then a good while. I said to myself: ‘Then,’ I said, ‘this is Port Albany, I believe, indeed.’ I believe Mr. Kennedy told me that the ship was inside close up

to the mainland. I went on a little way, and saw the ship and boat. I met up here two black gins and a good many piccaninies. One said, 'Powad! Powad!' Then I asked her for eggs, and she gave me turtle's eggs, and I gave her a burning glass. She pointed to the ship, which I had seen before. I was very frightened of seeing the black men all along here, and I was on the rock *cooeeing*, and *murry, murry* glad when the boat came for me."

So ends Jackey Jackey's narrative. Simple, sad, and remarkably graphic. No power of pen could improve upon it, hence it is quoted *in extenso*. Faithfully having carried his master's saddle-bags for a long, long time, at last he had to leave them hidden in a log. With strange precision, this interesting specimen of the Australian aboriginal afterwards pointed out the very spot where the bags containing Kennedy's reports were secreted. There they were, but they were much damaged by the rains, and almost illegible. I hope they still are preserved in one of the Colonial Museums. At the present moment I have no clue, otherwise I should gladly give a reproduction of some of them in this volume.

To return: Jackey Jackey reached Port Albany about eight o'clock in the morning of December the 23rd, 1848. The *Ariel* lay at anchor waiting for the approach of the missing party. The commander, Captain Dobson, had given them all up for lost, and he was in doubt how to act, when the distracted, starving native guide was perceived making signals from the shore. A boat put off, and overcome by his feelings, the wretched man could scarcely explain the fate of his master and the other members of the expedition. He lay at the point of death for a considerable time, but at length recovered under skilful treatment. When he had told his tale it was decided to set sail for Pudding Pan Hill, and then go on to Weymouth Bay for the main body of the party.

Next day the *Ariel* threaded the Torres Straits, and coasted along the shore, watching for any possible sign of Costigan, Dunn or Luff. Strange to say, the mariners came upon a canoe with half a dozen or so natives on board. Jackey Jackey was on deck, and at once recognised them. The little craft stopped, and one of the crew had the temerity to step on board, actually having in his possession the very knife which Jackey Jackey had given him. This proved him to be one of the murderers. He was instantly seized, and his companions, paddling away, were

promptly followed. The stout arms of British sailors made the chase a short one, and soon the boat's crew of the *Ariel* drew up alongside the craft of the black boys. The latter showed that strange pluck peculiar to savage races, and the sailors were received with a shower of spears. One man was badly wounded, and, of course, a volley of musketry showed the aborigines what they had to expect in facing the arms of Great Britain. One savage fell dead, and the rest jumped overboard. The canoe was captured, and contained much of the unhappy Kennedy's property. The prisoner—that is, the possessor of the convicting knife—escaped, having managed to get free from his bonds during the night, and, plunging overboard, disappeared. Christmas Day now arrived, and Captain Dobson had done as yet but little towards either elucidating Kennedy's fate, or avenging his death. On the 26th of Dec., however, the *Ariel* anchored in Shelbourne Bay, close to where the locality of Pudding Pan Hill, as described by Jackey Jackey, existed. Shallow water prevented the ship coming within three miles of the shore. When anchored, however, four men started, under the guidance of the native, in search of Costigan and the others. But Jackey was out in his reckoning. They were too far to the north, and Captain Dobson had to signal them back, in the meantime abandoning the search. The only thing now was to sail for Weymouth Bay in the hope of rescuing the other men. It was the last day of the year 1848 when they anchored and made the *Ariel* secure. Jackey Jackey still led the search party, and soon they reached a tribe of aborigines, who raised the shout of "White men! white men!" pointing as they did so to an adjacent mountain. They went forward. At last the brave Jackey Jackey shouted, "I see a camp, I see a camp!" and sure enough they found a camp; but tenanted, alas! by two men instead of the eight who had been left behind by poor Kennedy. Mr. F. Carron, the naturalist, and Mr. Goddard were the survivors. Here are the words of the before-mentioned Dr. Vallack, of the *Ariel*. Jackey Jackey had called out, "See two white-fellows sit down and camp," and he thus continues: "On the other side of the hill, not two hundred yards from us, were two men sitting down and looking towards us, the tent and the fire being immediately behind them; and on coming up to them, two of the most pitiable creatures imaginable were before us. One had sufficient strength to get up; the other appeared to be like a man in the very worst stage of

consumption. Alas! alas! they were the only two left out of the eight, the remainder having died of starvation."

More dead than alive, the survivors were removed on board the *Ariel*. It seems that comrade after comrade had died of sheer starvation, while threatened on all sides by hostile blacks, who jeered at them in their awful predicament. As best they could, they hid the bodies of their companions as they succumbed one after another.

Just before the relief party arrived, the natives seemed determined to put the unfortunate men out of their excruciating misery. Goddard seems to have been the most physically strong. Carron had completely collapsed through weakness. Peculiar and unaccountable was the conduct of the savages—kind and cruel alternately—with strange capriciousness; and yet, dreadful to contemplate the fate of the white men if they chose to be the latter. I often have thought it a wise precaution for those explorers who venture among savage tribes, to provide themselves with some swift-killing poison, in case perchance they fall into such hands.

No words can tell the end of the drama better than those of Mr. Carron. They are distinctly descriptive of the awful position of himself and Mr. Goddard. Thus runs Mr. Carron's narrative, and describes the final episode of this most disastrous expedition:—

"About an hour after he was gone, I could see some natives running over the hill towards me. I fired a pistol immediately, but before Goddard could get back into the camp and hand me a piece of paper, much dirtied and torn, I was sure by the manner of the natives that there was a vessel in the Bay. It proved to be a note from Captain Dobson, but I could only read part of it, because it was so covered with dirt. I was for a minute almost senseless from the hope of being relieved from our miserable condition. I made them some presents, and wrote a note to Captain Dobson, and sent them away with it. I easily made them understand what I wanted, but I soon saw that they had other intentions. I saw a great number of natives coming in all directions, well armed.

"I saw two strange tribes: amongst them one man that I gave an old shirt to, and put it on him. I saw him take it off and pick up his spears. We were expecting every minute to be attacked by these treacherous villains, when to our great joy we saw Captain Dobson, Dr. Vallack, Jackey Jackey (the black boy), and another man, who had received a spear

wound in his arm—Barrett—so that he could offer no resistance to the blacks coming across the creek. These men had risked their own lives by coming about three miles through mangroves and thick scrub, surrounded by not less than a hundred natives well armed, with the hope of saving some of us from starving."

This is truly a sad record to put in type. To accentuate the agony of the wretched men, on the 1st of December they saw a vessel crossing the Bay. Hope rose in the hearts of the unfortunate explorers; but in spite of every effort to attract the attention of those on board, she passed on. Passed on! Could anything be more awful than the disappointment of our brave fellow-countrymen, who endeavoured by fires, rockets, and signals of various sorts to attract their attention? The subject is too painful to dwell upon.

When the New South Wales authorities learned the result of this most disastrous expedition, a brig named the *Freak* was ordered by the Government to find out, if possible, the fate of the three men as yet missing and unaccounted for. Likewise, of course, it was most important that Mr. Kennedy's papers should be recovered. I have already mentioned the result of the search for the documents.

Jackey Jackey was an important passenger on the *Freak*. He alone knew the site of Kennedy's death. He led them to the spot; but alas! the rude grave had been disturbed and the body had disappeared. No one knows what happened to the three men who were left at Shelbourne Bay.

To sum up in a few words: it was a badly organised expedition. Provisions were somewhat scanty, and probably Kennedy erred in tactics when he rashly fired on the natives. He had his full measure of hard luck. To penetrate these tropical jungles is no easy task, and it is not for any historian to venture on a judgment regarding his actions. With admiration for his courage, enterprise and endurance, and sorrow for his fate, we sadly take leave of Mr. Kennedy, and pass on to another chapter.



CHAPTER VI.

Surveyor-General Roe, Augustus Charles Gregory, and Captain Charles Fitzgerald.



OUR story returns to the enterprising colonists of Western Australia. Undismayed by their inhospitable surroundings—for as yet it was clear that a chain of desert country embraced their fertile territory—still the Swan River pioneers persevered. It was by no means an encouraging task. To the northward of Perth had been fairly well explored, and to the south the country had been to a certain extent examined. Eyre was, however, the sole explorer who had penetrated by land to the eastward of King George's Sound. His experiences have been already recorded.

It was therefore determined to further prosecute the search, and the command of the expedition was entrusted to Captain John Septimus Roe, R.N., then Surveyor-General of Western Australia. He was born in 1879, and, having joined the Royal Navy, had been the companion of Captain Phillip King in his survey of the north and north-western coasts of the Continent in 1818. He had also accompanied the same commander in his fourth expedition of 1821. He was likewise one of those present at the original settlement of Swan River, having been with Governor Stirling on board the *Parmelia* with his pioneer party. A man of ripe experience in the field of exploration, he was very naturally selected

as chief of this expedition. On the 14th of September, 1848, the Surveyor set out, having with him six men and twelve horses, with about three months' provisions. Their direction was eastward and southward, and the intention was to travel by the Russell Range *via* Cape Riche. Soon, however, their progress was checked by sand plains and thickets of *Eucalyptus*; so they had to make for the south coast, where they rested for a while. Having met some natives, they had been shown several springs of water, and afterwards passed through some salt lagoons, in the neighbourhood of the Avon River. The country was certainly wretched in the extreme, therefore they had again to alter their course. In lat. 33° 16' they came upon another chain of salt lagoons. At last they reached a country plentifully provided with water and grass, and eventually reached a small settlement, where, as has already been stated, they endeavoured to restore to vigour their exhausted frames and almost starving horses.

They entered upon the second stage of their journey on the 18th of October, and began to follow up the course of the Pallinup River, which had been previously crossed by Mr. Eyre during his expedition across the Great Australian Bight. Fertile valleys and well grassed country rewarded the explorers for a time. They were on the look-out for coal, but could not find any; still grass for the horses was plentiful, and so they pushed on. By the 23rd they reached a branch of the Avon, flowing to the north-east, which they ascended in due course; but a few miles brought them again into a wretched barren territory. Aridity and fertility alternated in a marvellous manner in Western Australia, showing the strong necessity for the full and adequate exploration of her vast area.

Heavy rains soon added to the discomforts of the travellers, and wild tempestuous storms of thunder and lightning assailed them. Still proceeding to the north-west, and having had little else but coarse rushes for their horses' food, they suddenly came upon an oasis in the desert. This was fairly well grassed, but very small in extent; so that in twenty-four hours no herbage was left. Again they had, therefore, to move forward. Having gained the summit of a hill, they saw before them sandy undulating plains, only varied by belts of thick scrub. It was indeed a dismal prospect, and there is little use in wearying the reader with a monotonous account of each day's weary march. By the 2nd

of November they had reached a spot which was waterless and grassless. Therefore they had to halt to rest their tired and thirsty animals. They had now reached some hills, and gazed on the view before them. In the distance could be seen the sun, glaring on what were evidently miserable salt lakes; so, having named the hills the Bremer Range, they again moved forward, and next day they came upon sufficient water for their immediate needs. Still there was no grass. Accordingly, the Surveyor changed his course, making for a granite range some thirty miles to the south-east. Before they could reach the place, however, the horses gave in, and their position became one of grave peril. It appeared as if another day would decide their fate. But, pressing forward, next morning, on the north side of the range, which they named Fitzgerald Peaks, they fortunately discovered both water and grass. Having encamped for some days to rest and revive, they again started forth on the 9th of November. Soon they became entangled among salt morasses and dense scrubs, each day their position becoming more desperate.

By the time the party had reached Mount Ridley they were terribly exhausted, and the horses had been three days and nights without water. For their own needs they found a scanty supply of rain and dew in pannikens, which barely kept them alive. There was but little grass in the neighbourhood of the huge granite mass which composed the mountain, and that meagre supply was of wretched quality. Nothing but salt lakes and dreary stretches of scrub now surrounded them—a gloomy and dismal prospect! On the 15th of the month, one of the horses completely collapsed; therefore, the leader determined to push on with a portion of the party, leaving Mr. Ridley and Mr. H. Gregory behind. They accordingly turned their weary steps towards a granite hill in the distance, guided by a star. At length a moderate supply of grass and water was found, and those left behind rejoined the advance party. The horse, however, broke down within a quarter of a mile from grass. Fifty miles now separated them from the Russell Range, and the intervening country was a sterile desert. Dense thickets of scrub had to be traversed with the utmost difficulty, and, although a little water was obtained by digging, the horses had to put up with a feed of coarse rushes. A native camp, which had been abandoned, was then reached, and somewhat raised the spirits of the party. Surely, they thought, the presence of

the blacks was an indication of better country in the neighbourhood. By the 19th grass and water had disappeared, and the animals had to nibble the bark off the trees in order to satisfy their cravings. Next day, however, an oasis again appeared, and somewhat refreshed the party. Still, twenty awful miles of scrub lay between them and the Russell Range. It was now, indeed, a time of terrible anxiety for the leader, who had but little hope of keeping the horses alive. Delay, however, was not to be thought of, their only hope being to push on with all possible speed. Many deviations were necessary to avoid dense masses of impenetrable scrub. Before they had traversed ten miles of their journey, four of the horses gave in. They had to be unloaded, and then with great difficulty reached a hill, which was, to their intense disappointment, utterly destitute of either water or feed. Four miles off the Range loomed up before them, an apparently barren mass of naked rock, rising six hundred feet above the plain. But with that strange eccentricity which distinguishes the Australian interior, they suddenly came upon rich patches of grass, with an adequate supply of water.

This range lies in lat. $33^{\circ} 27'$, and consists of narrow gneiss ridges interspersed with fissures and quartz veins. For four days the explorers encamped and surveyed their surroundings, which were most discouraging. Dusky scrub covered the landscape in all directions, except to the southward, where the sea could be observed in the distance. An utterly hopeless territory it appeared, and the Surveyor-General saw to his dismay, that Russell Range was another impracticable district. With the view, however, of discovering some river debouching upon the southern shore of the Continent, the leader took a south-west course, in order, if possible, to reach Cape Riche. Their route soon became more favourable, grass and water being usually procurable.

Esperance Bay was at last reached, and afterwards the Surveyor took up a track somewhat very much akin to that of Mr. E. J. Eyre. Between the Bay and Recherche Archipelago many salt lakes and brackish streams were met with. Near the estuaries of the latter, red sandstone and various symptoms of coal formation were observed, but no actual coal shales as yet could be found. Indications of their existence, however, were specially noticeable at the mouths of the Lore, Gort, Young and Stokes' Inlet rivers. Mr. Roe now took a direct western course in order

to avoid the indentations of the coast, to make his journey shorter, and steered his course for Cape Barren, where he expected to find a considerable stream. His hopes were fortunately realised, and on the 20th of December the travellers reached the river, where they encamped amid fertile grassy slopes, covered, however, with acacia and other shrubs. The stream was named the Phillips. This stream was carefully examined for coal. Coal-shale alone rewarded the explorers' efforts, and therefore Roe determined to push further westward, where he had reason to believe genuine coal beds would be found. By the 26th, they reached another river, the Fitzgerald, nearly a mile wide, and flowing southward. The scenery was extremely picturesque, owing to the presence of high sandstone cliffs, but the travelling became awkward by reason of the dense scrub thickets. Here, nevertheless, genuine coal was found, one flat bed being eighty yards long, and six feet wide. It appears from Mr. Roe's description in his journal to have been brown coal, having the appearance of carbonized wood containing considerable bitumen.

This was indeed an important discovery, well repaying the intrepid explorer for his vigorous efforts and enthusiastic enterprise. The river was, therefore, explored to its mouth, and found to terminate in an estuary some four hundred yards wide; separated, however, from the ocean billows by a dry bar of fine white sand. From the absence of marine specimens, shells and so forth, it was concluded that the river was permanently divided from the sea. It was also found to be only navigable, even for boats, to a distance of some seven miles. After passing over a long flat of kangaroo grass, the explorers reached another stretch of rocky, scrubby country; but eventually emerged upon open gravelly plains, covered with grassy verdure. They were now on a table-land some few miles from the ocean beach, and as Mr. Roe passed several rivers, a special trip was made in the search for coal shales. It does not appear, however, that he made any further discovery of the precious fuel, which was destined to add in a large degree in future times to the prosperity of the Colony. Crossing a dismal sandy desert in his return from the sea shore, the Surveyor tells us he came suddenly upon the bleached skeleton of a man, lying on a limestone slab, at some distance from the beach. His native guide informed him that it was the remains of a seaman who had left a whaler in this locality a year and-a-half previously. It seems that the

vessel was anchored near Middle Island, and three of the crew deserted, in the hope of reaching Albany, which was distant more than three hundred miles. Two of the men died of thirst on the journey. The skeleton represented one of the unfortunate pair. The third, I believe, managed to reach a settlement near Cape Riche.

No further discovery of importance marked the progress of the Surveyor. As Mr. Tenison Woods observes, many years before gold was discovered, and the real wealth of Western Australia revealed: "It is to be regretted that the more the Colony became known, the worse its reputation became." The 2nd February, 1849, found the Surveyor-General at Perth. He had travelled over some eighteen hundred miles of country, and added considerably to the somewhat meagre knowledge of the Colony many valuable geographical, geological, botanical, and other important facts. Moreover, he had found coal seams, and a splendid timber forest, both of which amply repaid his strenuous exertions, besides revealing the general resources of the Colony.

* * * * *

Augustus Charles Gregory.

While Mr. Roe was thus exploring to the westward, another expedition was fitted out by the people of Western Australia—determined as they have ever been, in spite of all disadvantages—to develop the resources of their vast territory. The chief object of this project was to discover a practicable district in the neighbourhood of the Gascoyne River. It will be remembered that Sir George Grey had reported favourably of this district after his expedition in 1839, as has been already recorded in the first volume of my book. The command of the expedition was entrusted to a distinguished member of a family of explorers, afterwards known as the Hon. Augustus Charles Gregory, C.M.G., M.L.C., J.P. He was the son of the late J. Gregory—a lieutenant in the 78th Highlanders—and was born at Nottingham in 1819. It would appear that he arrived in Australia some ten years subsequently, where he received his chief education. He entered the Civil Service of the Colony in 1841; and from 1846 till 1859 made many valuable discoveries.

Sir George Grey's report, having been contradicted by Captain Stokes, the point remained to be determined. In accordance, therefore, with the

public desire, an expedition was planned and equipped. Mr. Gregory was instructed to proceed to the Gascoyne, and then to search for a river debouching into Shark's Bay, the existence of which was suggested in Grey's journal, but which seems not to have been named at the time. Pasture land was really the main object to be held in view, on which, largely, the ultimate prosperity of any country or colony depends. Six men, twelve horses, and three months' provisions were to compose, carry, and feed the party—a much similar equipment as that with which Surveyor-General Roe set forth.

The furthest outlying settlement at that period lay some eighty miles from the capital. Accordingly, the explorers took a north-west route, over the plains between the Moore and Arrowsmith Rivers. They started on the 9th of September, 1848; and, fortunately, the end of the rainy season provided water and forage for the horses. By the 15th of the same month, they had reached that part of the river where coal had already been discovered. Hard red sandstone was found to compose the upper stratum, and this rested on a softer rock, beneath which the coal shales lay. The river, however, divided, and Gregory resolved to take a due north route. Till the 21st they kept on this course, but, again water failed, and scrub obstructed them; so that they had to strike out to the north-west. Here dense masses of impenetrable acacia and cypress met them, and they turned their faces due west, in the hope of reaching the watersheds of some coast streams. They had already suffered considerably; but, through finding a native well, they contrived to reach the Murchison River, which, as it happens, had ceased to flow. Some pools, however, existed, and the leader again essayed a northern course. But again scrub and desert turned him back, and he had to take a western course. Again he was baffled, and forthwith he struck out to the northward. In spite of all exertions, progress soon was obstructed; for the scrub was simply impassable. An impregnable rampart now seemed to stand between the explorer and the southern limit of Shark's Bay. By almost superhuman exertions, and after losing many of his animals, Mr. Gregory reached lat. 27°; and then there was no alternative but to return to the bed of the Murchison.

Having formed a depôt, he now resolved to explore the river to its estuary, and, taking one man with him, he first determined to investigate

its source. Natives were met, and addressed in the York language.* They apparently could understand nothing, and gave no information. Cypress and acacia guarded the plains, and gum trees lined the valley. Mr. Gregory, therefore, rejoined the main body, and up to this time the discovery of a galena lode was practically the only valuable result. To investigate the coast country on their return journey was now the best course which appeared open to him. Grey had already given his report of the district surrounded by Moresby Range and Mount Fairfax. This favourable opinion had, as already stated, been contradicted by Stokes. Accordingly, the leader turned his attention towards these territories. He reversed the opinion of Stokes—with the same ignorance which distinguished Grey—stating that a quarter of a million of pastoral land was available near Champion Bay, and about 100,000 acres of fine country was on the banks of the Arrowsmith. Stokes, however, went in comfort by sea; whereas the other two explorers made their weary journey by land. This may, in a great measure, account for this apparent discrepancy.

In about two months and-a-half Gregory had fulfilled his commission, and he returned to Perth on the 17th of November of the year he set out. He had travelled about fifteen hundred miles, had encountered great difficulties, and his expedition may be said to have been crowned with considerable success. Certainly he had not reached the distant point which he aimed at; but his name must be duly recognised among the list of those devoted men who gave time, energy, valour and talent to the elucidation of the obscure mysteries of the Great Island Continent, and especially to that large proportion of its surface which is now known far and wide as Westralia the Golden. For his brilliant services he was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society, and—as will be seen later on—he conducted other expeditions with conspicuous success. It cannot for a moment be denied that in his expedition to the Gascoyne River he showed his splendid powers as an explorer, which within a few years were fully recognised.

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* See Mr. Calvert's book on the *Aborigines of Western Australia*.

Captain Charles Fitzgerald.

Public attention was now strongly drawn to the mineral discoveries on the Murchison River. At this time Captain Charles Fitzgerald, to whom was assigned the somewhat unpleasant duty of receiving the first batch of convicts in 1848, was Governor of the Colony. Six years previously, I may state, a similar experiment had been tried with juvenile immigrants from the Parkhurst Penitentiary, and the Colonists were thus induced to apply to the Home Government for convicts. Captain Charles Fitzgerald, R.N., C.B., entered the Royal Navy in 1809, and was distinguished for his courage, enterprise and ability. It was the discovery of a galena lode by Mr. Gregory, on the Murchison, which determined Captain Fitzgerald to go and see for himself the galena lode which the explorer had found. Accordingly, the Governor, with that practical spirit which ever distinguished his actions, made up his mind to personally test the value of the discovery. With this view he sailed from Fremantle on the 3rd of December, 1849. He was accompanied by Mr. A. C. Gregory, Mr. Bland, and three soldiers of the 96th Regiment. They reached the lead vein on the 6th of the same month, and traced it for over three hundred yards along the dry river bed. We learn from the records of the period that it appeared to be one solid mass of lead in combination with sulphur, the northern end losing itself in schistose rock. Copper was likewise discovered on this occasion, although its presence was merely indicated. Garnets of good colour, but by no means flawless, were also found.

On the 9th of December the Governor, having satisfied himself as to the existence of the minerals, resolved to return to Champion Bay. A few natives were seen, who were afterwards joined to others until they reached about half-a-hundred in number. Fitzgerald's party, although followed by them, and seeing that they had armed themselves with spears, paid little attention. This was an undoubted mistake, for their manner should have indicated to these experienced explorers their evident intention. In the midst of thick acacia scrub the blacks eventually surrounded them. Spears and stones were at first thrown; then Bland and Gregory were threatened with blows of clubs and boomerangs. At last; but too late, Fitzgerald fired, and instantly killed one of the blacks. The savages returned the compliment with a shower of spears, and the Governor's leg was pierced just above the knee, an awkward accident at such a

distance from home.* By the judicious use of powder and shot the explorers managed to keep their assailants off, Fitzgerald manfully and skilfully commanding his party. Still, for many miles they were closely followed, and ran a narrow risk of total annihilation.

Their schooner lay off Champion Bay, and a boat was near the shore. Even then, the blacks seem to have been determined to avenge the death of such of their number as had been killed by the occasional shots fired by the exploring party. It appears that they hid themselves among the bushes, while one man unarmed approached the sailors, trying to induce them to again come ashore. They showed their good sense in not doing so, and waiting till the shadows of night concealed their actions they pulled off for the ship. By morning's dawn the explorers weighed anchor and sailed for the Swan River. Captain Fitzgerald's wound healed up very rapidly, and he had the great satisfaction of knowing that he was one of the first to start a flourishing mine on the Murchison River. This was the second Governor of Western Australia who suffered bodily harm at the hands of the aborigines, the first being Captain Arthur Phillip, who was speared many years before.

* What a contrast from Oxley, Sturt, or Mitchell! Bad work!—Ed.





CHAPTER VII.

*Privately Conducted Expedition of Messrs. Oakden and Hulkes;
together with Mr. Hovenden Hely's Search Party, in order
to determine Leichardt's Fate.*



THE frightful experiences of so many gallant explorers cast a temporary gloom over the spirits of the Australian Colonists. Even the bravest are apt to be daunted in the presence of what seem to be the unconquerable obstacles of Nature. New South Wales completely retired from the field, and South Australia was perplexed and disheartened. Kennedy's fate, as recorded in a former chapter, seemed to cast a blight over the whole Continent. In Western Australia, men began to believe that their Colony was surrounded on the north by the terrible horseshoe of Lake Torrens, and that nothing beyond seemed to be better than a dangerous, inhospitable desert.

But, as time went on, courage and enterprise revived; and in 1851 Messrs. Oakden and Hulkes determined to try again. They were of opinion that if Captain Sturt had travelled by the western shore of the lake he would have made his way into more eligible territory. Accordingly, an expedition was again undertaken, under the direction of the above-named gentlemen. It would appear that they defrayed all expenses themselves, hence we have no official account of their exact route, nor any precise record of their discoveries. They appear, however,

to have made their way by the western shore of the lake. We have certain facts, however, derived from the circumstance that, being in search of a sheep run, they made application to the Commissioner of Crown Lands for a pastoral license. From this we learn that, having made their way for a considerable distance to the North-West, they discovered a very deep, fresh lake, about two miles across. The aboriginals, it seems, gave the explorers an account of many other lakes of similar character—the water also being fresh. The territory was called *Kokatta* in the native language, and the lake visited was known as *Karndan Yumbo*. Alligators and buffaloes were also spoken of; but not, so far as we can ascertain, actually seen. Driven to retreat by the usual lack of water, the pioneers urged their tired animals back, intending soon to return to the sheep-run. But the eastern goldfields having been meantime discovered, the companions were attracted elsewhere, so that the run was abandoned for several years.

A well-known writer, commenting on this journey, remarks:—"I fear we must consider the above discoveries as of very trifling importance. The stories of the blacks cannot be much relied on at any time; but, even if true, we must suppose them to have referred to the immense *salt* lakes, which abound in this district. The territory has been examined very carefully by many explorers since then, and no very favourable opinion arrived at. There is fresh water on the ground at certain times, just as there is upon the table-lands of Western Australia; but it only remains for a month or so after the rainy season, and becomes salt as it evaporates. There are, however, some watercourses with fine, fresh pools in them; but they are, like the grassy plains, few and far between. Here and there, patches of good grass and better soil may be found, but the general character of the district is sandy, and unable to support any vegetation which would entitle it to be considered a fertile district."

Having made several examinations of the North-West district myself, I am disposed to coincide in a large measure with the above views. At the same time, it may be noted that the words quoted were written many years before gold was discovered in Western Australia, and this important fact gives a very different value to the North-West territory, which is, to my certain knowledge, extremely rich in gold reefs. I merely refer to the above expedition in order to illustrate how large a part private enterprise

bore in the opening up and reporting on the vast, mysterious Australian Continent. Going on at the present rate of increase, it is estimated that in a hundred years from now, Australia will contain about fifty millions of inhabitants, and it is only when her enormous area is so peopled that the full extent of her resources will be adequately known.

A fruitless search for the ill-fated Dr. Ludwig Leichardt next comes under notice. Grave doubts were entertained for his safety, and an expedition was fitted out at Sydney in order, if possible, to ascertain the real facts of the case. The party were placed under the command of Mr. Hovenden Hely, who had accompanied Leichardt during his second expedition, and might therefore be supposed to have some knowledge of the doctor's unfortunate methods.

It will be recollected that the lost explorer was last known to be at Mount Abundance, near the Cogoon River; but after April, 1848, his movements were shrouded in mystery. Various theories were held, some contending he would attempt to carry out his intention of crossing Australia from east to west by Peak Downs, where he had buried some provisions on his second expedition; while others imagined that he would go by Carpentaria. A third party felt convinced that he would travel up the Barcoo River, and from there, start on his westward route. The latter idea was received with greatest favour by those who knew Leichardt best. Moreover, he had been seen by sheep and cattle drovers making in a westward direction. Many reports had reached the capital, leading to the fear that he and his party had fallen victims to the blacks; and accordingly the Government decided on an expedition as above stated. Mr. Hely left Sydney about January, 1852, accompanied by six men, with supplies for twelve months, and with instructions to act according to the best of his judgment. Towards the end of February, the travellers reached Brisbane, and started by Mitchell's route along the banks of the Alice; but, finding no traces in that direction, he altered his plans. This was by reason of some information received from those most unreliable of informants—the aborigines. He heard the news which caused him to alter his original intentions some forty miles from Mount Abundance. The story of the natives told was that Leichardt and his party had been massacred on a creek some two hundred miles distant. They offered to guide him to the exact spot, and he accepted their

services. They talked of bones and ironwork lying there, and told quite a plausible tale. Believing their account of the affair, the explorer at once started, with ten weeks' provisions, and two black guides. The weather turned very dry; and, with some difficulty, the latter were persuaded to push on, although they alleged that they would encounter hostile natives who would kill them. This was within forty miles of the depôt on the Maranoa, where Mitchell had encamped for four months. The sheet of water which the last-named explorer had described in his journal had entirely disappeared, and only a brackish pool remained.

To Hely's consternation and disgust, only some sheep bones and old canisters marked the locality where Mitchell had been. So much for placing reliance on native reports! Still, the blacks stuck to their original (or rather, *aboriginal*) story; and insisted that the party had all been murdered at this place. They further stated that only one of the natives had lost his life, and that some of the beasts would be found in the neighbourhood. They were a good deal wrong in their dates, however, and Hely was fully convinced that they were either lying or mistaken; especially when one of the guides disappeared during the night. Every portion of the river was, however, carefully examined; but nothing could be found in confirmation. After five days of useless investigation, the black who had remained, changed his version of the story, stating that if he pointed out the real spot he would be killed; but Hely persuaded him to show them the *real* place; and so they proceeded on another wild goose chase.

Having struck to the north-west, towards the Warrego River, other natives were met who confirmed the second tale; and one old *gin* offered to guide Hely to the place. She declared it was distant seven days' journey, and that they would find a plentiful supply of water on the road. Saddles, guns, and bones were said to mark the spot. As usual, the story was totally untrue. Arid desert marked their route to the Warrego, which was perfectly dry. Further on, two other veracious *lubras* were met with, who offered their services. They declared the place four days' journey off, and promised to meet Hely next morning. They broke their appointment however, and being with difficulty found, one of them said that by a short cut the fatal spot could be reached by the evening. Having

brought them to a well among the brigalow scrub, she announced that here was the scene of the tragedy. But what had become of the saddles and guns? They were absent. She, like the rest of her mendacious sex, was equal to the occasion. A flood, she said, had carried them all away. She likewise gave a circumstantial account of the massacre, having—as she alleged—been present on the occasion. A large body of aboriginals, she averred, had tracked the explorers for a few days, and, having surrounded them, speared them while sleeping. Only one of the whites awoke, who managed to shoot a native. The animals were stolen, and the natives became possessed of axes, pots, pans, and other odds and ends. These latter articles were, however, nowhere to be found. It was evidently another aboriginal fraud of the most glaring kind.

Ten miles further down the river, however, an undoubted camp was discovered. A tree was seen with an "L" cut into the bark, and also the letters "X V A."* Tent poles also proved that the travellers had remained here, and from other appearances, it would seem as if they had reached the place in wet weather. Mr. Hely found here some more black gins, who were naturally ready with their tongues. He was well supplied with the female native article, their number now amounting to the mystic nine. On the 29th of June, one of these ladies guided him to a native camp, where he was told that Leichardt's murder took place at a distance of three days' journey. The obliging blacks allowed all the women to accompany the search party, and, taking a west-north-west course, they met with a creek in lat. 25° 30', long. 146° 45'. It was a very fine country; but still there were no signs of the lost explorer. The women now informed the deceived and baffled Hely that he had a matter of eight days' journey before him, ere he could reach the tragic spot. It was evident, from their remarks, that they feared to show the real place, even if they knew it, which is very doubtful. Next day they left the camp, and Hely was obliged to return, abandoning all hope of successfully fulfilling his mission.

He was now on the Nivelles River, where another camp was discovered. The same letter "L," with the inexplicable letters "X V A" were visible.† What these latter mean, it is indeed hard to say, but the same writer considers they could not refer to any date,

* Query 15th April?

† With regard to these letters see Appendix.

having appeared in *both* camps. On the 22nd of July, 1852, the party reached the confines of civilisation.

It is, indeed, bewildering to understand the strange mendacity of the natives in this as in the other cases. Some points seem to have the semblance of truth, for Hely certainly found among them three tomahawks, which appeared to have been roughly fashioned by doubling and hammering together the gullet-plates of saddle-trees. Other explorers discovered certain facts, but nothing of a real, satisfactory nature. Leichardt's fate may yet be made clear; but so many years have now elapsed that it will probably remain a mystery until the sea gives up her dead.





CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Robert Austin's Expedition in Search of Gold.



A GAIN we return to Western Australia, the most obscure, and yet the most indefatigable of all the Colonies. Gold had been discovered in the Eastern Colonies; and it was not to be supposed that when such rich prizes were offered on the fields of Ballarat, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander, that much attention would be paid to the arid deserts of the interior. Still, Western Australia, being far removed from the sphere of that gold fever which seemed to magnetise not only the sister Colonies, but nearly all the civilised world, in a great measure held aloof. Ships from afar brought all sorts and conditions of men to Victoria, bent on the one aim—the dream of gold.

Still, Western Australia, though far away from that great confluence of gold-seekers, might reasonably be excused if she decided to find out, if possible, whether her own vast area gave equal golden promise. Accordingly, the West Australian Government resolved on another expedition.

Mr. Robert Austin, then Assistant Surveyor-General, was appointed to command the party, which consisted of ten men in all, one being a native guide. They had with them twenty-seven horses, and four months' provisions. Their chief object was to search for auriferous deposits, and the course to be taken was to the north-west of the already occupied territory. If no gold was found, then their instructions were to

seek for good land in the neighbourhood of the Gascoyne. They were also to look for the lake called *Cowcowing* by the natives. A vessel was to meet the party at the mouth of the Gascoyne River (Shark's Bay).

The rendezvous was at Mombekine, fourteen miles from Northam; and having left this place on the 10th July, crossed Short Lake, and travelled over a belt of sandstone conglomerate, the explorers made their first camp in lat. $31^{\circ} 11'$. Having ascertained from two men, who had been sent with forty days' provisions towards the north, that the country in that direction was of a miserable description, Austin proceeded eastward. Having travelled over thickly-wooded country, some thousand feet above sea level, and having camped beside a spring *en route*, they reached Lake Cowcowing on the 16th of the month. It was dry, its bed being covered with salt incrustation, yellow and saline, covered with samphire and quantities of small shells. Feed and water were not at first to be found, although wells were sunk and a careful search made. At length some grass was found several miles to the N.E., and on the 18th another camp was formed.

On the 20th, the leader, with two men, now left the camp to examine the country round the lake, which consisted of three long arms, stretching N.E., N.W., and S.W. Through thickets of scrub, gum and acacia; over sandhills and granite rocks, they with the utmost difficulty pushed their way, till they came upon another salt lake, passing over an indescribably horrible country. Then a gum forest, and more small salt lakes succeeded, until at length their courage and perseverance was, in some slight degree rewarded, by reaching a small patch of grassy country through which a small river flowed.

The main body now moved on to the higher ranges, and a record of their daily journeys here would be very monotonous reading. Having encamped on the 4th of August in lat. $29^{\circ} 53'$, long. 118° , they arrived at Gregory's spring of 1846. Moving on again on the 6th, and passing through endless scrub thickets, they found feed and water on a hill which they named Mount Kenneth, after one of the party—Mr. Kenneth Brown. It stood about fourteen hundred feet above sea level; and passing on to the eastward, they found watercourses flowing over bare granite and gneiss, composed of green and white ribbons of hornblende and quartz, twisted, curved, and seamed by quartz veins. After a short stay, in order

to recruit men and horses, the party again moved northward, passing over a succession of salt marsh and scrub.

It was, indeed, a wretched country, and their troubles were terribly aggravated by their horses having reached a patch of poison plant,* upon which the starving creatures grazed; and next day they nearly all suffered severely from the effects. They would fall down, kicking violently, and soon their heads and bellies would become swollen to an enormous size. This plant is supposed to have been a small species of the *Gompholobium*. Their position was now, indeed, a perilous one, as their lives largely depended upon those of the unfortunate animals. Several of those most severely affected were moved to safer quarters, while Austin pushed on with sixteen horses and ten days' provisions. Having halted, it was evident they had again reached a poison patch. Four horses immediately showed the fatal symptoms, and were unfit to move. Rain fell that night, so that they were, for the time being, supplied with water.

Pushing forward as rapidly as possible, they came upon a patch of healthy, coarse grass, with a good supply of water, which was indeed a fortunate circumstance, considering the state of the animals. The place was called, in consequence, Recruit Flats, and the leader determined to bring up the whole of the party to this locality.

On reaching the depôt, he found that seven of the horses had died, and five were in a dangerous state. There was now no alternative but to abandon all but the most necessary stores, and move towards Shark's Bay. Better feed had been found ten miles to the eastward; but before that short distance had been traversed, with lightened loads, three horses had to be abandoned. Having settled his party at the new camp, Austin made a short tour of investigation. While on his return journey, a solitary native, with extraordinary courage and ferocity, attacked the explorers, and had to be fired at with small shot before he would desist.

Austin now made for Shark's Bay, the party starting on the 4th September. Here a vessel was to meet them, as has been already stated. Their horses—now reduced to thirteen—carried just sufficient rations for the journey, together with enough flour to enable them to reach the Murchison, in case they should miss the ship. Recruit Flats were reached on the 5th, and Austin—having formed a camp—endeavoured to

* See Appendix.

find a passage in a N.W. direction, which would enable them to reach the Gascoyne. Their position became more and more critical, the country being of a most repellent description, poorly watered and covered with dense scrub. To make matters worse, the poison plant appeared at intervals in patches, and their condition became such that the weakened men entreated of Austin to abandon the horses altogether. To such a mad proposal, however, the leader would not consent.

Strange to say, they met with considerable numbers of the red kangaroo (*Osphanter rufus*) on this part of their route. How these animals found a living in this arid district it is hard to say, but they were thankfully welcomed as an addition to the scanty larder of the explorers. On the 21st September—having lost two horses on the same day—they had some small consolation in finding a cave near a spring. This was in lat. 27° 43', long. 118°. It had on its walls some very curious carvings, reminding us of those discovered by Sir George Grey at Hanover Bay, as mentioned in the first volume. They are described as representations of seven left hands of the ordinary size, with one large right hand above. On the left were five pairs of kangaroos' feet, and the feet of three emu. They were life-like reproductions of the objects in question, and the surface of the rock seemed to have been stained by some fluid. So ancient were they as to be quite beyond the knowledge of those natives who were questioned on the subject. This spot had a melancholy interest through a young member of the party, named Charles Farmer, accidentally shooting himself in the arm; and, in spite of all attention, dying of lock-jaw in terrible agony a few days afterwards. He was buried at the camp, and his humble name was immortalised by the highest mountain in the neighbourhood being called Mount Farmer.

They again resumed their laborious struggle through the thick scrub, and on the 30th September another horse succumbed, leaving them eleven out of their original twenty-seven horses. Truly it may be said that if the work of Australian Exploration was hard on the men, it fell with tenfold severity on the unfortunate animals.

Having sufficient provisions, however, Austin did not lose hope of reaching their destination, provided they could find a supply of water sufficient for their needs. The Sandford River was crossed on the 5th of October, and on the 8th a high range was reached in lat. 26° 24', the

loftiest peak being called Mount Murchison. They soon afterwards struck the Murchison River, flowing N.W. at a higher point than Gregory had reached. The bed was quite dry, and the river never seemed to flow for more than a very short time in the rainy season. A desert, covered with quartz fragments, was crossed, and then interminable almost impenetrable scrub. When within one hundred and ten miles of Shark's Bay, they had been three days without water. To proceed meant almost inevitable death, so they retreated towards the Murchison. Providentially, after travelling some twelve miles, they discovered a native well, and rested there. Two days after, by the same inscrutable guidance, they found another well, but a horse dropped dead before they reached it. The explorers were much astonished at the presence of this well, which was in the middle of a bare, ironstone plain. They came upon it quite by chance, and how it existed under the rays of a blazing sun none could tell. Had they not seen it their horses must have perished.

Austin formed a depôt by this well, and with two of the party started off to examine the country. By the 18th of October they reached the Murchison. It contained water in pools; but, to their dismay, it was salt. They made careful, nay, desperate search, for the leader now saw that the whole party were in imminent peril if water could not be found. All thoughts of the horses were now in the background, for the lives of himself and his men were in grave peril. His comrades at the depôt were little better off, for their water must soon become exhausted, and the grass would last the horses but a very few days. During two days of increasing anxiety, the three almost terror-stricken men traversed the burning red sand of the desert, hoping against hope. At length they turned to some hills lying to the eastward in lat. $26^{\circ} 24'$, long. $116^{\circ} 24'$. After ten miles of weary travel, the hills were reached, and to Austin's inexpressible joy, water and grass were found. The peak where they halted was named Mount Welcome, and to this spot the main body were at once moved.

Having made further examination of the surrounding country, and having found water again to the west of his former route, Austin came to the conclusion that by keeping on this line Shark's Bay might yet be reached. We can well imagine his longing to reach the ship which lay

at anchor at a comparatively short distance ; but he was separated by a desert which threatened the party with the most terrible of lingering deaths.

Accordingly, on the 25th of October, the leader gave orders to proceed towards the Gascoyne. They soon found themselves among the scrub, sandstone and quartz, where neither grass nor water could be found. Within a day or so, they captured an old aboriginal, and persuaded him to show them a water hole, which the old man did to his sorrow, for it was deemed necessary to compel him to accompany the party, in order to indicate the wells. After some twenty miles of most arduous travel, the black took them into a dense scrub, which surrounded a water hole. How he came to know of its existence is inexplicable. They were, of course, pressing due west, and at this point the savage begged to be taken south, indicating by signs that no more was to be found to the westward. But Austin was inexorable, and kept on his course towards the sea. Worse and worse grew the character of the country, and it became evident that the aboriginal was right. At one place the old man seemed to have hopes, and guided them to a well. It was dry, however, and their spirits fell to zero. They then separated, and made anxious search in all directions ; but water there was none. The old black pointed towards a hill some ten miles off, but seemed to doubt whether it would prove an oasis. He then scraped a hole for himself and fell asleep under a bush. Meantime, Austin hastened towards the hill across salt bush flats. Such water holes as he found were sandy and dry. The rest of the party had followed the example of the black, and lay down exhausted in holes under the bushes. When the leader returned with the terrible tidings, the native burst into tears, and the courage of the whole party seemed to break down. Austin now showed himself a man of courage and a born leader. He begged them to be firm and brave, assuring them that if they obeyed his orders he would yet bring them home in safety. Somewhat re-assured, they made preparations to journey towards the Geraldine Mine, where a small settlement had been formed to work the galena lode discovered by Gregory. It was a desperate venture ; but it was their only chance. Ninety miles lay between them and the highest point on the Murchison where Gregory had found water, after which seventy more had to be traversed before the settlement would be reached.

Austin had penetrated to a point in lat. $26^{\circ} 15'$, long $115^{\circ} 16'$, and on the night of the 29th of October the party started towards the Murchison. They travelled all night stripped almost naked, in order to be cool, and absorb as much as possible of the dew that fell. After incredible fatigues, they reached their camp of the 28th, and having made a detour to avoid certain rocky ground, they were confronted with a cliff so steep and rugged that in descending it several of the men dropped off, and lay down to die among the bushes. All the leader's efforts to rouse them were useless. The rest of the explorers, therefore, pushed on, hoping that when sufficiently rested, the exhausted ones would follow. The next water hole was reached in the evening, and Austin, with a heroism which reminds us of Sir Philip Sydney, instantly filled a keg and carried it back to his companions. One by one he found them on the track which the horses had left. They were almost on the point of death, but water was all the medicine they needed. The leader then made for the cliff where the three horses had been left. The poor animals were dead, but the loads were untouched. Taking what provisions were necessary for their immediate use, he hurried back to the water hole. To his consternation the water was exhausted. He must, indeed, have been exhausted himself, after such superhuman and unselfish exertions. We cannot but wonder at the extraordinary presence of mind, tact, energy, and courage displayed by almost all the explorers of Australia.

It seemed to the leader that their only alternative was to make for Mount Welcome with all possible haste. Half of the party returned for stores, and the rest moved forward. They reached a pool on the second day. After the stores and so forth had been brought up, it was found that another horse had died of exhaustion. Then Austin and the black went in search of fresh water. To no purpose however, and had the old man not been washed with brine from a salt stream, he would have completely collapsed.

It was the 6th of November when they reached Mount Welcome, but this time the hill belied its name. As soon as they had filled their kegs the water failed, so there was nothing for it but to push on down the Murchison. Hitherto, they had not suffered from any scarcity of provisions; but now, caution became necessary. To accomplish the journey of one hundred and sixty miles which lay between them and

Geraldine Mine, they had only eighty-one pounds of flour, with two and a half pounds of tea. The allowance was, therefore, reduced to ten ounces of flour per man each day. Having buried all unnecessary baggage, they started from Mount Welcome at midnight, carrying with them three days' supply of water. By forced marches, night and day, they reached Gregory's furthest camp on the 12th of November. Water was obtained by digging, and good grass grew in the bed of the river. After two days' rest, they proceeded down the stream. I need not recapitulate the interesting account which the explorer gives of the geological and other features of the river. Suffice to say that, after six days' difficult and fatiguing travel, they reached the mines on the 20th of November, 1854. Their labours were now at an end, and although the men were a good deal emaciated by their privations, they soon recovered under the kindly treatment of the Geraldine miners. No discoveries of any great importance were made by Mr. Austin; although his heroic conduct will ever remain a monument and an example. He imagined that he had found indications of gold; but as Mr. Tenison Woods writes in 1864, "*The metal has not been found yet.*" No doubt, however, Austin was right. He *did* see indications, but not sufficiently strong as to bring about the magnificent results which were to come some forty years after his memorable expedition.





CHAPTER IX.

Augustus Charles Gregory's North Australian Expedition.

THE cloud of mystery which enveloped the interior of Australia, hung heavily over the minds of the Colonists. Leichardt was given up for lost, nothing having been heard of him for about seven years. Hely's expedition in search of the lost explorer was deemed unsatisfactory; and a strong desire became manifest that another attempt should be made to seek for and find his remains. So far as the Doctor's fate was concerned, however, nothing very definite was decided upon. Still, public attention was thus again directed to the subject of further exploration.

Stokes, it will be remembered, had made a partial investigation of the Victoria River; but since his return nothing had been done in this quarter. Private individuals now came forward with generous offers of subsidy, and eventually the English Government, working in conjunction with that of New South Wales, resolved on organising another expedition. Second only in size to the Murray was the Victoria River, and the idea was conceived that its course might lead to the long-sought centre of the Australian Continent.

To Augustus Charles Gregory, whose name has already been mentioned in the first volume, the command of the expedition was entrusted. He had with him eleven men, among whom were the celebrated botanist, Dr. Mueller (afterwards known as Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller,

K.C.M.G., M.D., Ph.D., F.R.S.); also his brother, Mr. H. C. Gregory, Mr. Eley, surgeon and naturalist, together with Mr. Baines, artist. They were provided with an adequate supply of horses and sheep. Two vessels conveyed them, viz., the barque *Monarch*, and the schooner *Tom Tough*. The former carried the horses and supplies, while the latter was to remain and co-operate with the explorers at the Victoria River.

They left Sydney on the 18th of July, 1855, for Moreton Bay, where they shipped some of the party, and likewise fifty horses and two hundred sheep. Although the *Monarch* struck a reef, and was thus delayed, she reached Point Pearce, at the mouth of the Victoria River, on the 24th of September. Nine horses were lost through sickness during the voyage, but forty-one were landed in fairly good condition. The *Monarch* then weighed anchor and sailed away, leaving the explorers to their own devices, although still attended by the *Tom Tough*, which schooner had to work her way up the Victoria with the sheep on board.

The leader now decided on a land expedition up the course of the Victoria, the party consisting of himself, Dr. Mueller, and seven men. Mr. Wilson, another of their number, was directed to accompany the sheep and select a suitable landing place. On the 28th of the month, Mr. Gregory started, finding almost immediately that he should have given the horses a longer rest after their trying voyage. They were so weak as to be almost useless. Taking an easterly course, however, in six days they reached the Macadam Range, already discovered and named by Stokes. Two of their horses succumbed during their endeavour to reach the Fitzmaurice River, which they accomplished in a little over a week. It was a tedious, weary journey over stony sandstone fragments, and beyond measure trying to the unfortunate animals. To increase their troubles, having encamped on a dry tributary of the river, the tide came up in the night, bringing a formidable detachment of alligators, which attacked the party, but fortunately confined their attention to the horses, three of which were badly wounded. On the 10th of October the Victoria was reached, and the two parties united. Difficulties soon arose. The *Tom Tough* had run aground, and three-fourths of the sheep had died from suffocation in the little vessel's hold. Only forty out of two hundred were landed, and these in an exhausted state. Moreover, there were three feet of water in her hold, which caused the destruction of

more than one half of her stores, besides a ton of flour, a ton of rice, three hundredweight of salt, and eight hundredweight of sugar.

After having got the schooner afloat, erected a store, and landed supplies, Gregory essayed to ascend the river on the 15th of November. The boat they used was made of gutta percha, and very soon melted under the blazing sun. Another method had therefore to be adopted, and accordingly Gregory and his brother, accompanied by Dr. Mueller and Wilson, started with seven of the best horses, followed the course of the river in a nearly southerly direction, attaining lat. 16°, where they found excellent pasture. They returned to camp on the 13th of December, meeting with considerable difficulty owing to the rains, which had now set in.

They again set forth on the 3rd of January, 1856, taking a party of eight men and thirty pack horses, together with six saddle horses. The travelling was very bad, and the large cavalcade made but slow progress. A depôt was established in lat. 17°, they having lost two horses in the meantime. The advance party was now reduced to the more reasonable dimensions of four men and eleven horses. Accompanied by his brother, Dr. Mueller and one man, to their surprise they reached the head of the Victoria in lat. 18° 12', long. 130° 39' E.

Crossing the water-shed, they came upon a grassy plain. But the water courses disappeared, and a barren country was visible. Gregory now steered due west along the foot of a sandstone range, and at the 18th parallel came upon the head of another stream. Following its course to the north and afterwards to the south-west, they found that for the first hundred miles it ran through rich, level, grassy plains on the right bank, while the left was an entire contrast, consisting, as it did, of sandstone ranges and stunted trees. Soon both sides presented the appearance of a desert of drifting red sand. For about three hundred miles they followed its course, till they arrived at a series of salt lakes, when the channel terminated. This stream was called Sturt's Creek, and a hill in the neighbourhood of the lakes Mount Mueller.

Gregory, deeming that further advance was useless and dangerous, beat a hasty retreat to the depôt on the Victoria, finding the water rapidly diminishing as they retraced their steps. They reached the head of the creek on the 24th of March, having adopted an easterly course in order

to avoid the desert. The depôt camp was reached on the 28th, where all had gone well during his absence, and Gregory, with six fresh horses and three men, proceeded to examine the country to the eastward. After travelling sixty miles over well grassed land, they reached the eastern boundary of the Victoria River. Having subsequently examined the lower part of the same stream, he reached the main camp, where the *Tom Tough* lay, on the 9th of April, 1856. Meantime matters had again gone wrong on the schooner. One man had died of scurvy, and many on board were sick from the same complaint. It was thereupon decided to send the vessel to Coepang, while the leader explored the Carpentaria Gulf with seven of the party. The schooner was to take the others, and they were to re-unite at Albert River, from whence they were all to travel overland to Moreton Bay. Mr. Tenison Woods says, with more or less justice:—"Thus the second portion of this expedition was an undertaking greater than Leichardt had first projected in his celebrated journey to Port Essington." From his camp on the Victoria River, Gregory started on the 21st June, 1856. He had as companions his brother, Dr. Mueller, Mr. Elsey, the surgeon, three men, and thirty-four horses. Their supplies in all amounted to about two tons, so that they were not much overweighted. Their travelling was much impeded by the state of the country, and often progress was almost impossible. However, by the 19th of July they encamped by a creek, and here they were attacked by blacks, who were only repulsed by a discharge of small shot. Water became very scarce, and they were compelled to take a northward route. On the 4th of August they reached the head of the McArthur River, in the sixteenth parallel of latitude.

By the 20th of August they struck a place where deep gullies took rise on the south-east slope of the high land. These rapidly increased until they formed the head of the Nicholson River. Following down the stream, they soon came among barren sandstone ridges, where no grass was to be found. All was arid grassless desert, till within thirty miles of the Albert River, where the Plains of Promise commenced.

Having crossed a creek on the 30th of August in the seventeenth parallel, they came on a fine reach of water, which they recognised as having been described both by Stokes and Leichardt. Gregory determined not to wait for the schooner, but to journey towards home by an overland

route. He therefore buried a letter of instructions, and continued on his journey.

On the 3rd of September they left the Albert River, taking a S.E. course. After two days they reached a river about one hundred yards broad. It was the stream which Leichardt had mistaken for the Victoria. The blacks attacked Gregory in crossing it, and had again to be repulsed with powder and shot.

On the 9th of September the Flinders was forded, and, although for a time grassy plains prevailed, soon the country became utterly worthless. In lat. 17° they reached the Gilbert, flowing from the south. Here the explorers halted for two days, and having killed a horse dried his flesh. Improved vegetation with grassy plats occurred at the eighteenth parallel of latitude, and after various deviations they began to cross the ranges on the 11th of October. The southern reaches of the Lynd River, fifteen hundred feet above sea-level, were soon afterwards reached; and, after encountering many obstacles, the party descended into the valley of the Burdekin River in lat. $18^{\circ} 57'$. Although the valley itself was well grassed, the surroundings were barren, and therefore the leader decided on travelling a N.E. course.

Their route now lay through a territory already explored by Leichardt, on the Mackenzie and Comet Rivers; and thus Gregory's work was practically over. The Mackenzie River was reached on the 15th of November, and the Dawson on the 22nd of the same month.

Gregory had done well. He had explored a much larger tract of country than Leichardt, and accomplished it in half the time. Of course, Leichardt's experience was taken full advantage of; nevertheless, Mr. Gregory struck out for himself in many respects, and took his own line through an unexplored range of country.

I need say no more at present about this remarkably distinguished man, who corroborated Stokes' report of the Plains of Promise, and seems to have demonstrated that Leichardt mistook their locality. No lengthy details can possibly be given of this most important expedition. We have only the main results as they appear in the concise reports which Mr. Gregory gave to the Colonial Government. Nevertheless, he stands very high on the roll of Australian explorers.



CHAPTER X.

Babbage, Campbell, Goyder, Colonel Freeling and Major Warburton on Lake Torrens.

WHILE—as narrated in the last chapter—Mr. Gregory was now working for the New South Wales Government, South Australia was not idle. It will be remembered that Messrs. Oakden and Hulkes reported having found rich land on the western side of Lake Torrens. This was in 1851, and the two squatters only abandoned their project of settling owing to the gold rush in Victoria. The possibility of gold being found on their own territory roused the energies of the South Australians to a high pitch; and accordingly, an Adelaide engineer named Babbage was sent out on a prospecting expedition. He was unsuccessful in his search however, but made the first of a series of explorations which placed Lake Torrens on a more definite geographical basis. I need not go into the particulars of his route; suffice to say that he traversed the plains which were deemed to form the centre of the great Torrens horse-shoe, and found permanent water in various lakes, one of which was named Blanche Water. Having lost his horses, he wisely returned without, however, having fully elucidated the problem.

Mr. Campbell, a settler, in January, 1857, contributed something more to the scanty knowledge already gained, having taken a different route. He steered his course from the west side by Port Lincoln, and there discovered good pasture land; and also a watercourse which was

named Beda Creek. It was salt however, which was a disappointment; but he likewise came upon a fresh stream on a subsequent journey in company with Mr. Swinden. On this excursion, Campbell found a water-hole, which was, according to his account, large in size and fresh in quality. From the meagre reports which we have regarding his discoveries, he seems to have concluded that salt water was predominant throughout the country. Nevertheless, in spite of rumours, these minor expeditions roused the hopes of the South Australians, and the people of Adelaide were in raptures, imagining that, after all, magnificent land lay on their northern boundary. In thus referring to the spirit of the times, I am perhaps anticipating the report of Deputy-Surveyor-General Goyder, who, in April, 1857, was despatched to the North, in order to make a trigonometrical survey in the neighbourhood of Mr. Babbage's Blanche Water. He reached the twenty-ninth parallel, and from there appears to have had a clear view of some thirty miles. He came back with an astonishing account of Lake Torrens, as he gazed upon the scene from an elevation, which he called View Hill. Having crossed several channels, some dry and others salt, he reached one which was incrustated on its edges. He thought the incrustation was ammonia; but it proved to be nitrate of soda.

Then he proceeded in an easterly direction; and, coming across some water, he named the springs, respectively, Reedy and Rocky Springs. A solitary elevation was discovered, and called Weathered Hill. Having ascended it, a remarkable scene came within his view, doubtless coloured by his fancy. Gigantic gum trees and lakes seemed to be within the line of his vision. He descended, and, pressing on, struck Lake Torrens itself in the twenty-ninth parallel of latitude, the water being fresh. His description entirely differs from that of either Sturt or Eyre, showing the strange inconsistency of Australian inland waters. In his report we read the following, viz. :—"From the spot where my observations were taken, the lake stretched away from fifteen to twenty miles to the N.W., forming a water horizon from the north by west to north-west. The southern portion was terminated by a high land running south towards Weathered Hill, at once explaining the cause of the various creeks running to the eastward. An extensive bay is formed inside this promontory extending southward and westward, when the land again turns to a point

approaching to, and passing me. By a gentle curve to the east, so it ran, inclining gradually towards the S.W., and ultimately disappearing in the distance. The north portion of the horizon ends in a bluff headland, round which the water appears to extend to the north. The land passes thence to the east, and forms the north boundary of the visible portions of the lake; and, from an eastward elevation, appeared to extend round to the eastern wing. Its shores were apparently about five miles distant; and their perpendicular cliffs were very clearly discerned by the aid of a telescope.

“From the first,” he continues, “I had anticipated finding large lakes of fresh water at the termination of the various creeks, or one large lake into which a number of them discharged their waters. But in such case I should have expected to have discovered some flood marks, indicating the rise and fall of the waters; and, even supposing them to have attained their maximum height, the vegetation in some portion of the surface inside the water’s edge would have revealed this fact. But in this case there was an entire absence of such marks, the water’s edge being clearly defined, and the bed changing its character so suddenly from an alluvial soil to a blue loam, covered by an inch of fine silt, renders it almost beyond the possibility of a doubt that the surface water is subject only to the most trifling variations of level; and the absence of deltas in the embouchures of the creeks tend to show that there is no re-acting force; but that the waters in time of flood flow uninterruptedly elsewhere, and, I am inclined to think, in a generally N.W. direction.”

Goyder was evidently a man of strong imagination; and, no doubt, the wish was father to the thought. Probably he was deceived by a mirage, as is sufficiently indicated by his subsequent remarks. His narrative continues thus:—“We then proceeded due west for twenty miles, to obtain a view from the summit of the high land running from the N.W. point of Weathered Hill, crossing on our way those creeks at ten and thirteen miles’ distance. The first we named Duck Pond Creek, and the second *Mirage Creek, from its forming the boundary of an imaginary lake, which we supposed we were approaching, but which disappeared as we neared the elevated land. It would be useless to repeat the number of times we were deceived by mirage, and surprised by the enormous refraction produced by these plains.* Some idea of it may be obtained from the fact

that the large gum trees seen from Weathered Hill to the north, proved to be mere bushes of from two to four feet high; and a large hill seen from the summit of Mount Serle by the aid of a powerful glass, and which we estimated to be at least three thousand feet high, dwindled down to sixty."

The good people of Adelaide were, nevertheless, naturally highly elated at the favourable accounts of what was supposed to be the desert country which surrounded them. Many applied for squatting licenses; but the Government thought it advisable to get a confirmation of Goyder's encouraging reports. Accordingly, Colonel Freeling, R.E., then Surveyor-General of the Colony, headed a party to inspect the territory. They took with them a boat in which to sail upon these newly-discovered waters of the interior. The Surveyor-General was not long in dispelling the illusion, to the bitter chagrin of the South Australians. Towards the end of September, 1857, Colonel Freeling wrote a letter to the following effect:—"I much regret that what I have to relate is decidedly unfavourable to the extension of discoveries in the direction mentioned, and by the means proposed. The extensive bays described in Mr. Goyder's report, the bluff headlands, the several islands between the north and south shores, have all been the result of *mirage*, and do not in point of fact exist as represented. The conclusion drawn in that report that the lake is only subject to the most trifling variations of level, is also proved to be an erroneous deduction." That strange law of physics, terrestrial refraction, must be held responsible for Goyder's faulty conclusions.

When the Colonel arrived at Lake Torrens on the 2nd of September, he soon arrived at the conclusion that his colleague's lake was composed of a congregation of flood-waters. One of the party who had previously accompanied the latter explorer, declared that the lake had already receded nearly half-a-mile. On the 4th of the month, however, a folding iron punt which they had brought with them was launched; but there was not sufficient water to float the little craft; nevertheless they dragged it through the mud for about half-a-mile; but further progress was hopeless. The Surveyor-General likewise observed the appearance of cliffs and islands which had deceived his subordinate officer. The explorers made an attempt also to cross the lake on foot; but after the most arduous

exertions, were compelled to abandon the project. It was thus seemingly made clear that Lake Torrens was unavailable and impracticable. Goyder was not the first explorer who had been thus imposed upon. The writer has seen the same deceptive effect on the western prairies of America. Poole—during one of Sturt's expeditions—fancied he saw an inland sea, and it will be remembered how cruelly taken in were Sir George Grey and his companions on the west coast.

In spite of all this discouragement, the lust of exploration had seized upon South Australia, hence various new expeditions were projected. Mr. Stephen Hack, the son of a Chichester banker, was the next to enter the field. He led a party of five men, with twelve horses, a dray, and six months' rations, to re-explore the Gawler Ranges, which had been discovered by Eyre; and generally examine the country to the westward of Lake Torrens. Having taken ship to Streaky Bay, a main depôt was established, after which they advanced north towards the Ranges. Having proceeded some thirty miles to the eastward, they made their first camp at Parlā; and from an elevation the Gawler Range could be descried in a northerly direction. Accompanied by Messrs. Miller and Harris, together with a native guide, they reached the hills at a distance of some seventy miles. Here they found a spring, from whence they steered N.E. towards another hill, which they called Mount Centre. Subsequently, having examined the surrounding territory, and having travelled through most unpromising scrub, they reached a grassy country, estimated to cover an area of about one hundred square miles. Their black guide now fell ill, and had to be sent back to the main depôt, which was at Streaky Bay. Owing to his indisposition they were thus delayed on their journey, and only were enabled to make satisfactory progress on the 23rd of July. On this date they left the water-hole called *Ponara*, adjacent to Mount Granite. A well-grassed plain was crossed, and a spring named *Koondooléa* was reached. Promising pasture land was then found in the neighbourhood of another spring—*Yālbinda* by name—and it seemed as if the Gawler Range here terminated. Mr. Hack, however, made the latter journey by himself, and afterwards the main body moved on to a water-hole called *Kūrahkildē*, and a creek named *Yāna*. Afterwards they met with water at a place designated *Wānea* by the natives, where they came upon the tracks of Major Warburton, who had, as it

happened, started simultaneously with Mr. Hack, and whose experiences will be recorded hereafter.

Over slightly improved country the cavalcade thereupon proceeded, arriving at a spring, named *Colà-mirrika* by Messrs. Oakden and Hulkes six years previously. I observe, with pleasure, that this and the last-mentioned water-holes have been given their aboriginal titles. Would that this system of nomenclature had been universally observed throughout the Australian Continent! Many other springs and water-courses were found by Mr. Hack during this expedition, which, on the whole, may be regarded as a successful one. The details of his journey are decidedly meagre; and, moreover, he does not mark his stoppages by either latitude or longitude. He certainly took a very sanguine view of the country he traversed, but Major Warburton, who started about the same time, gives, as will be seen, a very different account of the district.

In June, 1857, this expedition was headed by Major Peter Egerton Warburton, H.E.I.C.S., C.M.G. A few words may be allowable regarding this distinguished explorer.* He was the fourth son of the Rev. Rowland Egerton Warburton, of Arley Hall, Cheshire, by his marriage with Emma, daughter of James Croxton, Esq. He was born on the 15th of August, 1813, and received his early instruction in France. In 1826 he entered the Royal Navy, and three years later he went to Addiscombe College, at that time the training-school for the Hon. East India Company's Service. From this he retired in 1853, having attained the rank of major. The same year he sailed for Perth, arriving in July, and three months later he went to Adelaide. Here he received the appointment of Commissioner of Police, which he held till 1867. Two years later, he was made Colonel Commandant of the South Australian Volunteer Force, a post which he honourably held till 1877, being afterwards placed in charge of the Imperial Pension Department.

To this gentleman, then, was now entrusted the leadership of the expedition in question. The exploration of the Gawler Ranges was his object, and, having started from the eastermost peak, he journeyed west. After this, he steered W.N.W., and, having reached Lake Gairdner, he took a devious route, which led him to a chain of salt lakes to the westward. Strange to say, although in the same locality as Mr. Hack,

* I take this account from the *Dictionary of Australasian Biography*, by Philip Menell, F.R.G.S.

Warburton met with a very different experience as regards springs and watercourses. He reported having come across *no permanent water*. Certainly he saw some fairly well-grassed land, but the essential water was absent. Not until the winter rains set in was the fluid to be found in necessary abundance, and it was therefore concluded that the neighbourhood of the Gawler Range was practically useless. Still it must be admitted that Mr. Stephen Hack, as an old squatter, was a more competent authority regarding pasture land; and although he took a somewhat rosy view of affairs, his opinions must be received with that respect which his experience merits.

A few words on two minor expeditions, initiated also from Adelaide, must close the present chapter. A month after Major Warburton set forth—namely, July, 1857—Messrs. Swinden, Campbell, Thompson, and Stock arranged another trip of exploration towards the west of the mysterious Lake Torrens. Campbell had been through the district before, and had discovered Beda Creek. Passing on from this point, which, in due time, they reached, they took a N.W. direction. Travelling over heavy sand, and sadly dispirited through lack of water, they at last reached the *Pernatty* well, so-called by the natives, at about eighty miles from the nearest point on the coast. A creek was soon reached—known as *Yanaherry*—and subsequently a flat-topped hill was gained, which they christened Bonney's Bluff. A dry, elevated strip of land between Lake Torrens and Spencer's Gulf was probably their most notable discovery.

Their trip was a very short one, and, in August, one of the party—Mr. Swinden—determined to make another effort, starting from *Pernatty*. He found good pasture land to the north of the Gawler Ranges, the territory afterwards bearing his name. It was the 23rd of August that he reached *Pernatty*, and next day he struck a water-hole. Two days later he succeeded in finding some fresh water-holes near a lake called in the aboriginal dialect *Andemorka*. I note with satisfaction that this chapter contains more native names than any one previously written.

Red sand, spinifex, grass and acacia scrub, seem to have been the distinguishing features of the so-called * Swinden's Country, which was examined during the next month by several squatters in search of pastoral land.

* Swinden's Country lies considerably to the north of the Gawler Ranges, Lake Andemorka being in lat. 30° 40' long. 137° 10'.

Mr. Campbell, another of the party, travelled some fifty miles to the northward, meeting with considerable success.

October of the same year saw Messrs. Miller and Dutton on the war-path. They took only three horses and an otherwise light equipment. They seem first to have made for the water-hole discovered by Eyre seventeen years previously, viz., *Beelemah*, near Denial Bay. And truly glad Mr. Eyre must have been to find it, as he will himself admit. Life and death depended upon that water-hole. These latter explorers brought back a report which must be taken for what it is worth. Its accuracy has been questioned on more than one ground. I append a footnote of Mr. Tenison Woods as a fitting conclusion to this chapter. He says:—"A controversy has since ensued as to the character of the grassy plains north of Fowler's Bay. Major Warburton, who saw the ground at its worst, describes it so as to bring forcibly to mind the naked plain in some parts of the Sahara. Captain Delisser, on the contrary, asserts that the land could not be better for the purposes of pasture except from the absence of trees of all kinds. Yet in spite of this recent attempt at forming a settlement (1863), they have failed for want of water. A well has been, I believe, sunk, but no water found at over 100 feet in depth. These immense arid plains form a large and curious feature in the physical geography of Australia."





CHAPTER XI.

The Expeditions of Babbage, Major Warburton, Francis Gregory, and others.



HE South Australian Government now (1858) resolved to continue the explorations of Mr. Hack. They had confidence in the fertility of their northern frontier, and a sum was readily voted for the purpose of—if possible—finally settling the question. Mr. Babbage, the Adelaide engineer already mentioned, was selected to lead the party.

Having dared the dangers of Lake Torrens, he was deemed to be the most suitable chief, but I am doubtful if the selection was a good one. His lieutenant was Mr. Harris, who was to act as surveyor. He had previously accompanied Mr. Hack in a similar capacity. Sixteen horses, three drays, a tank cart, with a hundred and eighty sheep, were provided, together with provisions for eighteen months.

Lake Gairdner had already been discovered, and Lake Torrens partially surveyed, so Mr. F. S. Dutton, then Commissioner of Crown Lands, took upon himself to give special instructions regarding Mr. Babbage's course of action. In his letter to the leader, he made the survey of Lakes Torrens and Gairdner of primary importance, giving Babbage more or less elaborate orders. The country between the western shore of Torrens, and the eastern margin of Gairdner, were to be fully examined, mapped, and surveyed, together with the northern coast of the latter lake.

But the South Australian colonists had liberally supplied the sinews of war; and were much more anxious to hear of new pastoral country than to procure a Government Survey, however complete or interesting to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. Mr. Babbage, as in duty bound, endeavoured to obey his superior, and proceeded to survey with the aid of Mr. Harris. So far as I can see, the letter of instructions was irrelevant and indefinite, and must share the blame of subsequent complications. In any case, the Government made Babbage the scapegoat, as might be expected.

It seems that on All Fools' Day of 1858 the leader and his men arrived at Beda, and made certain explorations in the Torrens direction. Then, having heard of a man named Coulthard being lost in the bush, they proceeded to search for him, which caused delay. In a footnote to his admirable work, Mr. Tenison Woods thus refers to the subject:—"The melancholy fate of this poor fellow," he says, "is a specimen of what sort of dangers are run by the first settlers in a newly-discovered country. He had gone with one companion in search of some pastoral country, but soon became much distressed for want of water. He then separated from his companion in search of it, and was never afterwards seen alive. When his body was found, his tin canteen was scratched with a brief record of his horrible sufferings from thirst. He had killed his horse for its blood, and then had gone forward on foot under a burning sun searching for water in every hollow and crevice. The record then becomes straggling and difficult to read, and the sentence which is left unfinished shows a terrible struggle to maintain the powers of life while he wrote his dismal story."

On the 9th of May, Babbage went straight west, taking one man, and this in spite of instructions from headquarters. The discovery of a salt lagoon rewarded his search, which, owing I suppose to its curious shape, he called Lake Windabout. More salt lagoons, named in the same strange fashion, were seen. Such titles as Hart, Hanson, Young-Husband, &c., testify to their lack of imagination. These enterprising men kept on exploring, searching, and investigating; but, as a matter of fact, some others, called McFarland, Seymour, and Smith—squatters with distinct purposes—had seen and valued the land during the previous year. And still on Babbage went, mapping and surveying as best he could, in

obedience to orders. By the 29th of August, however, he got really tired. So he took a well-deserved rest, chiefly for the good of his followers and the beasts of burden. These were the days of red tape and officialism, when the "Circumlocution Office" (of Charles Dickens) was in full swing. The theoretical discoverers of Government House, and the Colonial Office, undoubtedly did much to hinder the progress of Australian Exploration.

Having arrived at Port Augusta, Babbage learnt that Harris was making for Adelaide, taking with him most of the horses. He therefore started after his lieutenant, whom he overtook within about a hundred and fifty miles of the capital. The Colonial Government now made a new move, which it is somewhat hard to justify. Mr. Charles Gregory was sent out to supersede Mr. Harris. This was, indeed, a surprise for all parties concerned. The Adelaide authorities, moreover, ordered Babbage to send back his drays, and stick to pack-horses.* The explorer seems to have been in a dilemma. He had scarcely made the best use of his time; but I think he did fairly well under the circumstances. Mr. Babbage now begged of Gregory to join him in an excursion northwards, but for reasons best known to himself, that gentleman declined. So the leader started off on his own account, taking with him four men and six months' rations. We need scarcely follow his monotonous route over scrubby sandhills and salt-bush plains, swamps and creeks. At length Babbage reached the boundary of his former explorations. During the leader's absence, Mr. Stuart and Mr. Forster had discovered Chamber's Creek, and this was the next point reached. He traced the watercourse into a salt lake, which, with considerable generosity, he named Lake Gregory—a designation afterwards altered to that of Lake Eyre. The Hermit Range was next reached, and ascended. Lake Torrens was not visible from the summit, hence the explorer rightly concluded that it did not extend to the twenty-ninth parallel. Hot springs were next discovered to the westward. The water was fresh, and the temperature, as a rule, so high as to almost scald the naked hand. The first series of springs came from a sand-hill basin, yielding about 175,000 gallons of water *per diem*. The explored named these curious freaks of nature Emerald Springs, and then proceeded to examine the shores of Lake Eyre.

* Meantime, A. C. Gregory's expedition in search of Leichardt had returned, which had been conducted with the help of pack-horses only. Hence, probably, the order to dispense with drays.

Babbage, meantime, fell into disrepute at Adelaide, and Major Warburton was sent out to supersede him. The latter failed to overtake the former till the 5th of November, after which a series of disputes arose between the rival explorers. Bitter letters and insinuations arrived at the capital, into which we need not enter; suffice to say that so far as I can judge, Babbage was somewhat harshly dealt with. He can, in any case, scarcely be placed in the front rank of the explorers, although this may have been due to the original perplexing instructions which he received from the Commissioner of Crown Lands.

During his hunt for the contumacious Babbage, Major Warburton—who, by the way, was accompanied by Charles Gregory, as second in command—discovered and named Beresford Springs, the Douglas Creek, and the Davenport Range; the latter rising about a thousand feet over the plains. In his anxiety, however, to catch his man, and send him back, the Major missed many opportunities; nevertheless, he did much valuable work, and gave Stuart the clue to the subsequent finding of a passage to the centre of the Continent. Chief among his discoveries was his demonstrating that, instead of being a huge, undivided horse-shoe encircling the ranges and draining into Spencer's Gulf, Torrens Lake was really a series of salt basins, divided by fairly good stretches of country. To illustrate the previously-supposed dimensions of this vast expanse of water, I quote from a lecture delivered by Colonel George Gawler* (second Governor of South Australia), before the Royal Geographical Society. He spoke as follows:—"Picture to the mind the dimensions of that lake. Let us place ourselves on Highgate Hill, near London; and if it were possible to carry the eye to Gravesend or Chatham, that would be the breadth of it near its south-western extremity. Carry on this breadth from London to Newcastle-on-Tyne, diminishing the width to twelve miles; then turn that line into something like a horse-shoe, and you have an idea of what we *know* of Lake Torrens." These words were spoken almost twenty years before Major Warburton and Babbage had contributed to the solution of the problem. Thus was the map of Australia very considerably altered. Before closing this brief record of Major Warburton's second expedition, during which he certainly established the definite shape of the terrible lake, I would draw attention to

* Colonel Gawler was Governor of South Australia from 1838 till 1841.

the wretchedly mean conduct of the South Australian Parliament. The paltry sum of £100 was voted as his reward, and in the year following his salary was reduced another £100 *per annum*. As a well-known writer of the time sarcastically remarks:—"Surely such parsimony puts a bar upon energy and active enterprise in the public service. It was certainly a lucky thing for Columbus that he had not an Adelaide Parliament to deal with."

The South Australian Government, although energetic, certainly cannot be accused of extravagance; nevertheless, this same year (1858) Mr. Parry, a surveyor, was despatched with orders to map the country between Flinders Range and Lake Torrens. He arrived at Frome Creek on the 27th of July, which he expected to find flowing, but was disappointed to find it dry. The following day, however, he was fortunate enough to reach Shamrock Pool, which contained an abundance of water. Having pursued his course over fairly good country, he made some minor discoveries. He met with a goodly number of water-holes, which were surrounded with thousands of pigeons. Like some of his predecessors, he was much deceived by refraction, and, in returning, passed over much desert territory, which appeared in the distance to be well watered.

During the same year, Mr. Geharty, of the South Australian police, with one man under him, made a trip from Streaky Bay, having orders to examine the country north of Fowler's Bay. Mr. Hack had previously been over this ground, and this officer seems to have taken a much less favourable view of the place than the squatter already mentioned. No doubt, however, a police trooper and a sheep farmer might be expected to see the land in a different light. Moreover, the former may have been influenced by the reports of Eyre and Warburton, for whose opinions he doubtless had a higher respect.

Having examined the surroundings of Lake Gairdner, which he deemed to be utterly useless, Geharty proceeded to find, if possible, the fertile plains which Messrs. Miller and Dutton had asserted to lie to the N.W. of Fowler's Bay. He failed to reach them—if indeed they ever existed—and described the territory as consisting of sterile, hopeless, arid scrub. Doctors are said to differ; but surely not more so than explorers!

However mean and unreasonable were the Adelaide authorities, the same

cannot be said of Western Australia during this important period of Australian Exploration. Mr. Francis Thomas Gregory, who had previously accompanied his brother Augustus in his expedition of 1846, was despatched to examine the country between the Gascoyne and Mount Murchison. About the middle of April, 1858, he started from the Geraldine Mine, already mentioned in the chapter which deals with Austin. Having followed the course of the Murchison River, the explorer was disappointed with the appearance of the country. He then took a route to the N.E., and afterwards N.W. Having crossed several dry water-courses, on the 1st of May he came upon one which was wider and altogether more promising. Tracing its course till the 3rd of the same month, he found himself at the Gascoyne, which had flowed nearly due west, but now changed its course to a northerly one. After this, he found it to run N.W. and S., eventually taking a westward direction to Shark's Bay. The latter course was taken after its junction with a stream flowing from the N.N.W., and named by the explorer after Admiral Lord Lyons. Tracing it down, Shark's Bay was reached on the 17th of May.

Mr. Gregory then returned to examine the course of Lyons River, and soon arrived at a mountain nearly 3,500 feet above sea-level, which he called Mount Augustus. A magnificent view was visible, showing immense tracts of apparently promising country, through which the Lyons flowed from the eastward.

On the 3rd of June, Gregory left this river, and two days afterwards reached a tributary of the Gascoyne. Here the party encamped, and discovered Mount Stere to the eastward. Thirty miles further on another hill was reached, and named Mount Gould. From its summit the course of the Murchison could be traced for—as Gregory thought—a distance of about one hundred miles. He followed down the course of the latter river, and reached the Geraldine Mine on the 22nd of June. This explorer's trip, although a short one, must be admitted to have added very considerably to the sadly needed knowledge of the Western Australian interior.



CHAPTER XII.

Augustus Charles Gregory's Expedition in Search of Leichardt, and to Explore the Barcoo River.

LEICHARDT had now been missing for about ten years, and all sorts of rumours came floating in to Sydney. Little credence was given to them; but still they tended to awaken interest in further exploration. A Botany Bay convict—Garbut by name—declared that a settlement of escaped prisoners existed in the interior, and that Leichardt's party were there. This circumstance probably influenced the New South Wales Government to organise another expedition.

Augustus Charles Gregory—already mentioned—was given the command, and on the 15th of January, 1858, he went on his errand to Moreton Bay, as a preliminary measure. Having selected eight men for his companions, including his younger brother, the party started in the following March. Forty horses were likewise taken, and all were armed with guns and revolvers. By the end of the month they reached the Dawson River, having taken a W.N.W. course. Fairly good country was passed over, occasionally interspersed with scrub. They were certainly in light marching order, taking neither drays or boats. Following Kennedy's route to the Warrego, and crossing its watershed, they made the Barcoo River towards the middle of April. Mitchell's splendid picture of the stream he had called the Victoria* was by no means realised. The place looked like an arid desert; for the green meadows of Sir Thomas had completely vanished.

Remembering Mr. Hely's reports of trees marked with the mystic

* Afterwards called the Barcoo.

letter "L," Mr. Gregory was on the *qui vive*, and at last discovered in latitude $24^{\circ} 25'$ and longitude $145^{\circ} 6'$ a tree so decorated. He likewise noted other signs of a deserted camp. Trees had been cut down, tent poles erected; but nothing of a definite nature was ascertained regarding Leichardt's fate. *Somebody* had evidently been cutting the letter "L" in the bark of trees right through Australia, but who he was or why he did it still remains a mystery. For my own part, in default of a better solution, I cannot but suggest the possibility that some aboriginal who had thus far mastered the English alphabet, used his tomahawk to the above effect. The appendix of this volume recounts all the definite present knowledge obtainable regarding the subject.

Abandoning all hope of finding any traces of Leichardt, Mr. Gregory now very wisely confined his attention to exploration. No doubt he fully realised that, if he wasted time and money, and was unsuccessful, his work would not have been appreciated.

When the explorer reached what he supposed to be the Alice River, he failed to recognise it. Its dry water-bed was decidedly disappointing, and he naturally began to have grave doubts as to where he was. On tracing its course, however, and taking observations, he soon found that he had reached the so-called stream, which was, however, waterless. He now began to feel anxious as to the safety of his band, and thereupon struck out in a N.W. direction.

The Thompson River was now Gregory's destination, chiefly for water, I think; but also he indulged in the hope that Leichardt might have taken this course. Towards the beginning of May they had really more water than they wanted, being much oppressed with heavy falls of rain, which threatened them with disaster. To add to their anxiety, the aboriginals appeared and seemed likely to give trouble. They were dispersed with powder and shot. Having followed up the course of the Thompson for many miles, grass for the horses forsook them, and they were obliged to retreat. The chief had now travelled to almost the 24th parallel of latitude, and had to resolve whether to make for the head of the Barcoo River, and thence go north to the Belyando, or else to follow down the stream, and trace it either to the Darling or Cooper's Creek.

Gregory determined on the latter course, and took his route along the right bank of the Thompson. By the 23rd of May they had reached the

junction of the latter river and the Barcoo. Again they got into difficulties. Water they had, no doubt; but the land was almost utterly devoid of any kind of vegetation. The river, as usual, was eccentric and unaccountable in its flow, pursuing its course, however, through absolute desolation. Decayed weeds, and even the thatches of deserted aboriginal huts, were the feed of the horses. After much toil and privation, the party reached the 28th parallel on the 8th of June. Here was found but little to reward them. A treeless, grassless, desert plain met their view. Still travelling westward, guided by the numerous creeks, the leader had hopes of reaching Cooper's Creek, already discovered by Captain Sturt. Grass was at last found, and the tired animals regained strength. Following on among the many perplexing water-courses, sandhills, and flooded plains, Gregory resolved to beat a retreat, which assuredly was a prudent measure.

Having reached the extreme boundary of the South Australian Colony about the 10th of June, the explorer states that he saw a singular instance of aboriginals having removed natural obstacles from their path. Stony ridges had obstructed them, and he tells us that the loose stones were all shifted from their track, and piled on one side, as though they sought to make a permanent road. I cannot but remark that the blacks—if they had any such intention—were a very long time carrying it out, judging from the condition of the Australian Continent when it became a British Colony. Eventually, Mr. Gregory reached the creek called after the intrepid Count Strzelecki, whose exploits have been recorded in the first volume. Tracing its course, he reached Lake Torrens of execrable fame. Having crossed it on comparatively dry land, the explorer made his way to Mount Hopeless, which neighbourhood was already occupied by settlers. He was now practically at home.

In conclusion, I may remark that I have given the Hon. Augustus Charles Gregory, C.M.G., M.L.C., J.P., a chapter all to himself—chiefly on account of his eminence as an explorer, but more particularly because he seems to my mind to have inaugurated a new epoch in the field of discovery. No one as yet had shown such peculiar ability and ingenuity. Economy marked his progress; skill and humanity were conspicuous in his conduct; and it is only to be regretted that the record of this distinguished man has to be presented in so brief a form.



CHAPTER XIII.

The First Two Expeditions of Mr. John McDouall Stuart, and that of Governor MacDonnell.



NE of Australia's most distinguished explorers will form the chief subject of the present chapter. I refer to Mr. John McDouall Stuart, who, it will be remembered, accompanied Captain Sturt in the capacity of draughtsman, during his expedition across the Stony Desert in 1845. His dearly-bought experience on this terrible journey amply qualified him to undertake one on his own account. He was fired with ambition to further unfold Nature's secrets in the interior. Accordingly, accompanied by one white man and an aboriginal guide, he started on the 14th of May, 1858, from Oratunga, with the object of exploring to the westward of Lake Torrens.

Mr. Babbage was ahead of him, and Stuart reached that engineer's camp about the 14th of June. After a short rest, he pushed on to the Elizabeth, thereafter steering to the north. Andamoka Lake was discovered and named, and they came in view of one of the huge arms of Torrens on the 22nd of June. Horrible, sandy, scrubby plains were next traversed *en route* for a territory which the aboriginals called *Wingilpin*. His native guide, however, lost his bearings. Other blacks were met, but could give Stuart no help in the matter, and so he failed to reach his destination. He therefore took a westward course.

Stuart's journal, although abounding with facts, and most minute in detail, is uninteresting in the extreme; and I am fully assured would prove

most distasteful to the general reader. I will therefore content myself with a very brief outline of his movements and observations. After passing over an undulating plain, and enduring much hardship, a table-land was reached. Here was noticed a very curious freak of nature, quite characteristic of the marvellous scenery of the vast Australian interior. It appeared almost to be the work of men's hands. On the summit of a conical hill, it seemed as if a white tower had been built, encircled by a black ring near its apex. Chamber's Creek was afterwards discovered, and thus named by Stuart; Babbage having called the same watercourse after Stuart himself. The former designation was, however, finally adopted.

They now marched southward, their horses being sadly distressed. The flinty ground had worn out their shoes, and by some oversight they had not provided themselves with extra equine foot-gear. Nevertheless, the explorers pushed on, and investigated a tract of country west of Lake Gairdner. Fowler's Bay was their next destination, and they passed over vast plains covered with scrub, described as even more unpromising than the Stony Desert already visited by Stuart on Sturt's expedition. "A dreary, dreadful, dismal desert," as the narrative runs. Melancholy and monotonous must have been their weary path. Occasional patches of grassy land were seen, and a granite mountain was ascended, and named Mount Finke. Starvation and death through thirst often stared the explorers in the face, and their heroic perseverance is almost all that makes this expedition memorable. Their stock of provisions failing, rations had to be reduced to an almost incredible minimum. Nothing could possibly have saved their lives, had they not shot an occasional crow, opossum, or marsupial mouse. Their poor wretch of a guide left them when he failed to get his usual meals. We can scarcely blame him. Having reached Beelimah, on the coast, a hundred dreadful miles lay between them and Streaky Bay, where Mr. Gibson had a station. Scarcely a particle of flour then remained, but they managed to exist on shell-fish. They reached the place at last in a pitiable condition. Then a plentiful supply of food caused serious illness, but by the 3rd of September they regained strength, and again started forth. By short stages they travelled along Hack's track, but were sadly disappointed at the appearance of land

which the old squatter had described as most promising. Having crossed Freeling's Range, more dead than alive, they eventually, on the 11th of September, came to Mr. Thompson's station at Mount Arden. Stuart and his companion accomplished a great deal, although the results were not immediately apparent. They, at any rate, showed the Australian public what could be done with a small equipment. The enormously costly outfits of the past were not very acceptable to either the Government or the people. Contradictory reports and miserable disasters for a time had shaken their confidence, but it appeared as if now a new epoch had been inaugurated in the field of discovery by the gallant and intrepid man whose first expedition has thus been shortly narrated.

Undismayed by his sufferings, as just chronicled, Stuart again determined to brave the terrors of the interior. Strange to say, but little is known of his second expedition. I do not think his journal has ever been published. To the best of my knowledge, he made an offer to the Adelaide authorities to hand over plans, maps, and diary for a recompense of fifteen hundred square miles of pastoral land on a fourteen years lease, stipulating that the first four years were to be rent free. For some reason or another, the Colonial Parliament saw fit to reject his proposal, with the result that he kept his information to himself. It seems a pity to read of their strange parsimony, as already illustrated in the case of Major Warburton. Such services as were rendered by these enterprising men were simply invaluable, and were certainly, in many cases, most shabbily requited.

The Adelaide Legislature now hit upon a new plan, and offered a reward of £2,000 to the first man who should, at his own expense, cross the Australian Continent from sea to sea; but, to their shame be it noted, when the feat was at last performed, they refused to pay the money, on the ground that their offer only held good for a limited time. This seems to me to reach the very acme of meanness.

It appears that during his second expedition just referred to, Stuart having started in April, 1859, in company with Mr. Hergott and others, the last named gentleman discovered Hergott Springs. Afterwards they crossed Chambers Creek, already mentioned, and found some bubbling fountains in the neighbourhood of Davenport Range. It is supposed that these springs result from the drainage of the western elevated table-

land, which runs between the sandstone and the underlying rock, and which rises to the surface near the lowest level. Mr. Tenison Woods says that Australia may be described as an immense table-land, tilted up at the east and west sides, and that we might expect immense springs along the trough or cylindrical axis of the centre of the Continent. He thinks also that the vast drainage from the slopes at both sides, must accumulate in basins under, as well as over the rocks; and, of course, would seek an outlet at the surface as they were filled. Possibly their occasional high temperature is due to the depth from which they spring.

Stuart does not seem to have suffered so acutely during his second expedition, no doubt warned by his former journey. Having discovered and named the Neale's River, he returned home apparently well satisfied with the fertility of the territory he had traversed.

It appears that now no less a personage than the Governor himself became bitten with the mania of exploration. An eminent authority tells us that he was the *second* Governor who had personally conducted an expedition, and refers to the only other being Governor Fitzgerald, in the year 1848. With great respect I venture to differ from him, for I fancy that Captain Arthur Phillip, who first hoisted the British flag at Sydney Cove towards the end of the last century, also made personal examination of the surrounding country. Be that as it may, Sir Richard Macdonnell, K.C.M.G., C.B., M.A., LL.D., who represented her Majesty at Adelaide from 1855 till 1862, and during whose tenure of office Responsible Government was proclaimed in South Australia, resolved to find out for himself something further about the North-West interior of the Colony. He, therefore, with six men and eighteen horses, started for the Mount Serle Ranges in October, 1859. No discoveries of any great importance seem to have been made, although his Excellency appears to have formed a very favourable opinion of the country already reported upon. His influential example, however, undoubtedly tended to give impetus to the splendid work of Australian Exploration. He travelled as far as the Davenport Range, and saw some of the springs mentioned by Stuart. I understand that he would have gone farther, but for the strong advice of those who accompanied him. Probably, had more Governors lent their weight to this important work, we should now know much more of the vast resources of the Great South Land.



CHAPTER XIV.

The Expedition of Francis Gregory, and others.

IT IS extremely hard to preserve exact chronological sequence when recounting the minor expeditions, and still more difficult to impart much interest to the recital. Many I have omitted, because, although they all contribute their quota to the knowledge of the Australian Continent, they bear a strong family likeness to each other, and sink into insignificance beside the achievements of the great heroes of exploration. It may be mentioned, however, that in 1859 Captain Crawford went out in search of gold at the behest of the South Australian Government. He traversed much ground which Sturt had passed over fifteen years previously, and discovered the Tiyano Range, which was not laid down on the great explorer's chart. This is a somewhat singular circumstance, considering that the tracks of his party were clearly defined in the immediate neighbourhood. It will be remembered that Mr. Poole, Sturt's second in command during his march through the Great Central Desert, died of scurvy in 1845, and was buried at Depôt Glen. His lonely grave was found by Captain Crawford, and may be looked upon as almost his chief discovery. The burial-place had escaped the watchful eyes of the aborigines, although his initials were cut on the tree which served as his monument. The graves of both Burke and Wills lie not far distant from this desolate spot.*

* That is to say, their *original* graves. Their remains were subsequently carried to Melbourne by Mr. Howitt and his party.

The Barrier Ranges were searched for signs of gold without success. The Tiyo Hills were reported to consist mainly of slates, schists, and granite, combined with veins of ironstone and quartz, while the other chain were masses of white trap, quartzites, and magnetic iron ore. Thus were the sanguine hopes of the Adelaide people again disappointed.

Turning to Western Australia, Mr. Frank Gregory, who had discovered the Gascoyne and other rivers in 1858, was appointed by the Home and Colonial Governments to command an expedition, organised to confirm or refute the reports of King and Stokes. Both these explorers had taken a most unfavourable view of the country. About two hundred years previously, Dampier had expressed his belief that there were no rivers at all for hundreds of miles along this desolate, low, sandy coast; and, indeed gave such a very poor account of New Holland as very possibly may have prevented further examination at that distant period. Had he taken a correct view of affairs, and brought back a favourable report, how the destinies of the Continent might have been altered! Gregory's instructions were to proceed northward by sea, and then to make investigations of the country in a southerly direction.

Accordingly, the leader, with nine men, twenty horses, and provisions for eight months, shipped on board the barque *Dolphin*, and having touched at Champion Bay, reached North-West Cape on the 7th of May. Three days later, they anchored off Delambre Island; and thereafter they discovered and named Dolphin Island. Having with difficulty made Nickol Bay, they landed, in order if possible to find a suitable place to disembark his horses. After two days of weary tramp through mud swamps, and having ascended a sandstone range, they discovered a small stream, which was named the Nickol. Taking a westerly course, they were unfortunately driven back to the vessel through lack of water.

After further examination, however, a landing-place was found, and on the 16th of the month, with five days arduous exertion, the horses and outfit were got on shore. This delay was caused, in a great measure, by the annoyance suffered at the hands of the natives, who at last became so threatening in their conduct that it was necessary to resort to fire-arms. An unfortunate accident also occurred on the 16th. Mr. Hewson, the mate of the ship, was severely wounded through the accidental explosion of a musket. On the 25th, however, they started, taking a

southerly course. Several small water-courses were crossed, flowing through a grassy plain, and on the 27th they were rewarded by coming to a fair-sized stream, some sixty yards wide, and with grassy banks. It was named the Maitland. As they moved on, the country began to deteriorate, and next day they were obliged to camp through heavy rain setting in. So plenteous was the downpour that their camp-fire was extinguished and their stores considerably damaged. Either too much or too little water seems to be the order of the day in these treacherous regions. Having dried their provisions, they pushed on, and soon met with a spinifex desert, over which progress was well-nigh impossible. Having, with much toil, reached the hundred and sixteenth meridian, they made their first really important discovery, being a fine river. It flowed from the south, and its channel was about two hundred yards wide. This they named the Fortescue, in compliment to the then Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Tracing up its course, they met with a party of aboriginals, who would give no information, and fled into the bush. After six days travel up the valley over some fairly good country, the channel growing narrower and the ground more stony, they found themselves on the 5th of June completely hemmed in by precipitous cliffs, which compelled them to abandon the river-bed. A high range had been from time to time sighted, running parallel with the stream some ten miles off. Gregory determined to reach this, and turned south. The intervening country was of a most difficult description. However, they reached the hills, which was called the Hammersley Range, where high cliffs completely barred their progress; and, after many endeavours to find a passage, they again reached the Fortescue. Hoping that this river would lead them to a pass, they carefully examined its course, and for a time were unsuccessful; but at last they discovered the channel which penetrated the barrier cliffs. This was on the 12th of June, and in about the twenty-third parallel. Two of the highest peaks were named Mounts Samson and Bruce, and having ascended one of these summits, which stood two thousand seven hundred feet above the sea-level, Gregory, who had found great difficulty in following the channel, noticed a small ravine, which he thought would lead them to some promising country to the southward. After extreme hardship, owing to the rocky nature of the country, they reached some fairly good land with

abundance of water. This soon changed, however, and by the 14th of June they had neither grass nor water. For some days afterwards they suffered from the same cause, and the leader fell ill owing to his having experimentally eaten certain seeds, which he fancied would prove nutritious. Their horses being much distressed and footsore, Gregory resolved to divide his party. Accordingly, with three men, seven horses, and eight days' rations, he left on the 22nd to examine the territory which lay between the range and the Lyons River. After thirty miles rough travelling, a large stream was found flowing westwards. It was called the Ashburton, in honour of the President of the Geographical Society. Although at this time the channel was only about a hundred yards in width, the explorer was of opinion that the rainy season would probably make it six times as broad. Following the stream up for some distance, it turned in a N.W. direction.

Gregory now left the stream, and proceeded south over rocky country full of ridges, chiefly consisting of schist. One of the hills met with was named the Capricorn, owing, I suppose, to its being in that tropic. On the 24th, they found themselves in mountainous, rugged country, and having ascended a sandstone table-land, Mount Augustus was seen at the head of the Lyons. The mountain was distant some eighty miles, and the country seemed most promising for many miles around.

The explorers now struck for the coast, well satisfied with their discoveries. Passing through the Hammersley Range, they reached a small stream, which was named the Sherlock. They met with considerable privation, and, as usual, the horses were the worst sufferers. One poor beast, whose hoofs were worn off, had to be abandoned. At length, in a pitiable condition, they reached the coast some forty miles from Nickol Bay, and on the 19th they came to the rendezvous where the *Dolphin* lay.

After ten days' well-earned rest, Gregory again set out, having lost only one horse. He had now eighty-seven days' provisions, which enabled him to allow each man one pound of flour and seven ounces of meat daily. Following an easterly course, they came upon a watercourse having a sandy bed some three hundred yards wide. Here he found both water and grass, and named the stream the Yule River. Taking with him two

men, he began tracing up the stream, and after fairly easy travelling for a few days, they camped on the 19th, about the twenty-first parallel, and the hundred and nineteenth meridian. Next day, they came on a river flowing through very rocky banks, which was named the Strelly. Subsequently the travellers came on a creek well stocked with fish, which they called Glen Herring, and which they traced up till they came on a large stream. This was about two hundred yards wide, and was named the Shaw, after the Secretary of the Geographical Society. Across fine grassy plains, and hilly country, they held their way, until on the 26th they struck another river flowing N.E. It received the designation of the De Grey, after another President of the same Society. From thence proceeding, with sadly disabled horses, over a stony tract of country, they emerged on an immense plain abundantly covered with white grass. Crossing this, they discovered another stream, upon the banks of which the tea-tree grew in wild profusion. The Oakover was the name selected. The shade of the trees was very refreshing to the tired men as they travelled up its banks. Gregory now wishing to travel eastward, had reluctantly to leave this fertile territory. Passing through a neighbouring range, to his disappointment he found himself in a miserable, dismal desert, consisting of red sand ridges. He was determined, if possible, to cross this horrible tract of country. With two companions he travelled about eighteen miles, but his wretched animals completely broke down; so, after a terribly distressing journey, there was nothing for it but to return to their last camping place, where a pool of water existed. On the 4th of September they reached the camp. Here he remained for one day, after which, on the 6th, he set out again with two companions and six horses, leaving the others behind, with orders to fall back upon the Oakover River if they ran short of water. Gregory and his companions had now an awful experience. They travelled four miles the first day; and, after making three miles the next day, one of the horses gave in. They left the poor beast under a tree, and his men driving on the others, Gregory went ahead to seek for water. Not a drop was to be found, and the leader was well-nigh driven to desperation. The thermometer rose to over 100° F., and their case seemed almost hopeless. The explorer then resolved, as a last chance, to endeavour to reach the camp, which was now over thirty miles away. Starting at daybreak, they made but slow

progress, and when the sun got up they could barely move their weary limbs. They had, too, the dread anxiety that, if the others had gone back to the Oakover, they were inevitably doomed to perish. As a final resource, Mr. Brown—one of the weary band—was sent forward in all haste, the others to follow as best they might. Gregory and his comrade now dropped behind, and as they neared their destination they saw evidences of the desperate struggle Brown had sustained. On the burning sands of the desert could be seen saddles, guns, &c., which their advance guard had been obliged to leave behind. Having reached within nine miles of their destination by the evening, they despaired of ever traversing the remaining distance. After an awful night of suffering, they again moved forward in an absolutely fainting condition. Having staggered through half of their dreadful pilgrimage, to their unspeakable relief Brown was seen approaching, bringing fresh horses; and thus, after having barely escaped from the jaws of death, the leader rejoined his party. Mr. Brown lost two horses while on his perilous trip, but recovered the articles which he had dropped on the way.

Gregory now came to the self-evident conclusion that to cross this desert with the means at his disposal was impossible. He felt certain that if he could have managed it, he would have reached a fertile territory, watered by streams. But his path was inexorably barred.

To follow down the Oakover to the northward now appeared to be his only course, and this he adopted. On the 18th of September the party reached the confluence of this river with the De Grey, travelling over fertile land. The latter river flowed from the S.E., and joined the former in lat. 20° 36'. The river—now called the De Grey—was then followed down through fertile territory. On their journey they surprised a native camp in full enjoyment of an aboriginal supper. The blacks bolted, leaving their repast to the mercy of the explorers. Fish, rats, beans, grass-seed cake, and a beverage made from some oily substance! Who shall say that the black starves in his native wilds? Apparently, from the variety of the *menu*, he lives luxuriously. The natives soon afterwards, however, regretted their hasty departure, and made pursuit. A hungry man is said to be an angry man at all times; in any case they followed the explorers up, and threw spears both at horses and men. As usual, they were chased away by powder and shot.

No other incident of much interest occurred during their journey to the coast, which they reached on the 25th of September. Following the shore, they, after severe toil and privation, regained the ship at Nickol Bay on the 17th of October. A week afterwards, horses, stores, &c., were on board, and the 9th of the next month saw them at Fremantle. So ended one of the most successful expeditions in those regions of Australia.

Mr. Frank Gregory certainly was eminently distinguished for zeal, energy, courage and skill; and, moreover, his remarks on the physical features of the country were specially valuable for their minuteness and precision. Rivers had been found where aridity was supposed to exist, and it is little wonder that the South Australians hailed the news with wonder and delight.

During this same year Messrs. Dempster, Clarkson, and Harper undertook an expedition at their own expense, starting from Northam in the hopes of penetrating eastward into a good country. They had thick scrub and salt marshes to contend with. Having started on the 3rd of July, 1861, they met with but little success—sand and granite being about all they saw. Their diary contains, however, some interesting, although fabulous accounts of a great traveller called Boodgin, and of white men being killed by *jimbras*. These creatures—something like monkeys, according to the aboriginal story—are extremely dangerous, and seem to be a sort of tangible and visible kind of devil. But the real devil, *ginka*, though quite as fierce, was always invisible. The aboriginal native is distinctly unreliable as regards ordinary matters; but when he dilates on demonology, we may as well give his story up as an unanswerable conundrum.

Having thus striven to penetrate eastward in all directions, the explorers turned back, having added, perhaps, little to the knowledge already gained regarding the interior, save that it was possible to make way through the scrub to the eastward. I mention the names of these three independent pioneers at the conclusion of this chapter, in order to perpetuate, so far as lies in my power, the memories of those who, unassisted by Government, went forth with their own horses and equipment, and contributed much to the discovery in Australia. The State-aided expeditions no doubt accomplished the vast majority of the work, just as our regular army might well be expected to do in time of war. Still, the irregulars, volunteers and others, are well entitled to their place in history.



CHAPTER XV.

The Expedition of Mr. J. McDouall Stuart to the Centre of the Australian Continent.

HAVE already referred to the niggardly treatment which explorers experienced at the hands of the South Australian Parliament. It will be remembered that while they refused either pecuniary recompense or lease of land to Mr. John McDouall Stuart in return for his maps, plans, field-books and so forth—they nevertheless made a general offer of a large pecuniary reward to the man who should first—at his own expense—cross the Australian Continent from sea to sea, in a north and south direction. Stuart determined, if possible, to win this prize, and accordingly in March, 1860, he started from Chamber's Creek, accompanied by Messrs. Keckwick and Head, taking with him thirteen horses. Having halted at Beresford Springs, they found themselves on the site of a recent native battle-field. The corpse of a tall aboriginal was lying on the ground, the hands having been cut or gnawed off, and the feet pointing to the N.W. The skull was fractured in several places, and the flesh had been partially devoured by wild dogs and crows. Near at hand were several huts, and scattered round were waddies, spears, boomerangs and broken dishes—the latter weapons having possibly been used as missiles by the lady combatants. The travellers were struck by the fact that this defunct warrior seemed—contrary to native customs—to have been denied the honour of the usual funeral rites. By way perhaps, of compensation for absence of the ordinary ceremony, a handful of hair

had been torn from the scalp of the deceased, and, along with a bunch of emu feathers, placed between two pieces of half burnt wood, the hair pointing to the S.E., and the feathers to the N.W. With this it is to be hoped the spirit of the dead was set at rest.

On the 17th of March the Neales River was reached, and from this point the travellers began their exploration of unknown territory. Stuart resolved to trace up the course of this stream as far as possible, and found the country on its banks swampy and extremely difficult to travel over. Water and vegetation was plentiful, however, and by the 24th of the month Heed's Range was sighted to the S.W. Having halted to rest, and make good certain damages which their packs had sustained, the leader made a short excursion to reconnoitre, but with no practical result. After a delay of twenty-four hours the party again moved forward in a north-easterly direction, and having travelled some thirty-five miles, struck three creeks at their point of junction. One of these was named the Trew, and on its banks were seen many traces of the aborigines. Taking thereafter a northerly course, they reached Ross Creek, and afterwards the Stevenson River, a broad stream with grassy banks, and bearing every appearance of permanency. It flowed to the eastward, and emptied its waters into Lake Eyre.

Passing over a region of scrub with ironstone soil, they reached and named Mount Beddome; but from its summit saw very little to encourage them. The country wore an appearance of endless monotony as they pushed their way towards the interior; still the leader was sanguine of an improved state of affairs when they had finally left the watershed of Lake Eyre behind them. Mount Humphries was reached on the 4th of April, and having ascended it, a more cheering view gladdened their eyes towards the northward. Taking this course they discovered a fine watercourse, which they named the Finke, in compliment to one of Stuart's financial supporters. They crossed this creek—not without considerable peril, for it was full of quicksands—and came upon a tract of country composed chiefly of drifting red sandhills and spinifex grass. A somewhat tedious journey of a dozen miles or so brought the explorer to that extraordinary natural obelisk known as Chambers' Pillar. Standing on the summit of a hill about one hundred feet in height, was a huge monolith of sandstone one hundred and fifty feet high and twenty feet wide, with two

separate peaks on its summit. It was surrounded by several remarkable hills, having the appearance of ruined castles. This strange column is almost in the same latitude as Tower Almond, at the source of the Belyando River, mentioned by Sir Thomas Mitchell. I may mention that the pillar received its designation to perpetuate the name of Mr. Chambers, one of the most liberal promoters of Stuart's expedition, and who died in 1862 before the explorer's work was fully accomplished.

The leader next advanced towards red sandstone hills, which were called the James Range, and soon struck Hugh Creek. To the northward they could see some strange-looking crags and bluffs, towards which they steered; and on their way encountered a small range, which presented most formidable difficulties. Perpendicular precipices, huge rocks and dense thickets of scrub, made their progress well nigh impossible. Indeed they were in a pitiful state, ragged, footsore, and well-nigh dead-beat, when they at last succeeded in crossing the hills. Having reached the head of the Hugh River, they encamped to recruit and repair damages. By the 10th of April they had reached the further hills already referred to. The neighbourhood was richly grassed, and the range was named after Mr. George Marsden Waterhouse, then Chief Secretary of South Australia. Passing over a fine pasture country, they noted considerable change in the vegetation, and, having unfortunately eaten the kernel which grew on a kind of palm, and tasted like a potato when roasted, several of the party were extremely ill. Having recovered, they pushed on, and soon came on what Stuart considered the first *real* range he had met with since leaving Flinder's Range. Its direction was east and west, and it was given the name of McDonnell Range, after the Governor of the Colony. One of the principal bluffs was named after Major Brinkley, and another hill was called Mount Hay. The masses of metamorphic rock of which this range consists are five miles in width, and it gains special importance from the fact that it forms the division between the northern and southern waters of the district.

Another range to the N.E. was met with, and given the name of Mr. Henry Strangways, Minister of Lands, who had superintended the arrangements of the expedition. After leaving this scrubby territory, open country was encountered, and water became very scarce. They were now within the tropics, and the leader became oppressed with the

fear that he might be obliged to turn back. A night of great anxiety was passed, but next day he ascended a hill, and to his great joy sighted a small creek to the eastward. The hill was called Mount Freeling, after the Surveyor-General, and the range to which it belonged named after the Hon. Thomas Reynolds, Premier of South Australia. On the 19th the party advanced towards the creek which Stuart had seen, but their progress was barred by masses of sharp rock. They soon found an abundance of excellent grass, however, and a few miles further on another creek, besides two rocky reservoirs, full to the brim. They now moved forward with lighter hearts, and found the country improving as they advanced. Another creek was reached, and their eyes were gladdened by the sight of luxuriant grass and bright coloured flowers. On the 21st they encamped by a rainwater pool, their only anxiety being slight symptoms of scurvy which afflicted them.

Next day was a very important one for Stuart, and likewise a red-letter day in the history of Australian Exploration. The entry in the explorer's journal is as follows:—"I find from my observations of the sun that I am now encamped in the CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA. About two and-a-half miles to the N.N.E. is a high mound. I wish it had been in the centre. I shall go to it to-morrow and build a cone of stones, plant the British flag, and name it Central Mount Stuart. Splendid grass all round." It must have been indeed a proud moment for Mr. Stuart, when, with three cheers, the Union Jack unfurled itself over that lonely spot, and a bottle was buried containing an account of their discovery. It must be admitted that this explorer was exceptionally fortunate in the line of route he happened to select. Sturt, Eyre, Leichardt and Gregory had all aimed for this same spot, and after dreadful hardships and terrible sufferings had to give in; whereas this lucky traveller had gained his object with comparatively little trouble. Central Mount Stuart rose to a height of about two thousand feet, and was the southernmost point of a sandstone range which extended to the northward. Grass was abundant, and a native orange tree was plentifully distributed throughout the neighbourhood. There was likewise a peculiarly fine class of rose, having a strong perfume and a seed vessel resembling a gherkin. Truly a surprise for those who had always pictured the centre of the Continent as the very acme of desolation and aridity.

Having rested some four days, the party again proceeded on their journey, taking a westerly route towards a peak which could be seen in the distance. On the first night they had to camp without water, but next day, after a weary march of nearly forty miles, they reached two hills, named Mount Denison and Mount Leichardt. Near the latter hill they happily found a permanent supply, with a sufficiency of grass and vegetation. Here they observed many signs of natives, but saw none. In order to lose no time, Stuart and Keckwick now made excursions in different directions, leaving the camp in Mr. Head's charge. On the 28th, Stuart ascended Mount Denison, reaching its lofty summit after a weary climb of eight hours. A promising scene lay before him. Broken ranges and wooded plains extended to the southward, while a high hill could be seen in the distance. To the westward, where the ranges ended, an elevated plateau was visible, beyond which a boundless plain stretched to the horizon. Whilst contemplating this scene, and reflecting on the grand possibilities for future settlement afforded by these vast unexplored areas, the leader was much alarmed by a sight which met his gaze. Midway down the mountain he had left his horse tied to a tree, and about this point—so far as he could judge—a column of smoke was rising into the air. Evidently blacks were in the neighbourhood; and it was impossible to predict what attitude they might assume. As a matter of fact, however, when he descended in haste, he found his horse safe, and the natives were, as yet, invisible. The explorers now left Mount Denison, and after eighteen miles' travel over a spinifex desert, reached Mount Barkly, which hill derived its name from Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Victoria. Water again became extremely scarce, but they kept pushing on through a most repellent tract of country. On the 1st of May they struck a dry creek, which they named the Fisher, after the President of the Legislation Council. A small well was discovered in the bed of this watercourse, which barely supplied their wants. They now took a westerly route in the hope of finding water, but none was to be found; and with the exception of two hills (Mount Turnbull and Mount Arthur) they met with nothing but a dreary arid of desert of red sand, covered with patches of spinifex, and the whole district totally devoid of water. There was no alternative but to return, and their retreat was fraught with difficulty and danger through lack of water. On their

way they discovered curious footprints, which were very different from those of the aboriginals they had hitherto come across. They were not broad and flat, as the tracks of the black fellows usually are; but long and narrow, with a deep hollow in the instep—the large toe projecting to a considerable extent. Stuart says in his journal that, had he come across the tracks on the previous day, he would have followed them up; but now the state of his horses was so precarious that his only hope of saving their lives was to reach the native well in Fisher Creek with all possible speed. Fortune again befriended the explorers, for their weary footsteps were led to a water hole, where, having refreshed themselves and their well-nigh dying horses, they afterwards made their way to the Fisher. From this point they pushed on to Mount Denison, where illness, consequent on privations and exhaustion, detained them for three days.

The leader now resolved to return to Central Mount Stuart, and by following the course of a large gum creek, which they had named the Hanson, in a N.E. direction, to find, if possible, a well-watered route to the sea coast. In pursuance of this object, they left Mount Denison on the 12th of May, and in two days reached the centre of the Continent. Neither horses nor men were in fit condition for further exploration. The former had almost succumbed for want of water, and were in a miserable state; while the leader himself was suffering from scurvy. He had also fallen from his horse, and rode with great pain. His journal tells us that his hands were a complete mass of unhealed sores, his mouth and gums so sore that he could only eat boiled flour and water, whilst the aching in his limbs and muscles was insufferable. Keckwick was also suffering from bad hands, resulting from scurvy. Being thus completely prostrated, Stuart unwillingly resigned himself to taking a few days' rest, while Keckwick travelled northward in search of permanent water. He brought back somewhat favourable news, having struck water in Hanson Creek. One cannot help almost regretting that he met with any encouragement to advance; for assuredly, Stuart—under the circumstances—was risking valuable lives with but small prospect of success. They moved forward at a very slow pace, and found another creek, which was named the Stirling, and near which was a native encampment. The blacks bolted immediately on seeing the white intruders, and all that was noted by the explorers was the odd circumstance

that they had no hair on their heads. Having reached the range from which the Stirling flowed, they named it the Crawford, and another range further N.E., the Foster. A high peak in the latter range was called after Count Strzelecki. From the summit of this mountain was sighted, far to the northward, another range, which was designated the Davenport, after Sir Samuel Davenport. The leader admits the frightful exertions it cost him to accomplish the ascent in his miserable state of health; and, moreover, he was sadly disappointed at the unpromising appearance of the country. After fifty miles of travel over waterless plains of sand and scrub, the range was reached. It was composed of hard red sandstone, and in its neighbourhood only one small pool of water was to be found. Here they encamped for a day, and the leader's health having somewhat improved, he resolved on another effort to advance if any practicable route could be found. Accordingly, the ever-willing Keckwick went forward alone to reconnoitre. He did not return until next day, having been taken suddenly ill on his journey; and his absence caused his comrades great anxiety. His report was favourable, and after another day's halt they moved on. A fine creek was reached on the 1st of June, which was named the Bonney, after Mr. Charles Bonney, Member of the Legislative Assembly. A wide tributary was next discovered, which was called the McLaren, and the explorers having forded both streams, directed their steps to some ranges visible at a great distance in a N.W. direction. They reached the hills on the 5th of June, and from one of the peaks Stuart surveyed the surrounding country. It appeared most unpromising. Still trusting to fortune, they advanced, and after travelling some five miles, fell in with another creek called the Goodiar. Next day, after traversing a spinifex desert interspersed with numerous small creeks, they came upon a watercourse called Tennant's Creek—afterwards one of the stations on the Overland Telegraph Line. On their way thither they were surprised to notice old tracks, which much resembled the hoof prints of horses, and which puzzled them not a little. The explorers do not seem to have advanced any theory as to their origin, however, and may have doubted whether they were the marks of horses at all. A well-known authority on Australian exploration suggests that they might possibly have been Leichardt's tracks, in these words:—“Supposing him to have gone up the Flinders, and to have reached the

watershed found by McKinlay—had he then struck to the westward, he might have crossed about this latitude.”

On the 7th of June, Bishop's Creek was reached, and followed to a tableland consisting of ironstone, granite, quartz and red sandstone. It was named after the Right Rev. Dr. Short, Bishop of Adelaide, and found to extend in a N.W. direction. As the explorers pushed on for a time, all seemed promising so far as grass and water was concerned. The country soon changed, however, grass and water giving place to sand and scrub. Three hundred miles now separated them from the source of the Victoria River, and they made desperate exertions to advance. But all their efforts were unavailing, and to fall back on Bishop's Creek was the only course open to them. Unfortunately they took a southerly route, and found themselves in a still more pitiable plight. Three of their horses died from want of water, and it was with unparalleled toil that they at length arrived at the creek in an utterly exhausted condition.

They rested several days at this watercourse, and received a visit from four natives, who were decidedly hostile in their demeanour, brandishing their spears, and gesticulating in a threatening manner. Eventually, however, they became sufficiently pacified to be approached with safety. The result of a conference was far from satisfactory. They professed to comprehend nothing, and gave no information. The only clothing worn by the quartette was a red net, which adorned the head of the tallest savage. In spite of bodily weakness and vexatious discouragement, Stuart determined to make yet another attempt to cross the Continent. Abiding fame and a substantial sum of money were certainly worth striving for, and he had already accomplished a great portion of the heavy task he had undertaken. Accordingly, on the 18th of June they again advanced, this time taking a direction east of north. Ten miles' travel brought them to a fine watercourse, which they named Phillip's Creek. There they camped for the night, and next day, having crossed Short's Range, they arrived at a marshy plain, in which were numerous water pools. They called these Keckwick's Ponds; and, judging that a northerly course would lead them into difficulties, they steered their course to the eastward. Their selection proved most unfortunate. Scrub, ironstone and granite rocks, with occasional grassy patches, were

encountered, but no water was to be found. They managed to get back to Keckwick's Ponds just in time to save their horses. Here they again rested, and deliberated on further action. Several natives made their appearance, and, although apparently in a friendly mood, were inclined to steal anything they could lay hands on. One of them wore a sort of helmet, fashioned of net-work and feathers, the significance of which was quite unknown to the explorers. An old man, who seemed to be the father of the helmeted black, was very loquacious; but his chatter conveyed no information whatever. Regarding him, Stuart writes:—"I have endeavoured by signs to get information from him as to where the next water is; but we cannot understand each other. After some time, and having conferred with his two sons, he turned round and surprised me by giving me one of the Masonic signs. I looked at him steadily; he repeated it, and so did his two sons. I then returned it, which seemed to please him very much, the old man patting me on the shoulder and stroking down my beard."

It is, I think, to be regretted that Mr. Stuart did not give the elderly savage a few more signs just to see if the one exhibited was an accidental gesture, which, I think, is only too probable. It would be interesting indeed to find that the aborigines had among them a few free and accepted Masons; and how they came to belong to the Craft would be a most fascinating problem. Probably the strongest evidence against the authenticity of the Masonic sign is their subsequent treatment of a brother Mason. Stuart and his companions still continued their northward course, indulging in the vain hope of reaching a stream which would lead them to the Gulf of Carpentaria. Having reached a creek, they were examining its course for signs of a favourable route, when natives were observed, following and watching them. The explorers paid no attention, and in the evening, having found no water further down, they returned to the place where they had forded the watercourse. It was now the 25th of June, and they were in latitude $18^{\circ} 47'$, having penetrated to within about two hundred miles of the head of the Gulf. Darkness was falling upon the travellers, when suddenly out of the adjacent scrub there rushed a number of well-armed natives, who surrounded them, uttering loud cries. Placing their horses near the creek, and getting between them and the blacks, they held their guns

in readiness to fire. To quote the explorer's journal:—"I told the men to get their guns ready, for I could see they were bent on mischief. They paid no regard to the signs of friendship I kept constantly making, but were still gradually approaching nearer. I felt very unwilling to fire upon them, and continued making signs of peace and friendship, but all to no purpose. The old man—the leader—who was in advance, made signs with his boomerang for us to be off. This proved to be a sign of defiance, for I had no sooner turned my horse's head to see if that were what they wished, than we received a shower of boomerangs, accompanied by a fearful yell. They then commenced jumping, dancing, yelling, and throwing their arms in all sorts of positions, like so many fiends, and setting fire to the grass. Still I felt very unwilling to fire upon them, and tried to make them understand that we wished to do them no harm. They now came to within forty yards of us, and again made a charge, throwing their boomerangs and spears, one of which struck my horse, and the rest came whistling and whizzing past our ears. I then gave orders to fire, which stayed their mad career for a little."

Terrified at the firing, their pack-horses stampeded, and the blacks endeavoured to steal them. They feared the firearms, however, and eventually went away, after following the explorers to their camp of the previous night. It was now forced upon Stuart that to persevere in his attempt to cross the Continent would be sheer madness. Four times had he been baffled, and he had now to yield to the inevitable. So small a party could not cope with hostile natives, and a still more urgent reason for returning lay in the fact that two-thirds of his rations were exhausted. Accordingly, on the 27th of June, the party turned their faces homeward, full of bitter disappointment at having to abandon their project. Still, Stuart had been singularly fortunate, and had accomplished more than any of his predecessors towards solving the problem of the Australian interior. Their return journey was made with ease and rapidity, the line of country being familiar to them. At Bonney's Creek, Stuart actually began to contemplate another effort to reach the Victoria River, and the party halted for six days in expectation of rain, which (happily, perhaps) did not fall. The dry watercourse may, indeed, have been the salvation of the party. Having reached the Hanson Creek, near Central Mount

Stuart, they were followed by blacks, who, however, did not molest them. They were wonderfully fortunate in finding water, although Hugh and Finke Creeks had been dried up since their outward journey. Stuart's health was, however, completely broken down, the scurvy re-appearing in a violent and painful form. Much delay was caused through this malady, which often prevented him sitting on his horse. His two companions also suffered in a minor degree, and had water failed them all the travellers must have perished. They managed, however, to reach settled districts by the end of August, thus terminating one of the most important and successful expeditions in the annals of Australian Exploration.





CHAPTER XVI.

The Expedition of Messrs. Burke and Wills. The Travellers Reach the Gulf of Carpentaria.



HE expedition now to be chronicled is in some respects entitled to the chief place in the history of Australian Exploration. Not that it was by any means the most successful, however; for it was, to a great extent, a rank failure; nor that it was well planned and managed; for it displayed an unparalleled tissue of unpardonable blunders. Nevertheless, it derives its importance from the fact that the two leaders were the first Europeans who crossed the Australian Continent to the Gulf of Carpentaria; also from its splendid equipment; from the noble generosity of its disinterested promoters; from the great popular ovation which was accorded to the exploring party on their departure from Melbourne; and finally from its world-wide advertisement. Another circumstance which makes this expedition specially memorable, is its having been initiated and supported by the compact, prosperous Colony of Victoria, which—having herself been thoroughly explored from boundary to boundary—had nothing to gain but the honour of having advanced scientific enterprise in the great Island Continent, of which she formed a part.

The prime mover in the project was Mr. Ambrose Kyte, an early resident, who had by his own industry risen from obscurity to wealth. In 1858, this gentleman, through the *Melbourne Argus*, offered the sum of

£1,000 towards the expenses of an exploring expedition to cross Australia from the south to the northern coast. Thus encouraged, the Royal Society of Victoria took the matter up with such zeal that by the next year the sum of £3,200 was raised. The Victorian Government then came to the front, and altogether the amount of £12,000 was at the disposal of an ill-selected body, known as the Exploration Committee. Although they were all men of good standing and undoubted integrity, only two of their number had the least practical experience of exploration. This unfortunate fact was, no doubt, the original cause of the melancholy disasters which ensued. Money being plentiful, it was decided that the exploring party should have the assistance of camels; and accordingly Mr. George James Landells was despatched to Peshawar, and in due time brought back twenty-four animals and several native drivers. There was considerable difficulty and delay in the selection of a leader for this great and important enterprise. There was probably a natural desire that the honour should fall to a resident of the Colony; but Victoria, for obvious reasons, was but ill-supplied with men suitable for the purpose, and the Committee decided, if possible, to enlist the services of that well-trying leader, Mr. Augustus Charles Gregory. He declined; but offered some valuable suggestions, which it was decided to carry out. He likewise recommended Major Warburton for the command; but certain objections were raised, and, after much discussion, the choice eventually fell on Mr. Robert O'Hara Burke, who held the position of Inspector of Mounted Police at Castlemaine. He had previously been in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and had also served with the Austrian cavalry, in both of which careers he had acquitted himself with credit and distinction. As an explorer, however, he had little or no experience. Of bushcraft he knew next to nothing, and the same may be said regarding his knowledge of surveying, inland navigation, and Australian geography. It appears that his application was strongly supported by the Chairman of Committee, Sir William Stawell. Thus, in default of a first-class experienced man, this fatal selection was endorsed; and thus was sealed the fate of the expedition. Mr. Landells, who had fetched the camels, was appointed second in command—another blunder—for, as will be seen, he contributed not a little to the failure of the scheme. Third in command was Mr. William John Wills. He was a native of a district in

England, which had produced some of our greatest heroes in days gone by, having been born in Totnes, Devonshire, on January 5th, 1834. At the age of eighteen he sought his fortune in Victoria, and took the humble position of shepherd in the Edward River. He afterwards obtained a situation in the Survey Department, where he showed great ability, and in 1858 he became assistant to Professor Neumayer, at the Melbourne Observatory. Dr. Hermann Beckler was engaged as surgeon and botanist, and Dr. Ludwig Becker, as artist, naturalist and geologist. The other members of the party were W. O. Hodgkinson, Charles J. Ferguson, Thomas F. McDonogh, William Paton, Patrick Langan, Owen Cowen, William Brahe, Robert Fletcher, John King, Charles Gray, Henry Creher, John Dickford, and three Sepoy camel drivers. Twelve months' provisions, weighing about twenty-one tons, were supplied, and no expense was spared in the way of general equipment.

All preliminary preparations having been completed, the whole cavalcade paraded in the Royal Park, and some ten thousand of Melbourne's citizens assembled to take final leave of the travellers, being much interested in the camels, which beasts of burden were quite new to the Colony. It was a gay and enthusiastic concourse, bitterly contrasting with the sad events which twelve months were to disclose. Never did an expedition start with so much pomp and ceremony. The Mayor of the city, advancing to the leader, spoke as follows:—

“Mr. Burke, I am fully aware that the grand assemblage this day, while it has impeded your movement in starting, is, at the same time, a source of much gratification to you. It assures you of the most sincere sympathy of the citizens. I will no longer detain you; but for this crowd, and on behalf of the Colony at large, I say, ‘God speed you.’”

To this valedictory speech Mr. Burke made reply as follows:—

“Mr. Mayor, on behalf of myself and the expedition, I beg to return you my most sincere thanks. No expedition has ever started under such favourable circumstances as this. The people, the Government, the Committee—all have done heartily what they could. It is now our turn, and we shall never count it success, till we justify what you have done, in showing what we can do.”

The instructions which Burke received were somewhat indefinite as to detail. To explore Central Australia, and reach the shores of Carpentaria

Gulf, somewhere near the Albert River of Stokes, was the general object before him. Likewise he was to form a depôt at Cooper's Creek, on the Barcoo River, in accordance with Mr. A. C. Gregory's advice. The party being so large, and the baggage being so cumbersome, they made but slow progress towards the junction of the Murray and Darling Rivers, besides which various dissensions soon arose between some of the officers and their leader. When they reached the township of Menindie, near Laidley's Ponds (discovered by Mitchell), matters came to a crisis. Mr. Landells insisted on managing the camels in his own way, and, having come into conflict with the leader, he resigned his post. I may mention that a cause for friction existed even before they left Melbourne. It appears that Landells demanded from the Exploration Committee a larger sum than that which had been allotted to the leader. The camels being in his special charge, and Burke being careless of money reward, the latter made no demur; but such a financial arrangement could not fail to be subversive of discipline and harmony. Dr. Beckler also expressed his intention of leaving, and the two malcontents forthwith returned to Melbourne, a distance of about four hundred miles. On his arrival at the capital, Landells publicly expressed his conviction that under Burke's management the expedition was bound to prove a disastrous failure.

I must also state that the successful issue of the project was much endangered by the party starting late in August. This was clearly the wrong season of the year. Before the Darling could be reached, many of the watercourses and wells might be expected to have dried up, and although the wet months on the north coast are from December till the end of February, the south coast and the interior would have to be dealt with at a most unfavourable time. Some of the camels having already showed signs of distress, and also owing to the defection of his second in command, Burke thought it advisable to alter his original plans. He first filled up the vacancy made by Landells' retirement by appointing Mr. Wills to be second in command. No selection could have been wiser or more judicious, but his next move was a most serious blunder. The sheep station at Menindie was superintended by an overseer called Wright, who professed an intimate knowledge with the whole surrounding district, and offered to lead the party northward, to Cooper's Creek,

by a better track than that chosen by Sturt in 1845. In spite of the fact that he was a man of no education—so ignorant indeed that he could scarcely write a letter—the leader made up his mind to appoint Wright to be third in command. Any social or other qualities which would elevate him somewhat above the rank and file were, in this man, conspicuously lacking; and eventually he proved himself quite unsuited for the post, and was accounted the most blameworthy of all the leaders. The sun was rapidly drying up the water, and withering the herbage, as was to be expected. The leader, therefore, resolved on dividing his party. The stores and main body were to remain at Menindie, while—with six men, fifteen horses and sixteen camels—he and Mr. Wills were to push forward to Cooper's Creek. Under Wright's guidance they left the main depôt on the 19th of October, and in ten days arrived at Torowotto. From here Burke sent a despatch to the Exploration Committee, in which he stated that he had travelled since he left Menindie over two hundred miles of finely grassed country, abundantly supplied with creeks and water-holes. Certainly Wright had so far fulfilled his promise to guide them over a well watered route, and doubtless Burke felt well satisfied in having selected him as a subordinate leader. This man was now instructed to return to Menindie, and—having assumed the command—to bring forward the rear party and stores to Cooper's Creek. He bore with him a letter, in which Burke stated his conviction thus: "If Mr. Wright is allowed to follow out the instructions I have given him, I am confident that the result will be satisfactory." He also asked that Wright's appointment should be confirmed, and said that he required a further supply of dried meat—a somewhat strange request under the circumstances. Having arrived at Menindie, Wright sent off a man named Hodgkinson to Melbourne, with Burke's despatch, and added one of his own, stating that more horses would be needed in order to carry the stores to Cooper's Creek. Hodgkinson made a very rapid journey; for, starting on the 19th of November, he arrived on the 30th, thus covering a distance of four hundred miles in eleven days. The Committee were naturally astonished to hear that a further outlay would be needed. The money entrusted to them had been already spent, and it was understood that every possible requisite had been supplied. The Governor of Victoria came forward, however, with a guarantee for £400. Wright's appointment as third officer was

confirmed by the Committee; and Hodgkinson, having faithfully and speedily fulfilled his mission, rejoined the depôt at Menindie on the 9th of January, 1861. The various separations of Burke's party—one of which we have just recorded—makes it somewhat difficult to trace the progress of the expedition in anything like a continuous fashion. In pursuance of the best method in my power, however; I must now leave Wright's party at Menindie, and follow the footsteps of the leader and his companions. According to a despatch received by the Committee on the 30th of January, he left Torowotto on the 31st of October; and, taking a route somewhat to the eastward of Sturt's, over a well grassed and watered country, arrived in due time at a watercourse called Wright's Creek. After this they had to travel over very stony ground until they reached the Barcoo, or Cooper's River. They had accomplished the entire journey from Menindie in exactly three weeks, without suffering to any extent from privation or exhaustion; and they were very favourably impressed with the creek and its surroundings. Fine trees were on its banks, and grass was abundant. For over a week they carefully examined the course of the river, travelling very slowly in order to recruit the animals, and at the same time enable them to select the most desirable location for a depôt. On the 20th they chose a place which seemed suitable, but they were driven out by hordes of rats, and compelled to move further down the stream. About half way towards Sturt's crossing a depôt was eventually established; where, although grass and water were abundant, flies, mosquitoes, and rats proved a very great nuisance.

The explorers now made no less than five protracted and wearisome trips to the northward, with the view of finding a route between the lines taken by Gregory and Sturt. The experience thus gained was most disappointing. Wills rode ninety miles, and found no water, but lost his camels, which escaped during the night. The party were therefore obliged to walk back to the depôt, and had they not providentially met with a pool, would probably have perished. To find this water-hole, the leader, accompanied by Wills and King, made a journey of some seventy miles, but failed to trace it. Subsequently Wills and King made another attempt, and having reached the pool, searched and found saddles, &c., which had been left behind. Having thus wasted about a month in fruitless endeavours

to find a safe resting place to the northward, Burke and his companions busied themselves in making every preparation for a start, so that no further delay should take place when Wright arrived with the main party and stores from Menindie. Two horses were killed and their flesh dried, while the remainder were shod. The equipment and accoutrements were overhauled; and, being thus fully occupied, they waited patiently for the tardy advent of the third in command. To Burke the delay was as unaccountable as intolerable. Two months had elapsed since he left the main depôt, and Wright's instructions were clear. The leader had covered the ground between Menindie and Cooper's Creek in twenty-one days, and, making every allowance for a more heavily burdened train, he naturally thought that the rear party had had ample time to reach the depôt on the Barcoo. As will be seen hereafter, Wright, for many reasons of his own, and under various pretexts, did not start from Menindie until the 26th of January, nearly six weeks after this date. At length Burke lost his patience, his temper, and finally his head. He seemed to forget the objects for which his expedition had been fitted out, and, to use his own expression, he determined there and then "to dash into the interior and cross the Continent at all hazards." Flinging prudence to the winds, his idea seems to have been to make a record journey across Australia, leaving his botanist, geologist and naturalist behind. He—whose chief aim should have been to utilize the splendid resources entrusted to his charge, in order to report faithfully and minutely on the geographical features and formation of the country he passed through—now took a step which at once stamped him as a rash, wrong-headed and incompetent leader.

It was on the 16th of December that Burke consummated this crowning act of folly, thereby signing his own death-warrant, and bringing ruin on the expedition. On that morning he mustered the men, and selecting from their number Charles Gray and John King, he intimated his intention of leaving the rest at the depôt, while, with Mr. Wills, Gray and King, he journeyed to the sea and back. He entrusted the command of the depôt to William Brahe, until Wright should arrive; and gave orders that their time should meantime be employed constructing a stockade for a defence against possible attack by hostile natives. Regarding this appointment, he says in his despatch:—"I shall leave the party which remains here under the charge of Mr. Brahe,

in whom I have every confidence. There is no danger to be apprehended from the natives if they are properly managed, and there is nothing, therefore, to prevent the party remaining here until our return, or until their provisions run short." Having thus delivered himself, and having split up his splendid force into three useless sections—the main body at Menindie, and four men loitering on Cooper's Creek—this strangely impetuous Irishman, with his three companions, set out on that long perilous march from which only one was to return alive. "You must not fret," were Burke's last words to Paton, who had known him for many years, "I shall be back in a short time. If I am not back in a few months you may go back to the Darling." And to another he was heard to say that, provided he crossed the Continent, he did not care if he had only one shirt to his back at his journey's end. This was precisely his condition as to clothing about six months after. One horse and six camels carried their equipment and provisions for three months, while at the depôt six camels and twelve horses were left in charge of the four men.

It was on Sunday, the 16th of December, 1860, that the little cavalcade set out. For some distance they rode, but very soon proceeded on foot, the two leaders going on in front, each carrying a rifle and revolver, while King and Gray accompanied the animals in the rear. Upon his gallant and heroic young colleague, Mr. Wills, fell the duty of taking astronomical observations, examining the country, and making notes, and each evening the latter wrote a diary. It was fortunate he did so, for the leader rarely put pen to paper.* The meagreness of their equipment was carried to an incredible pitch of absurdity. Burke would carry no tents, thus inflicting on himself and companions the unnecessary hardship of camping out in the open. Their allowance of rations consisted of a pound of flour and a pound of meat each day, occasionally supplemented with a little rice. And this was the feeble party of badly-equipped and underfed pedestrians which represented the expenditure of some £12,000.

It will be remembered that Captain Sturt made two journeys northward, and Burke resolved to brave the terrors of the Stony Desert by a route intermediate between the northern and southern tracks of the

* The entire contents of Burke's Note Book will be found in the Appendix.

former explorer. By this means he hoped to strike Eyre's Creek, and from thence to work his way northward. In this selection he was singularly fortunate, and the mud plains, as described by Sturt, were found to be clothed with verdure, owing to recent rains. They also came upon a fine creek, which having followed for some time, they took a northward course. Red sandhills, lagoons, grassy plains, with stretches of spinifex and scrub, presented themselves alternately to the steadily advancing explorers. Enormous multitudes of pigeons surrounded the pools, and we learn that the sandhills, being honeycombed by rats, caused much distress to the camels, which constantly stumbled and fell. Having reached the desert proper, they moved on in a W.N.W. course; but after a few miles they resumed their former line of travel, N.W. by N. Crossing several sand ridges, and passing some abandoned native huts, they found plenty of grass, but no water. At length they halted at a creek, which gave them an ample supply, and was named the Gray, after one of the party. The soil over which they now passed was like rotten clay, and meeting some natives, they were advised to take a N.E. direction; but, as a matter of fact, they did not change their course. It was now Christmas Day, and happily their downcast spirits were raised by the appearance of a fine creek, which they at first thought was Eyre's Creek. An examination of its course, however, proved that this was not the case, its flow being from the W. of N. It was, however, a fortunate discovery for Burke, and illustrated the hard luck which dogged the heels of the intrepid Sturt. As a celebrated writer remarks:—"How that explorer (Sturt) could have missed it seems very incomprehensible. He certainly crossed to the south of the point, but the stream might have taken a more westerly bend at that time; and as an instance of the fatality which seemed to attend him, it can now be seen that if he had pressed on in his second attempt to cross the Stony Desert, he would have found this channel. By turning back when half way, he left a triumph for others which was within his grasp." I cannot but remark that many of these explorations of the Australian interior very often appear like a desperate game of chance, in which brave men staked their lives against a name in the history of Australian exploration.

Burke and his comrades kept as far as possible to the banks of this watercourse, which consisted of grand reaches of deep water, sometimes

five miles long. On the right bank were ridges of red sandstone, while on the left were extensive grassy plains. By the 30th of December, however, the course of Burke's Creek turned eastward, so with some misgivings they had again to trust to chance for the water they needed. They took the wise precaution, however, of loading the camels with ten days' supply; and on the 31st, after some fourteen hours' journey over stretches of alluvial soil, they halted without having come across any signs of water. On New Year's Day, however, fortune again smiled upon them in the shape of a fine creek, to which was given the name of Mr. Wills. After a week's travel, of which we have no record, they crossed the southern tropic, having hitherto met with providential assistance in bounteous measure. And now the country became even more favourable. Luxuriant grass and other vegetation, such as vetches, portulac, salsolæ, &c., covered wide plains of argillaceous soil, interspersed with numerous creeks, along whose banks gum and box trees grew in wild profusion. Game was likewise plentiful, and it is cheering to read of these toilworn pilgrims regaling themselves on pigeons and wild duck. Large flocks of these birds were constantly to be seen, and, as they rose from the creeks, invariably flew to the eastward. Until the 12th they enjoyed these well-favoured fertile plains, when they encountered low, slaty, sandstone hills, with grass and water in the intervening valleys. Crossing this range, they observed others to the northward and also to the westward. In the distance even higher hills could be discerned to the eastward. The first range reached was called after Captain Charles Frederick Standish, Chief Commissioner of the Victorian Police. The others are simply marked "ranges" on Mr. Wills' map; and during five days' journey across them the journal contains no entry or note of progress. This and other deplorable blanks in the explorer's diary renders anything more than a fragmentary record impossible. It seems incredible that Burke should have so neglected his duty to his generous supporters; and much honour is due to Wills—the hero of the expedition—who rescued from oblivion a partial knowledge of that fateful pilgrimage.

Leaving behind them Mount Forbes, by which name they called the last high peak of the Standish Range, they emerged on a well-grassed pebbly plain, which led them to low quartz ranges, upon which grew an abundant crop of coarse porcupine grass. Amidst the grassy valleys they

came upon the head of Green's Creek, and striking a gully trending northward, they followed it up for some distance. There is here another hiatus of twelve days in Wills' journal, and we only learn from one of Burke's rare entries that they were intercepted by almost impassable ranges. The heat became intolerable during the day; and instead of starting at six in the morning, they set out about midnight, when moonlight permitted, and this method they also adopted on their return journey.

Cloncurry River, a broad flowing watercourse, one of the sources of the Flinders, was discovered about the 27th of January, and its course was followed. Next day one of the camels was bogged in its channel, and left behind, the leader fearing an attack from the natives.

I may here mention that all Burke's halting places were numbered in sequence, the camp at Cooper's Creek, on the Barcoo River, being "Camp 57"; and on the return journey the same method was adopted, with the explanatory addition of the letter "R." It is only by reference to this system that we can arrive at any conclusion as to the precise date which occurs next in Wills' diary. It reads thus:—"Sunday, February, 1861," and must refer to either the 3rd, the 10th, or the 17th of the month. When we consider, however, that the camp of the 30th of January is marked "112," and the one on the date in question "119," we may conclude that the missing date is probably the 10th, which allows four days' rest between the two halting places. Heavy rains much impeded their journey down the Cloncurry, and the ground was so soaked as to be a veritable succession of swamps. With the camels it was impossible to travel. It was therefore decided that the leader and Mr. Wills should advance towards the sea on foot, leaving the rest of the party in charge of the animals, stores, &c., at camp 119. Mr. Wills thus describes their progress:—"After breakfast we accordingly started, taking with us the horse and three days' provisions. Our first difficulty was in crossing Billy's Creek—named after the horse—which we had to do where it enters the river, a few hundred yards below the camp. In getting the horse over here, he got bogged in a quicksand so deeply as to be unable to stir, and we only succeeded in extricating him by undermining him on the creek side, and then pushing him into the water. Having got all the things in safety, we continued down the river bank, which

bent about from east to west, but kept a general north course. A great deal of the land was so soft and rotten that the horse, with only one saddle on and twenty-five pounds on his back, could scarcely walk over it. At a distance of about five miles we again had him bogged in crossing a small creek, after which he seemed so weak that we had some doubts of getting him on. We, however, found some better ground close to the water's edge, where the sandstone rock runs out, and we stuck to it as far as possible. Finding that the river was bending about so much that we were making very little progress in a northerly direction, we struck off due north, and soon came on some table-land, where the soil is shallow and gravelly, and clothed with box and swamp gums. Patches of the land were very boggy, but the main portion was sound enough.

"Beyond this we came on an open plain covered with water up to one's ankles. The soil here was a stiff clay, and the surface very uneven, so that between the tufts of grass one was frequently knee deep in water. The bottom, however, was sound, and no fear of bogging. After floundering through this for several miles, we came to a path formed by the blacks, and there were distinct signs of a recent migration in a southerly direction. By making use of this path we got on much better, for the ground was well trodden and hard. At rather more than a mile, the path entered a forest, through which flowed a nice watercourse, and we had not gone far before we found places where the blacks had been camping. The forest was intersected by little pebbly rises, on which they made their fires, and in the sandy ground adjoining, some of the former had been digging yams, which seemed to be so numerous that they could afford to leave plenty of them behind, probably having selected only the very best. We were not so particular, but ate many of those that they had rejected, and found them very good. About half-a-mile further on we came close on a black fellow, who was coiled by a camp-fire, while his gin and piccaninny were yabbering alongside. We stopped for a short time to take out some of the pistols that were on the horse, and that they might see us before we were so near as to frighten them. Just after we stopped, the black got up to stretch his limbs, and after a few seconds looked in our direction. It was very amusing to see the way in which he stood standing for some time, as if he thought he must be dreaming, and then, having signalled to the others, they dropped on their haunches, and

shuffled off in the quietest way possible." This forest was succeeded by another marsh, which was evidently covered with sea water at certain seasons. Wild geese, plover, ducks and pelican were abundant, and the scene was lively in comparison with the dismal swampy country through which they had recently dragged their weary limbs. A dense forest of mangroves to the northward shut them out from a view of the Indian Ocean. Tying up their horse, which showed signs of breaking down, they endeavoured to penetrate this perplexing thicket. They did not, however, succeed in reaching the beach, as was subsequently recorded by Burke, under date 28th March, in a note to Wills' journal. He says :— "At the conclusion of report, it would be as well to say that we reached the sea, but we could not obtain a view of the open ocean, although we made every effort to do so."

Thus for the first time in history, the Australian Continent was crossed from shore to shore by white men. Their route was almost a straight line, nearly coinciding with the 140th meridian of east longitude. This great and unprecedented feat does much to redeem the grievous errors of judgment which lie at Burke's door; and I cannot but remark, in conclusion, that the most culpable parties were the Exploration Committee in Melbourne; who, though perfectly cognizant of their incompetency, yet presumed to select a leader for this important campaign, the melancholy termination of which has yet to be recorded.





CHAPTER XVII.

Return of Burke and Wills from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Cooper's Creek. Death of both Leaders.

BURKE and Wills had indeed good reason to be elated at the marvellously successful outcome of their bold march to the sea. They had performed an unexampled feat—one which had baffled all previous attempts. Great, however, as was this victory in one sense, the advantage gained was sadly disproportionate. Their contribution to scientific knowledge amounted to little or nothing. One cannot help noting with surprise they did not even know what part of the Gulf of Carpentaria they had reached—imagining that they had followed down the Albert River discovered by Stokes—whereas the Flinders, which lay over a hundred miles to the eastward, had led them to their destination. It was natural that Burke was eager at once to retrace his triumphant steps, although I think it probable that had he succeeded in reaching Melbourne, congratulation would have been mingled with reproach and remonstrance. A very small sum would have fitted him out for the record trip which he had accomplished. How could he have given an account of his stewardship to the tune of £12,000? His slender stock of provisions had run very low, making their speedy return to Cooper's Creek a matter of imperative necessity. 83 lbs. of flour, 38 lbs. of meal, 12 lbs. of biscuits, 12 lbs. of rice, and 10 lbs. of sugar constituted their supply; and this had to last them for two months, which meant very

short rations indeed. Their bodily health was good, however—their hearts beat high—and with the chance of game *en route*, and their animals in case of pressing need, they had no doubt whatever as to reaching the depôt at Cooper's Creek in safety.

They had lost one camel, named Golah, in Cloncurry Creek, but on returning to the camp, where they had left King and Gray, they found that the poor animal had extricated himself, and found his way to the depôt. He arrived in a wretchedly thin condition, having deliberately starved himself through grief at missing the other camels. When he joined his Bactrian relatives he ate heartily; but his constitution was undermined, and Golah had to be abandoned at Camp 18 R. It was on Thursday, the 21st of February, that they turned their faces towards the south. We have very scanty particulars of this journey, which is to be regretted; but their weak condition and perilous plight during a great portion of their long march, fully accounts for lack of journalistic matter. At first heavy rains were encountered, which filled the creeks, and the rich alluvial flats were clothed with luxuriant vegetation. Their line of route was in a great measure identical with their outward course, and in most cases the camps coincided; but as they were enabled in some instances to shorten the distance with short cuts, they went over some new ground, and had further opportunities of demonstrating that they had discovered a vast expanse of magnificent pastoral country.

Slowly but surely fatigue and privation began to sap their strength, and sickness fell upon the party. Gray was the first to give in, and Wills complains bitterly in his diary of having to send back for the invalid, who was thought to be "gammoning;" but, as events proved, this was an unjust accusation. The leader himself soon afterwards became very ill, and they had to eke out their scanty store of food by killing a camel. As they advanced with all possible speed, the country became drier, and the two sick men began to revive, but rain fell in torrents shortly afterwards, rendering the ground soft and boggy. Another camel was slaughtered for food, leaving them with four, and Billy—the horse—to carry their diminished belongings.

On the 6th of March, another camel got bogged, and had to be abandoned. Two weeks longer they painfully dragged themselves along, and on the 20th had to dispense with 60 lbs. of baggage. On the 25th of

the month, Gray purloined some flour, wherewith to make gruel. It was only to be expected that starving men would view such an act as a heinous crime, and Burke administered rough and ready justice in the form of a sound thrashing.

This daily allowance now consisted of a quarter pound of damper and twelve small sticks of dried camel's flesh. They were able at times to gather a vegetable called *Portulac*, which eked out their scanty store. This was probably the *Portulacca Oleracea*, commonly known as *Purslane*. It is a low growing succulent annual, plentiful throughout parts of India, and eaten as a potherb by the Hindoos. It may possibly have been another kind, however, as there are between thirty and forty known species of the genus *Portulacææ*, most of which, however, are indigenous to the American Continent. Another camel had to be killed on the 30th of March, followed by their equine friend Billy, whose limbs and feet had completely collapsed. Almost four months had now elapsed since their departure from Cooper's Creek, and they began to feel the full effects of the continuous toil and exposure. Burke expected to meet with help even before the depôt was reached, and cheered his companions with the assurance that the Exploration Committee had promised that he should be followed up. This may have been true, or it may have been a sick man's fancy; one thing is certain, namely, that the Committee had never calculated on the expedition being split up into three comparatively useless sections. Wills kept up his spirits, and was cheerful under all circumstances, but Gray daily grew weaker. Eventually his legs gave way, and he had to be strapped to the back of a camel. Happily his sufferings were not aggravated by thirst until the 13th April, when they reached the margin of the Stony Desert. Here they had to travel for two days without reaching either well or watercourse, and endured great misery. On the night of the 16th they halted at a *polygonum* swamp, and Gray was speechless with exhaustion. On being covered over for the night, he whispered that he was dying, and gave a few directions about some of his humble belongings. Next morning he was found to be dead. They buried him and rested for a day, and that short delay, as will be seen, by cruel mischance, rang the death-knell of the two leaders.

They now divested themselves of all encumbrances except their fire-arms and a little meat, with the view of hurrying forward by forced

marches. Once they travelled all night, so desperate was their predicament. Burke rode one camel, Wills and King the other. By the 19th they had reached within thirty miles of the depôt, and two days afterwards Burke, who was riding on ahead of the others, shouted to his companions, "There they are, I see them." Alas! his weary eyes and the dusk of the evening had deceived him, for when they reached the site of the depôt it was deserted. There stood the stockade, erected during their absence, but men, tents, horses and camels had vanished. Here, indeed, was the awful climax in this tragedy of errors. The leader coo-eed, and called out the names of Brahe and his companions, only to be answered by the tomb-like silence of the desert. Overwhelmed with grief and dismay, he flung himself upon the ground in despair. Wills and King were calmer, and searching round the deserted camp they came upon a tree marked with these words :—

"DIG, 21 April, 1861."

Burke was too utterly prostrated to obey this mandate; but the other two lost no time in carrying out the instructions on the tree, which actually bore that very day's date. A box containing provisions was soon brought to light, and also a letter from Brahe, to the following effect :—

"Depôt Cooper's Creek,
"21 April, 1861.

"The Depôt party of the Victorian Exploration Expedition leaves the camp to-day to return to the Darling. I intend to go S.E. from Camp 60, to get into an old track near Balloo. Two of my companions and myself are quite well; the third—Paton—has been unable to walk for the last eighteen days, as his leg has been severely hurt when thrown by one of the horses. No one has been up here from the Darling. We have six camels and twelve horses in good working condition.

"WILLIAM BRAHE."

It was truly a lamentable state of affairs. The camp had only been a few hours vacant, and certainly the most obvious course was to follow Brahe's party with all possible speed. But they had expended their last ounce of energy in pushing on to the depôt; and they all reluctantly agreed that to overtake a fresh, well-mounted cavalcade was hopeless. The letter certainly stated that men and animals were in good condition,

but, as a matter of fact, they only made very short stages ; and if Burke had made a last final effort he would undoubtedly have come up with Brahe. The leader also strongly advocated a change of route, contending that the best and shortest route to settled districts was to make for Mount Hopeless, in South Australia, following A. C. Gregory's line of travel. Both Wills and King urged that they should go back to Menindie, the way they came, as being the safest and wisest course ; but Burke's counsels prevailed. Another desperate blunder on the leader's part.

I make no apology for inserting here the entry in Wills' diary referring to that ill-starred Sunday. The simple cheerful words may well be reproduced, and laid to heart as a noble specimen of unruffled fortitude and patient endurance. "April 21st, 1861. Arrived at the depôt this evening, just in time to find it deserted. A note left in the plant by Brahe communicates the pleasing information that they have started to-day for the Darling ; their camels and horses all well and in good condition ; we and our camels being just done up, and scarcely able to reach the depôt, have very little chance of overtaking them. Brahe has fortunately left us ample provisions to take us to the bounds of civilization, viz. :—Flour, 50 lbs. ; rice, 20 lbs. ; oatmeal, 60 lbs. ; sugar, 60 lbs. ; and dried meat, 15 lbs. These provisions, together with a few horseshoes and nails, and some castaway odds and ends, constitute all the articles left, and it places us in a very awkward position in respect of clothing. Our disappointment at finding the depôt deserted may easily be imagined, returning as we did in an exhausted state, after four months of the severest travelling and privation, our legs almost paralysed, so that each of us found it a most trying task to walk only a few yards. Such a leg-bound feeling I never before experienced, and I hope I never shall again. The exertion required to get up a slight piece of rising ground, even without any load, induces an indescribable sensation of pain and helplessness, and the general lassitude makes one unfit for anything. Poor Gray must have suffered very much many times when we thought him shamming. It is most fortunate for us that these symptoms which so early affected him, did not come on us until we were reduced to an exclusively animal diet, of such an inferior description as that offered by the flesh of a worn out and exhausted horse. We were not long in getting out the grub that Brahe had left, and we made a good supper off some oatmeal porridge

and sugar. This, together with the excitement of finding ourselves in such a peculiar and almost unexpected position, had a wonderful effect in removing the stiffness from our legs."

It will thus be seen that they had almost double the provisions on which they had already travelled five times the distance now before them; and they had now only three mouths to feed instead of four. A reaction began to set in after a day's rest, and when the first shock of disappointment had passed off. Their camels being almost useless, they each carried a load of 30 lbs., and restored everything else to the cache. This they carefully covered up, placing in it a bottle containing the following letter:—

"Depôt No. 2, Cooper's Creek, Camp 65.

"The return party from Carpentaria, consisting of myself, Wills and King (Gray dead), arrived here last night, and found that the depôt party had started on the same day. We proceed on to-morrow slowly down the creek to Adelaide, by Mount Hopeless, and shall endeavour to follow Gregory's track, but we are very weak. The two camels are done up, and we shall not be able to travel faster than two or three miles a day. Gray died on the road from exhaustion and fatigue. We have all suffered much from hunger. The provisions left here will, I think, restore our strength. We have discovered a practicable route to Carpentaria, the chief portion of which lies on 140° of east longitude. There is some good country between this and the Stony Desert. From there to the tropics the country is dry and stony. Between the tropics and Carpentaria a considerable portion is rangy, but it is well watered and richly grassed. We reached the shores of Carpentaria on February the 11th, 1861. Greatly disappointed at finding the party here gone.

"ROBERT O'HARA BURKE.

"April 22nd, 1861.

"P.S.—The camels cannot travel, and we cannot walk, or we should follow the other party. We shall move very slowly down the creek."

Here again an evil destiny pursued them. So carefully did they conceal every sign that they had visited the depôt and opened the cache, that when, sixteen days afterwards, Brahe and Wright arrived to examine the hiding-place, they imagined that it had never been disturbed. No doubt the leader wished to prevent its discovery by the natives, but it was a

grievous oversight not to have either mutilated or altered the markings on the tree. Thus, on the 22nd of April, 1861, Burke, Wills and King set out with the intention of following down the Barcoo River, towards the Torrens district. When night fell upon them they had only accomplished five miles, which testifies to their enfeebled condition. Although Wills' journal is always written in a bright, cheery strain, evidences are not wanting of the cruel sufferings which this long protracted journey had entailed. The ragged state of their clothing added to their misery, for the nights were very chilly and, as already stated, they had no tents. They were much encouraged next day when, having encountered some blacks, they were enabled to barter a few straps and matches for about 12 lbs. of fish. The natives appeared again on the 24th, and were most friendly, accompanying the explorers some distance on their route. Their progress was slow, but the country was fairly favourable for travelling. Their improved diet was giving them strength, says the hopeful Wills, and in a few days time they would be able for any amount of fatigue. Their greatest suffering was through cold during the night, and for this Brahe must be held blameworthy,* because he knew of their scanty raiment and should have left clothes and blankets in the cache. On the 28th one of their two camels got stuck in the creek, and after two days unavailing toil they had to shoot him, and secure as much meat as possible. Another day was spent in drying the flesh, which operation being completed, they again moved down the creek. This watercourse now began to split up into several arms, each of which disappeared in the plain. On the 2nd of May want of water compelled them to return to Camp 9, their resting place of the previous day. Here they again met with the natives, who gave them a sumptuous meal, consisting of fish and cake, made from the seed of the *nardoo* † plant, crushed into a powder. They were most anxious to ascertain the whereabouts of this cereal, but could not make the blacks comprehend their wishes. Possibly the natives had their own reasons for keeping the matter secret; but in any case they were most generous regarding fish, of which they gave the explorers three different varieties. The most choice variety, which usually weighed from one to two pounds, was called, in the aboriginal language, *cawilchi*, and a more common sort, with large coarse scales, was termed *peru*.

* Wright was equally, if not more culpable, being Brahe's superior in command.—Ed. † See Appendix.

The third kind, which was about six inches long, and of eel-like shape, was called *capé*.

Their prospects now began to be gloomy in the extreme, for the country before them was a dreary waste, covered with box trees, but without any sign of water. Daily were their scanty provisions melting away, and with no prospect of replenishment. Their boots had almost disappeared, and their clothing hung in shreds upon their burnt and wasted frames. Their camel had for some days showed symptoms of breaking down, and on the 7th of the month could not be got to rise. The wretched beast was seen to be past recovery, but they left him to rest for a time in charge of King, while the two leaders reconnoitred down the river. After travelling some ten miles they met some natives, and, having accompanied them to their camp, the travellers were handsomely regaled on fish and *nardoo* cakes. Next day another trip was made down the course of the river, with no satisfactory result. After travelling some seven miles, Wills fell in with the blacks, who again fed him sumptuously, this time adding rats to their bill of fare. Having returned to the camp, where Burke and King had remained, he found that they had shot the camel, and with the death of their last beast of burden their hopes of reaching settled districts were almost annihilated. In this desperate state of affairs, they indulged in the belief that they would be able to keep life in them by means of the *nardoo* seed, if only they could discover how and where it grew. In order, if possible, to ascertain this, Burke and King went in search of the natives, while Wills was left at the camp to jerk the flesh of their last camel. The blacks had left their quarters on the creek, so they came back to deliberate on the next move. It was decided that Wills should remain, while the other two, with four days' provisions, endeavoured to find the natives. After two days they returned, and another council was held. Their only chance seemed to lie in attempting the journey westward, whilst they had some little strength and a certain amount of food left. No time was lost in starting. Everything was buried except three small packs, and even these had to be lightened before they had been three hours on the march. The gallant Wills still made his notes, and alludes to the keen morning and evening winds, which sorely tried the weakened bodies of the forlorn and feeble band. They adopted a more southerly

route, avoiding their former track, which had only led them to waterless, sandy plains. On the 17th of May, King suddenly caught sight of the much-desired *nardoo* plant, growing in little tufts close to the ground, and they soon afterwards discovered that the surrounding flats were covered with this clover-like growth. Their downcast hearts were now filled with joy and thankfulness. They looked upon themselves as comparatively safe, and well able to hold out until aid was forthcoming. But the gathering and preparation of the seed was by no means easy. We are told that it was a day's work for one man to pick enough for two meals, and then the grains had to be cleaned and pounded. No doubt the blacks could accomplish these operations in a fraction of the time these weary, worn-out wrecks of men spent over the work.

It was now borne in upon them that the westerly journey was hopelessly impracticable; and the *nardoo* plant growing in profusion around them, gave promise of a bare existence, without counting possible aid from the friendly natives. Accordingly they finally resolved to remain *in statu quo*, and wait for assistance from Melbourne or elsewhere. It will be remembered that a letter had been left by Burke on the 22nd of April, at Dépôt No. 2, Camp 65, at Cooper's Creek, stating their intention of travelling by Mount Hopeless towards Adelaide. Having now altered their plans, and having resolved to remain stationary on the lower portion of the creek, it was very necessary to record their intention for the guidance of any search-party. Wills was selected for the task, and started up the creek on the 27th of May to deposit the note, and also the journals. On his way he fell in with some natives gathering *nardoo*, which grew in great abundance. The kindness of the savages was very comforting to the solitary man. One carrying his spade, and another his bundle, they escorted him to their camp for refreshment and repose. Those who would brand the aboriginal of Australia as hopelessly ignorant, unteachable, bloodthirsty savages, would do well to pause and reflect on the conduct of the Cooper's Creek natives, but for whose kindly charity not even a single survivor would have been found of that gallant quartette who first crossed the Australian Continent.

After a sorely-needed rest, Wills pursued his toilsome way, and

arrived at Cooper's Creek on the 30th of May. He was now in a very weak state of health, the *nardoo* containing but little nutriment. With painful effort he wielded his spade, and deposited in the cache some journals, with a notice of the condition of the party. The note was as follows:—

“ May 30th, 1861.

“ We have been unable to leave the creek. Both camels are dead. Mr. Burke and King are down on the lower part of the creek. I am about to return to them, when we shall probably come up this way. We are trying to live the best way we can, like the blacks, but find it hard work. Our clothes are going fast to pieces. Send provisions and clothes as soon as possible.

“ WILLIAM J. WILLS.

“ The depôt party having left contrary to instructions, has put us in this fix. I have deposited some of my journals here for fear of accidents.”

When he retraced his steps towards the spot where his companions tarried, an extreme lassitude well-nigh overpowered him. After a few miles on the first day, he threw himself down under some bushes, being utterly prostrated, and weary almost to the point of death. Next day he tried to reach the camp of the blacks, but again sank down with exhaustion, and made his bed among the desert scrub. On the following morning he made his way to the place where the natives had entertained him a few days previously. But alas, they had departed, leaving nothing but a few fish-bones behind them. Alongside the blackened fire the famishing explorer sat down in bitter disappointment, and ravenously chewed the refuse of the savages' repast. And, moving on, the wretched man found two dead fishes, which he considered a piece of extraordinary good luck, such was his pitiable plight! Having again slept under a bush, he moved down the river, and was overjoyed to see smoke in the distance. Soon the sound of a “coo-ee” reached his ears, and he perceived the aboriginal chief, Pitchery, on the opposite bank, who signed for him to come round to their camp. He could hardly ascend the path which led to their fire, on which a huge pile of fish was being cooked. This he thought was intended for the consumption of the six natives who were present. They had already despatched their breakfast, however, and he was made to understand that the banquet was for him alone. No doubt

his emaciated, gaunt appearance roused their sympathies, for they plied him with *nardoo* cakes, and extracted the fish-bones for his benefit, watching with smiling faces, as the thin, pale white-man satisfied his cravings. When completely satiated, Pitchery, having allowed him a few minutes' breathing time, presented him with a special aboriginal dainty, in the shape of a huge bowl of raw *nardoo* flour, mixed to the consistency of a thin paste.

It is a curious circumstance that the blacks seem to take a violent fancy to certain individual white men, while they are either indifferent to, or cordially detest, Europeans in general. Wills seems to have ingratiated himself, and was invited to remain at their camp. With the view of conciliating them and learning their mode of life, he stayed for four days, and then returned to Burke and King. Their best chance of life now seemed to be in establishing amicable relations, and living with the friendly natives till help arrived. Accordingly they gathered together their small belongings, and with extreme difficulty reached the huts. They were empty and deserted, to their great disappointment. To follow the blacks was impossible. They therefore occupied one of the huts, and strove to live on *nardoo*.

The gathering and pounding of the seeds now fully occupied them. Wills and King collected the plants, while the leader pounded. A crow was occasionally shot, and by chance a little fish was procured from a passing party of blacks; but the *nardoo*, which was their mainstay, proved inadequate to sustain life. "I cannot understand this *nardoo* at all," writes Wills; "it certainly will not agree with me in any form. It appears to be quite indigestible, and cannot possibly be sufficiently nutritious to sustain life by itself." In spite of the steady, relentless approach of a lingering death, this brave young man continued to make his notes, marking the changes in wind and weather. By the 20th of June he was so weak as to be unable to blow the dust out of the *nardoo* seed. On the 21st his diary runs thus:—"Last night was cold and clear. I feel much weaker than ever. It is a great consolation, at least in this position, to know that we have done all we could, and that our deaths will be rather the effects of the mismanagement of others, than any rash act of our own. Had we come to grief elsewhere, we could only have blamed ourselves; but here we are, returned to Cooper's Creek,

where we had every reason to look for food and clothing, and yet we have to die of starvation."*

Wills was now the greatest sufferer, the strongest of the party being King. The notes of the former betray his intense weakness, and his mind seems at times to have wandered. We learn that his clothing consisted of a merino shirt, another shirt without sleeves, a pair of flannel trousers almost reduced to rags, and the remains of a waistcoat. Truly a poor protection against the night winds, which grew colder as the season advanced. Burke now reluctantly came to the conclusion that as Wills was unable to move, their sole remaining hope lay in King and himself finding the blacks. This, of course, involved leaving Wills behind, probably to die alone; and Burke offered either to carry out this plan, or else to remain, and all take their chance together. Wills insisted that they should go, alleging that he had no fear of being left. The last words he ever wrote were penned the day before his comrades started. They are full of cheerful resignation, and we may conclude that his subsequent solitary death was a calm and painless one. The eye of Heaven alone was upon him when he breathed his last. I quote from his note-book:—

“I am weaker than ever, although I have a good appetite, and relish the *nardoo* much; but it seems to give us no nutriment, and the birds here are so shy as not to be got at. Even if we got a good supply of fish, I doubt if we could do much work on them, and on them alone. Nothing now but the greatest good luck can save any one of us, and as for myself, I may live four or five days if the weather continues warm. My pulse is at 48 and very weak, and my legs and arms are nearly skin and bone. I can only look out, like Mr. Micawber, for something to turn up, but starvation on *nardoo* is by no means very unpleasant, but for the weakness one feels, and the utter inability to move oneself; and as far as appetite is concerned, it gives me the greatest satisfaction. Certainly fat and sugar would be more to one's taste. Those seem to me to be the great stand-by in this extraordinary Continent: not that I mean to depreciate the farinaceous food, but the want of sugar and fat in all substances obtainable here is so great that they almost become valueless as articles of food without the addition of something else.”

* See Appendix (Starvation).

Leaving him an eight days' supply of *nardoo*, and placing water within his reach, Burke and King bade their gallant comrade farewell. Wills gave the former a letter for his father,* and his watch; and then he lay down, wistfully gazing after their retreating figures as they disappeared into the bush.

It was soon evident that Burke had overrated his strength. His back and limbs were racked with pain, and weakness so overcame him that on the second day he could barely travel two miles. At length, in the evening, he completely collapsed, and, throwing aside all his belongings, he staggered towards some bushes and flung himself down. King gathered some *nardoo*, and was lucky enough to shoot a crow for their supper. Burke was able to eat a little, but as the night wore on he told his companion that he could not live till the morning. Giving King his watch and pocket-book, and begging of him to remain until he was quite dead, Burke resigned himself to his fate. He spoke but little further, except to request that he might be left unburied where he died, and that a pistol should be placed in his right hand. About eight o'clock next morning Robert O'Hara Burke breathed his last—another sacrifice on the altar of Australian Exploration. In his pocket-book, he wrote these final words:—

“I hope we shall be done justice to. We have fulfilled our task, but we have been aban—. We have not been followed up as we expected, and the depôt party abandoned their post.

“King has behaved nobly. He has stayed with me till the last, and placed the pistol in my hand, leaving me lying on the surface, as I wished.”

Poor King† was now indeed in a forlorn and desperate plight, but being exceptionally robust, and possessed of strong vitality, he did not give way to despair. Happily he found a bag of *nardoo* in one of the native huts, containing sufficient to last him for a fortnight, and he was successful in shooting a few crows. He lost no time in making his way to where Wills had been left five days before, only to find the corpse of his late comrade and superior officer, which had already been denuded of most of the clothes by the natives. Having buried the body, he went in search of the blacks, who from the first, although they gave him food, rather objected to him as a permanent guest. Eventually, however, he managed to ingratiate

* This letter will be found in the Appendix. † For Summary of John King's narrative, see Appendix.

himself with the tribe, partly through shooting birds, and especially by a lucky display of skill in the healing art. He likewise enlisted their sympathies by showing them the dead body of Burke, and made them understand that they would be handsomely rewarded on the arrival of a rescue-party. With these kindly sons of the desert he remained until Sunday, the 15th of September, when Mr. Edwin J. Welch,* second in command of Mr. A. W. Hewitt's expedition, caught sight of "a solitary figure apparently covered with some scarecrow rags and part of a hat," standing on the sand by the side of the creek.

* For Mr. Welch's account, see extract from his journal in Appendix.






CHAPTER XVIII.

William Brahe's desertion of the Cooper's Creek Depôt.

Wright's delays at Menindie.

Report of Committee of Enquiry on the Expedition.

HE circumstances which led to the melancholy fate of Messrs. Burke and Wills may well be said to have formed a Tragedy of Errors. We have already seen how his splendid outfit was sub-divided and sacrificed by Burke himself, and yet how, by superhuman exertion and dogged perseverance, the great unparalleled feat of crossing Australia to its northern sea coast was duly achieved. It is impossible not to admire the leader's heroic resignation, Wills' intrepid calmness, and King's splendidly energetic vitality. The immediate cause of the two explorers' death from exhaustion and starvation was undoubtedly Brahe's departure from Cooper's Creek Depôt; still it would be manifestly unfair to lay all the blame on this subordinate commander, as the victims were naturally disposed to do. In one sense it was their own fault; for, after burying Gray on the 16th of April, they rested for a day, instead of advancing with all possible speed. Had they taken the latter, and obviously the proper course, they would have reached the depôt on the 20th instead of the 21st, and would thus have saved their lives. But it is simply hopeless to seek for any *single* cause which led to such disastrous results, and the wasteful expenditure of so much money. The sole responsibility cannot be laid on Burke, who was manifestly incompetent—

because the Exploration Committee must be held primarily accountable to the Government and the subscribers, for their injudicious selection. The former, however, paid the penalty with his life; while the latter, being unpossessed of anything adapted to the operation of kicking, and being a committee with no soul to save, got off scot free. This desirable security and immunity is a privilege peculiar to blundering Companies, Corporations, Societies, Associations and so forth, unless fraudulent intent is evident, as in the case of the Liberator Company, or the City of Glasgow Bank, when so many eminently respectable and pious gentlemen were laid by the heels. So dove-tailed into each other are the various circumstances, that without doubt, everyone in control had what he considered a perfectly good and sufficient ground for his actions, and could prove to demonstration that if any apology or excuse were needed, or blame attachable, someone else was the culpable party. The historic mistake of the Balaclava Charge must have been fresh in everybody's memory, and possibly comparisons were drawn and a general verdict passed that "someone had blundered;" or that everyone had blundered, which seems to be nearer the truth.

Let us now, however, briefly trace the course, and scan the conduct of Brahe and Wright, the two sub-leaders of Burke's two sub-divisions left behind in idleness, to await their headstrong chief's return. It was on the morning of the 15th of December that he entrusted the charge of the depôt to Brahe, an ordinary working man, and, moreover, a foreigner. We are not told that any definite time was specified for their sojourn.* As already stated, one of the men—Paton—who had known Burke for a very long time, and who afterwards died of scurvy, shed tears at the time of the latter's departure, upon seeing which the leader said, "Paton, you must not fret. I shall be back in a short time. If I am not back in a few months you may go back to the Darling." Such was the slapdash, happy-go-lucky style in which Burke started on his own funeral march. No doubt the reason that no very definite instructions were left with Brahe was that Burke fully expected that Wright would have brought up the main party from the rear, and taken over the supreme command, long before the gulf-bound quartette had accomplished one-half their long journey to the Indian Ocean.

* Brahe declared before the Committee of Enquiry, that three months was the time specified. He had no written instructions, however; merely Burke's verbal orders.—Ed.

Cooper's Creek had now become the main rendezvous, and William Brahe its temporary chief. From the 16th of December he and his three comrades occupied themselves building stockades, and attending to the wants of the six camels and twelve horses in their charge. They had reason to expect Wright at any moment. Burke and Wills had accomplished the journey from Menindie to Cooper's Creek in three weeks, and—allowing for a more cumbersome outfit—a month or five weeks should certainly have enabled the main body to traverse the distance. The natives began to be troublesome, according to Brahe's story, although, as we know, those encountered by Burke, Wills and King were singularly kind and friendly. In any case, the depôt party confined themselves to barracks, and anxiously watched for the unaccountable Wright. Then they were attacked with scurvy, were unsupplied with medicine, and yet appear scarcely to have realised what ailed them. As the month of March passed, and no tidings from either north or south reached them, they began to get anxious and impatient. Then came April, finding them still in bad health, with diminishing provisions. They knew that Burke had taken only three months' supplies, and began to fear that he and his party had perished in their perilous venture. Brahe, although nominally in command, could not be expected to exert much influence over men who were, in all other respects, his equals. Therefore, it is not to be wondered at that after four months had elapsed, his comrades persuaded him to leave Cooper's Creek.

Accordingly, just ten and-a-half hours before the arrival of the worn-out explorers from the Gulf, Brahe and his party struck for the Darling, leaving a small stock of provisions in the cache, with the letter already referred to. To the unfortunate wording of this letter may be attributed Burke's decision not to follow them up. "Two of my companions and myself are quite well. We have six camels and twelve horses in good working condition." These were the fatal sentences which convinced the weary travellers that any attempt to overtake so well-equipped a party on its retreat was hopeless. That Brahe left the depôt before he need have done so is beyond dispute, and in that respect he may be deserving of some censure; still, probably he acted to the best of his judgment, and under pressure. What, indeed, must have been the measure of his self-reproach subsequently, when he reflected that by

waiting a few more hours at Cooper's Creek, he would have rescued the explorers, and saved the expedition from disaster ?

And now as to Mr. Wright's movements. It will be remembered that he accompanied Burke and Wills when they left Menindie, *en route* for Cooper's Creek, on the 19th of October, 1860. Having led them over a new and well-watered route (the only satisfactory piece of work to his credit), he left them at Torowotto on the 29th of the same month. His general instructions were to act as third officer, and to follow up as soon as possible with the stores, and an extra supply of salt meat. On his part, Wright asserted that he was not to leave Menindie until his appointment was ratified by the Exploration Committee. But Burke's letter does not bear out this statement, nor is it at all probable that with his hasty, imperious, restless temper, the leader would for a moment contemplate delaying the whole expedition for what after all was merely the nominal consent of the Committee. His despatch is as follows :—
“Mr. Wright returns from here to Menindie. I informed him that I should consider him third officer of the expedition, subject to the approval of the Committee, and I hope that they will confirm the appointment. *In the meantime, I have directed him to follow me up with the remainder of the camels to the Barcoo; and to take steps to procure a supply of jerked meat.*” The words “*In the meantime*” certainly seems to contradict Wright's contention. Another cause of delay was put forward, namely, the arrival at the depôt of Trooper Lyons, from Swan Hill, with despatches for Burke, giving an account of Stuart's discoveries. In pursuance of instructions, the trooper, accompanied by Macpherson, the saddler of the party, and a black boy named Dick, was sent off to overtake the leader; Wright conceiving it to be his duty to wait at the depôt till their return. While thus engaged in wasting precious time, the native guide came back with a paper, imploring assistance, as the two whites were starving. In response to this appeal, Dr. Beckler set out on the 19th of December, and found them living on food supplied by the natives, at a distance of about one hundred and ninety miles from the depôt. They stated that they had lost their way, and had seen nothing of Mr. Burke or any of the other party.

At last, on the 26th of January—three months and a week after Burke had left the main depôt at Menindie—Wright's cavalcade made a leisurely

start. Up to the last, the sub-leader framed excuses and committed blunders. For example, he left the bulk of the stores and equipment behind him, which was not only contrary to instructions, but in defiance of common sense. He could not hope to render efficient service to the advance party, when he only carried sufficient supplies for a three months' trip out and back. The first entry in his diary is characteristic :—" January 26th. Packing stores until eleven a.m., when the camels were sent on under the charge of Dr. Beckler, with instructions to camp on the west side of Pamamaroo Lake. Owing to the unruly disposition of the horses, it was one o'clock before they started with four ; five more started at two p.m., and four more at three. The afternoon was occupied a considerable time in packing and unpacking, nearly every horse throwing his load, and the party becoming separated in consequence. One part of the expedition was not able to find Dr. Beckler's camp, and two horses broke away, remaining all night in the *polygonum* thickets with their packs on them." This was a poor sort of commencement to their journey, and we need not feel surprised to find that they only accomplished five miles on the first day. It appears that on the 1st of February, being destitute of water, everything was left behind, while with the camels they hurried to the Motanie Ranges, where they camped. For a week they were journeying backwards and forwards for the abandoned packs. I suppose the hot weather accounts for this drought, for we know that in the previous October—from the 19th to the 29th—Wright led Burke's party 200 miles to Torowotto, over which route, creeks and water-holes were so abundant that they never had to travel more than twenty miles without water. Having passed Nutherunge and Yeltawinge Creeks, they reached a water-hole at Paldromata Creek, and on the 12th camped at Torowotto Swamp. Here they rested for some unstated cause (or possibly for no cause at all), and started again on the 15th. After one day's advance for eighteen miles, another halt was made until the 19th, in order to reconnoitre ahead for water. They then moved on to a spot where a supply was found, and so numerous were the rats, that the camping-place was called Rat Point.

No permanent water could now be found, and it was thought necessary to send the animals back to Torowotto. For three weeks they continued to search, with the result of finding a small water-hole in the saltbush plains, and a better supply at Poria Creek. As a result

of privation and exhaustion, four of the party, viz., Dr. Beckler, and also Stone, Purcell and Smith, were seriously attacked with scurvy; two of the horses were dead, and the camels in very poor condition.

At Poria Creek they encamped, and rested for over a week. The animals improved in health, but the sick men grew worse, and were terribly annoyed by savage rats, with which the place was infested. On the 29th, they moved to the banks of Koorliatto Creek—a tributary of the Poria—where they found better feed and shelter. Here Wright formed a small hospital, which he left in charge of one of the patients—Dr. Beckler—and advanced to Balloo Creek. Having camped on a splendid reach five miles long and fifteen to twenty feet deep, Cooper's Creek was distant about seventy-five miles to the north-west. According to Wright's story, he made every endeavour to reach the Barcoo River, but was driven back by hostile natives. Passing by this statement as incredible, we find that Wright now sent a message to Dr. Beckler, instructing him to take the sick men back to Menindie. The Doctor naturally protested against the order, which was countermanded, and the invalids were carefully removed to Balloo Creek.

It was now the 21st of April. Burke, Wills and King had arrived at the deserted camp; Wright—who should have been there with ample supplies—was cooling his heels some seventy-five miles away, while Brahe was slowly approaching the latter, and leaving the depôt with its three forlorn starving tenants. Next day a slight attack is said to have been made by the blacks on the main body, who retreated on being threatened with firearms, which scarcely bears out Wright's statement that they prevented his advance to the depôt. The 21st was likewise signalised by the death of Stone, followed by Purcell on the 22nd. Having buried the remains of their comrades, they again received a threatening visit from the blacks, who left them to return in augmented numbers on the 27th, but were easily repulsed.

Two days afterwards Wright and his party suddenly beheld a company of men, horses, and camels approaching their camp, and soon afterwards he was comparing notes with Brahe and his scurvy-stricken comrades. Poor Dr. Beckler, who had ministered to the requirements of his companions in distress as long as nature permitted, breathed his last on the evening of the 29th, and was buried next day.

Wright, who now commanded both parties, resolved on returning to Menindie, and the cavalcade travelled as far as Koorliatto Creek on May 1st, *en route* for the Darling. It seems to have dawned upon him at this stage (or possibly the idea was suggested by Brahe), that a farewell visit to Cooper's Creek would be desirable. Accordingly these two worthies started for the depôt *alone*, in spite of the dangerous blacks who had intimidated that valiant blockhead, Wright! They arrived at the deserted depôt with whole skins, on the 8th of May, and crowned their stupidity by failing to notice that the cache had been disturbed. A fortnight and two days previously Burke, Wills and King had started on their ill-fated journey down the creek, and, as already mentioned, had left a note to that effect. But these strangely thick-witted men did not trouble to dig into the cache, in order—if not to make sure that it contained no despatch—at least to place on record that they had visited the depôt. Again, we cannot help asking, why was not a supply of clothing and more provisions added to what Brahe well knew to be an insufficient and scanty store? It is almost impossible to believe that the men were there at all. King distinctly declared that there were many marks and signs which would show that the cache had been disturbed. Here is Brahe's excuse in his own words:—

“ Mr. Burke's return being so soon after my departure, caused the tracks of his camels to correspond in the character of age exactly with our own tracks. The remains of three separate fires led us to suppose that blacks had camped there. The fires had burned to mere ashes, and left no perceptible evidence from the position of the sticks as to whether they were black men's fires or not. The ground above the cache was so perfectly restored to the appearance it presented when I left it, that—in the absence of any fresh sign or mark of any description to be seen near—it was impossible to suppose that it had been disturbed.”

That two men, not altogether insane, could have exercised their eyes to the extent of observing that additional camp fires had been lighted, and neglected to exercise their brains or their muscles to ascertain if these fires were the act of the men whom they were seeking, is beyond belief. So far as their joint reputations are concerned it might almost be said—

“ *Quem deus vult perdere prius dementat.*”

The more we pursue the subject the more painful does it become ;

indeed, so closely did their evil fate pursue them, that we are compelled to think that Burke and Wills were predestined to die in the desert. Having done worse than nothing, Wright and Brahe turned back to Koorliatto, and the whole party moved towards the Darling River. The sick men all recovered strength, with the exception of William Paton, who seems to have had a presentiment of Burke's fate. He never regained his health, and fell a victim to the scurvy on the 6th of June. Menindie was reached on the 18th of the same month, and despatches containing news of Burke's continued absence were sent in hot haste to Melbourne. At this very time the doomed explorers were subsisting on the charity of the blacks, and such *nardoo* seed as they had strength to pound.

Before closing this chapter, it may be well to insert the report of a Committee subsequently appointed by the Victorian Government to enquire into the matter of the Burke and Wills Expedition. The members selected were :—General Sir T. Pratt, K.C.B., Sir F. Murphy, M. Hervey, Esq., T. F. Sullivan, Esq., and E. P. S. Sturt, Esq.

After deliberating for two months and-a-half, the following well-considered, but loosely-worded report was issued :—

“ In conformity with the terms of her Majesty's Commission, we have made enquiry into the circumstances connected with the sufferings and death of R. O'H. Burke and W. J. Wills—the Victorian explorers.

“ We have endeavoured to ascertain the true causes of the lamentable result of this expedition, and have investigated the circumstances under which the depôt at Cooper's Creek was abandoned by Mr. William Brahe. We have sought to determine upon whom rests the grave responsibility of there not having been sufficient supply of clothing secured for the recruiting of the explorers on their return, and for their support until they could reach the settlements; and we have generally inquired into the organization and conduct of the expedition.

* * * * *

“ The expedition having been provided and equipped in the most ample and liberal manner, and having reached Menindie, on the Darling, without experiencing any difficulties, was most injudiciously divided at that point by Mr. Burke.

“ It was an error of judgment on the part of Mr. Burke to appoint Mr.

Wright to an important command in the expedition without a previous personal knowledge of him; although doubtless a pressing emergency had arisen for the appointment from the sudden resignations of Mr. Landells and Dr. Becker.

“Mr. Burke evinced a far greater amount of zeal than prudence in finally departing from Cooper’s Creek, before the depôt party had arrived from Menindie, and without having secured communication with the settled districts, as he had been instructed to do; and in undertaking so extended a journey with an insufficient supply of provisions, Mr. Burke was forced into the necessity of overtaxing the powers of his party, whose continuous and unremitting exertions resulted in the destruction of his animals, and the prostration of himself and companions from fatigue and severe privations.

“The conduct of Mr. Wright appears to be reprehensible in the highest degree. It is clear that Mr. Burke, on parting with him at Torowotto, relied on his receiving his immediate and zealous support, and it seems extremely improbable that Mr. Wright could have misconstrued the intentions of his leader as far as to suppose that he ever calculated for a moment on his remaining any length of time on the Darling. Mr. Wright has failed to give any satisfactory explanation as to the cause of this delay, and to that delay are mainly attributable the whole of the disasters of the expedition, with the exception of the death of Gray. The grave responsibility of not having left a larger supply of provisions, together with some clothing, in the cache, at Cooper’s Creeks, rests with Mr. Wright. Even had he been unable to convey stores to Cooper’s Creek, he might have left them elsewhere, leaving notice at the depôt of his having done so.

“The Exploration Committee, in overlooking the importance of the contents of Burke’s despatch from Torowotto, and in not urging Mr. Wright’s departure from the Darling, committed errors of a serious nature. A means of knowledge of the delay of the party at Menindie was in the possession of the Committee—not indeed by direct communication to that effect—but through the receipt of letters from Drs. Becker and Beckler at various dates up to the end of November, without, however, awakening the Committee to a sense of the vital importance of Mr. Burke’s request in that despatch, that he should ‘be

soon followed up,' or to a consideration of the disastrous consequences which would be likely to result—and did unfortunately result—from the fatal inactivity and idling of Mr. Wright and his party on the Darling.

“The conduct of Mr. Brahe in returning from his position at the depôt before he was rejoined by his commander, or relieved from the Darling, may be deserving of considerable censure; but we are of opinion that a responsibility, far beyond his expectation, devolved upon him. And it must be borne in mind that, with the assurance of his leader, and his own conviction that he might each day be relieved by Mr. Wright—he still held his post for four months and five days, and that only when pressed by the appeals of a comrade sickening—even to death as was subsequently proved—his powers of endurance gave way, and he returned from the position which could alone afford success to the weary explorers should they return by that route. This decision was most unfortunate, but we believe he acted from a conscientious desire to discharge his duty, and we are confident that the painful reflection that twenty-four hours' further perseverance would have made him the rescuer of the explorers, and gained for himself the praise and approbation of all, must be of itself an agonizing thought, without the addition of censure, he might feel himself undeserving of.

“It does not appear that Mr. Burke kept any regular journal, or that he gave written instructions to his officers. Had he performed these essential portions of the duties of a leader, many of the calamities of the expedition might have been averted, and little or no room would have been left for doubt in judging the conduct of these subordinates, who pleaded unsatisfactory and contradicted verbal orders and statements.

“We cannot too deeply deplore the lamentable result of an expedition undertaken at so great a cost to the Colony, but while we regret the absence of a systematic plan of operations on the part of the leader, we desire to express our admiration of his gallantry and daring, as well as the fidelity of his brave coadjutor, Mr. Wills, and their more fortunate and enduring associate, Mr. King; and we would record our feelings of deep sympathy with the deplorable sufferings and untimely death of Mr. Burke and his fellow comrades.”



CHAPTER XIX.

Mr. Alfred W. Howitt's Expedition in search of Burke and Wills.

Rescue of King.

Explorers' remains found, and subsequently brought to Melbourne.

NEARLY twelve months had elapsed since the splendidly equipped expedition, under Burke and Wills, had left Melbourne, and the Exploration Committee began to feel anxious regarding its safety. It is very possible that reflection may have brought some of their numbers to see that they had made an unwise choice in selecting Mr. Burke as leader. The ease with which people acquire wisdom "after the event," and too late to be of much use, is proverbial. Even before Brahe arrived in Melbourne, and told his sorry story to the Committee, a contingent party for searching and succouring, had already been organized and equipped. Wright—I may mention—had meantime betaken himself to Adelaide, having no doubt a very natural objection to facing an investigation of his conduct. Mr. Alfred W. Howitt—son of the well-known authors, William and Mary Howitt—a fearless and experienced bushman, was chosen to lead the search party, consisting of three men. Having started on their quest, they met Brahe near Swan Hill, on his way to Melbourne, and, after hearing his news, returned with him to the capital. To guard against possible hostilities on the part of the natives, the strength of Howitt's band was doubled, and he was accompanied by

Mr. Edwin J. Welch as second in command, and Mr. Walsh, a surgeon, who had previously been in the field with Mr. J. McDouall Stuart.

A great wave of sympathy now arose and passed over the whole of Australia. Too late, as we know, so far as the rescue of the leaders was concerned, but still redounding to the credit of the other Colonies. It was thought by some that Burke might be still striving to eke out an existence on the northern coast, having found it impossible to retrace his steps southward. The Exploration Committee—who now showed an activity hitherto conspicuous by its absence—forthwith applied to the Government for the services of the steam-sloop *Victoria*, for the purpose of searching the coast at the Gulf of Carpentaria and neighbourhood. To this the authorities assented, and gave the command to Captain Norman. It was also arranged that another rescue party, under Mr. Walker, should examine the country from North Queensland to the Gulf. Then the Queensland Government came forward with the generous offer of two thousand pounds, in order to equip an expedition to proceed in the *Victoria* to the Albert River, and then to make careful examination of the Burke River. Mr. A. C. Gregory undertook the formation of this party on behalf of the subsidising Government, Howitt and Walker taking their instructions from Victoria. Then the South Australian Parliament voted money for another expedition, which was to penetrate the Continent from south to north, under the command of Mr. John McKinlay. Thus was the disastrous enterprise of Burke and Wills destined to bear much fruit, for at this time no less than five parties were simultaneously sent to explore the interior and coasts of the Continent. It will now be our task to follow briefly the fortunes of the different leaders, whose chief mission was to solve this latest mystery of the Australian desert.

Mr. Alfred Williams Howitt—with his party reinforced as aforesaid—set out on his journey early in July, and, crossing the Darling River near Wilcannia, took a direct course for Poria Creek, from whence he steered for Stokes Ranges, discovered and named by Sturt in 1845. From these hills, which he crossed with considerable difficulty, he passed on to desolate plains, covered with broken fragments of coarse sandstone and conglomerate. On the 6th of September the explorers struck Brahe's former track, and on the 8th they reached Cooper's Creek. More than two months had elapsed since the death of Burke and Wills, and they little

suspected how near they were to their remains. The river was almost waterless, feed was very scarce, and the general aspect of the Barcoo and its surroundings miserable in the extreme. As they followed up the course of the river, they saw several natives, but received at first no information. On the 13th of September Fort Wills depôt was reached, and again the cache was *looked at*. No one seemed to think it worth while to dig, and so make sure that it had not been disturbed, since Brahe had first constructed it about five months previously. Next day the party descended the creek, arriving at a splendid broad reach several miles long, and of considerable depth. Here camel tracks were observed, which Howitt believed to belong to Burke's party. He thus describes the discovery of King, and the subsequent movements of the party:—

“Camp 32. September 15th. Lat. 27° 44', long. 140° 40'.—On leaving this morning I went ahead with Sandy to try and pick up Mr. Burke's track, at the lower end of a large water-hole, found where one or two horses had been feeding for some months. The tracks ran in all directions to and from the water, and were as recent as a week. At the same place I found the handle of a clasp knife. From here struck out south for a short distance from the creek, and found a distinct camel's track and droppings, on a native path. The footprints were about four months old, and going east. I then sent the black boy to follow the creek across the sandy country in a bend on the north side. No tracks here; and coming on a native path leading my way, I followed it as the most likely place to see any signs. In about four miles this led me to the lower end of a very large reach of water, and on the opposite side were numbers of native *wurleys*. I crossed at a neck of sand, and again came on the track of a camel going up the creek. At the same time I found a native, who began to gesticulate in a very excited manner, and to point down the creek, bawling out 'Gow! Gow!' as loud as he could. When I went towards him he ran away; and, finding it impossible to get him to come to me, I turned back to follow the camel track, and to look after my party, as I had not seen anything of them for some miles. The track was visible in sandy places, and was evidently the same as I had seen for the last two days. I also found horse tracks in places, but very old. Crossing the creek, I cut our track and rode after the party. In doing so I came on three pounds of tobacco, which had lain where I saw it, for some time.

This, together with the knife handle, the fresh horse tracks, and the camel tracks going eastward, puzzled me extremely, and led me into a hundred conjectures. At the lower end of the large reach of water before mentioned I met Sandy and Frank looking for me, with the intelligence that King—the only survivor of Mr. Burke's party—had been found. A little further on I found the party halted, and immediately went across to the blacks' *wurleys*, where I found King sitting in a hut that the natives had made for him. He presented a melancholy appearance, wasted to a shadow, and hardly to be distinguished as a civilized being, except by the remnants of clothes on him. He seemed exceedingly weak, and I found it occasionally difficult to follow what he said. The natives were all gathered round, seated on the ground, looking with a most grateful and delighted expression. Camped where the party had halted, on a high bank close to the water. I shall probably be here ten days to recruit King before returning.

"Camp 32. September 16th.—King already looks vastly improved even since yesterday, and not like the same man. Have commenced shoeing horses, and preparing for our return. Wind from S.W., with signs of rain. The natives seem to be getting ready for it.

"Camp 32. September 18th.—Left camp this morning, with Brahe, Welch, Wheeler and King, to perform a melancholy duty, which has weighed on my mind since we camped here, and which I have only put off until King should be well enough to accompany us. We proceeded down the creek for seven miles, crossing a branch running to the southward, and followed a native track leading to that part of the creek where Burke, Wills and King camped, after their unsuccessful attempt to reach Mount Hopeless and the northern settlements of South Australia, and where poor Wills died. We found the two *gunyahs* pretty much as King had described them, situate on a sand-bank between two water-holes, and about a mile from the flat where they procured the *nardoo* seed, on which they managed to exist so long. Poor Wills' remains we found lying in the *wurley* in which he died, and where King, after his return from seeking for the natives, had buried him in sand and rushes. We carefully collected the remains, and interred them where they lay, and—not having a Prayer Book—I read the 15th chapter of 1. Corinthians, that we might at least feel the melancholy satisfaction of having shown the last respect

to his remains. We heaped sand over the grave, and laid branches upon it, that the natives might understand by their own token not to disturb the last repose of a fellow being. I cut the following inscription on a tree close by to mark the spot:—

W. J. WILLS,

xliv. yds.

W. N. W.

A. H.

The field-books, a note-book belonging to Mr. Burke, various small articles lying about of no value in themselves, but now invested with a deep interest from the circumstances connected with them, and some of the *nardoo* seed on which they had subsisted, with the small wooden trough in which it had been cleansed, I have in my possession. We returned home with saddened feelings, but I must confess that I felt a sense of relief that this painful ordeal had been gone through. King was very tired when we returned, and I must most unwillingly defer my visit to the spot where Mr. Burke's remains are lying, until he is better able to bear the fatigue."

Two days were now spent in preparation for the return journey, such as shoeing horses and so forth. Several carrier pigeons were despatched to Melbourne, bearing tidings of their successful progress, but they never reached their destination. It was hardly to be expected, considering the immense distance and the numerous birds of prey. To resume Mr. Howitt's Journal:—"September 21st. Finding that it would not be prudent for King to go out for two or three days, I could no longer defer making a search for the spot where Mr. Burke died, and with such directions as King could give, I went up the creek this morning with Brahe, Walsh, Wheeler and Atkins. We searched the creek upwards for eight miles, and at length, strange to say, found the remains of Burke, lying among tall plants under a clump of box trees, within two hundred yards of our last camp, and not thirty paces from our track. It was still more extraordinary, that three or four of the party and two black boys had been quite close to the spot without noticing it. The bones were entire, with the exception of the hands and feet,* and the body had been removed from the spot where it first lay, and where the natives had placed

* Probably the remains had been disturbed, and partly devoured by native dogs.—Ed.

branches over it, to about five paces distant. I found the revolver which Mr. Burke held in his hand when he expired, partly covered with leaves, and corroded with rust. It was loaded and capped. We dug a grave close to the spot, and interred the remains wrapped in the Union Jack, the most fitting covering in which the bones of a brave but unfortunate man could take their last rest. On a box tree, at the head of the grave, the following inscription is cut :—

R. O'H. B.

21/9/61.

A. H.

“September 23rd. We went down the creek to-day in search of the natives. One of the party accompanied me, and we took two days' rations, in case it should be necessary to prolong our search. Two days after we camped here the natives left, and have not been seen since, and I could not think of leaving without showing them that we could appreciate and reward the kindness they had shown to Burke's party, and particularly to King. For three miles we travelled over alluvial flats along the creek, timbered with box and large gums, and dotted with bean trees; orange trees of large size, but at present without fruit; various kinds of acacias, and other bushes. To the right hand, level flats and sand ridges, apparently tolerably grassed. We then came on a large reach of water, where four or five natives had just been fishing. Their nets were lying on the sand to dry, and the fire yet burning. Not seeing anyone about, and getting no answer to a 'Coo-ee,' we went on. At three miles more, we passed the first feeder to Strzelecki's Creek, going to the southward, and at a large reach of water below found the natives encamped. They made a great commotion when we rode up to them, but seemed very friendly. I unpacked my blanket, and took out specimens of the things I intended giving them :—A tomahawk, a knife, beads, a looking-glass, comb, flour, and sugar. The tomahawk was the greatest object; after that, the knife; but I think the looking-glass surprised them most. On seeing their faces some seemed dazzled, others opened their eyes like saucers, and made a rattling noise with their tongues, expressive of surprise. We had quite a friendly palaver, and my watch amused them immensely. When I gave them some of the sugar to taste, it was absurd to see the sleight of hand with which they pretended to eat it, I suppose for fear of being poisoned.

This is, I suppose, general, as our black boys are continually in dread lest the 'wild black fellows' should poison them by some means. I made them understand that they were to bring the whole tribe up next morning to our camp to receive their presents, and we parted the best of friends. The names of the principal men are Tohokulow, Mangallee, Toqunuter, Pitchery, Cruriekow, and Borokow.

"September 24th. This morning, about ten o'clock, our black friends appeared in a long procession—men, women and children, or, as they also call them, piccaninnies; and at a mile's distance they commenced bawling at the top of their voices, as usual. When collected together on a little flat just below our camp, they must have numbered between thirty and forty, and the uproar was deafening. With the help of King, I at last got them all seated before me, and distributed the presents—tomahawks, knives, necklaces, looking-glasses and combs—among them. I think no people were ever so happy before, and it was very interesting to see how they pointed out one another, who they thought might be overlooked. The piccaninnies were brought forward by their parents to have red ribbons tied around their dirty little heads. One old woman, Carrawaw, who had been particularly kind to King, was loaded with things. I then divided 50 lbs. of sugar between them, each one taking his share in a Union Jack pocket handkerchief, which they were very proud of. The sugar soon found its way into their mouths. The flour, 50 lbs. of which I gave them, they at once called 'white-fellow nardoo,' and they explained that they understood that these things were given to them for having fed King."

The man who actually first met King was Mr. Edwin J. Welch, Howitt's second-in-command, whose name was afterwards prominently identified with journalism, both in Queensland and Victoria. An extract from his diary, describing this incident, will be found in the Appendix.

Howitt, having thus fulfilled his mission, decided to return at once, although somewhat tempted to continue his explorations further. The relief party having reached Melbourne in safety, on the 28th of November, and Howitt having reported the interment of the two explorers' remains, it was resolved that they should be exhumed, and brought to the capital. With this object in view, Mr. Howitt again set out on December the 1st, 1861. Cooper's Creek was reached on February

the 8th, 1862, and after making various excursions and minor discoveries, the bodies of Burke and Wills were safely conveyed to Melbourne, *via* Adelaide, where they were honoured with a public funeral, and subsequently a splendid monument was erected to the memory of the explorers.

King received a pension from the Government;* and Mr. Howitt, for these and other services to the Colony, received the appointment of police magistrate. He was a close student of ethnology, and in collaboration with the Rev. L. Fison, wrote a work on native marriage customs. Having likewise a scientific and practical knowledge, he led several prospecting parties for the Government, which afterwards resulted in his being appointed Secretary for Mines in Victoria.

* For particulars of pensions, &c., see Appendix.





CHAPTER XX.

Mr. John McKinlay's South Australian Expedition in search of Burke and Wills.



AS already mentioned, the South Australian Government joined in the general search for traces of the unfortunate explorers, Burke and Wills. Mr. John McKinlay, the gentleman selected as leader of the expedition, was well fitted for the task, and his management of this enterprise made his name famous as an Australian explorer. He was born at Sandbank, on the Clyde, in 1819, and at the age of seventeen emigrated to New South Wales, where his uncle owned a sheep station. Having become an experienced bushman, and taken up several runs near the boundary of South Australia, he became more or less identified with that Colony.

On this errand of mercy and rescue, he started from Adelaide on August the 14th, 1861, with a party of six men, Mr. W. O. Hodgkinson being second-in-command. They took with them seventy-two horses, four camels, several bullocks, a flock of sheep, and provisions for twelve months. Having reached Blanchewater, some miles to the westward of Mount Hopeless, without incident, towards the end of September they travelled over Gregory's track from the Barcoo to Lake Torrens, and arrived at Lake Pando (or Lake Hope) early in October. A good many natives were seen, having in their possession various articles of European manufacture, which caused McKinlay to feel confident that he was on

the right track for Burke and his party, whom he imagined to have been murdered by the blacks. McKinlay's journal thus relates their subsequent discovery:—

“October 20th. Reached Lake Kallhi-View. Found plenty of water. Watered the horses (the camels some distance behind, unable to keep up), and at once proceeded northward, along the side of a large beautifully-timbered, grassed and clovered swamp or creek—about one and-a-half miles across—to ascertain the fact as to the presence of a European dead or alive, and there found a grave lately formed by the natives, evidently not one of themselves, sufficient pains not having been taken; and from other appearances at once set it down as the grave of a white man, be he who he may. Then returned to Lake Kallhi-View, to await the coming of the camels, which was not until about 5 p.m. Determined in the morning to have the grave opened, and ascertain its contents.

“Whilst I went to the top of the sandhills looking round me, Mr. Hodgkinson strayed a short distance to some old native huts near, and by-and-bye returned, bearing with him an old flattened pint pot—no marks upon it—further evidence that it was a white man's grave. Plenty of clover* and grasses. Whole distance travelled about eighteen miles. Kept watch as usual (did not intend doing so). Just as we were retiring, we thought some of the natives had followed us; or some others came to the lake—rather a strange matter after dark. Soon afterwards they disappeared, which made us more certain still that it was natives. Intend spelling the camels for a few days to recruit them. One on arrival was completely done up, and none of the others looked very sprightly.

“October 21st.—Up in good time. Four starting for the grave. Went round the lake, taking Mr. Hodgkinson with me, to see if the natives were really on the lake. I did not intend saddling the camels to-day, if there were no natives here, intending to leave our camp unprotected, as hands were short and the grave was out of sight. Found no natives round the lake, but some of the trees were still burning. We started at once for the grave, taking a canteen of water with us, and all the arms. On arrival we removed the earth carefully, and close to the top of the ground found the body of a European, enveloped in a flannel shirt with short sleeves, a piece of the breast of which I have

* No doubt this was *sardoo*, which King at first mistook for clover.—Ed.

taken. The flesh, I may say, completely cleaned off the bones, and a very little hair but what must have been decomposed.* What little there was I have taken."

It is pretty evident that the above-described corpse was that of Gray, the latitude and longitude in which McKinlay made his discovery closely corresponding with the scene of the former's death. Having marked a tree in the neighbourhood, "McK., Oct. 21, 1861," the leader proceeded to make enquiries of an aboriginal who accompanied them. He told them a cock-and-bull story about a white man being killed by a blow from a native sword; but it is pretty evident that he drew entirely upon his imagination for the facts. This is one out of innumerable instances where the natives, if ignorant when questioned regarding any circumstance, show great skill in concocting a plausible tale on the spur of the moment. There were no signs on the neighbouring trees of a camp having been formed at this place, but tracks showed that camels and horses had been tied up there a considerable time before. Between these tracks and the grave, another grave was found, which appeared to have been dug with a spade or shovel, and McKinlay states that he came upon "a lot of human hair of two colours, that had been decomposed." He at once jumped to the conclusion that he had solved the problem of Burke and Wills' fate. "I fancy," he writes in his diary, "they must have all been murdered here (lat. 27°, long. 139° 50', about forty miles from where Wills really died). Dug out the new-found grave with a stick, the only instrument we had, but found no remains of bodies, except a little bone. The black accounted for this in the following manner:— He says *they had eaten them*. Found an old fire-place immediately adjoining, with bones very well burnt, but not in any quantity. In and about the last-named grave, a piece of light blue tweed, with fragments of paper, and small pieces of the *Nautical Almanack*, were found; also an exploded Eley's cartridge. No appearance in any of the trees of bullet marks, as if a struggle had taken place. On a further examination of the blacks' camp, where the pint pot was found, there was also found a tin canteen, similar to what is used for keeping naphtha. Native says that any mems. the whites had are back in the last camp we were at, as

* Here the explorer is probably in error, for, as is well known, hair defies the ravages of time or decomposition.—Ed.

well as the ironwork of saddles, &c., which we mean to recover on our return."

Next day the travellers encountered a tribe of blacks, who fled on their approach. One was captured, however, in order to gain information about the graves. He showed them an old camp, at which had been left a quantity of horse-hair saddle stuffing. He likewise stated that everything else had been burnt, and the bodies of the explorers eaten. Eventually the native left to bring them a rifle, which he stated had been hidden in a hollow tree. That night he did not return. At about four in the morning, however, the blacks put in an appearance, to the number of about forty, headed by the man just mentioned. They were armed, carried torches, and were most menacing in their demeanour. McKinlay ordered them back under threats of firing upon them, but they disregarded him, and endeavoured to surround the party. Hodgkinson and Middleton were then ordered to fire, and with some difficulty they were dispersed.

As before stated, McKinlay believed, with some show of reason, that he had solved the mystery of the missing explorers. Had King not survived and been discovered, and had the bodies of Burke and Wills not been found, it is quite possible that this explorer's explanation would have been accepted, and the four unfortunate men would have been credited with promiscuous interment in the paunches of aboriginal *anthropophagi*.

Before fulfilling the second part of his instructions—viz., to proceed to Lake Eyre and Central Mount Stuart, making investigation of the country lying between Burke's and Stuart's tracks, also seeking for indications of gold, and finally returning to Finnis Springs for supplies—McKinlay buried the following letter :—

"October 23rd, 1861.

"To the leader of any expedition seeking tidings of Burke and party.

"Sir,—I reached this water—Lake Massacre—on the 19th inst., and by means of a native guide, observed a European camp one mile north on the west side of flat. At or near this camp the tracks of camels, horses and whites were found. Hair, apparently belonging to Mr. Wills, Charles Gray and Mr. Burke or King, was picked from the surface of a grave by a spade, and from the skull of a European buried by the natives. Other articles less important, such as a pannikin, oil-can and saddle-stuffing,

have been found. Beware of the natives, upon whom we had to fire. We do not intend to return to Adelaide, but proceed west of north. From information, all Burke's party were killed and eaten.

“JOHN MCKINLAY.

“P.S.—All the party in good health.

“If you had any difficulty in reaching this spot, and wish to return to Adelaide by a more practicable route, you may do so for at least three months to come, by driving west eighteen miles, then south of west, cutting our dray-track within thirty miles. Abundance of water and feed at easy stages.”

Although, as already stated, it is more than probable that the remains discovered were those of Gray, we cannot but admit that absolute proof of identity is absent. I think, however, we may ask ourselves the question, “If not Gray's, what human body could this possibly be?” The Leichardt party might certainly have been in that direction, but then we should expect to have more than one corpse forthcoming, and such remains would now be nearly fifteen years old. During the last days of his forced march to Cooper's Creek, there are no recorded observations in Wills' journal, which fact somewhat increases our difficulty in fixing the locality of Gray's death. Again, it is perplexing to note the discrepancy between Wills' and McKinlay's reports respecting the attitude of the blacks. The former speaks of their extreme friendliness; the latter found them so hostile that he was obliged to fire on them. Possibly he and his party were inclined to be somewhat harsh, if not vindictive, believing them to be murderers and cannibals.

McKinlay now sent Mr. Hodginson—his second-in-command—with two men to the settled districts, near Blanchewater, conveying his version of the explorers' fate. They started on the 28th of October, and were instructed to bring back rations sufficient for a more prolonged exploration than originally intended, taking several pack horses for the latter purpose. Meantime the leader formed a depôt in latitude $27^{\circ} 41'$, and longitude $139^{\circ} 30'$, from which he conducted some minor excursions in the neighbourhood. Good grassy flats and salt lagoons, with sandhills and dry lakes, characterised the neighbourhood, but it was completely destitute of fresh water. The heat registered at the depôt was at times so terrific as to make the reader doubt the accuracy of their thermometer.

For example, on the 16th, 17th and 18th of November, the temperature was reported 140°, 160° and 146° at noon in the sun, and it varied on another day from 54° at five in the morning, to 100° twelve hours later. Flies were likewise a source of torment to the animals, and, although feed was plentiful, no rain fell, and the consequent dry climate destroyed the appetites of both man and beast. Under such uncomfortable circumstances they longed for the return of Hodgkinson, whose prolonged absence was a source of anxiety. At length, on the 29th of November, he arrived at the depôt, and brought the tidings of Howitt's return, the rescue of King, and the true story of Burke's and Wills' fate. The leader now made a journey to the eastward, passing through an extremely barren country, and, having descended the Barcoo, visited the graves of both Burke and Wills at Cooper's Creek. Having buried a statement of his intended movements, he returned to the depôt. On the 17th of December the main body, with animals and equipment, moved towards Lake Massacre, passing over several lakes and lagoons. Into one of the former Mr. Hodgkinson swam for about three hundred yards, finding the depth at this distance to be ten feet. Such a supply of water might almost be expected to last throughout the summer, although it could be seen to be already rapidly evaporating. Countless myriads of pelicans, parrots, and pigeons surrounded these sheets of water, the margins of which were covered with verdure. McKinlay resolved to remain in the lake district until the rainy season commenced, and during this delay he made a thorough survey of the adjacent neighbourhood. He discovered a large number of lakes differing in shape, character, extent, and surroundings. There were some which appeared to have been perfectly dry for years, while others were full of water, and had the semblance of permanency; some were environed with rich feed and verdure, while the banks of others were sterile or covered with unwholesome samphire. Then the country was intersected with numerous creeks, the channels of several being wide, and their waters well stocked with fish. This territory, as might be expected, was somewhat densely peopled by aboriginals of good physique, and who were, on the whole, inclined to be friendly. Towards the end of January a heavy fall of rain encouraged McKinlay to make a reconnoitring excursion to the northward, and, after passing over flats and sandhills, he soon came upon the veritable Stony

Desert of Sturt. Having taken a route to the eastward of that adopted by both Burke and the last named explorer, he turned back from a waterless waste and again sought the welcome oasis of the Barcoo Lakes. The leader now hesitated to advance until the rains began in earnest, although by waiting his provisions were being diminished, and the men were suffering in health. At length, on the 10th of February a heavy thunderstorm induced him to risk moving northward, towards Eyre Creek. Having therefore advanced into the Stony Desert, the travellers encountered a continuance of heavy rains, which nevertheless, failed to fill the watercourses. After advancing some sixty miles, however, they encamped on the banks of a large creek containing water, with an abundance of both fish and fowl. This stream had been discovered by Burke and Wills, and is fully described in the diary of the latter, although—strange to say—it is not mentioned by Captain Sturt. Having followed up the course of this creek, to which McKinlay gave the name of Burke, camel tracks were observed, and the skeleton of a horse—relics, no doubt, of the last named explorer's outfit. The leader and several of the men were laid down by sickness at this point of the journey, while to add to their misfortunes one of the oxen died, and the aboriginal guide absconded. Still they struggled to make headway, but only succeeded in advancing some seven miles along the banks of the creek, over almost impassable sandhills, when they were obliged to halt and form a camp. They were now in the last week of February, and having killed a bullock, they settled down for a few days of much needed rest. The rain came down in torrents; but, having made up his mind to penetrate the Continent to Carpentaria, the prospect of a good water supply was most agreeable to McKinlay. By the 1st of March, however, not only had the river risen above its banks, but the plains were turning into one vast sea, with islets formed by sandhills and lines of trees. They had considerable trouble in getting their sheep and cattle to a place of safety, and the stores suffered considerable damage. Some weeks previously the natives had warned them that they would be flooded out as soon as the Barcoo rose, but their advice was unheeded—the leader imagining that they concocted this story in order to get rid of the whites. For ten days the party were imprisoned by the rains, their leisure time being employed in jerking meat, horse-shoeing, and generally repairing damages. The

waters having somewhat abated, the explorers again advanced; but having camped after sixteen miles of rough travel on the edge of a flooded flat, they were driven into the hills by the still rising flood. McKinlay pays a high tribute of praise to the camel as being by far the most suitable of any beast of burden for Australian Exploration. In respect of feeding, drinking, or endurance, he considers that sheep and camels can be taken to almost all parts of the Continent, and still kept in good condition.

It was at length found impossible to travel in a northerly direction, owing to the floods, hence the leader resolved to push on to the eastward along a table-range. Having taken this course, a pass was discovered on the second day—which, having crossed, a rich pasture land was reached, where the bamboo swamps were frequented by thousands of pigeons, teal and wild duck. Ella Range was discovered and christened on the 15th of March, and from the summit of a high peak many hills and creeks were visible on the horizon, to the north and west. Stony plains, sand-hills, streams and gum flats were traversed for about a fortnight, after which a creek was followed up, which pierced a sandstone range. Passing through this gap, and following up the watercourse, during the first days of April, they found themselves harassed by the swampiness of the land, and although grazing for the animals was plentiful on the banks, the country in general was of a wretched description. The Mueller River—called after the famous botanist, Baron von Mueller (now known as the Diamantina)—was discovered and named on the 7th of the month. This stream was about seven hundred feet broad, its waters attracted thousands of birds, and the country at first showed symptoms of improvement. These signs soon disappeared, however, as the explorers advanced, and they found their progress much impeded with rocks and stones. Their supplies were now very much reduced; and meat, with such *portulac* as they could collect, was their chief sustenance. Retreat was therefore out of the question, and McKinlay decided to make for the Albert River, at the mouth of which he expected either to find the *Victoria* steamer, or—if Captain Norman had sailed—it was understood that a depôt would be formed for the use of the Queensland explorers, Walker and Landsborough. Failing this, his nearest route to settled districts was to steer for Port Denison, on the eastern coast of the Continent.

Travelling northwards, they passed in succession three considerable creeks, which were named the Fletcher, the Cadell, and the Middleton. The last named seemed to flow from the north, and the party followed its course up to the range from which it sprung. Having crossed this chain of hills, richly grassed creeks were found, evidently emanating from a high chain of hills to the westward, which stretched with bold, abrupt outline far away to the northward. These mountains were found on investigation to rise some thousand feet above the surrounding plains, and here McKinlay had a period of enforced delay, through losing one of the party among the dark ravines. After four days' search he was found, however, in an exhausted and almost dying condition. From the fact of the streams all seeming to flow to the north, the explorer concluded that he had crossed the Carpentaria watershed. Several creeks were successively followed in a northerly direction—one large stream being named the McKinlay. So monotonous is the description of their progress that the reader may well be spared its perusal. It is certainly surprising, however, to read of so many large watercourses in a comparatively rainless and tropical country. A lofty plateau having been crossed, a northward flowing creek was followed up, which, after two days' travel, led them to the Leichardt River, at this spot about five hundred feet wide. Their journey down the Leichardt was uneventful, and their toils were somewhat lightened by the prospect of supplies at Carpentaria. At last, on the 19th of May, the salt marshes which fringe the Gulf were reached, but the dense mangrove thickets made it impossible to reach the beach. Moreover, the *Victoria* had sailed about three months previously (16th February), and no cache could be found. There was, therefore, no alternative but to move for settled districts without delay. The choice lay between South Australia and Queensland, the latter being the nearer, although the route of the former was better known. McKinlay chose Port Denison, and the end of May found them among the mountain ranges *en route* for that settlement. They took a track much similar to that travelled by Gregory, and followed down the course of the Burdekin River, in the hope of meeting outgoing settlers with sheep and cattle. Having reached the Leichardt Range, through a gap in which the Burdekin flows, they arrived at Mr. Phillip Somer's station early in August. They were in a half famished condition, having eaten cattle,

horses and camels during their long nine weeks' march. They were now some seventy miles from Port Denison, which they reached in due course, and subsequently journeyed to Melbourne, where he met with a warm welcome, on September the 25th, 1862.

McKinlay's expedition was of signal service to the cause of settlement and geographical research, confirming Stuart's theory, and proving that much territory, which had hitherto been put down as sterile desert, was eminently adapted for pastoral occupation. In appreciation of his work, the South Australian Parliament, with unwonted liberality, voted him the sum of £1,000, the Colony subscribed for a handsome silver tea and coffee service, and he also was honoured with the gift of a gold watch from the Royal Geographical Society of London.





CHAPTER XXI.

Mr. William Landsborough's Expedition from the Gulf of Carpentaria, in search of Burke and Wills; also, his subsequent Discoveries.

HAVING thus briefly recorded the results of the rescue expeditions which started from Melbourne and Adelaide, under the respective leaderships of Messrs. Howitt and McKinlay, we must now turn to the eastern coast, where active preparations had been made by the Government and people of Queensland. It will be remembered that Mr. Walker was to cross by land from Rockhampton, while Mr. Landsborough and Captain Norman were to go by sea in the steam sloop *Victoria* to Carpentaria, the second named leader subsequently to penetrate towards the centre from the Gulf. Necessary repairs to the steamer caused some delay, and it was not until the 24th of August, 1861, that the entire outfit was in readiness. On that day, in company with the brig *Firefly*, which carried the whole of Landsborough's party, the provisions and the horses, the two vessels sailed from Brisbane, bound for the Investigator Roads, where two vessels—the brig *Gratia* and the schooner *Native Lass*—were to meet them, bringing coals and a further supply of provisions. At first their voyage was a prosperous one, and the Barrier Reef was reached in eight days. Stormy weather succeeded, however, and, during a heavy gale, the steamer lost sight of the brig. The latter, nevertheless, managed to weather the storm, and, having threaded the Torres Straits, sought shelter under the lee of Sir Charles Hardy's Islands. Soon afterwards her anchor cables parted, and she was driven on a coral reef. Although much battered by the waves, she was

fortunately left high and dry, so that most of her cargo and twenty-five of the horses were saved. Landsborough's party had been landed, and were housed under tents when the *Victoria* arrived. The brig was temporarily patched up, so as to be serviceable as a transport hulk, and was taken in tow, with horses and cargo on board, on the 12th September. A fortnight later they cast anchor in Investigator Roads, where the two coal vessels awaited them. Subsequently the damaged *Firefly* was taken twenty miles up the Albert River, where the horses were landed, and a depôt formed.

While Landsborough was getting ready for a journey to the S.W., towards Central Mount Stuart, in the hope of discovering Burke's tracks, Captain Norman made an examination of the Albert River. His boat first brought him to Gregory's 1855 track, after which he reached the Plains of Promise, described by Stokes. Being much impeded by timber logs in the upper branch of the Albert, which he called the Barkly, he left his boat, and travelling on foot, marked the trees at intervals with the broad arrow, together with the letters V and N, for possible guidance to either Burke or Walker.

The expedition of Mr. William Landsborough being the subject of the present chapter, a few words may be said regarding his antecedents. He was the son of an Ayrshire medical man, and received his education in the town of Irvine. Having emigrated to the Colony of New South Wales, he took up a sheep station, but afterwards removed to Queensland. In 1856 he made several explorations, discovering Mount Nebo and Fort Cooper, and also examined Peak Downs and the Nogoa River three years later. In 1860 he discovered the head of the Thompson River, and, in spite of his many enemies, his appointment as leader was probably the wisest selection which could have been made by the Royal Society of Victoria. He and his party, Mr. G. Bourne being second-in-command, started from the depôt on the 16th of November, and after two days' travel to the S.W., discovered a tributary to the Nicholson, which they named the Gregory River. This they crossed on the 21st, and advanced across the plains in the same direction. Hills were sighted on the 23rd, and steering to the S.E., they again came to the Gregory. They then entered the tableland by the river channel, which they followed till the 27th, when a gorge was found. They camped in latitude 19° 2', and longitude 138° 52', having unfortunately lost one horse, which was

drowned in the Gregory River. Next day the O'Shannessy River was found by the leader and a black trooper, who had separated from the rest on a reconnoitring trip; and on the 29th, having followed up the course of the Gregory, Verdon and Balfour Creeks were discovered. They rejoined the main body a little further up stream, at Haine's Creek. In tracing the course of the river, they found the travelling very rough, and could see by the diminishing supply of water, that it would not last much longer. Other tributaries were examined, but without success, and eventually, on the 5th of December, the river bed was found to be perfectly dry. Next day the leader took a southward course in quest of water, and, having crossed a range which he called Barkly's Tablelands, reached a stream, which was named Pratt's Creek. To this spot the rest of the party and the animals were brought up on the 8th, when a camp was formed. Leaving them here, Landsborough again went ahead, and on the 12th discovered two watercourses, named respectively the Elliott and Herbert Rivers. The water in Pratt's Creek was fast drying up, and on the 15th the main body was shifted to another watercourse named Clifton Creek, which was well stocked with fish. Having here divided his men, three travelled south, while the leader, with the remainder, took an eastward course. The only water to be found was in the Herbert River, where they were re-united on the 19th. The water difficulty—that bane of Australian travel—was now paramount. To advance to the south-west with his whole party, unless this necessary was procurable at reasonably accessible stages, was manifestly impossible. The leader, therefore, with two natives, went southward, and a fine water-hole, named Lake Mary, rewarded his search. It lay in about the 20th parallel of latitude, and here a depôt was formed, to which the main body advanced. Here they remained, while Landsborough and a companion explored the Herbert. They travelled down its course some thirty-five miles, after which the water failed them, and accordingly they rejoined their companions at Lake Mary.

Concluding that further progress in a S.W. direction was impracticable, and having advanced to latitude $20^{\circ} 8'$ without discovering any traces of Burke, the leader determined to return to the Albert River. In pursuance of this course, after a short rest at the depôt, they moved up the Herbert, and passing Clifton Creek, struck the head of the O'Shannessy, which

they followed until it joined the Gregory. Having traced this stream down on its southern bank, and discovered the Ligar, one of its tributaries, they came to Beame's Brook, which connected the Gregory with the Albert, and thus arrived at the depôt. Although the expedition had been comparatively fruitless, so far as its main object was concerned, Landsborough had considerably added to the riparian knowledge of the district he traversed, demonstrating that almost all the Australian rivers spring from a basaltic watershed.

On the 8th of February, having left his men at the depôt up the Albert River, Landsborough went on board the *Victoria*, and reported progress to Captain Norman, stating that his return was due to water famine, and danger from hostile natives. He likewise averred that his party was too small to admit of separation for reconnoitring and other purposes. Not having been attacked, however, and no threatening demonstration having been made on the part of the blacks, his fears seem somewhat groundless, and his excuse appears premature, to say the least of it. During Landsborough's absence, Captain Norman had made minute search on the Albert River, but found no signs of the missing explorers. While thus engaged, Walker and his party arrived at the depôt on the 7th of December, and reported that they had found tracks of Burke and Wills on the Flinders River. A further supply of stores was needed by Walker, in order to follow up his discoveries, and these having been supplied, the party started again on the 20th of the month. Norman arranged to meet them at a given point on the Flinders River, but, as will appear in the following chapter, dealing with Walker's expedition, the leader and the captain never saw one another, the rendezvous being inundated by the sea.

Landsborough, having learnt of Walker's discoveries, was now most desirous of continuing his search in a S.E. direction, instead of returning home by steamer, and with this view applied to Norman for tea, sugar and rum, to supplement his provisions. These commodities, however, could not be spared, for supplies were short on the *Victoria*, and moreover, the journey now proposed by Landsborough had not been in any way counted on, sanctioned or provided for, by the Exploration Committee. Captain Norman reminded the over-ardent explorer of these facts, and pointed out to him that in accordance with the instructions of

the Royal Society of Victoria, his strict duty was to sail in the *Victoria* to Queensland. But, nothing daunted, Landsborough reiterated his request, in response to which the captain wrote stating that he would give him such supplies as he could spare; but that if his (Landsborough's) expedition would be jeopardized by short rations, he was in no way obliged or encouraged to run any risks, especially as Walker had already gone in the same direction. Nevertheless, the captain virtually gave the explorer full permission to do as he thought best under the circumstances. Finally, Landsborough elected to do as he proposed, and having been supplied with certain stores, started on the 10th of February, accompanied by Messrs. Bourne and Gleeson, with three blacks, Jemmy, Jacky and Fisherman. Their stock of provisions amounted to about twelve hundred and eighty pounds, which comparatively small quantity was carried on pack horses. They advanced at once towards the Flinders River, by way of the Leichardt, and reached the former stream on the 19th February. Burke's tracks were visible, as well as Walker's, although the rains, which had recently fallen and flooded the river, had almost obliterated the footprints. Being thus anticipated in his search, as he might naturally have expected, Landsborough proceeded to explore up the course of the river. After a week's travel, they reached three curious solitary peaks, which were called Fort Bowen, Mount Brown, and Mount Little. The country here was generally level, and richly grassed, the banks of the river being often thickly wooded. In latitude 20° 23', the Flinders River was joined by a fine creek, which, with the main stream, was full of water. On the 6th of March he reached an ideal grazing country, with just enough timber for fuel and shade. The landscape around his camp seems to have delighted his eyes. In the foreground, he tells us, were box and other trees, festooned with creepers, and beyond was an extensive grassy plain, extending in a north and east direction to distant blue mountains. The explorer winds up, however, with this remark, "As the day advanced this picture lost a portion of its beauty, by the disappearance of anything like a mountain." No doubt the noonday mist rising from the plains had obscured these far-off ranges from his view. Bramstone Range came in view on the 13th of March, and here were met a large number of friendly blacks, whose chief diet seemed to be fresh-water mussels and rats.

They now had reached more mountainous country, and a peak, which the leader scaled, was named Walker's Table Mountain, because tracks leading N.W. were here found which doubtless belonged to Walker's party. Boundless plains appeared to stretch westward, while to the S.E. were mountains, hills and tablelands. They still travelled over downs covered with fine grass, and thinly wooded with acacia. On the banks of the Flinders there grew a plant producing pods of silky cotton. This was a species of the *Cynanotium*, and the unripe pods, being full of a milky substance much prized by the aborigines, formed a welcome article of food. Altogether, it must be admitted that so far, Landsborough had been exceptionally lucky, considering his small party and limited rations.

By the 19th of the month, the Flinders had diminished to the dimensions of a sandy channel, through which a shallow river, measuring about one hundred yards across, slowly flowed. Next day they left this watercourse, and followed up a tributary called Gardner's Creek, the valley of which was splendidly grassed and wooded. Having thereafter crossed a barren sandy range to the southward, they emerged upon a flat sterile tract of land, much overgrown with spinifex and iron bark. Occasional patches of grass and a few creeks alone, redeemed this expanse from being a veritable desert. Along the course of a creek which flowed through stony ridges and spinifex flats, they made their way towards Bowen Downs, a territory which had been discovered by the leader and his friend Mr. Buchanan, in 1860. Here it was hoped they would find a station where their rations might be replenished, but the land was as yet unsettled—a dray-track being the only sign of human occupation. Taking a southward direction across the plains, over a rich undulating country, well grassed and thinly timbered, a creek flowing south was reached on the 29th. This the leader recognised as having been discovered by himself two years before, and called by his own name. The Landsborough flowed south, indicating that they had crossed the watershed, whereupon they proceeded to follow the creek down its course, fully expecting to find a newly-formed cattle or sheep station. But again they were doomed to disappointment; and pastures, which seemed to have been cropped by sheep, were found to have been eaten by grasshoppers. After being joined by the Cornish Creek, the Landsborough developed into a fine river, called the Thompson, which flows

into the Barcoo, some miles south of the 25th parallel. Kennedy and Gregory believed that this stream drained a useless and inhospitable region, but Landsborough's experience, as we have seen, was quite the reverse. Near one of his old camps, which was marked upon a tree L. LXIX, some blacks were met with. They were friendly, and reported that they had seen an exploring party, and told the leader that the stream he was following was joined in two days' journey, by a wide river flowing S.W. On the 9th of April he went in search of the stream, but concluding that he had been deceived, returned to the Thompson. Here I may mention that Landsborough, not having his correct longitude, and misled by Gregory's report, never suspected that the important stream in question was in reality the Barcoo River. Next day they met some natives according to appointment, who were to guide them to the stream referred to. The daily journeys were so short that they travelled for four days without reaching the stream. At length, having passed a small range, a creek was reached, which was called, after the Registrar-General for Victoria, Archer's Creek. Following its course for about a dozen miles, it led them to the brimming waters of the Barcoo, flowing through verdant grassy banks.

Mr. G. Bourne, who accompanied Landsborough, wrote a most interesting journal of the expedition, of which I wish space would permit me to transcribe copious extracts. On Sunday, April 13th, his diary runs as follows:—"Camp 46.—Having lost so much time lately, we break through the rule, and travel to-day, making thirteen miles S.S.W. The country is still very dry, and may at some periods well be called a desert; two dry seasons being enough to make it so, while at other times it may be flooded and look beautiful as a garden. The uncertainty of rainfall will always be a great drawback to this part of the country, otherwise very rich. But this is more or less the case in most parts of Australia. It is very amusing to see the effect of riding on the old black. With great difficulty he gets off the horse, and when off cannot move, and seemed puzzled because we are not stiff also.

"If he wished to run away he could not do it. Our rations are very bad now, we have used the best of the bad flour, the remainder is very bitter and nasty. We hope to find some one a long distance out from the settled districts with cattle. This morning an old black brought up to our

camp a gin, perfect enough in form for a Venus. He seemed very proud of her, but she did not much relish our admiring gaze. She had a fine, fat little girl with her, but not her own. The old men always secure the young gins, persuading the younger men that they would disagree with them, and that the old ones are better for them. This is also the case with their food. A young man is only allowed to eat certain animals, most easily obtained, such as opossum, fish, &c.; but should he be fortunate enough to get an emu or kangaroo, he must hand it over to the old men, who would tell him that he would certainly get ill or die if he dared to eat it. And many of the young men believe it, although I daresay there are a good many sceptics among them."

I may mention that Mr. Bourne concludes his diary with a bitter complaint regarding the ungenerous conduct of Landsborough, who, it appears, omitted on every public occasion to acknowledge his services as second-in-command. Referring to a service of plate which was presented to the commander, Bourne remarks:—"His substantial testimonial I do not envy him, but it pains me that he should be content to monopolize instead of only sharing the distinction which others have so materially assisted in winning."

To resume our account of Landsborough's journey, it was now a matter for consideration whether it would be more judicious to travel eastward, towards the settled districts of the Barcoo, so as to reach Melbourne by that route; or to follow down the banks of the river, and so shape their course for Adelaide, by Gregory's route of 1859. The leader eventually resolved to adopt neither plan, and after leaving the Barcoo, on the 25th of April, they followed up a small creek to a range from which it issued. They then crossed it, and came upon a level plain in parts grassed, but with scrubby and thickly-wooded intervals. At this season it was well watered, and the party struck the Warrego River on the 20th of May in latitude $27^{\circ} 28'$. Next day they came to Messrs. Neilson and Williams' station, where they received a hearty welcome, and learned for the first time of the fate of Burke and Wills. After a short rest, Menindie, on the Darling, was reached, and finally, by the end of June, they arrived safely at Melbourne.

Mr. Landsborough found himself the subject of considerable censure on the part of a certain section of the public, who were led to the belief

that the explorer had sacrificed the main object of his expedition—that is, the rescue of Burke and Wills—to the secondary and sordid object of searching for available pasture land. Several of the Colonial papers encouraged this idea, which must I think be set down as unjust and erroneous. While professing to praise Mr. Landsborough for the rapidity with which he conducted his long and arduous expedition, he is accused by one writer of neglecting what should have been his chief aim at a very early stage of the journey, as “there was not the remotest probability of striking Burke’s track after quitting the Flinders River, and taking a S.S.E. course for the rest of the way.” The newspaper article in question goes on to attack Landsborough, because from the moment he thus diverged to the S.S.E. all mention ceases to be made of the ostensible purpose for which the expedition was organised until the station on the Warrego was reached, when great surprise was expressed at the tidings that Burke had perished. Now, as a matter of fact, the journal states that he took every opportunity of enquiry from the natives he met whether a camel party had been seen by them, while a constant look-out for tracks was kept.

“Supposing,” continues the philanthropic and, of course, strictly conscientious newspaper man, “these gallant men (Burke and Wills) to have been still living, and anxiously awaiting succour, at some one of the ninety camping places at which they halted on their arduous journey between the depôt and the Gulf, what excuse could Mr. Landsborough have offered for giving so wide a berth to the probable route of the explorers, and for omitting to strike their track, traces of which had been reported on the Flinders by Mr. Walker?” Mr. Landsborough had, I conceive, a very sufficient excuse. He was not in the full possession of the facts, like his well-informed and captious critic. He knew nothing of the ninety camping places, or their location. He had, on the other hand, every reason to believe that Walker was following the homeward track of the explorers, and finally, he had no reason to think that Burke would split up his numerous retinue, and miraculously manage to strike almost a straight line for Carpentaria along the 140th meridian of longitude.

Still exhibiting an inexhaustible supply of cheap wisdom after the event, this oracular scribe proceeds in true penny-a-liner style. “We may be reminded that ‘all’s well that ends well;’ that the lamented

explorers were beyond the reach of human assistance, and that Mr. Landsborough had achieved a most valuable result in following the course he did; but we cannot help remarking that in so doing he seems to have been more intent on serving the cause of pastoral settlement than upon ascertaining if it were possible to afford relief to the missing men. The impression produced by a perusal of the despatch which we published on Saturday last, is that the writer was commissioned to open up a practicable route from the Warrego to the Flinders, and *not* that he was a leader of a party which had been organised and despatched 'for the purpose of rendering relief, if possible, to the missing explorers under the command of Mr. Burke.' We do not wish to detract one iota from the credit due to Mr. Landsborough for what he actually effected; but we must not lose sight of the mission of humanity in which he was professedly engaged, nor the fact that this mission was replaced by one of a totally different character, strengthening as this circumstance does the conviction which is gaining ground in the public mind, that we have been deluded into expending large sums of money in sending out relief expeditions, which were chiefly employed in exploring available country for the benefit of the Government and the people of Queensland. The cost and empty honour have been ours, but theirs has been the substantial gain."

It is pretty clear that strong *animus* inspired the writer of the above, whose clumsy animadversions would probably have been even more severe if Landsborough had encroached on the ground presumably searched by Howitt and by Walker. And had he discovered no new pastoral country, and contributed nothing to the problem of the division of the northern and southern rivers, words of censure strong enough could scarcely have been found. But because he did not waste his time—and having finished his search—because he completed the work which Mitchell and Leichardt had begun, he met with unmerited condemnation. He survived these attacks however, receiving warm congratulations and a presentation from the Royal Geographical Society of London. When he died, in March, 1886, he left behind him the memory of a useful life; and one who knew him well, declared that "he was the very model of a pioneer—courageous, hearty, good-humoured and kindly. He was an excellent horseman—a most entertaining companion, and could starve with greater cheerfulness than any man I ever saw or heard of."



CHAPTER XXII.

Expedition conducted by Mr. Frederick Walker from Rockhampton to Carpentaria, in search of Burke and Wills.

ABOUT the same time as Captain Norman started on his maritime expedition in the *Victoria* steamer, Mr. Frederick Walker—a skilled bushman of tried experience as an explorer—set out from Rockhampton, bound for Carpentaria, by overland route. His party was chiefly composed of black troopers, his selection of which may be accounted for, by the fact that the leader had taken previously an active part in the organization of the native police. Having forded the Dawson, he reached Albinia Downs; and thence travelled through the ranges at the head of the Claude River, discovered and named by Mitchell. Having already traversed these regions on a former occasion, Walker pushed forward at a rapid pace, and without special incident arrived at the head of the Barcoo. He searched for and found the tree marked “L,” as described by Gregory, and seven miles further down the stream found another, similarly distinguished. These he believed to be undoubted relics of Leichardt, and he surmised that the lost traveller had taken a N.W. course from this camp.

The leader and his party now struck out N.N.W. towards the Alice River, taking a route to the westward of Leichardt's first journey. Before leaving the Barcoo he sent back a trooper with a report of progress, on the 7th of October. Their course took them at first over an arid country,

such watercourses as occurred being dry; then a few water-holes were found, until—having crossed some uplands, evidently the watershed of the Barcoo and the Alice—some small tributaries, flowing towards the latter river, were encountered. Patrick Creek was reached and named on the 10th, and here two of his native companions discovered some horse tracks, which Walker firmly believed to be Leichardt's. If so, they would have been some fifteen years old, and it is much more likely that Landsborough and Buchanan were responsible for them during their trip two years before. Having camped for a night, next morning they moved forward over a splendid grass country, and the weather being extremely hot, they made a very short journey, and halted at a small watercourse. Next day they proceeded in a N.W. direction, over high downs, interspersed with creeks, and reached the Alice River on the 13th. This stream was in full flood, well wooded, and grassed abundantly. Having forded the Alice, and skirted a scrub thicket, an elevation was reached, which the explorer believed to supply both that river and the Thompson. Following the ridges for some ten miles, another stream was reached and named the Coreenda. That night their horses strayed away, and next day was occupied in finding them, during which operation, more hoof prints were seen and again credited to Leichardt. Still advancing N.N.W., through scrubby plains and sandstone ridges, overgrown with spinifex, a creek and several lagoons were reached after some twelve miles journey, in the neighbourhood of which were more tracks—and this time of a numerous cavalcade travelling westward. The explorer tells us that they had been made in wet soil, and hence, in his opinion, must be Leichardt's, because such a trail would last for many years. Moreover, he met with some blacks who had iron tomahawks, which he considered conclusive. On the other hand, we have Landsborough's express statement that he marked the trees as mentioned. I need not, however, discuss the subject further, as I have dealt with it elsewhere in this work; failing more definite evidence, we must be content to leave Leichardt's route and subsequent fate as an unrevealed secret of the Australian interior. On the 16th of October two peaks were sighted to the westward, and named Mounts McAlister and Horsfeldt. Next day they arrived at the head waters of the Thompson, and steering N.W., reached a chain of hills which formed the watershed of streams flowing

south. Walker hoped that the northern drainage would lead to Carpentaria Gulf, and accordingly made for a high peak visible in the north-western distance, in which a gorge could be seen. After two days travel across fine country—which, being of volcanic origin, produced a richer grass than usually found with sandstone—several creeks flowing south-west were met with, and a tableland was reached. This fine plateau led them to the gap in the mountain towards the north, which proved to be the source of a river flowing in that direction. They had now evidently reached the northern watershed, although the bed of this stream was dry; and they began to suffer from lack of water. They still pushed to the northward, but without success; in fact, the country grew more and more arid. Their animals gave in one after another, and matters began to look serious with the party, when Walker, who had climbed a high hill, saw gum trees at some five miles distance. Only a few of the horses could hold out to reach this place, where several water-holes were found; but those animals which had to be temporarily abandoned were supplied with water next day, and were soon re-invigorated by the only medicine they needed. These water-holes occurred in the channel of a river some two hundred and fifty feet wide, which they crossed, and named the Barkly, after the then Governor of Victoria. Its course was N.W., and the leader supposed that it flowed into Eyre's Creek. In reality, however, it joined the Flinders, and had he followed its course Landsborough would have reached the Gulf a good deal sooner than he did, thus saving his party much unnecessary fatigue. Probably had he seen more tracks, and adhered to the Leichardt theory, he would have adopted this plan. Seven miles from this camp, on the Barkly, they reached a basaltic range, which had to be crossed if a northward route was taken. On the 24th of the month they began ascending the ridges, and when they had reached the summit found themselves in a wide plateau, in the middle of which rose a peak, and two others could be seen to the N.E. After several hours of toilsome progress over stones, which much distressed the horses' feet, they encamped at a pool on a creek which received the name of Jingle—not in honour of Charles Dickens' Pickwickian hero however—but after one of the native police. The peak on the tableland and hills to the N.E. were named respectively, Mounts Norman, Mayne and Ward.

The Jingle Creek connected with the Barkly, as was discovered by

following it westward, and the latter river took a W.S.W. direction, being diverted from its N.W. trend by interposing ridges. They encamped near a lagoon, around which multitudes of pigeons congregated, on the 25th, and next day endeavoured to push forward to the N.E. The basaltic range frustrated their utmost efforts, however, and they returned to the river. Here Walker fell a victim to native "yarns"—always so unreliable—not perhaps because the savages wish to deceive, but because they often fail to comprehend the question, and are determined to give their interrogator information of *some* sort. In short, it is frequently their intense anxiety to please, which causes them to mislead. The story they now told was that the Barkly's course was for some miles W.S.W., when it met a stream from the N.E., and after their junction they flowed into a presumably northern river called in the aboriginal *Careegaree*. This stream might well be supposed to be the Flinders by the misguided Walker, who saw that there was no possibility of advancing northward without traversing the ranges. With great toil and difficulty they accomplished this feat, and found the character of the country altogether changed. The basalt ridges—interspersed with fertile stretches of splendid grass—had disappeared, and sandy tracts, grown over with spinifex, extended before them. The Stawell River, flowing nearly N., was discovered on the 30th, and here their camp was attacked by blacks. A native had been observed digging for water, and he had evidently summoned his comrades. The aboriginals were repulsed with considerable slaughter—the death-roll showing twelve killed, besides which many were wounded. No such heavy bill of mortality has as yet been recorded in these pages in connection with the numerous encounters between the white trespassers (or pioneers) and the original owners of the Australian soil (or savages). We hesitate to attribute this to Walker's inhumanity, but rather to the natural ferocity of his black troopers, who would extend no mercy to their unfortunate compatriots. Moreover, the very presence of the former, arrayed against them, would inflame the rage of the wild blacks, who probably belonged to some kindred tribe, for the combatants perfectly understood each other's language.

Having left the real Flinders, Walker naturally pursued the phantom river in vain, and he began even to doubt if he had ever crossed the main range. In order to verify his suspicions, two of the troopers were

despatched to the westward, and discovered two streams which flowed to the Stawell, which appeared to be a tributary of the Barkly. On the 5th of November—having being delayed by rains and the loss of a horse—they travelled W. of N., and coming to a dry channel, dug for water without success. Next day, however, they found that the hole had filled during the night, thus enabling them to water their horses.

They then returned to the main body on the Stawell, and the whole party pushed forward over the tableland. The weather was intensely hot and water very scarce, causing the death of another horse. A fine river was fortunately discovered on the 10th, flowing W.N.W. It was at first mistaken for the long-expected Flinders, but the leader subsequently saw his error, and called the stream the Norman. Their progress was very slow, owing to heat and heavy travelling over sandy scrub; while the leader began to have fears that the s.s. *Victoria* might have left the Gulf before he had completed his tedious march. Their ammunition, too, began to get scarce, and altogether their position became critical. Walker's troubles arose, of course, from his own misconception of their real position, and misplaced confidence in native reports. Luck befriended him, however, and on the 25th of November a fine river was reached, into which the Norman emptied itself. At last they had reached the Flinders, after having followed a route parallel to its course, although considerably to the N.E. They camped on the high banks of this fine stream, somewhat to the north of the 18th parallel, enjoying the fresh sea breeze which blew from the Gulf. Their good fortune did not end here, for plainly to be seen were the tracks of four camels and one horse. The trail was recent, and led down stream, clearly indicating that Burke's party had reached Carpentaria. The explorers now formed a new theory—based upon the belief that the tracks he had previously discovered were assuredly those of Leichardt—namely, that Burke had followed that explorer's route, and subsequently intended to travel up the Albert River, or on a similar line to that of A. C. Gregory, in 1856. But in this Walker soon found he was mistaken, for having crossed the Flinders, Burke's tracks were again found, and this time returning towards the S.S.E. From this it seemed probable that he had reached the Gulf, and was thus moving back towards the Barcoo River.

They now travelled due west with all possible speed, in order to reach

the depôt, and thereafter to follow up the traces of the lost explorers. When, on the 30th of November, they were within two days' journey, or about twenty-five miles of the Albert, they were filled with intense anxiety regarding the steamer. If Captain Norman had sailed, their position would have been a very perilous one. Although they strained every nerve to accelerate their progress, the numerous watercourses and sandstone ridges so impeded their advance that they did not reach the Albert River until the 3rd of December. On the evening of the 1st, I should mention, they had another encounter with the natives, again leading to a resort to firearms and loss of life. When we consider how other explorers came into frequent collision with hostile aboriginals, and though met by overwhelming numbers, easily dispersed them without bloodshed, it is hard not to accuse Walker of cowardice and inhumanity. The water of the Albert was rather brackish, indicating the proximity of the Gulf; and on the evening of the 3rd their ears were gladdened by the distant report of a cannon. On the 4th, we are not surprised to learn that Walker and a trooper, while reconnoitring, were attacked by the natives; indeed, the marvel is that their brutality was not avenged by the destruction of the entire party. On this occasion they managed to escape, with the loss of one horse. On his return to the main camp, Walker was informed that a bottle had been found, which contained a despatch from Captain Norman, pointing out the position of the depôt on the Albert. After two days' heavy tramp through marshy ground, they arrived at the rendezvous, where they received a hearty welcome.

Having reported his experiences and discoveries, Walker only needed his stores to be replenished in order to complete his investigations. They were soon equipped with the necessary supplies, and set out on the 20th of December. Captain Norman agreed to meet them at a certain point on the Flinders, as already mentioned; but, on arriving at the appointed place, he found that, being at certain seasons inundated by the sea, it was quite inaccessible to horses. The Captain erected a flag, and searched in vain for any sign of Walker's party. He then went up the Flinders in a boat, and continued his search under great difficulty, having actually to carry the craft four miles overland. No traces of Walker or his party were visible, however; so, having marked a tree and buried a bottle, on the 14th of January Norman set sail in the *Victoria* for Investigator Roads.

Meanwhile, Walker arrived at the Flinders River on the 30th of December, and on the last day of the year proceeded towards the rendezvous. Having moved down the river to the place where Burke's tracks had been seen, they vainly searched for any vestiges of a camp, while the footprints themselves soon disappeared among some sandstone ridges. Whilst thus employed some natives appeared, and, according to Walker's story, were preparing to attack them, but the explorers gallantly charged, and dispersed them. Then these brave pioneers actually fired at the flying savages, killing two of their number, in order, explains the ingenuous Walker, to show them the long range of the Terry rifles. The heartless cruelty and criminal folly of this method of warfare admits of no possible excuse, and we cannot but wonder that Walker ever returned alive to tell the shameful tale.

The examination of the camel tracks left them in doubt as to what course Burke had taken. When Burke and Wills went on foot towards the Gulf, leaving Gray and King in charge of the camels, the latter naturally made large patches of footprints while grazing about the neighbourhood. This, of course, was a puzzle in itself, which became more perplexing when no human footprints were visible among the camel tracks. Altogether they found it very difficult to arrive at any definite conclusion. On the 4th of January, 1862, they were near the locality where Norman had agreed to meet them, but the river was unapproachable, as already explained, owing to the high spring tides. Next day they endeavoured to ford the numerous salt-water inlets, but were baffled in their attempts. Being well supplied with stores, Walker was not much distressed to find that their meeting was hopeless; nor indeed was it necessary under the circumstances. As they advanced up the Flinders, two trees were seen, one being marked B cxix, and the other S S E ¹⁴. The former number, no doubt, indicated the camp on Cloncurry Creek at which the camels were left behind, while Burke and Wills went on ahead to the Gulf, as mentioned in Wills' journal. Regarding the other mark, Mr. Walker fancied it signified instructions to dig fourteen feet S.S.E. from the tree. This was done, with no result, as might be expected, for had Burke meant "dig" he surely would have written to that effect. Mr. Tenison Woods thinks it denotes the 14th day on their return, or S.S.E. journey. But was it, I ask, their 14th day? The lost explorers had taken

with them only three days' supplies when they left Camp 19 for the Gulf, and although they found a few yams, they can scarcely have been absent a fortnight. Again, the return camps of Burke's journey were all marked with the distinguishing letter R, if I am not very much mistaken. Moreover, an assiduous search failed to show any return tracks from the tree in question, all those visible, leading towards the Gulf.

The leader then formed another theory regarding the missing party, which I need not set forth. Enough to say that it was erroneous. He now, however, resolved to make for the Norman River, where he expected to find the missing trail in the red sand. Had the grass been dry enough to burn, the traces which it concealed would have revealed the exact state of affairs, and set Walker right. At all events, they advanced up stream, and again came upon the outward tracks of Burke's party. On the 20th they met a native woman, whose language was intelligible to the troopers. She said that she had seen Burke's little band travelling towards the Gulf, but declared that they had never afterwards come up the river. It is very likely that the lost explorer had turned off the main stream at Cloncurry Creek, which, it will be remembered, he followed on his outward march. Walker, of course, had no idea that this was the case, and rainy weather having set in, he resolved to push eastward to the Norman River. Their journey was indeed a toilsome one, especially for the animals, on account of the heavy soaked soil of the plains. Blacks were met with, and corroborated the story of Burke's outward route, but his return was still a mystery. The natives were very amicable, but somewhat presumed on their friendship by appropriating various odds and ends belonging to the explorers. This was, of course, followed by a resort to the deadly Terry rifle. I am glad to say that no one was reported killed on this occasion, but we read that their screams of terror could be heard as the bullets crashed through the bushes in their neighbourhood. It is refreshing to be able to record a presumably bloodless victory to the credit of the hitherto sanguinary Walker. It is a grimly humorous notion, the idea of a rescue party going out and slaying the very people who fed and cherished Burke, Wills and King, enabling the latter to live and testify to their kindness.

The party encamped on the Norman on the 25th of January, and next day were almost flooded out by the rising of the river, which

overflowed its banks. They now continued to follow their own downward tracks, and kept ascending the river's course till the 1st of February, when they struck out in a N.E. direction. Their route was over a marshy country, and in one day's march they came to the Jardine River. From rising ground could be seen in the distance the ranges at Gilbert River, which hills form portion of the long Cordillera of the eastern coast, stretching across the Continent from north to south. Walker decided to cross these mountains, in the hope of thus reaching a river, which would supply them with water and lead them to the settled districts. On the 3rd of the month he crossed a nearer and lesser range, coming upon fine grazing country with box timber; but the broken stones made the travelling very painful for the horses. A splendid fertile valley, and three considerable creeks were next encountered. A tableland rose to the northward, a high peak of which was named Mount Barry, in compliment to Sir Redmond Barry, Chancellor of Melbourne University.

Delayed by rain and the recovery of several horses which had strayed, Walker did not ascend Mount Barry till the 10th, when from its summit he commanded a very extensive view. At the base of the mountain he could see what he supposed to be the Carron River of Leichardt flowing to the N.W.; and in the far distance S. the range of hills at the head of the Flinders. On the 12th they started S.E. on their arduous journey through the terrible mountain passes and ravines. Picturesque, though monotonous, is the record of their daily march, diversified by crags, precipices, hills, ridges, streams, valleys, cliffs, gorges and extinct volcanoes. The hillsides were for the most part of sandstone formation, changing to granite and varieties of trap as the summits were gained. No less than fifteen horses had to be abandoned, and their stock of provisions was rapidly giving out. Through a miscalculation, the Burdekin River, which Walker expected to strike, was nowhere to be seen, and those aborigines whom they interviewed were uncommunicative. At last they struck this stream. It was, however, a case of avoiding Scylla to plunge into Charybdis, for the travelling along its banks was worse than ever. The broken fragments of basalt so cut the horses' hoofs that their passage could be traced in blood. Then there was a horrible tall grass, from six to nine feet high, upon which grew sharp spined seeds, which caught the skin and caused intense pain. At length, so desperate

did their condition become, that four men were sent forward so as to get supplies at the nearest point, and then return to the relief of the others. It was on the 16th of March that the advance party set out with seven comparatively fresh horses. The remainder, after resting, slowly made their way down the Burdekin. At length, on the 4th of April their comrades were met returning up the stream, and Walker found himself in the neighbourhood of a sheep station. Here he was supplied with stores, and informed of Burke's and Wills' fate; otherwise he intended still further to prosecute his search for the lost pioneers. Walker's expedition thus failed in its main object, and cannot be said to have added a great deal to the knowledge of the physical and geographical features of the country he traversed between Rockhampton and the Gulf. He seems to have been a combination of shrewdness and stupidity, and his exhibition of civilised savagery in conducting native warfare is an indelible blot on his name. One of the wisest remarks in his journal is this:—"The great desert of the interior is a great bugbear;" and in some degree he anticipated the discoveries made almost immediately afterwards by Messrs. Landsborough and McKinlay.





CHAPTER XXIII.

*Mr. John McDouall Stuart's attempt to cross the Continent
from Chambers Creek.*

He is compelled to return from Newcastle Waters.

HE brilliant achievement of Mr. J. McDouall Stuart in reaching the Centre of Australia, and the concomitant discoveries made on his memorable expedition towards that long-sought point, were destined to bear immediate fruit. His signal victory over the terrible deserts of the interior, had, moreover, a laxative effect over the proverbially tight purse strings of the South Australian Exchequer. Hitherto this indomitable explorer had been allowed to struggle on as best he could, so far as the Government was concerned; but now that he had made his name, a paternal Parliament, ever ready to have a finger in the pie of prosperity, at once voted the sum of £2,500 for the equipment of an expedition, calculated to overcome all difficulties connected with a northward march towards the sea. The great and costly cavalcade, under Burke, had already left Melbourne some five months, and no doubt South Australia, ambitious to be foremost in the field of victorious exploration, entertained well-founded hopes that her tried and skilful hero would out-distance the Victorian rivals.

Accordingly, on the 1st of January, 1861, Stuart started from Chambers Creek, with a party of twelve men and forty-nine horses, Mr.

Keckwick being second-in-command. The celerity of Stuart's movements may be judged from the fact that this was actually the fifth time within the short space of two years that he had essayed to solve the hitherto inscrutable problems of the formidable and inhospitable interior. The first stages of his outward route on this occasion largely coincided with his former journey. Over this ground it will therefore be unnecessary to trace his progress. Owing to the intense heat, the leader fell ill at Loudon Spa, and the party were thus delayed; nevertheless reaching the Lindsay Creek, in lat. $26^{\circ} 10'$, on the 4th of February. Leaving the old track somewhat to the westward, Mount Humphries was reached, and then the Finke River. Water was very scarce, and the rains were anxiously looked for. Travelling very slowly, they came to the Hugh River, which contained a fair quantity of water; and, having crossed the McDonnell Range on its northern side, heavy showers fell which, although the creeks were filled, made travelling almost impossible.

In spite of all drawbacks, they reached the Bonney River on the 12th of April. It was flowing, and its banks well supplied with food for the horses. Here Stuart made an examination of its course and the surrounding neighbourhood, until stopped by an impenetrable gum-tree thicket. The exploring party now struck northwards, making Pennant's Creek on the 21st of April, and Attack Creek on the 25th. At the latter place it will be remembered they had a skirmish with the blacks on their previous journey, when their numbers were so small as to make their position dangerous, and compelled their return. Traces of the natives were abundant, but the travellers met with no molestation, and so they began their explorations over new ground to the northward. The creek flowed from a broken range, which extended north and south, and lay a little distance to the westward. The leader conceived that his best plan would be to cross this, and then make for the Victoria River by a N.W. route. Having ascended a peak, he observed that to the E. and S.E. the country appeared to be covered with dense scrub, but to the N.W. another range was visible, and the prospect was more encouraging. Having steered on the latter course, they were soon driven back through lack of water, and suffered considerably until the Tomlinson Creek was discovered, where they encamped on the 28th of April, at the north side of a chain of hills, called the Whittington Range. Vegetation was

luxuriant here, while grass and game were alike abundant. Carruthers Creek was next reached, and from a neighbouring hill, a view of somewhat scrubby country was gained, their subsequent advance northwards being a slow and painful one over stony ground covered with acacia. Hunter's Creek flowing N.W. was the next stream found, and its course was followed until it lost itself in an extensive grassy plain. Thereafter they struck out due north, until turned back to the creek by continuous drought. Taking a route towards the eastward, they passed over some magnificent open plains, covered with grass above the horses' knees; but notwithstanding this copious growth, water was not to be found, and to make matters worse no rain fell.

On the 4th of May, having again tried a due north course, and discovered two creeks, Stuart reached a dry lake bed to the N.W. It had apparently been at one time about twelve feet deep, and the bottom contained iron, limestone, and gravel, with the remains of shells, &c. For over twenty miles they struggled across this hollow, through dwarf eucalyptus and thick grass. The ground was fissured with deep cracks, into which their horses constantly stumbled, and in this manner Stuart was somewhat severely hurt. Although they had reached latitude $17^{\circ} 49'$, and were thus near the Victoria River, progress became impossible owing to lack of water.

Stuart's cherished scheme of penetrating to the north coast now looked very unpromising, but from the top of a high tree certain appearances were visible which gave him hope of finding a watered route towards the extreme north-west horizon. He therefore formed a depôt; at which the main body were left, while with two companions, a week's provisions and seven horses, he started out on a reconnoitring excursion. This was on the 9th of May, and after traversing a wide extent of splendidly grassed country, he gained a point some twenty-five miles from a range, when they entered upon a wretched expanse of arid red sand, thickly covered with scrub. They pushed on to some barren sandstone hills, which were quite destitute of water. Had they been able to hold out for some sixty miles more, they would have reached the valley of the Victoria, but fate willed it otherwise, and immediate retreat was their only course, as their horses were on the point of succumbing. Again, on the 13th, he made another attempt by pushing along a range (now called

the Ashburton Range) to the northward, where he discovered and named Fergusson's Creek. Lawson's Creek, where there was plenty of water and numerous signs of natives, was reached on the 14th, but next day their advance gave them no encouragement. Scrubby, barren, sand ridges, alone rewarded their ardent search, and they had to camp without water on the 16th. Stuart again fell ill, and found his progress completely hemmed in by impenetrable scrub thickets. He had, therefore, to fall back upon Lawson's Creek, with clothing torn, horses completely beaten and the explorers themselves broken down with fatigue. After three days' rest the leader again set out on the 20th of May, taking a N.E. route on the other side of the range. His experiences were then more gloomy than ever, but he resolved to leave no point of the compass untried. A desert of impassable scrub barred their progress at forty miles, and the country for fifty miles in every direction appeared absolutely devoid of water. Again they made for Lawson's Creek—the horses having had to travel for eighty miles without water.

Stuart had every reason for intense disappointment. To be, as it were, within measurable distance of his goal, and to be baffled on every side, must have been well nigh unbearable to a man of his spirit; and we find him again on the 22nd, with the same number of men and fresh horses, making another strenuous effort, this time taking the west side of the hills, and striking due N. Here they met with a measure of success, and their hopes rose accordingly. A splendid expanse of water was reached, and named Newcastle Water, the adjacent plains being designated Sturt's Plains, after the venerable "Father of Australian Exploration," Stuart's former commander. This reach was very wide, and seemed to promise every facility for attaining his object. Stuart therefore returned for the main party, with the view of fully investigating the capabilities of his welcome discovery. Having moved his men some thirty miles along this sheet of water, on the 25th Stuart went ahead to the N., and could see a tableland of sand, bounded by wooded hills, some twenty miles to the N.W. When first discovered, Newcastle Water extended in length farther than they could see; but on tracing it down, it was found to lose itself in flooded plains, after the perplexing fashion of so many Australian streams. Establishing his main body at the most northerly point available, the leader then proceeded N., taking three men

and nine horses. Twenty-eight miles of scrub and desert stretches found them encamping without water, and a further advance next day brought them into even more unpromising country. Sorely against his will, the intrepid Stuart had again to retreat, his horses almost breaking down before Newcastle Water was reached.

Rain now fell, and, in one sense, raised Stuart's hopes, although it rendered the country marshy, and travel very arduous. The blacks, who had been observing them for some days, showed threatening symptoms; but were readily dispersed by a discharge of muskets, and without shedding blood. The leader now resolved to take a course five degrees N. of W., starting from a point to the southward of that from which he made his previous trip. His equipment consisted of three men and nine horses, with provisions for two weeks. Marshy grounds and the densest of scrubs made their progress a miserable, hopeless struggle. Next day two miles of open grassy country was met with, and their downcast spirits rose, but closely-matted thickets immediately followed, utterly destroying their hopes. It was almost a case of

"Water, water everywhere,
But not a drop to drink,"

for the ground was so moist that the horses sank over their fetlocks, and yet there was nothing available for drinking purposes. Again baffled, Stuart returned to his companions at Victoria River, the Gulf of Carpentaria having proved inaccessible, in spite of the most heroic and untiring exertions. An attempt was made to cross Sturt's Plains, and gain the northern coast, by a detour to the eastward. This was utterly futile, and the leader resolved as a last resource to travel south, so as, if possible, to skirt the belt of scrubs which had obstructed his westward progress. Accordingly, having returned to Tomlinson Creek, he set out with three men, ten horses, and supplies for two weeks. Taking a course twenty degrees N. of W., in two days' time the horrible red sand showed its hateful presence, and soon afterwards retreat was rendered imperative by scrub and drought. Yet another effort was made with three companions, Stuart taking a route 36° N. of E. Mount Hawker was reached and ascended, also a higher peak named Mount Hall. From these elevations nothing was to be seen but grassy plains, and hills to the S.E. After stopping for one day at a watercourse, which was called Loveday's Creek, they returned to the Tomlinson Creek.

Before finally abandoning the search, this persevering and sorely discouraged explorer determined on one last struggle towards the Victoria, on a rather more northerly route than that just abandoned. Three men, ten horses, and a month's supplies were taken. At twenty-five miles they halted, after a day's travel over sandy soil, on the evening of the 4th of July. Next day a watercourse was found, and called Burke's Creek. After following it for ten miles it disappeared, as usual, and left them waterless; but they still pushed on, though with faint hopes of finding another stream. Deeper and deeper they penetrated into masses of scrub and sandy desert. They dug for water, but even at five feet the soil was dry. At length the dauntless Stuart had to yield, since nature inexorably forbade his northward march. North, east and west the stubborn scrub interposed a barrier as of woven steel, tearing their garments, lacerating their flesh, and wounding their horses. Water famine also held out its dismal threatenings, and at last their provisions began to fail them. It will be remembered that Stuart had started with thirty weeks' provisions on the 1st of January. Twenty-six weeks had elapsed since then, and at least ten weeks' journey separated them from the outskirts of civilisation.

Many repairs were necessary before they could undertake their homeward march. Horses had also to be shod, and their own footgear cobbled as far as possible. They started on the 12th of July, and after a certain amount of privation through occasional lack of water, reached the settlements on the 7th of September.

Although Mr. Stuart's expedition failed in its main object, to the bitter disappointment of its leader, it was by no means destitute of valuable fruits, and in no degree detracted from the fame of this distinguished explorer.





CHAPTER XXIV.

Mr. John McDouall Stuart's last Expedition. He succeeds in crossing Australia to Port Darwin.

STUART arrived at Adelaide towards the end of September, and the reception he received indisputably proved that, although he had not reached the Indian Ocean, he had in no degree forfeited the respect and confidence of his Government and fellow colonists. Although soon after his return, the tidings of Burke's sad fate had reached South Australia, the undaunted explorer desired nothing better than to set out once more on his long journey to the ocean, so as to complete the task he had so well begun. He had been driven back by natives when leading a very small party; disabled by scurvy, obstructed by impassable scrub thickets, and threatened with water famine; nevertheless, the New Year of 1862 saw him again leaving settled districts, his Parliament having entrusted him with the outfit and command of another expedition.

We need not follow him over his old track, which duly led him to Newcastle Water and Sturt's Plains. Having formed a depôt for his main body at the upper end of the reach, he found himself face to face with the stubborn barriers of scrub, desert and forest. Northward and westward he tried in vain to find a watercourse, and many days were spent in weary rides through dense *mulga* and hedgewood scrub. The

plains seemed to be surrounded by impenetrable thickets on all sides, and in no direction could he find a tributary of the Victoria River. This state of affairs was found to exist for some sixty miles, north, west and east. Defeat again seemed impending, when Howitt's Ponds were discovered, and Auld's Ponds somewhat further N. in latitude $16^{\circ} 28'$. Following these waters down, they emerged into lightly-wooded, grassy plains, and finally came upon a fine deep creek, named Daly Water, after the then Governor of South Australia. Following its course northwards, swamps and alluvial flats were with difficulty crossed, and Purdie's Ponds reached. The main party having been brought up to this point on the 11th of June, Stuart started again on the 13th, and struck a small creek flowing N. with an easterly trend, which he took to be a tributary of the Roper River.

One of the main objects of Stuart's journey was to act as pioneer for a telegraphic route across the Continent, and also to fix a point on the northern coast where the electric cable might suitably enter the Indian Ocean, thus to connect the Old World with the New. An eastward course would mean the establishment of a telegraphic depôt at Carpentaria, with the objection of an extra length of cable through the Gulf. Nevertheless, every effort had been made by Stuart to reach its head, and the project only abandoned when its shores were found to be absolutely inaccessible. The westward route had also been tried in vain. The scrub and desert made it a matter of sheer impossibility to reach the Victoria River, which would have brought them to the coast by Gregory's route of 1855. There still remained the extreme north coast to be attempted, probably the best of all spots for an ocean telegraph station of such importance.

Having followed down the winding course of the tributary just mentioned, which was named the Strangways, they came to a lake-like expanse of water, surrounded with tropical vegetation; and soon afterwards reached the Roper River, which was filled with water, and flowed through a magnificent country. The grass was very dry, and the blacks set it on fire in many places, but did not otherwise interfere with the progress of the explorers. Having accidentally drowned a horse, they cut up and dried his flesh. On the 30th of June they crossed the river to the N.E. bank, and came upon a northern tributary, which was called the

Chambers, out of gratitude to Mr. John Chambers, the explorer's constant friend. They now encamped in latitude $14^{\circ} 47'$, and were visited by amicable natives, one being a giant of seven feet in height. They seemed to have had some experience of white men, and had such a dread of firearms that when they saw a pigeon shot they abruptly took their departure, and were never seen again. The Chambers ran out in a sort of sandstone spinifex desert after two days' journey, finally disappearing in latitude $14^{\circ} 25'$. A few miles past its head, a running creek was found, which flowed southward, and led the explorers into a wilderness of sandstone precipices, forming a tableland from whence the northern waters sprang. This same watershed had formerly embarrassed Leichardt, and in crossing its ridges and stony creeks Stuart had a wearisome task. Sandstone at length gave place to basalt, and that in turn changed to slate and limestone. Leaving behind him a small river, which he called the Katherine, being the lower portion of the Flying Fox Creek, he struck across the plateau, and at length looked from the last sandstone cliff upon a beautiful wooded valley, through which a stream flowed. He thought he had reached one of the sources of the South Alligator River, but he was really in the valley of the head waters of the Adelaide. It was now the 10th of July, and after a week's severe struggle over a boggy country, they reached the main channel of the river itself. Here it was about two hundred and fifty feet wide, and lined with a thick grove of bamboo, climbing vines, and other tropical plants. Pushing with great difficulty along the banks of the Adelaide, the rise and fall of its waters proclaimed that they were drawing near to the ocean.

Having avoided the river to escape the terrible marshes which impeded their path, they took a N.E. direction on the 24th of July, and having crossed the valley and entered the thickly-matted scrub, they had to halt the horses, in order to clear a passage. "I advanced a few yards on to the beach," writes Stuart, "and was gratified and delighted to find the waters of the Indian Ocean in Van Diemen's Gulf, before the party with the horses knew anything of its proximity. Thring, who rode in advance of me, called out 'The sea!' which took them all by surprise, and they were so astonished that he had to repeat his call before they fully understood what was meant. Then they immediately gave three long and hearty cheers. The beach is covered with a blue soft mud. It being ebb-tide, I could see

some distance. I found it would be impossible to take the horses along it. I therefore kept them where I had halted them, and allowed half the party to come on to the beach and gratify themselves by a sight of the sea, while the other half remained to watch the horses until their return. I dipped my feet and washed my face and hands in the sea, as I promised the late Governor, Sir Richard McDonnell I would do if I reached it. The mud has nearly covered all the shells. We got a few, however, but I could see no seaweed. There is a point of land some distance off, bearing 80°. After all the party had had some time on the beach, at which they were much pleased and gratified, they collected a few shells. I returned to the valley, where I had my initials (J. MCD. S.) cut on a large tree, as I did not intend to put up any flag until I arrived at the mouth of the Adelaide.* Afterwards they proceeded along the valley, soon coming upon a running creek, where they encamped. "Thus," Stuart continues, "have I, through the instrumentality of Divine Providence, been led to accomplish the great object of the expedition, and take the whole party as witnesses to the fact; and travelled through one of the finest countries man could wish to inhabit, good to the coast, and with a stream of running water within half-a-mile of the sea."

Having found it very difficult to reach the mouth of the Adelaide, owing to the marshy ground, and being anxious to save his horses as much as possible, they cleared a space in the neighbourhood of the tallest palm tree, and having hoisted the Union Jack on its topmost point, they gave three cheers for the Queen, for the Prince of Wales, and for the flag itself. A memorial of their visit was then buried at the foot of the tree, consisting of a tin case containing a paper upon which the following was written :—

"South Australian Great Northern Exploring Expedition.

"The exploring party under the command of John McDouall Stuart arrived on this spot on the 25th day of July, 1862, having crossed the entire Continent of Australia, from the Southern Sea to the Indian Ocean, passing through the centre. They left the city of Adelaide on the 26th of October, 1861, and the most northern station of the Colony on the 21st day of January, 1862. To commemorate the happy event they have raised the flag bearing his name. All well. God save the Queen."

* See Appendix.

Having thus accomplished his heavy task, Stuart and his party turned their backs on Cape Hotham and the dreary northern coast. Their march south was a very severe one, and Stuart's sufferings from scurvy are pitiable to contemplate. His right hand was useless, he was almost blind, and had to be carried on a rude litter. Water was scarce, too, on their homeward route, which added to the sufferings of the party. A wretchedly feeble, emaciated invalid was the gallant Stuart when at length they reached Mount Margaret, early in December, 1862, where he received some relief, and somewhat recovered, so as to enable him to ride to the capital. He arrived in Adelaide on the very day that Howitt's party reached that city with the remains of Burke and Wills, on their way to Melbourne. He was received with acclamation, being likewise rewarded by the South Australian Government with a grant of £2,000, and a lease of land rent free for seven years. There can be no question as to his high rank as an explorer, and the immense benefit he conferred on his Colony, both as regards pastoral development and the Overland Telegraph Route from Adelaide to Port Darwin. He afterwards returned to England much broken in health, where he was presented with a gold medal and a watch by the Royal Geographical Society, and died in his native country on the 16th of June, 1869.





CHAPTER XXV.

*Various minor Expeditions by Col. Warburton, Surveyor-General
Goyder, Captain Delisser, Secretary Anthony O'Grady
Lefroy, Francis and Alexander Jardine, &c.*

THE attractions of the Gulf of Carpentaria and the northern districts for a time diverted attention from the southern territories, washed by the waters of the Great Australian Bight. The meagre particulars gleaned by Eyre during his memorable march in 1840, gave but little encouragement regarding the general character of the country, and about twenty years elapsed before any further notice was taken of what was regarded as a hopeless and impracticable desert. Towards the end of 1860, however, we find that Colonel Warburton, accompanied by three men and eleven horses, undertook an expedition through this inhospitable region. Traces of Eyre's journey were still visible, and the explorers discovered several holes, which the distressed traveller had dug in search of water.

Without serious difficulty Warburton succeeded in penetrating some eighty miles beyond the head of the Bight, meeting with universal waterless desolation. An excursion was made inland from this point, the party travelling first N., then E., and returning S.W. Their path lay over a desert waste—a level tract of sand—where neither water nor timber existed, and there was not even a stone to break the monotony. It appeared that some rain had fallen recently—only, however, to be at once

swallowed up by the arid soil. A few snakes and an occasional bustard were the only animals seen in this dismal locality. The Colonel then made a reconnoitring trip, taking a N.W. course; and, having advanced through scrub for several miles, emerged on the same red sandstone plain. The leader travelled over this wretched territory during two days, reaching a point some sixty miles from the coast. Finding no improvement in the nature of the country, he returned, having gained no definite idea as to the extent of the desert. Being much better equipped than Eyre, and having the benefit of the former explorer's experience, Warburton's party endured nothing like his sufferings; nevertheless, they encountered considerable privation, and were not sorry to turn their backs on this most sterile of Australian wilds.

In 1862 Mr. George Goyder, Surveyor-General of South Australia, made some investigations north of Fowler's Bay. Having travelled a hundred miles inland, he found no vegetation but *mallee* scrub, spinifex, and a few scattered blades of grass. The porous sandy soil was in many places saturated with salt incrustations, and the few natives who inhabited these miserable regions were supposed to subsist on the water from the roots of the *mallee* plant.*

In July of the same year, Captain Delisser, a squatter—accompanied by a friend—made a journey through the same district. Having started during the cool season, their progress was somewhat easier, and they formed a more favourable impression of the country. They rounded the head of the Bight, in a N.W. direction, and came on a water-hole, after some seventeen miles of dense scrub. They then pushed on, keeping the same course; but after fifty miles they had to retreat through lack of water. This they afterwards procured by digging in the sandhills to the S.W., which are said to possess the curious feature of yielding salt water on the side facing the sea, and fresh water on the north, or landward slope. From these hills, steering due W., the pioneers reached an immense boundless plain covered with waving grass and salt bush. Delisser was somewhat favourably impressed with the territory, although surface water was absent. In any case, soon after his report was published, pastoral settlement was extended to these districts, and a water-supply obtained by boring.

* See Appendix (Water-trees).

In 1863 the West Australians were making further examination of their territory, and an expedition was organised for the investigation of the tableland east of the Swan River. The command was entrusted to Mr. Anthony O'Grady Lefroy, the Colonial Secretary. The party pushed out to the eastward of York as far as longitude $121^{\circ} 40'$, and the leader believed that he had discovered country which was adapted for agricultural purposes. The details of his report were not encouraging, however. Surface water was absent, with the rare exception of a few native wells in the rock. His opinion regarding this district's suitability for settlement was based on the richness of the soil, and his conviction that water, in practically unlimited quantity, could be obtained by sinking wells. The same year also saw the foundation of a settlement near the De Grey River, on territory discovered by Mr. Frank Gregory; and the north coast was soon destined to change its wild character at the bidding of science and civilization.

On the shores of Carpentaria, William Landsborough had founded the township of Burketown, and at the suggestion of the Governor of Queensland, the Imperial Government decided on establishing a depôt at the northern extremity of Cape York. Mr. John Jardine—police magistrate of Rockhampton—was chosen as superintendent of the new settlement, and founded the township of Somerset. Having proceeded by sea to his destination, he arranged with the authorities that his two sons, Frank and Alexander, should convey a herd of cattle overland to Somerset, resulting in the expedition of the Brothers Jardine, which will be dealt with in due course.

Owing to the favourable report of the celebrated explorer, Mr. John McDouall Stuart, the Northern Territory, comprising all the region north of latitude 26° south, and between 129° and 138° east longitude, was annexed to South Australia by commission under the great seal, dated the 8th of July, 1863. It was therefore determined to form a settlement in this district, and three vessels, conveying emigrants, the *Henry Ellis*, the *Yatala*, and the *Beatrice*, sailed from Adelaide, and anchored in Adams Bay in August, 1864. To Colonel Finnis was entrusted the command of the entire project, and the selection of a suitable site was left to his discretion. Port Essington, on Melville Island, had been selected as a settlement in 1824, and on Raffles Bay another station was established

in 1827; but both of these places were finally abandoned in 1829.* Neither of these places were, therefore, to be chosen, although regarding the former place, Captain King reported:—

“Port Essington, being so good an harbour, and from its proximity to the Moluccas and New Guinea, and its being in a direct line of communication between Port Jackson and India, as well as from the commanding situation with respect to the passage through Torres Straits, it must at no very distant period become a place of very great trade and of very considerable importance.” This was written in 1818; and again, in 1841, Captain Stokes, the discoverer of Port Darwin, writes of Port Essington:—

“As steam communication, moreover, must soon be established between Singapore and our Colonies on the south-eastern shores of Australia, this port—the only really good one on the north coast—will be of vast importance as a coal depôt.”

In spite of these strongly expressed views in favour of this port, experience proved that it was an impracticable locality. Escape Cliffs † in Adams Bay, was also suggested, but not chosen. A depôt had been formed here for reconnoitring purposes, and Mr. J. McKinlay, who was despatched in search of a suitable site, left the camp, bound eastward, on this errand. He and his party narrowly escaped with their lives, owing to the sudden flooding of East Alligator River. He subsequently explored the estuary of the Daly River, and selected a site which, however, was not ratified. It may be mentioned that this was the last service he performed for the Colony of his adoption. Privations and exposure during his arduous journeys, brought on certain ailments, to which he succumbed on the last day of December, 1874, at Gawler, where a monument was erected to his memory.

Dissentions and discontent began to threaten the new settlement, resulting in the appointment of a commission by the South Australian Government for enquiry into the affairs of the Northern Territory. Colonel Finnis was subsequently removed, and Surveyor-General Goyder selected Port Darwin as preferable to Escape Cliffs. The town of Palmerston was then founded, and soon rose to importance through operations in connection with the Overland Telegraph Line. The erection and maintenance of

* See Appendix (Port Essington and Raffles Bay). † See Appendix (Escape Cliffs).

this line naturally tended to open up the country, and although Queensland eagerly competed for the privilege of possessing the station at which the cable was to enter the ocean, a South Australian port was selected, and the elder Colony received the well-earned honour.

About this time in Western Australia an effort was made to found a settlement at Camden Harbour, but it proved abortive; and an expedition was conducted by Mr. Hunt, to the eastward of York, which resulted in the discovery of no suitable country, although the explorer traversed some four hundred miles of territory between latitude 31° and 32° .

I have already referred to the settlement of Somerset, which was formed on the mainland, opposite Albany Island, by Mr. John Jardine. On the 11th of October, 1864, his two sons, Francis Lascelles and Alexander William, started on an overland trip to the new settlement, accompanied by Messrs. A. J. Richardson (Government Surveyor), Scrutton, Cowderoy, Binney, and four blacks. They took with them forty-two horses, two hundred and fifty head of cattle, and supplies for four months. Having started from Carpentaria Downs, much delay and inconvenience was caused, owing to an erroneous map which misguided them regarding the Lynd River, of Leichardt, which they searched for in vain. Their course was at first down the Einnesley, which, after following for about a fortnight, the two brothers went forward to find, if possible, the Lynd, which they believed would carry them a considerable distance towards their destination. Thirty miles of an error on their map completely misled them; but they came upon a series of ponds, to which the cattle were brought up. Then a large creek was encountered by the advance party, who, on their return, received the alarming news that, owing to an accidental fire, half their provisions and almost the whole of their outfit were destroyed. Nevertheless they pushed on down the creek, which led them to the Staaten River, where the natives, who had for some days been threatening them, drove off several of their horses, and thus further hindered their progress. It was now early in December, and the leaders resolved to leave the Staaten and steer due north. On this course they were almost devoured by flies and mosquitoes, besides losing their mule and three horses. After a skirmish with the blacks, who persisted in following them, they reached the Mitchell River, and there were attacked by a numerous and formidable band, who

were dispersed eventually without loss on the side of the whites. They still steered north, over miserable country, the savages dogging their footsteps, and towards the end of the year making another raid upon their horses. They were this time with difficulty repulsed, and their incessant presence became irksome and dangerous in the extreme. On the 5th of January the Archer River, flowing through a grassy district, was discovered and named. By the 10th of January, 1865, the rains, which had been coming down, increased, and it was almost impossible to advance through the swampy country. Then, in crossing the Batavia, two horses were drowned, and poison plants were fatal to ten others; so that by the 17th of the month their stock was reduced by loss, theft, drowning and poison by thirty head, leaving them fifteen horses out of forty-five. They had now to bury what was not absolutely necessary, and, loading the remaining animals, they tramped on foot. By the 20th of January they could see the ocean to the eastward. Having thus reached the narrow neck of land which terminates in Cape York, they found themselves so obstructed by marsh and scrub that it was decided to halt the cattle while the two leaders went ahead in search of an easier track. They left the main body with this intention, taking with them one black guide, on the 30th of January; and after a terrible journey through scrubs, swamps, and flooded creeks, on the 1st of March they met with several natives, who guided them to their destination. Their prolonged delay had caused their father much anxiety as to their safety, for the brothers were only twenty-two and twenty years of age respectively. The main party and the cattle were soon brought up to the settlement, and in recognition of their services the Royal Geographical Society elected the brothers Fellows, awarding to each of them the Murchison grant of the Society.





CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. John Forrest's First Expedition; in Search of Leichardt's Remains, &c.

NO name on the long list of Australian explorers is so closely identified with the Colony of his birth as that of the Hon. Sir John Forrest, K.C.M.G., the first and only Premier of Western Australia. He is the third son of William Forrest, of Leschenault, near Bunbury, and was born on the 22nd of August, 1847. Having been educated at the Bishop's School, Perth, at the age of eighteen he joined the Survey Department, and soon afterwards he entered the field of exploration, upon which he was destined to gain undying renown.

Mr. Forrest was indebted to a revival of Leichardt rumours for his first appointment. For some twenty years, ever since his final disappearance, periodical stories were told by the blacks regarding the fate of the unfortunate Doctor and his party. A new and circumstantial tale was told to Mr. J. H. Monger, a squatter, to the effect that the white men had been attacked and killed at a certain place, while making damper. His informant was Jemmy Mungaro, a native tracker, who minutely described the scene of the massacre, and offered to guide a party to the precise spot. The Western Australian Government, always eager to elucidate the mysteries of the interior, accepted an offer made by Dr. Von Mueller, Director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, who tendered his services as leader, Mr. John Forrest being selected as navigator and

second-in-command. While making preparations for his journey, the latter gentleman was informed that Dr. Von Mueller had been prevented from fulfilling his office, and that the leadership had been conferred upon himself. He was certainly very young for so responsible a position, and possibly on that account Surveyor-General Roe supplied him with a copious list of instructions, setting forth the objects of the enterprise, and pointing out the best means for effecting them. As a specimen of practical advice and valuable injunctions from an old, tried explorer to a novice, I reproduce the Hon. Captain Roe's official letter, dated 13th April, 1869. It ran thus:—

“Sir,—His Excellency the Governor, having been pleased to appoint you to lead an expedition into the interior of Western Australia, for the purpose of searching for the remains of certain white men, reported by the natives to have been killed by the aborigines some years ago, many miles beyond the limits of our settled country; and it being deemed probable that the white men referred to, formed part of an exploring party under the command of Dr. Leichardt, endeavouring to penetrate overland from Victoria to the Colony several years ago; I now have been directed to furnish the following instructions for your guidance on this interesting service, and for enabling you to carry out the wishes of the Government in connection therewith:—

“1.—Your party will consist of six persons in the whole, well armed, and made up of Mr. George Monger, as second-in-command; Mr. Michael Hamersley, as third-in-command; a farrier blacksmith, to be hired at Newcastle; and two well-known and reliable natives, Tommy Windich and Jemmy, who have already acquired considerable experience under former explorers.

“2.—An agreement to serve on the expedition in the above capacities has been prepared, and should be signed by each European member of the party, prior to starting.

“3.—A saddle-horse has been provided for each member of the party, together with pack-horses to transport such portion of the outfit as cannot be carried by the former. A three-horse cart will also accompany the expedition as far as may be found practicable through the settled country, and thereby relieve the pack-horses as much as possible.

“4.—All preparations for the journey now being complete, it is

desirable that you should lose no time in starting, so as to arrive at the commencement of the unexplored country by the end of the present month, or beginning of the expected winter rains. It has been, however, already ascertained from native information that a considerable quantity of rain has recently fallen over the regions to be explored, and that no impediment may be anticipated from a scarcity of water there.

“5.—The route to be followed might advantageously commence at Newcastle, where some of your party, and several of your horses, are to be picked up; and thence proceed north-easterly to Goomaling, and 100 miles further in the same general direction, passing eastward to Mounts Chunbaren and Kenneth of Mr. Austin’s, to the eastern farthest of that explorer in 119° E., and $28\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ S. Thence the general north-easterly route of the expedition must depend on the information afforded by the native guides as to the locality in which they have reported the remains of white men are to be found.

“6.—On arriving at that spot, the greatest care is to be taken to bring away all such remains as may be discovered by a diligent search of the neighbourhood. By friendly and judicious treatment of the local natives, it is also probable that several articles of European manufacture which are said to be still in their possession may be bartered from them, and serve towards identifying their former owners. The prospect of obtaining from the natives, at this remote date, anything like a journal, note-book, or map, would indeed be small; but the greatest interest would attach to the smallest scrap of written or printed paper, however much defaced, if only covered with legible characters. A more promising mode by which the former presence of European explorers on the spot might be detected, is the marks which are generally made on the trees by travellers to record the number or reference to a halting-place, or the initials of some of the party. Thus, the letter L has in several instances been found by searching parties to have been legibly cut on trees in the interior of the Eastern Colonies, and in localities supposed to have been visited by the eminent explorer alluded to. It is needless to point out that metal articles, such as axes, tomahawks, guns and pistol barrels, iron-work of pack-saddles, and such like, would be far more likely to have survived through the lapse of years than articles of a more perishable nature.

“7.—After exhausting all conceivable means of obtaining information on the spot, and from the natives of surrounding country, an attempt should be made to follow back on the track of the unfortunate deceased, which is said to have been from the eastward, and towards the settled part of this Colony. There a close and minute scrutiny of the trees might prove of great value in clearing up existing doubts, especially at and about any water-holes and springs, near which explorers would be likely to bivouack.

“8.—After completing an exhaustive research and enquiry into this interesting and important part of your duties, the remainder of the time that may be at your disposal, with reference to your remaining stock of provisions, should be employed in exploring the surrounding country, in tracing any considerable or smaller stream it may be your good fortune to discover, and generally in rendering the service entrusted to your guidance, as extremely useful and valuable to the Colony, as circumstances may admit.

“9.—Towards effecting this object, your homeward journey should, if possible, be over country not previously traversed by the outward route, or by any former explorers, and should be so regulated as to expose your party to no unnecessary risk on account of falling short of supplies.

“10.—In your intercourse with the aborigines of the interior, many of whom will have no previous personal knowledge of the white man, I need scarcely commend to you a policy of kindness and forbearance, mixed with watchfulness and firmness; as their future bearing towards our remote colonists may be chiefly moulded by early impressions.

“11.—To render the expedition as extremely useful as possible, I would urge you, in the interests of science, to preserve such specimens in natural history as may come within reach of yourself and your party, especially in the departments of botany, geology and zoology, which may be greatly enriched by productions of country not yet traversed.

“12.—Direct reference to minor objects and to matters of detail is purposely omitted, in full reliance on your judgment and discretion, and in your personal desire to render the expedition as productive as possible of benefit to the Colony and to science in general.

“13.—In this spirit I may add that the brief instructions herein given for your general guidance, are by no means intended to fetter your own

judgment in carrying out the main objects of the expedition, in such other and different manner as may appear to you likely to lead to beneficial results. In the belief that such results will be achieved by the energy and perseverance of yourself and of those who have so nobly volunteered to join you in the enterprise, and with confident wishes for your success, in which H. E. joins,

"I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

"J. S. ROE.

"John Forrest, Esq."

Such was the budget of wise council tendered for the digestion of the young explorer, who started with his party full of high hopes on the 15th of April, 1869. Their supplies consisted of 800 lbs. of flour, 270 lbs. of pork, 135 lbs. of sugar, 17 lbs. of tea, together with miscellaneous necessaries, and two suits of clothes for each man.

They reached the station which outskirted farthest to the eastward—Yarraging, belonging to Messrs. Ward and Edwards—on the 26th, and made certain purchases of rations, which gave them three months' adequate supplies. On the 28th, an advance party started on a N.E. route, and made a somewhat unfortunate beginning, through their guide losing his way, which obliged them to camp in a thicket without water. By 1st May, still steering N.E., having brought up the main party, they encamped at Danjinning, a small oasis containing a native well. The explorer reminds us in his journal that Austin visited this place in 1854, and that the tracks of his horses were still quite observable. This seems strange, after a lapse of fifteen years, in a country which was regularly subject to rain-storms. Yalburnunging, Billeburring and Gnaragnunging were passed on a northern track, and on the 5th of May Mount Churchman or Geelabbing was reached—an immense barren granite hill, but with plenty of feed and water in the vicinity. Here they were joined by a party of no less than nine blacks (friends of Jemmy, the original projector of the expedition). These dusky colleagues of this aboriginal promoter declared that a long time ago a company of white men and horses died at a place called Bouincabbajibimar, and also that a gun and other trifles were to be had for the asking. Such tidings must have made the heart of Forrest glad, for as yet he had not had time to gauge the unfathomable mendacity of the aborigines. On the 11th of May, however,

he began to have his doubts. His journal of that date frankly states:—
“Have fears that the information received from the natives relates to nine of Mr. Austin’s horses that died of poison at Poison Rock.” After a day’s rest on Sunday, the 9th, Forrest, Tommy, and one of the Mount Churchman blacks, started off to visit the Warne district, which having done, they returned to camp.

On the 12th, twenty-five natives turned up (acquaintances of Jemmy and his nine friends), and the new comers held a grand corraboree * in honour of the expedition. Anything in the shape of a wild-goose chase has strong attractions for the Australian black, and these natives, pointing to Poison Rock, declared that nothing but horses’ bones were to be found. Jemmy, however, had heard of a place to the eastward, which he called *Noondie*, and here, according to his story, there were enough white men’s bones to stock an anatomical museum. Having reached a dry salt lake on the 18th, they attempted to cross it next day, and with great difficulty reached an island, which they mistook for the opposite shore. Subsequently, in attempting to cross Lake Barlee, as Forrest named it, after the Colonial Secretary, their horses got bogged, and many of their loads had to be carried by members of the party. On the next Sunday, the 23rd, the leader, Tommy and Jemmy, went in search of some natives, who had been observed the previous evening. They soon returned, however, seeing no chance of finding the blacks. Nothing of importance occurred during the next week, at the end of which a high hill was sighted, which Jemmy declared to be *Noondie*, the site of the massacre. Forrest, with Mr. Monger and Jemmy, set out on the 31st, leaving Mr. Hamersley in charge of the camp. Seeing a large fire seven miles to the westward, they steered in that direction, and came upon a tribe of about one hundred natives. Jemmy was stripped, in order to make him more in the aboriginal fashion, and went forward to interview his compatriots. He soon came back, beckoning Forrest and his friends to follow, asking them, however, to keep close behind him, as they were what he called “like sheep-flock,” meaning, I suppose, in great numbers. Thereupon, the horses were tied up, and they advanced. Jemmy started “cooe-ing,” and was duly answered, but to use the words of Forrest’s journal:—“As soon as they saw him the bloodthirsty villains rushed at him, and threw three

* This word is variously spelt by the different explorers.

dowaks, which he fortunately dodged, when, luckily, one of them recognised him (having seen him at Mount Elain when a little boy), and called to the others not to harm him. Seeing Jemmy rushing towards the horses, Mr. Monger and I thought it was time to retire, as we saw the mistake we had made in leaving the animals. The thickets being dense, we had difficulty in finding our horses quickly. On reaching them Mr. Monger found that he had dropped his revolver. Had not Jemmy been recognised, I feel sure there would have been bloodshed, and we might probably have lost our lives. Mounting the horses, we advanced towards the natives, and had a short talk with one of them, who came to speak to Jemmy. There was a guard of eight natives, with spears stripped and dowaks in readiness, should we prove hostile. Although I assured them we were friends, and asked them to put down their spears, they took no notice of what was said. One native told us not to sleep here, but to go away and not return, or the natives would kill and eat us, after which he turned away, as if he did not wish to have any more words with us." The explorers wisely took this ingenuous aboriginal's advice and retired, camping without water about five miles away.

Next day they again approached the camp of the blacks, and secured Mr. Monger's revolver, which had been duly found, and which the savages, for some reason or other, had been warming at the fire, to see if it was loaded. They were certainly going the right way about investigating its contents! But, "fortunately," as Mr. Forrest tells us, "it did not go off." Under Jemmy's cross-examination they asserted that Noondie was distant two days' journey N.W., but that the remains were those of horses, and not men. They likewise offered to guide the travellers to the spot, and made a solemn promise to come to the camp next day for the purpose. Forrest, after waiting for twenty-four hours, was obliged, however, to start without them, for—to his great disappointment—they never put in an appearance. The travellers set out on the 3rd of June, travelling W.S.W., and for a time saw neither natives nor osseous remains of any kind. At length they saw a solitary specimen of the former in the shape of a very old black, who was sitting at a fire in the scrub. He did nothing but howl, however, and Jemmy could make nothing of what he meant. Next day being the 11th, having proceeded on their somewhat hopeless journey, they met a middle-aged black,

accompanied by two small children. "He appeared very frightened," says Forrest, "and trembled from head to foot. Jemmy could understand this native a little, and ascertained from him that he had never seen or heard anything about white men or horses being killed or having died in this vicinity. Did not know any place called Noondie, but pointed to water a little way eastward. Jemmy then asked all manner of questions, but to no purpose, as he stated he knew nothing about the business. Our guide then asked him if he had ever heard of any horses being eaten. He answered 'No,' but sadly remarked that the natives had just eaten his brother! I have no doubt parents have great difficulty in saving their children from these inhuman wretches."

Till the 18th of June a diligent search was made for bones and other relics of Leichardt, when it became evident to Forrest that whether by accident or design the blacks were misleading him, and that Austin's skeleton horses had been made the foundation of a *mare's nest*. In accordance with his instructions, Forrest resolved to make the best possible use of his time and opportunity by exploring to the eastward. Accordingly they started at noon on the 19th, travelling towards a granite range, which, having reached, they encamped with abundance of water, but hardly any feed. For three days after this they found themselves travelling over a waterless district, towards Mount Lenora, until, on the 22nd, they discovered a pool, where they halted for the night. Forrest now decided to go ahead with Tommy and reconnoitre for water before bringing forward the main body. On the 23rd they set out in the direction of the hill just named, and encountered several natives, one of whom ran up a tree, from which position he pelted both Forrest and the guide, and refused to descend, although the leader exhibited the effects of revolver shots on the trees. He even refused to be beguiled with a piece of damper, and when he rejected this delicacy of the bush Forrest thought it time to leave him to his own devices. Next day they pushed on, meeting with unfavourable country. Mount Flora was reached and named on the 24th, and thereafter they ascended another hill, which was called Mount Margaret. They were now sixty miles from the main depôt, and, having been some thirty hours without water, Forrest resolved to turn back. On their return journey they met with sufficient water for their needs, and reached the camp on

Saturday the 26th, carrying a red kangaroo which had fallen to Tommy's gun. Having rested on Sunday, as was a usual habit with Forrest, the entire party was moved eastward to Mount Malcolm, where they had found a pool. On the 29th the leader and Tommy again started eastwards, taking seven days' provisions. I need not recount a weary journey over spinifex, through dense thickets, sand and salt marshes—and all the time dependent on scanty rain-water pools for a meagre supply of water. By the 2nd of July they had reached one hundred miles to the eastward of their main camp, at a point $28^{\circ} 41'$ S. latitude, and $122^{\circ} 50'$ E. longitude. Their horses had been thirty-six hours without feed or water, and, having halted without either of these necessaries, Forrest resolved to return next morning. Twelve hours later, having started early in the morning, a small pool in a creek was found and named Windich Brook, after Tommy (whose surname was Windich). The camp was reached on the 5th, at 6 p.m., and this time they carried home an emu—another trophy of Tommy's skill in gunnery. Forrest's excursion had lasted for seven days, and was on the whole discouraging, for each night the wayfarers had to camp without water.

It was now necessary to take stock of the provisions, which were found to be sufficient for about three weeks on full rations. Forrest therefore decided to make his way back to Perth on somewhat reduced allowance—so as to make the food last for thirty days. By so doing, he says, "I hope to reach Clarke's Homestead, Victoria Plains, and intend to return by Mount Kenneth, Nanjajetty, Ningham or Mount Singleton, and thence to Damparwar and Clarke's Homestead, thus fixing a few points that will be useful to the Survey Office." On the morning of the 7th they started, and up till the 11th they kept pretty closely to their outward track, when the young surveyor ascended a high peak, which he named Mount Alfred. From its summit he took, as he stated, "a fine round of angles—Mount Alexander, Mount Bivou, Mount Ida, Mount Elvire, and Yeadie and Bulgar being visible." On the 14th, the leader, with Hamersley and Jemmy, having reached Lake Barlee, they made an attempt to cross it, but after travelling over a mile, with horses sinking below their girths, they had to return. A second effort at another place, where there existed a series of islands, was happily crossed with success, and they bivouacked on the opposite shore with good grass and plenty of water.

Next day they joined their comrades, and they all pushed on through a miserable country. Then the leader, having started the main party, made another subordinate trip with that aboriginal Nimrod, Tommy, who shot a turkey and caught a possum; otherwise they would have gone short of food, having missed their companions, whom they found two days later. Every now and then we note the surveying instinct of the explorer conspicuously prominent, his journal recording the successive "rounds of angles," which he took on all possible occasions. On the 26th they met two blacks, who had heard a harrowing account of their skirmish of May 31st. According to the aboriginal version all the whites had been killed and eaten—a fair specimen of native veracity. Sunday, August the 1st, found the travellers within nine miles of Mr. Clarke's homestead, which bore S.S.E., and next day they reached his hospitable residence. Without much delay the party continued on their journey, arriving at Newcastle on the 4th. Here Forrest parted with Mr. George Monger, and on the afternoon of the 6th of August, 1869, the explorers arrived at Perth, having been absent one hundred and thirteen days, and covered a distance of some two thousand miles.


So far as Leichardt's fate was concerned the expedition was barren, but considerable scientific knowledge was gained regarding the country, between the outposts of Westralian civilization and the 123rd meridian. Another important fact was ascertained, namely, that in Mr. John Forrest the Colony had acquired another explorer who only needed time and opportunity to reach the highest summit of distinction.





CHAPTER XXVII.

Mr. John Forrest's Second Expedition from Perth to Adelaide, round the Great Australian Bight.

HE zeal of Leichardt's indefatigable countryman—Baron Von Mueller—was by no means quenched through the barren result of Forrest's first expedition. The young surveyor could scarcely be blamed for the absence of the explorer's bones, in the search for which he had undoubtedly made *debüt* his in the field of exploration; and in proof of this, the eminent botanist was most anxious that his services should again be enlisted in the same cause. Von Mueller suggested that Forrest should set out from the Upper Murchison with a light party, and six months' supplies, and travelling towards Carpentaria, look out for signs of Leichardt *en route*—making during his journey all possible scientific observations and discoveries. The Baron's arguments are embodied in an article from his pen in the *Colonial Monthly*, in which he writes thus:—“While those who searched after traces of the lost party did not solve the primary objects of the mission, their labours have not been without importance to geographical science. The course of one traveller connected the southern interior of Queensland in a direct route with the vast pastoral depressions about Lake Torrens; the researches of another explorer, bent on ascertaining Leichardt's fate, unfolded to us a tract of table-country now already occupied by flocks and herds, not less in length than that

of Sweden and Italy. . . . We should bear fully in mind how a line in Leichardt's intended direction would at once enable the squatters of North-East Australia to drive their surplus of flocks and herds easily across to the well-watered, hilly and grassy country, within close proximity of the harbour of the north-west coast."

The Government and the public generally, however, did not quite share in Von Mueller's enthusiasm, and, although Forrest was willing to undertake the journey, there was a difficulty in raising the funds. This project was therefore indefinitely postponed; but the surveyor's services were to be utilized in another quarter. Governor Weld was desirous that an attempt should be made to reach Adelaide by way of the south coast. Very little had been done towards investigating this route, which Eyre's disastrous trip had made painfully memorable. His terrible march in 1840 seemed to have acted as a deterrent to explorers, and the frightful privations to which he was subjected gave the heroic explorer but scant opportunity either for making or recording useful observations regarding the physical and geographical features of the country traversed. Forrest was, however, in no way dismayed by possible perils or privations, and declared himself ready to conduct the enterprise at all hazards.

In 1867 a good harbour had been discovered on the southern coast, about two hundred and fifty miles to the westward of Fowler's Bay. It had been surveyed by Captain Douglas, under the instructions of the South Australian Government, and reported on most favourably. Unfortunately for that Colony, however, Port Eucla's geographical position brought that landing place within the boundaries of Western Australia, and the possession of such an eligible depôt naturally opened up great possibilities of exploration. To this point Forrest and his party were directed to make their way, keeping a route as far as possible inland from the coast, and at Eucla it was arranged that a vessel should meet them with supplies. On this occasion Mr. Forrest received a letter of instructions from Mr. Frederick Barlee, the Colonial Secretary, which may with advantage be here quoted:—

“Colonial Secretary's Office, Perth,

“March 29th, 1870.

“Sir,—His Excellency the Governor, confiding in your experience, ability, and discretion, has been pleased to entrust to your charge and

leadership an overland expedition, which has been organised for the purpose of exploring the country between the settled portions of this Colony and the Port of Eucla, situated near its east boundary.

“Your party will consist of the following six persons, well armed and provisioned for two months, namely :—Yourself, as leader; Mr. Alexander Forrest, your brother, second-in-command; H. McLarty, a police constable, third-in-command; W. H. Osborne, farrier, &c.; and two reliable natives, one of which will be your former well-trying companion, Windich. An agreement to serve under you on the expedition in the above capacities, will be signed by each European named, previous to starting.

“Ample stores and supply of provisions have been prepared for your use, and a suitable coasting vessel (the schooner *Adur*) is engaged under an experienced commander, to convey them where required, and to be at your disposal in aiding the operations of the expedition. It is desirable the party should start from Perth as soon as all arrangements have been completed, and take the most convenient route to Esperance Bay; where men and horses can be recruited, further supplies from the coaster laid in, and a fresh start made for Eucla as soon as the first winter rains may lead to a prospect of the country being sufficiently watered.

“About one hundred and twenty miles to the eastward of the station of Messrs. Dempster, at the west end of Esperance, lies Israelite Bay, under some islands, in front of which there is said to be anchorage. That being the nearest known anchorage west of Eucla, it appears to offer a convenient spot whence fresh supplies might be drawn from your coaster, with which to prosecute the remaining three hundred miles; but this arrangement, as to an intermediate place of call, will be liable to modification after consulting on the spot with Messrs. Dempster, who are well acquainted with that part of the coast.

“Between Israelite Bay and Eucla the route should be as far from the coast as circumstances and the nature of the country will admit.

“At Eucla all the remaining provisions and stores that may be required should be landed, and the coaster despatched on her return to Fremantle with a report of your proceedings.

“After recruiting at Eucla, five or six days might be employed with advantage in exploring the country to the northward, care being taken to

place in security, by burying in casks or otherwise, such provisions as might not be necessary for the northern excursion.

“On returning to Eucla from the north, the expedition is to make a final start overland for Adelaide, by such route as you may deem advisable. The Surveyor-General is of opinion that *via* Port Lincoln, and thence to Adelaide by steamer, would be the preferable route, but of this you will be the best judge after receiving information from the various out-stations you will pass. Before leaving South Australia, you will dispose of your horses and such remaining stores and provisions as may not be further required, retaining all instruments and such pack-saddles and other articles of outfit as you may deem worth preserving for future service.

“On arriving at Adelaide you will report yourself to his Excellency the Governor, and avail yourself of the first favourable opportunity of returning to Perth with your party and with the remains of your outfit, either by any vessel about to proceed direct to the Swan, or by the earliest mail steamer to King George's Sound. On application to his Excellency, Sir James Fergusson, you will be furnished with such means as may be necessary to defray your expenses from South to Western Australia, as well as during your stay in the former Colony.

“I am to impress upon you the desirability of endeavouring by every means in your power to cultivate friendly relations with the aboriginal inhabitants of the country you are about to traverse.

“Such are briefly the general instructions by which it is intended you should be governed in conducting the expedition entrusted to your care and guidance, and I may add that the fullest confidence is placed in your energy, zeal and discretion for bringing it to a successful issue. The main objects of the undertaking are alone referred to; and although a mode of accomplishing them is alluded to, it is by no means intended to fetter your judgment in adopting such measures of minor details as may appear to you necessary for effectually carrying them out.

“I have the honour to be, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

FRED. P. BARLEE.”

Escorted a few miles by the Governor himself, the cavalcade set out on the 30th of March, 1870, taking with them fifteen horses, and rations

sufficient for the first 450 miles of the journey, *i.e.*, to Esperance Bay. Before striking out east, Forrest's aim was to reach Eyre's track of 1840-41. It will be remembered that the latter followed the line of coast as far west as King George's Sound, and Forrest's journey southward to this point need not be narrated. Past Kojonup, Jerramungup, Etticup, Martinup, Nigalup, and Koorarkup they travelled, until on the night of the 14th of April, they camped on a small branch of the Fitzgerald River, at a place called Dwertup. Here they found water, but very scanty feed, their latitude now being $33^{\circ} 1' S$. Phillips River was reached on the 16th, when they may be said to have gained the line of the former traveller's route. Their long and arduous journey now lay due eastward. Forrest's diary is a model of conciseness and precision, although naturally devoid of much general interest during many of the day's doings—all so accurately and faithfully described. With this journal as my guide, I will endeavour to briefly summarise the main incidents of this successful and memorable expedition. The explorers' first destination was now Esperance Bay, where the *Adur* schooner was to meet them. On the 23rd they encamped at Messrs. Dempster's homestead—Mainbenup by name—some twenty-five miles north of the bay. From here the leader, accompanied by Billy Noongale—one of the native guides—set out for the coast, but the ship was not in sight. Next day they again climbed a hill, anxiously gazing seawards, and in the evening the main body arrived from the former resting place and camped. Forrest began to have serious fears for the schooner's safety, when three more days passed and their eager watch for the expected vessel was in vain.

On the 29th, however, having ascended Look-Out Hill, the *Adur* could be seen in the distance near Cape Le Grand, steering for the bay, and on the same evening Forrest, having gone on board, found all well. "I cannot," he says, "find words to express my joy and relief from anxiety this evening. All fears and doubts were at an end, and I was now in a position to attempt to carry out my instructions." The temporary absence of the vessel may well be taken as an illustration of the many unforeseen accidents which are prone to utterly frustrate the best planned expedition. Had any mishap befallen the schooner, it is difficult to see how Forrest could possibly have advanced on his long march eastward. Fatigue had already severely tried the party, the horses' backs were sore,

and four days were taken to recruit. The safety of the *Adur*, however, was a great anxiety removed, and thus the first stage of their journey was duly accomplished.

After landing all necessary stores, they bade farewell to the Dempsters, and returned to the desert in the hope of traversing safely the next one hundred and twenty miles to Israelite Bay. Here the *Adur* was again to meet them and replenish their supplies. What a contrast to the lonely march of Mr. Eyre! May the 9th was the date of their departure, and for nine days they pursued their eastward course over sand and scrub, with occasional patches of grassy country, watered by brackish streams. The black guides seem, as usual, to have contributed handsomely to their commissariat, for Billy shot many ducks, and on the 17th Tommy bagged a kangaroo. Two natives, whom they met, partook of a plentiful repast off the latter, "literally," says Forrest, "eating the whole night." We are reminded that Eyre's faithful native companion—Wylie—performed similar wonders in the course of his fateful journey thirty years previously. It would be interesting to hear a scientific opinion as to the digestive powers of the Australian native. Doubtless long generations of intermittent gorging and starving on the part of their ancestors have, in the course of many generations, abnormally developed their organs in this respect. I respectfully suggest an examination of the internal arrangements, as displayed by an aboriginal *cadaver*, to the Colonial Colleges, and a report thereupon might be printed for the benefit of English medical scientists. A few anatomical dissections, preparations and diagrams, would be likewise a notable addition to the Imperial Institute.

On the 18th Israelite Bay was safely reached, and this time the *Adur* was waiting for the party, the captain and crew having been somewhat alarmed regarding their safety, as they were two days later than anticipated. Over such country twelve miles a day was nevertheless a good rate of speed, and men and horses were so terribly distressed that a ten days' rest was resolved upon. Forrest made a careful survey of the coast line, detecting several errors in the Admiralty charts. No one can look upon this eminent explorer's map, showing the overland tracks from Perth to Eucla and Adelaide, without being struck with its masterly execution and marvellous minuteness. Even when produced on a fairly large scale—as is the map before me as I write—the southern coast is so

exquisitely defined, and so crammed with small type, that in some cases a magnifying glass is necessary to decipher the numberless names, lines, dates and observations.

On the 24th of May it was very properly decided to celebrate the Queen's Birthday. The captain and crew of the *Adur* came ashore, and the entire party, lining up under the Union Jack, gave three cheers and fired a salute of twenty-one guns. In his journal, the present Premier of Western Australia makes a remark which well accords with the feelings always expressed by Australians regarding the British Crown. "I venture to record," he writes, "that our vocal efforts were as sincerely and heartily made in the Australian wilderness, as any which rang that day in any part of her Majesty's wide dominions. We were all highly delighted—not only feeling that we had done our duty as loyal subjects—but other celebrations in more civilised places were forcibly recalled to memory." The explorer does not record if Her Majesty's health was drunk, but from my knowledge of the Premier's loyal hospitality in after years, I feel assured that this important ceremony was faithfully observed.

Having thus appropriately celebrated his Sovereign's birthday, and the successful completion of the second stage of his journey, Mr. Forrest made preparations for going ahead. He had now three hundred and fifty miles before him, over an unknown, difficult and dangerous track, Eucla Bay being the next point at which he could possibly get assistance from the schooner. Knowing the perils which menaced his advance, the leader gave explicit directions in writing to his auxiliary, Captain Waugh, who ably commanded the *Adur*. I give these instructions in Forrest's own words, and if it be deemed that my narrative rather tends to verbosity than conciseness, I here would remark that I have obvious reasons for recording as fully as possible this explorer's actions. His was one of the best-conceived and best-conducted of the later expeditions for Australian Exploration; and being now at the head of the Western Australian Government, he may well be regarded as one of the best living types of skilful, scientific and successful travellers. I cannot but regard him as a notable example or model for imitation among explorers, either in Australia or elsewhere. With this explanation, I proceed with Forrest's letter to the commander. It is as follows:—

“Israelite Bay, 28th May, 1870.

“Sir,—It being my intention to start for Eucla on Monday, the 30th instant, I have the honour to direct that you will be good enough to make arrangements for leaving this place on the 7th of June, wind and weather permitting, and sail as direct as possible for Port Eucla, situated in south latitude $31^{\circ} 43'$, and east longitude $128^{\circ} 52'$.

“You will remain at anchor in Port Eucla until the 1st of September, long before which time I hope to reach and meet you there. No signs of myself or party appearing by that date, you will bury in casks, under the Black Beacon, 400 lbs. of flour, 200 lbs. of pork, 100 lbs. of sugar, 10 lbs. of tea, and four bags of barley, together with the remainder of our clothing on board. You will be careful to hide the spot of concealment as much as possible, by any means that may suggest themselves. Also you will bury a bottle containing report of your proceedings.

“All these matters had better be attended to a day or two before, and on the 2nd of September you will set sail, and return with all despatch to this place (Israelite Bay), where, if I have been obliged to return, I will leave a buried bottle at the spot (arranged by us yesterday), which will contain instructions for your future proceedings.

“No signs of our return being found here, you will sail for Fremantle, calling at Esperance Bay on your way.

“On arriving at Fremantle, you will immediately report your return to the Hon. the Colonial Secretary, and forward him a report of your proceedings, after which your charter-party will have been completed.

“These arrangements are chiefly respecting your proceedings in the event of our not having reached Eucla; and I may add that, although I have every hope of reaching there in safety, still it is impossible to command success in any enterprise, and I have to impress upon you the necessity of these instructions being carried out as nearly as possible to the very letter. Wishing yourself and crew a prosperous voyage, and hoping soon to meet you in Port Eucla,

“I have, &c.,

“JOHN FORREST,

“Leader of Expedition.

“Mr. R. B. Waugh,

“Master of Schooner *Adur*.”

Thus having as far as possible provided against contingencies, the leader completed his final preparations. The day before his intended start was a Sunday, and as usual Forrest read Divine Service to his own party and the crew. He tells us that, with prospects of such dangers before them, they felt more impressed than under ordinary circumstances. Next day (30th May) saw them on the road, steering north for some fifteen miles from the Bay, over salt marshes, clay pans, and dense thickets, quite destitute of grass. The very first night out they had a fore-taste of what was in store for them ahead, for they camped without either water or feed. Continuing along the coast line, and passing over very indifferent country, on the 3rd of June their jaded horses were refreshed by abundant grass, but, alas, without water. On the previous days of their journey the unfortunate animals had to put up with water without grass, which must have been somewhat trying to their constitutions. If Forrest had had camels, his difficulties would have been much lightened. He tells us of how they approached the iron-bound coast, and as they looked cautiously over an awful precipice they all were terror-stricken by the view. As yet, owing to their carrying a small supply of water, neither men nor horses had very seriously suffered; but when we pass on to the 10th, we find the latter had subsisted for ninety-six hours on the wretched allowance of two gallons each. Next morning four of the thirsty beasts had strayed away, and the leader was oppressed with acute misgivings. They were found, however, by the faithful Tommy, who, moreover, had discovered a few water-holes, which, to a certain extent, relieved them. On the 12th a water-hole, containing about one hundred gallons, was found, surrounded with grass. Pushing on next day from their camp, in longitude 126° 12' E., Point Dover came in sight, near where the unfortunate Baxter was murdered, and the explorers came upon water on their way thither.

By the 14th they had traversed one hundred and fifty miles where no permanent water existed, and felt great relief in reflecting that so far they had been lucky enough to discover water-holes. They were now on the sea-shore, and, to their astonishment, they beheld the *Adur* making in for the land. This seemed very strange, as the wind was favourable for Eucla. Having reached within three miles of the shore, the schooner turned eastward, and although fires were lighted to attract her attention,

they were not observed by the captain or sailors, and she soon faded from sight. The leader afterwards ascertained that the commander was uncertain as to his longitude, and had sailed coastwards in order to see some landmark. Had the travellers been in such straits as was Mr. Eyre, their disappointment would have been terrible, and I dare say Mr. Forrest may have regretted not having a supply of rockets for signalling purposes.*

They found water in various places by digging during the next few days, and sufficient feed for the horses was, happily, procurable. Having camped on the 20th, the leader, McLarty and Tommy made an excursion to the northward to examine features of the country. They travelled fifty miles over fairly good land, but water failing them, they were obliged to return on the 22nd. Next day Tommy found the shoulder-blade of a horse, with two small pieces of leather. Forrest was strongly of opinion that they must have belonged to Mr. Eyre's equipment. We are reminded that just about this locality, Eyre states in his journal of the 16th of April, 1841, that he sent his overseer to kill an unfortunate horse which was unable to move, and there is very little doubt that these interesting relics, which were given to Governor Weld, belonged to the very animal in question.

Seven natives were met with on the 24th. They were entirely naked, and having pointed out some water, they slept by the explorers' fire; after having eaten an enormous quantity of damper, and made pillows of each other's bodies. Having parted with the blacks, two of whom accompanied the party for a short distance, they found a fine water-hole on Sunday, the 26th. The leader read Divine Service, which being, perhaps, a little out of Tommy's line, the black went for a stroll with his friend Billy, and the two hunters brought back a brace of small kangaroos, which gave them all a splendid dinner. The Sunday dinner, Mr. Forrest tells us, was a speciality of his, and any little dainty, such as a parrot, cockatoo, or wallaby, was religiously kept for that occasion. By the 1st of July they reached Hampton Range, and, descending the cliffs, Eucla sandhills came in sight, to the great joy of Forrest and his comrades. He might have reached the port that night, but preferred to wait until daylight. The surveyor writes :—

* Had the wind failed, the *Adelphi* might have remained within signalling distance till darkness set in; when rockets would almost certainly have attracted the attention of the captain. I intend to order a case as an adjunct to the expedition I am at present equipping.

" We are now again in safety, Eucla being only seven miles distant, after having travelled one hundred and sixty-six miles without permanent water; in fact, over three hundred miles with only one place where we procured permanent water, viz., in longitude $126^{\circ} 24'$ E. I trust we all recognised, with sincerity and thankfulness, the guiding and protecting Father, who had brought us in safety. By observation the camp was in latitude $31^{\circ} 42'$ S."

Next day they made an early start, and soon beheld the schooner riding at anchor in Eucla Harbour, between the Red and Black Beacons. So safely ended the penultimate stage of the gallant Forrest's journey.

Over half of his heavy task was now completed, and, of course, by far the worst half. Forrest had every reason to congratulate himself on the probable success of his notable achievement. Everything had been done decently and in order; whether it involved the necessary reconnoitring, observations and surveying, or the invariable dining and devotion on Sundays. A long despatch was penned to the Colonial Secretary, for the information of the Governor, and with this the *Adur* set sail, leaving the party to their own devices for the rest of the journey.

On the 11th of July they entered South Australia, and saw the boundary-post which had been placed on Wilson's Bluff by Lieutenant Douglas. A flagstaff was soon erected bearing the Union Jack, and upon the former was nailed a copper plate, upon which was engraved—

" WESTERN AUSTRALIA, ERECTED BY J. FORREST,
JULY 12TH, 1870."

Here was buried a cask, containing 100 lbs. flour, 130 lbs. barley, 16 new sets of horse-shoes, shoeing nails, &c.; and upon the flag-staff was fastened another plate, bearing the words—

" DIG 8 FEET WEST."

On the 14th they left Eucla, and started for the head of the Bight, carrying thirty gallons of water. This was one of the worst experiences of the entire route. Till the 17th no water could be found for the horses. They were in a frightful state of exhaustion, when at last the head was reached, and water obtained by digging. Four days had apparently wrought a terrible change upon the animals. From being strong and in good condition, they were reduced to skeletons, having only drunk one gallon during ninety hours. All danger was now over for the time, and

next day they reached the first signs of civilisation, duly acknowledged by hurrahs from the party, and thankfulness to a protecting Providence. On the 20th a shepherd was met; then Mr. Maiden, stationmaster at Colona; and on the 24th, at Colona, Police-Trooper Richards and party walked into their camp. Fowler's Bay was reached on the 27th, and here they rested till August 1st, when they started, accompanied by the last-named officer, for Port Augusta. The port was reached on the 18th, and a telegram sent to Sir James Fergusson, at Adelaide, where the successful traveller safely landed on the 28th of the month.

Here is a description of their appearance, taken from the *South Australian Advertiser*:—

“It was a genuine Australian bush turn-out, the trappings, water-drums, and other necessaries, being admirably adapted for the purpose. The horses looked somewhat the worse for wear; but, considering the immense distance they have travelled, their condition was not to be complained of, and a few weeks in the Government paddocks will put them into capital condition. The officers and men, both white and black, look the picture of health, and their satisfaction at having completed their long and arduous task is beaming from their countenances.”

Having been duly lionised and banqueted at Adelaide, on the 12th of September, Forrest and his party sailed by the steamer *Alexandra*, and reached Perth on the 27th; where even warmer welcomes awaited the gallant explorer and his comrades after their long absence, lasting one hundred and eighty-two days.





CHAPTER XXVIII.

Mr. John Forrest's Third Expedition ; from Champion Bay to the Overland Telegraph Line.

MR. JOHN FORREST had now made his name, and filled with an ardent passion for discovery, he burned for further achievements in the great field of Australian Exploration. Meantime his brother, Alexander, who had acted so well under him, was next entrusted with the command of a small expedition, and in 1871 went out to the eastward in search of fresh pastoral country. He reached latitude 31° S., and then made for the coast in a S.S.E. direction. The party had started too late in the season, however, and their progress was thus hampered. Having reached Mount Ragged and the Thomas River, they steered in a westerly direction, getting as far as Esperance Bay. In a large measure the expedition—which, by the way, only cost £300—was successful, a considerable tract of pastoral country being discovered, and on his return the leader received universal congratulation.

The route of Mr. John Forrest's next expedition lay through the centre of Australia, from Champion Bay on the West Coast, to a point on the Overland Telegraph Line, which stretches from Adelaide to Port Darwin. It was in July, 1872, that the explorer laid his views before the Honourable Malcolm Fraser, then Surveyor-General. He proposed starting early in 1873, with four white men and two blacks, taking twenty horses and provisions for six months. The cost of this gigantic and dangerous undertaking he estimated at only £600—a great contrast to

the expensive equipments of his predecessors—being just one-twentieth of the sum spent on the Burke and Wills outfit! As Governor Weld truly remarked at the time:—"Should Mr. Forrest succeed in this journey, his name will fitly go down to posterity as that of the man who solved the last remaining problem in the Australian Continent; and whoever may come after him, he will have been the last (and certainly, when the means at his disposal and the difficulties of the undertaking are considered, by no means the least) of the great Australian explorers."

For various reasons, however, the start of the expedition was postponed till the 18th of March, 1874, on which date the cavalcade quitted Perth for Champion Bay, their real point of departure. It may here be noted that the main object of this exploratory enterprise was to obtain information regarding the immense tract of country from which flow the Murchison, Gascoyne, Ashburton, De Grey, Fitzroy and other rivers—all debouching into the sea on the western and northern shores of this territory. This having been accomplished, much was left to the leader's discretion. He could either go westward, and fall back on the settlements at Nicol Bay, or he could go eastward to the South Australian Telegraph Line. Thus in a great measure unfettered as to his actions, Forrest set forth, accompanied by his brother as second-in-command, together with James Sweeny (farrier), Police-Constable James Kennedy, and two natives, Tommy Windich and Tommy Pierre. Almost immediately after starting, men and horses were terribly oppressed by the intense heat (of which I myself have recently had bitter experience in the North-West), and Forrest sadly regretted the lack of camels. The necessity for watering his horses entailed upon the explorers many wearying deviations and privations upon both man and beast. At the final start despatches were handed to the leader by a mounted trooper, the last white man they were to see for nearly six months.

It would be wearisome indeed to follow with any degree of minuteness the footsteps of these brave men in their great march across the Continent. I shall, therefore, only extract the most interesting incidents of the journey. On the 14th of April they left Yuin, and travelled along the upper banks of the Murchison, passing over undulating grassy flats, the water in the pools being for the most part brackish. This state of affairs continued for many days. Glengarry Range was discovered and

named on the 13th of May, and on the 17th Mounts Bartle and Russell were reached. After passing another chain, called the Kimberley Range, after a former Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the 21st they travelled over the watershed of the Murchison. The country ahead of them looked promising, and on the 27th they were rewarded by finding some splendid springs, "which," says Forrest in his journal, "I named the Windich Springs, after my old and well-tried companion, Tommy Windich, who has now been on three expeditions with me. They are," he continues, "the best springs I have ever seen—flags in the bed of the river and pools twelve feet deep and twenty chains long—a splendid place for water." This tribute by the present Premier of Western Australia to his humble aboriginal guide, should be laid to heart by those who look upon the Australian natives as the most despicable type of the human race.

North-west from this point—latitude $25^{\circ} 22' S.$, and longitude $120^{\circ} 42' E.$ —lay a fine range, named after the Earl of Carnarvon, another Colonial Secretary. After a distressing march over miserable country, five springs were found on the 2nd of June, and named after Governor Weld. Here they rested and refreshed their tired horses until the 8th, when they again pushed forward. Twenty miles from the Weld Springs their horses were completely done up, having had no water for thirty-one hours. There was nothing for it but to make a harassing journey back to the springs just named. Having remained here while some of the party searched ahead, on the 13th they came in contact with hostile blacks. Forrest thus describes the attack:—"About one o'clock Pierre saw a flock of emus coming to water, and went off to get a shot. Kennedy followed with the rifle. I climbed up on a small tree to watch them. I was surprised to hear natives' voices. I saw from forty to sixty natives running towards the camp, all plumed up and armed with spears and shields. I was cool, and told Sweeny to bring out the revolvers; descended from the tree and got my gun, and coo-eed to Pierre and Kennedy, who came running. By this time they were within sixty yards, and halted. One advanced to meet me, and stood twenty yards off; I made friendly signs. He did not appear very hostile. All at once, one from behind (probably a chief) came rushing forward, and made many feints to throw spears. He went through many manoeuvres and gave a signal, when the whole number made a rush towards us, yelling and shouting,

with their spears shipped. When within twenty yards I gave the word to fire. We all fired as one man, only one report being heard. I think the natives got a few shots, but they all ran up the hill, and there stood talking, haranguing and appearing very angry. We all loaded our guns and got everything ready for a second attack, which I was sure they would make. We were not long left in suspense. They all descended from the hill, and came slowly towards us. When they were about one hundred and fifty yards off, I fired my rifle, and saw one of them fall; but he got up again and was assisted away. On examining the spot we found the ball had cut in two the two spears he was carrying. He also dropped his *wommera*, which was covered with blood. We could follow the blood-drops for a long way over the stones. I am afraid he got a severe wound. My brother and Windich being away, we were short-handed. The natives seemed determined to take our lives, and therefore I shall not hesitate to fire on them should they attack us again. I thus decide and write in all humility, considering it a necessity as the only way to save our lives. I write this at 4 p.m., just after the occurrence, so that should anything happen to us my brother will know how and when it occurred."

Happily the blacks did not again put in an appearance, although it was a time of extreme anxiety for the travellers, who built a stone hut in case of further hostilities. Their natural desire was now to get away from this unpropitious locality; but after much searching it was not until the 22nd of June that sufficient water was found to enable them to advance. On the 23rd Lake Augusta was discovered, where another batch of natives were seen, but they did not show fight—on the contrary, they ran off at top speed. On the 26th a single native was met with, and was chased up a tree, in the hope of extracting information. But all Windich's eloquence would not induce him to open his lips; whether he understood the guide's dialect it is hard to say. On the 30th more water was discovered, and at their bivouac they had the strange *menu* of one *wurrung*, four *chockalocks*, three emu eggs, besides bread and bacon—so they fared sumptuously for once.

It was their last comfortable meal for some time to come, however; for the most trying part of their journey now commenced. On July 1st they came into a horrible desert of interminable spinifex. Horse after horse gave in, and even the gallant leader's heart began to fail him. Until the

5th his diary is pitiable to read. Then Sunday came, and the little party were reunited—having slowly followed up after Forrest and Windich, who had gone on ahead. "Found my brother in good spirits," the leader writes. "We soon felt quite happy, and viewed the future hopefully. I was sorry to lose the horses, but we cannot expect to get through such a country without some giving in. Read Divine Service," and so on. It was evident that they would have to retreat seventy miles in order to save their lives, if water was not immediately found. On the 7th, Forrest, accompanied by his brother and the two blacks, started off in desperation, and fortunately found a fair supply, to which the main body was moved up. Alexander Forrest and Pierre then went forward on a flying trip, and after a weary march among the ranges, a spring was found on the 11th. The younger brother's diary runs thus:—"11th.—Again bore west to meet the party. After going seven miles we saw a beautiful piece of feeding country—the first we had seen for the last 130 miles—and after looking for water, and our fondest hopes beginning to fail, we at last followed what seemed to be the largest gully to its head, when we were gratified in beholding abundance of water, with several springs, with good feed in the flats below. My horse was completely knocked up, and I was glad to be able to give him a rest. After being an hour here, Pierre, who is always on the look-out, saw two natives fully armed, and in war costumes, making for us. I was soon on my legs and made towards them, but as soon as they saw us they began to move off, and were soon out of sight in the thicket. At two o'clock we camped, and after taking off our saddles and making a fire, were very much surprised to find a party of eight or nine natives going to camp close to us, and a number more coming down the hill. We thought it was best to move on a few miles. I believe myself they intended attacking us after dark."

This welcome discovery was called Alexander Spring, after the finder, and here they all rested until the 16th, when the leader and Windich went ahead on the never-ending search for water. They were successful, and on the 18th Forrest found himself within one hundred miles of Mr. Gosse's furthest westerly point. Blyth Pool was discovered and named on the 20th. I need not recount a series of brave struggles against Nature's barriers during this march of one hundred miles, but pass on to the 2nd of August, when I quote from the traveller's journal:—"I now

began to be much troubled about our position, although I did not communicate my fears to any but my brother. We felt confident we could return if the worst came, although we were over one thousand miles from the settled districts of Western Australia. The water at our camp was fast drying up, and would not last more than a fortnight. The next water was sixty miles back, and there seemed no probability of getting eastward. I knew we were now in the very country that had driven Mr. Gosse back. I have since found that it did the same for Mr. Giles. No time was to be lost. I was determined to make the best use of it if only the water would last, and to keep on searching. Just when the goal of my ambition and my hopes for years past was almost within reach, it appeared that I might not even now be able to grasp it. The thought of having to return, however, brought every feeling of energy and determination to my rescue, and I felt that with God's help I would even now succeed. I gave instructions to allowance the party, so that the stores should last at least four months, and made every preparation for a last desperate struggle."

These words were written on Sunday, the 2nd August, and though the struggle was indeed desperate, Forrest's indomitable courage and unwavering skill eventually conquered. By the 16th Windich came upon a gum-tree marked

E. GILES,

Oct. 7, '73,

and also came upon cart tracks, which belonged to Mr. Gosse, who had camped close by. With some variations, during which many discoveries were made, the latter explorer's tracks were followed. They had several encounters with the natives, but without bloodshed on either side. Two of their horses died, and much suffering endured by both man and beast. On the 26th of September they were in latitude 27° 9' S., and the welcome words appear in the diary, "Hope to reach the Telegraph Line to-morrow."

Next day loud and continued cheers came from the weary travellers as they beheld at last the long-sought poles and wires connecting Adelaide with Port Darwin. Damper and water had been their fare, but on the 30th they reached the Peake, where roast beef and plum pudding awaited them. Here they rested until the 4th of October, receiving many telegrams of congratulation.

Although my space is limited, I cannot refrain from putting on record Mr. Forrest's testimony regarding the brave men who accompanied him on this arduous journey. He writes as follows:—

“ I have a very pleasant duty :—To record my thorough appreciation of the services of my companions. To my brother, Mr. Alexander Forrest, I am especially indebted for his assistance and advice on many occasions, also for his indomitable energy and perseverance. Every service entrusted to him was admirably carried out. He never disappointed me. When absent for a week, I knew to a few minutes when we should meet again. Whether horses or loads had to be abandoned, it mattered not to him. He always carried out the service; and I attribute much of the success to being supported by such an able and hopeful second-in-command. In addition to this, he bestowed much care on the stores of the expedition, collected all the botanical specimens, besides taking observations for laying down our route on many occasions during my absence.

“ To Tommy Windich (native) I am much indebted for his services as a bushman, and his experience generally. Accompanying me on many occasions, often in circumstances of difficulty and privation, I ever found him a good, honest companion.

“ To James Kennedy, James Sweeny and Tommy Pierre, I am thankful for the ready obedience and entire confidence they placed in me. They ever conducted themselves in a proper manner, and on no occasion uttered a single murmur.”

I need not describe the splendid and well-deserved receptions which Mr. Forrest received, both at Adelaide and at Perth, on his return to his native Colony. No one who has read my somewhat inadequate chronicle of his three superbly-conducted expeditions can fail to pay tribute to this great explorer's extraordinary ability in conducting his slender bands across the arid trackless deserts of the great Island Continent. It is little wonder that he now enjoys the honours which his Queen and his Colony have conferred upon him, and that the high qualities with which he is richly endowed, have transformed John Forrest, the humble surveyor, into the Hon. Sir John Forrest, K.C.M.G., F.R.G.S., F.G.S., first and only Premier of Western Australia.



CHAPTER XXIX.

Colonel P. Egerton Warburton's Expedition from Central Mount Stuart to Perth.

*He Fails to Reach his Destination; but is Rescued on the
Oakover River.*

AS already noted, Mr. John Forrest sent in his proposition to penetrate from Champion Bay to the Overland Telegraph Line in July, 1872. Although cordially accepted, his project was not carried out until 1874. The reason for this postponement was the departure from Adelaide of the expedition which forms the subject of the present chapter. Two patriotic South Australians, Mr. Thomas Elder and Mr. Walter W. Hughes (both of whom afterwards were knighted), had offered to defray the expenses of an expedition, to start from the neighbourhood of Central Mount Stuart, and from thence to make for Perth. It was not desirable, in the opinion of Governor Weld and others, that a Western Australian explorer should set out at the same time, partly because he might seem to be entering into competition with the South Australians, and also because advantage might be gained by waiting to note the results, and, as far as possible, profiting by their neighbours' experiences.

The command of the expedition was conferred upon Colonel P. Egerton Warburton, already referred to, who had in 1857 investigated

the country west of Torrens, and in the following year had accurately defined the shape of that terrible lake. The party consisted of his son, Mr. Richard Egerton Warburton; Mr. J. W. Lewis, surveyor; Dennis White, cook and assistant camel-man; Sahleh and Hallum, two Afghan camel-drivers; and Charley, a native boy. Their animals were four riding, twelve baggage, and one spare camel; and they carried six months' supplies. This, it must be admitted, was a splendid outfit: infinitely more costly than that of Mr. Forrest, who was constantly bemoaning his lack of camels, and, no doubt, like Mr. Giles, envying his brother explorers who were so provided. And yet, as the sequel will show, Forrest did more with his horses than did Warburton with his camels, proving, in my humble opinion, that the success of an expedition depends far more on the man than the beast of burden. Some men are, in fact, so utterly incapable, that they could scarcely cross Australia with safety in the first-class carriage of a well-appointed train.

It may here be interesting to note that in 1866 the Hon. Thomas Elder* had sent a special messenger to India in 1868, and had imported one hundred and twenty-one camels, thereby rendering invaluable service to the cause of Australian Exploration. The ships of the desert supplied to Warburton were of the one-humped species, carrying saddles formed of two longitudinal wooden battens, united by three arched hoops. The foremost hoop formed the pommel of the front seat, the middle hoop just cleared the skin of the hump, and the aftermost hoop formed a back to the hind seat; or, in other words, there were two seats, one before and behind the hump. Where only one man rode, he always occupied the hindermost seat, and seemed to be sitting upon the very croup of the animal. To soften the hollow in which he sat, he usually stuffed it with his blankets, and the stirrups hung on either side of the battens. In the front part of the saddle were carried the rider's spare clothes, boots, arms, ammunition, and so forth. So much for the appointments of a riding-camel. As to baggage animals; circumstances largely decided the manner of their loading. In lieu of a bridle, the camel is guided by means of a wooden button passed through the cartilage of the nose, to which is attached a piece of light cord, and by this simple contrivance the beast is effectually controlled. The baggage-camels are usually driven in strings

* For further particulars regarding importation of camels, &c., see Appendix.

of five, the nose-string being tied by a peculiar slip-knot to the breeching of the one in front, so that it immediately gives way in case of a stampede, otherwise the buttons would obviously be torn from the cartilage. Though, as a rule, docile and obedient, these curious animals are subject to fits of temper, and also to panics, more especially if the master-bull, who heads the herd, loses control of the others.*

It is not my intention, in briefly describing this expedition, to enter into details so fully as I was induced to do in the case of Forrest. Forrest's journey was a model one, and a brilliant success from first to last; Warburton's must, at least from one point of view, be put down as a failure, besides which it added comparatively little to the geographical knowledge of the Continent. A large portion of the journey was simply a fight for bare life, and had the explorer been supplied with horses instead of camels, the whole party must inevitably have perished. Giving the leader full credit for courage and endurance, all that can be said in favour of the enterprise is that certain negative results were attained, and if he did not discover good pastoral country, he at least found a desert, and that, perhaps, is better than nothing. An oft-repeated tale of dreary sand-ridges, clothed with spinifex, dense scrubs of dwarf eucalyptus and acacia, useless either to civilised or savage, is hardly worth recording minutely. Still, owing to the tremendous battle with Nature's obstacles which the valiant explorer fought, I shall shortly trace his course, and leave him to tell in his own words some of the most dramatic incidents of the journey, in which six months' provisions had to last nearly a year. For those who care to read the full account of the sufferings of Warburton and his party, I would refer them to his diary, published in a work entitled, "Journey Across the Western Interior of Australia" (London, 1876). It was his bad luck to take a route through inhospitable and arid country, which was, perhaps, more his misfortune than his fault.

Having left Adelaide in September, 1872, Warburton and his party

* Some of the bull-camels will carry 10 cwt., but the average is from 4 cwt. to 6 cwt., the cows averaging, as a rule, a little less. The distance travelled averages fifteen miles a day, or twenty to twenty-five when coming back without burdens. In some cases Europeans act as camel-drivers for the camel caravans, but Afghans are generally preferred, as they manage the loading, and understand the camels better than a white man could do. The distances done by some of the riding-camels in the Colonies have been very great. A *jemadah* at Beltana rode a very fast camel of Sir Thomas Elder's from Beltana to Port Augusta and back, carrying a doctor, as well as the Afghan, on the return trip, a distance of over three hundred miles, in twenty-four hours. The camels are also used by both the South Australian and Queensland police troopers.

had a journey of one thousand one hundred and twenty miles before them in order to reach the proper starting-point of the expedition. This was Alice Springs, a station on the Overland Telegraph Line, and having travelled by way of Beltana, along a track now beginning to be fairly well known, they arrived safely at their destination. Having rested and made various final preparations, all was ready for a start by the 15th April, 1873. Tropical rains had detained them, or they would have set out several weeks earlier. Their route for two days was due north, still on the Telegraph Line, until Burt Creek was reached, when they struck out west. Their course at first lay about one degree south of Central Mount Stuart, and Warburton's first object was to seek for the Hugh and Finke Rivers, in the neighbourhood of the McDonnell Ranges. Having failed to find either of these streams, he shaped his course in a N.W. direction. For some distance they travelled over fairly good country, but only too soon their troubles commenced. Water, of course, was needed in great abundance for a troop of seventeen camels, and this difficulty beset the party from the beginning to the close of their eventful journey. The country as they advanced proved to be a barren waste, and through having to retreat again and again to former encampments, the distance covered was much increased. No less than three times had they to cross the boundary line between South and Western Australia, before they were enabled to make permanent progress. On some rare occasions a thunder-storm came to the rescue, but, on the whole, the clouds were ungenerous to a degree. After meeting with a few pools among the ranges, and finding occasional native wells, on the 9th of May a deep glen was discovered, in which was a plentiful supply of water, shaded by basalt rocks rising to the height of three hundred feet. Here the weary band rested for a few days, and then pushed on ahead. Again they found themselves in wretched sandy tracts, covered with the horrible spinifex, and the attendant sufferings for man and beast re-commenced. At length, on the 22nd of May they reached a fine creek, the head of which was running. They had met with nothing like it hitherto, and Warburton determined on forming a camp, and there remaining until by flying trips ahead another adequate supply of water could be found. Accordingly, he and two companions set forth, and having discovered some native wells, the main body was moved up. Thenceforward, their position became

more and more critical, until at Waterloo Wells they had to halt for a whole month, when one of the Afghan drivers nearly died of scurvy. To make matters worse, four of their camels broke loose, and although tracked for about a hundred miles, the chase had to be abandoned. They were never again seen, and must have died in the desert. Although the explorers had now travelled about one thousand seven hundred miles, they had made but little real progress. After a frightful experience of spinifex ridges and undulating sandy plains, they again found some native wells on the 12th of August. On the 17th they reached a point which Warburton reckoned to be some twelve miles distant from the most southern point reached by Mr. A. C. Gregory in 1856. Having ascended a hill, the Colonel hoped to see Termination Lake, into which Sturt's Creek empties itself. A range of sandhills intercepted his view, however; but having taken observations, he concluded that he had connected his own survey with Mr. Gregory's northern discoveries. Toiling on to the westward, on the 30th a lake was discovered, abounding in water-fowl. The water was fresh, and several birds were shot. Here they halted for a time, but their slender store of provisions made either advance or retreat imperative. To their credit be it said, the latter alternative was not even suggested, although I cannot but think that such a course would have been justified by necessity, if not dictated by common sense.

A few natives were met with from time to time, and the Colonel's opinion of the blacks almost exactly coincides with that of the famous Captain Dampier* regarding the "Poor Winking People of New Holland," in 1688. "They are," the Colonel says, "the very lowest in the scale of humanity, and I cannot conceive how anything could fall much lower. They do not even take the trouble to put a few bushes up to shelter themselves from the sun, or the rain—when it does rain, though I don't know when, for I didn't see it—but the sun is hot enough. They go on the shady side of a bush when the sun is too hot for them, and when it rains I suppose they go to the lee side. The gentlemen take the shank-bone, about nine inches long, of the wallaby, a kind of marsupial hare, and when it is lubricated nicely in the mouth, they pass it through the cartilage of the nose, and it sticks out; and having done this they are in full dress. I do not know anything more that is wanted. Of

* See *Discovery of Australia*, by Albert F. Calvert, page 40.

the ladies' dress I say nothing, and for this simple reason, that there is nothing at all to say anything about."

September found the party amidst interminable stretches of sand-ridges, which had to be crossed at an angle, thus inflicting extra labour on the camels. Had these hillocks been entirely devoid of vegetation, the animals must, of course, have perished, but though water was apparently absent, various trees and shrubs existed—chiefly acacias—upon which these invaluable beasts could browse. On the 15th the bull-camel became violently ill, and was dosed with a whole bottle of Colman's mustard, while others were struck in the loins by the night wind and died.

The explorers were rapidly nearing their last extremity, through lack of water. Sickness assailed almost all the party, and the scouting work fell to the lot of Lewis and the black boy, Charley. Wonderful to relate, on the 9th of October the camels came to the rescue. Their masters could not find water, and the strange creatures went straying on their own account in search of what they needed. Instinct led them to a water-hole, and a new lease of life was thus given to the wretched men. At this well they were obliged to slaughter one of these most precious beasts to satisfy the terrible hunger which was upon them. For three weeks they remained here, and it became evident that any attempt to reach Perth meant certain death. It was therefore resolved to steer northwards, and as a last resource strive to reach the head of the Oakover River, a distance which Warburton estimated at about one hundred and fifty miles. The forlorn band started on the 4th of November, and by a happy chance Charley came upon native tracks, which led them to another well. Again they set out, Lewis and Charley going on in front, the rest following as best they could. Despair now seized upon Warburton, as the words of his diary indicate.

He writes :—" We killed our last meat on the 20th of October ; a large bull-camel has therefore fed us for three weeks. It must be remembered that we have no flour, tea or sugar, neither have we an atom of salt, so we cannot salt our meat. We are seven in all, and are living entirely upon sun-dried slips of meat, which are as tasteless and innutritious as a piece of dead bark. . . . We are hemmed in on every side ; every trail we make fails, and I can now only hope that some one or more of the party may reach water sooner or later. As for myself, I can see no hope of life,

for I cannot hold up without food and water. I have given Lewis written instructions to justify his leaving me should I die, and have made such arrangements as I can for the preservation of my journal and maps.* My party are in such a state that unless it please God to save us we cannot live more than twenty-four hours. We are at our last drop of water, and the smallest bit of dried meat chokes me.† I fear my son must share my fate, as he refuses to leave me. God have mercy upon us, for we are brought very low, and by the time death reaches us we shall not regret exchanging our present misery for that state in which the weary are at rest. We have tried to do our duty, and have been disappointed in all our expectations. I have been in excellent health during the whole journey, and am so still, being merely worn out from want of food and water. Let no self reproaches afflict any respecting me. I undertook this journey for the benefit of my family, and I was quite equal to it under all the circumstances that could be reasonably anticipated; but difficulties and losses have come upon us so thickly for the last few months, that we have not been able to move. Then our provisions are gone; but this would not have stopped us could we have found water without such laborious search. The country is terrible."

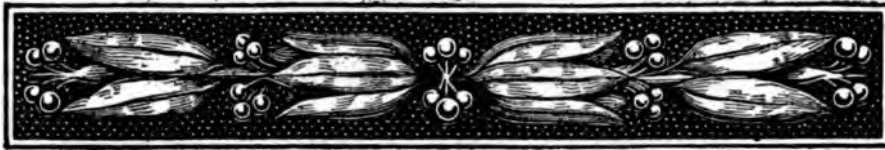
As already stated, Lewis and Charley were the only members of the party who had sufficient strength left to make the necessary reconnoitring trips ahead. On the 14th of November the latter returned to his unfortunate comrades, bearing a bag of water. In obtaining this, the faithful guide was almost murdered by a gang of blacks, who were camping near a native well, having received two spear wounds and a blow from a *waddy*. He was rescued, however, and the party camped at the well. It was now decided that Lewis and one of the Afghans should endeavour to reach the Oakover, and they accordingly started on the 19th of the month. In dire distress the others waited, having well-nigh abandoned hope. On the 25th the advanced party returned, Lewis having found the head of the Oakover, and here they moved their camp on the 5th December. The creek was a tributary of the river, and was well supplied with water. They now believed themselves to be within two or three days journey of the De Grey Cattle Station, belonging to Messrs. Grant,

* Warburton's letter from the camp on the Oakover to the Hon. Thomas Elder will be found in the Appendix.
† Colonel Warburton's opinion on camel meat, &c., as given in a speech before the Royal Geographical Society, will be found in the Appendix.

Harper and Anderson; and Lewis went forward to implore immediate aid, carrying a letter from the leader. The actual distance was, however, no less than one hundred and seventy miles, which meant a delay of over three weeks. Warburton came to the conclusion that the station had been abandoned, and resigned himself to his fate. While in this mood, and practically a dying man, the black gave a shout from a tree which he had climbed, and to the amazement of the Colonel and his comrades, a relief party, with horses, were close to their camp. Thus on the 29th of December was Warburton and his little band of heroes providentially saved.* As I have stated, the results were meagre, and from an explorer's point of view the expedition was a failure. Still, as another record of undaunted courage and indomitable perseverance, Warburton's unfortunate camel expedition will ever remain a conspicuous landmark in the history of Australian Exploration.

* For extract from Colonel Warburton's speech before the Royal Geographical Society, see Appendix.





CHAPTER XXX.

*Mr. Ernest Giles' First Expedition from the Overland Telegraph
Line, South Australia, to the Sources of the Murchison,
Western Australia.
He Fails to Attain his Object.*

ERNEST GILES, Fellow and Gold Medallist of the Royal Geographical Society, is the son of William and Elizabeth Giles, and was born at Bristol, England. Having received his education at Christ's Hospital, in London, he sailed to South Australia, to which Colony his father had previously emigrated. He joined the gold rush to Victoria in 1852, and afterwards obtained a clerkship in the Melbourne County Court. Being of an adventurous disposition, he resigned his post, attached himself to an expedition, and made several exploring trips in Queensland.

It was not until August, 1872, that this explorer conducted an exploratory enterprise on his own account. His object was to push across the Continent upon the South Australian Trans-Continental Telegraph Line, to the settled districts of Western Australia. The chief expense was borne by Baron Von Mueller; while Giles himself, Mr. G. D. Gill, and also a young gentleman named Samuel Carmichael, who joined the explorer, contributed towards the outfit. Accompanied by Mr. Carmichael and a black boy, he started for Chambers' Pillar on the 4th of August, having previously despatched the bulk of the stores to the Peake. He

reached the latter place in due course, re-shod his horses, and engaged another hand—Alec Robinson by name. They then continued their journey, minus Dick, the black boy, who insisted on leaving them, being terrified at the prospect of meeting wild natives. He had been with Giles for some three years, and had received school instruction at Kew, near Melbourne. Teamsters, bushmen, shepherds, and others, had, it seems, played upon his fears somewhat after this fashion :—“ By G——, young fellow, just you look out when you get *outside* ! The wild black will b——y soon cook you. They’ll kill *you* first you know—they *will* like to cut out your kidney fat ! They’ll sneak on yer when yer goes out after the horses ; then they’ll have yer and eat yer.” A repetition of such-like terrible prognostications determined Dick to go back with a bullock team, which they met, and there was no use trying to dissuade him. On the 4th of August the little band reached Charlotte Waters Telegraph Station—the last outpost of civilisation. Here Giles endeavoured, without success, to engage another man, their small party now only consisting of three, and a small Scotch terrier dog. On the 12th they again advanced, and, having thrice crossed the Finke River, they reached Chambers’ Pillar on the 22nd. “ There it stands,” the traveller writes, “ a vast monument of the geological periods that must have elapsed since the mountain ridge, of which it was formerly a part, was washed by the action of old ocean’s waves, into mere sandhills at its feet. The stone is so friable that names can be cut in it to almost any depth with a pocket knife ; so loose indeed is it, that one almost feels alarmed lest it should fall while he is scratching at its base. In a small orifice or chamber of the pillar I discovered an opossum asleep, the first I had seen in this part of the country.”

They proceeded along the course of the Finke, after fording the stream to avoid its many windings, and, passing over red sandhill country covered with porcupine grass, reached and named Christopher’s Pinnacle and Chandler’s Range. It was now the 28th of August, and when they encamped for the night the dog “ Monkey ” barked furiously, and soon afterwards two blacks appeared. All the information they would give consisted of the word *Larapinta*, which referred to the Finke River—the word signifying a snake—and was thus applied, owing to the serpentine windings of this strange watercourse. Next day they pushed on, and again halted on the river bank. The weather was intensely hot during

the day, and the *triodia* spines very troublesome. At night the thermometer fell to 24° , and an observation by the stars showed their latitude to be $24^{\circ} 25'$.

Heavy rains heralded the month of September, rendering it impossible to follow the flooded Finke through a gorge in the hills. They therefore struck out to the W.N.W., in order to strike a gap in the northern range. On their way they came on a watercourse named Rudall's Creek. On the night of the 10th September they found themselves almost under the tropic line, the latitude being $23^{\circ} 29'$, and here they discovered and named Carmichael's Creek. As yet no break had occurred in the ranges, through a gorge of which the Finke flowed seventy miles behind them. But whatever promising country may have lain behind the mountains, the explorers were quite unable to find a gap or pass through which their horses could be taken. Next day it was discovered that the animals had been left without hobbles over night, and had wandered away. Robinson secured six, and Giles three, the latter meeting with a ludicrous but painful accident. While passing over some hills he slipped down a gully, and fell into a frightful patch of coarse spinifex. He tells us that he was pricked from head to foot, the spiny points breaking off and causing great pain for days afterwards. Having again lost some horses, Giles this time remained in camp, while Carmichael and Robinson went in search of them. While making a hobble-peg the wood slipped, and the blade of the knife went through the top and nail of his third finger, afterwards sticking in the end of his thumb, clearly proving that "misfortunes never come singly."

Water became very scarce, and the horses began to be in much distress. Fortunately in the evening they discovered a series of rocky basins, which contained enough for all wants, and next morning the holes were found to have been refilled from a tiny stream which trickled through the crevices of the rocks. "I trust," writes Giles, "the water will remain until I return from these dismal looking mountains to the west. I made another search during the morning for more water, and I can only conclude that this water was permitted by Providence to remain here in this lonely spot, for my especial benefit, for no more rain had fallen here than at any of the other hills in the neighbourhood, nor is this one any higher or different from the others which I visited, except that this one

had a little water and all the rest none. In gratitude, therefore, to this hill, I have called it Mount Udor." A gum-tree here was marked

E.G.

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this being the 21st camp from Chambers' Pillar—in latitude $23^{\circ} 14'$, and longitude $130^{\circ} 55'$. Giles, taking a spare horse, now went off by himself to explore some ranges to the westward, and after considerable fatigue, failing to find water, arrived back at the camp on the 30th September. He now resolved to retreat. Here are his words:—"To-morrow I am off; it is useless to remain in a region such as this. But where shall I go next? The creek I had last got water in might even now be dry." He determined to try, however, to reach it further down its channel, and accordingly the travellers steered in a S.S.E. direction. On the 1st of October they discovered that one of their mares had foaled. The little colt was too young to walk, and had to be killed—the dam, "looking the picture of misery," accompanying the party. Forty miles were traversed over open country, (the vegetation of which was similar to that of the Darling River) without finding water, and the disconsolate mare having broken down, had to be abandoned among the sandhills. Having camped without water, next day the animals could scarcely walk, through being over two days and nights without drinking. At length, when almost in despair, the leader came upon a small rock tarn, from which men and beasts obtained an abundant supply. They remained at this spot a few days to recruit, and meanwhile retraced their steps to the sandhills, in order to bring the mare up to this oasis, if perchance she had survived. She was just alive, and barely able to swallow the water they brought with them; but after drinking she revived somewhat, and was driven to the camp. Some very curious caves were discovered in the rocks adjoining—here and there on their walls were strange devices, the human hand being represented both by black and red processes. Giles tells us that the drawing is executed by filling the mouth with charcoal powder if the colour is to be black; if red, with red ochre powder. Then the wall is damped where the mark is to be left, and the palm of the hand placed against it with the fingers stretched out. The powder is then blown against the hand, and when withdrawn, the space occupied by the hand and fingers is left clean. Snakes were likewise represented, but here the

stencil system is exchanged for a higher style of art, in which some sort of pigment is used.

On the 7th of October they again started, exploring to the westward, and had to travel one hundred and twenty miles before getting any water, which they only reached by returning to the oasis which they had left. Giles goes into raptures and quotes poetry over this charming spot, which he called Glen Edith:

On the 11th, with fresh horses, the leader and Carmichael started in a southerly direction, and discovered Laurie's Creek, the course of which lay through a plain of from six thousand to ten thousand acres of fine grass land, which was called the Vale of Tempe. It was now decided to shift their camp from Glen Edith to this spot. Having accomplished this, Robinson was left with the terrier to guard the camp, while Giles and Carmichael started off to visit a high mountain seen in the distance. They took an easterly route, over desolate sandy scrub, and having climbed a hill, no water was to be seen. They procured sufficient for the horses by digging, during which operation they were surrounded with large and small red hornets, and also diamond birds (*Amadina*), all anxious to drink. Regarding the former, Mr. Giles remarks—"With reference to the hornets, though they swarmed round our heads and faces in clouds, no one was ever stung by them, nature and instinct informing them that we were their friends." Soon afterwards, the two explorers had a miserable experience in a horrible salt marsh, and feared that their horses would be altogether swallowed up in the quagmire, which prevented them from reaching the high mountain they had come to examine. This mountain he named Mount Olga, and the salt marsh Lake Amadeus, "in honour," he says, "of two enlightened royal patrons of science." Their horses were very weak from struggling through the morass on an insufficient supply of water, and it was with difficulty that they reached the tank which they had dug the day before. So slowly did the fluid percolate through the sand, that it was midnight before the creatures were satisfied. Giles pays a tribute to these noble animals to the following effect:—"What wonderful creatures horses are! They can work for two or three days, and go three nights without water; but they can go for ever without sleep. It is true that they do sleep, but equally true that they can go without sleep. If I took my choice of

all creation for a beast to guard and give me warning while I slept, I would select the horse; for he is the most sleepless creature Nature has made. Horses seem to know this, for if you should by chance catch one asleep, he seems very indignant either with you or himself." Space will not allow me to comment on the foregoing statement, for which Mr. Ernest Giles must be held responsible.

Further travel to the south brought them again to the northern margin of Lake Amadeus, and on the southern shore could be seen some hills, which were named McNicol's Range, after which they had sixty-five miles to travel from the "lone, unhallowed shore of this pernicious sea"—as Giles calls it—to their little tank. Thirsty, tired and hungry, they encamped, after having travelled twenty-eight miles with the thermometer 103° in the shade. At early dawn they were in the saddle, their horses being in a pitiable condition. Thirty-six miles still divided them from known water, and that was in very limited quantity. At length they reached the glen, their horses having travelled one hundred and thirty-one miles without a drink. After drinking, two of the animals were seriously ill, and fell on the ground groaning and kicking. They were unfit to move next day, so they rested, and Giles wrote his notes. The valley where they found water was named Glen Thirsty, and the entrance to it Worrill's Pass. The former designation was surely selected on rather an ungrateful *lucus a non lucendo* principle, for the glen supplied them with the wherewithal to quench their thirst.

They had now been absent from the Vale of Tempe for ten days, although they had only taken supplies for a week with them, which were completely exhausted. Starting early from Glen Thirsty, they reached the camp about five p.m. Robinson reported all well, excepting two horses that were disabled. On the 30th October, the leader and Carmichael started again, travelling in a S.E. direction, and encamped at night on a beautifully grassed watercourse, which was named King's Creek, and the N.W. point of a neighbouring range was called Carmichael's Crag. Following along its southern face, a deep, pellucid watercourse, into which a stream ran from the rocky fissures, was named Penny's Creek. Another of much larger size was discovered eighteen miles further on, and got the name of Stokes' Creek. After the luxury of a swim in one of the rocky basins, they continued along the range,

reaching two watercourses consecutively, which were named respectively Bagot's and Trickett's Creeks. The entire range from whence these creeks sprang, Giles named in compliment to his brother-in-law and supporter, George Gill's Range. It is over forty miles in length, and the country at its foot is richly covered with vegetation and well watered.

At sixty-five miles from the depôt, Petermann's Creek was discovered, which Giles believed would lead to the Finke River, and they now turned back towards the Vale of Tempe. Giles' object in travelling so far east was to find, if possible, a safe route whereby Alec Robinson might return, so that, having one less to feed, he and Carmichael might prosecute their investigations further afield. On the 5th of November they reached the Vale of Tempe, after some unimportant adventures with the natives. The leader's intention was to reach and cross Mount Olga, where he had great hopes of finding good country to the westward. Hence his anxiety to get rid of Robinson, who was more or less of an encumbrance, and seems to have had a specially hearty appetite. They therefore pushed to the eastward, with the view of starting him on his journey home. Having again reached Stokes' Creek, they encamped at the rock-hole where they had bathed. After supper that evening, Mr. Carmichael suddenly put an end to Giles' plans by declaring that he had had enough of exploration in the meantime, and that he would return with Robinson to civilised parts. "Of course," writes the disconcerted leader, "I could not control him; he was a volunteer, and had contributed towards the expenses of the expedition. We had not fallen out, and I thought he was as ardent as I was, so his resolve came upon me as a complete surprise. My arguments were all in vain; in vain I showed how, with the stock of provisions we had, we might keep the field for months. I even offered to retreat to the Finke, so that we should not have such arduous work for want of water, but it was all useless." Again and again Giles renewed his arguments and persuasions, but had eventually to abandon the project of going westward, although he had several horses heavily loaded with provisions. On the 8th of November they moved eastward, exchanging but few words, until they reached the Levi Range about midday; and in the evening they encamped without water. Leaving the other two with the animals, Giles went forward alone, and after great difficulty managed to get a few mouthfuls of muddy liquid. He was

subsequently attacked and pursued by a tribe of blacks, and only escaped through the fleetness of his horse, West Australian.* The place was appropriately named Escape Glen. Starting early in the morning, eagerly desirous for water, after two miles they came upon a dry creek, in which were two large ponds, where Carmichael and Robinson caught several fish with hook and line. Here they halted, and named the locality Middleton's Pass and Fish Ponds. Following up the creek to the S.E., a number of friendly natives were met with, and the gorge between two hills, through which the watercourse went, was christened Rogers' Pass. After this, they discovered and named Seymour's Range, Mount Ormerod and Mount Quin, finding several water-holes near the latter hill. Travelling through Briscoe's Pass, through which ran the Palmer Creek, in a N.E. direction, they found that it terminated in the Finke River. The expedition was now at an end. Giles had failed in his object, which was to penetrate to the sources of the Murchison River, but the explorer cannot well be blamed. On the 21st of November they reached the Telegraph Line at the junction of the Finke and Hugh Rivers. Soon after, on arriving at Charlotte Waters Telegraph Station, in latitude $25^{\circ} 55'$, and longitude 135° , the leader, who had sent Carmichael and Robinson on ahead, met Colonel Warburton and his son, with whom he was acquainted. These gentlemen informed him that they were about to undertake an exploring expedition to Western Australia for Sir Thomas Elder and Captain Walter Hughes; and also that a South Australian expedition was just in advance of them under Mr. William C. Gosse. This was rather depressing news to the disappointed explorer, but he was not to be beaten, and having telegraphed to his friend and patron, Baron von Mueller, he revolved in his mind future schemes of exploration, which he vowed would be crowned with success.

* This animal must not be confounded with West Australian who won the Derby in 1853!





CHAPTER XXXI.

Mr. Ernest Giles' Second Attempt to Cross from the Overland Telegraph Line to Western Australia.

BY the joint efforts of that enthusiastic and generous promoter of exploration—Baron von Mueller, and Giles himself—another fund was raised, to which several wealthy Victorians subscribed. The South Australian Government contributed £250, regarding which Giles remarks, “My poverty, and not my will consented to accept so mean a gift.” During his first expedition he had travelled only about three hundred miles from his starting point, and although defeated in his main object, he had certainly discovered large areas of permanently watered fertile country. Having reached Adelaide in January, 1873, he persuaded his old schoolfellow, William Henry Tietkins, to join him as second-in-command. He also engaged a man named James Andrews, and having bought a four-wheel trap, with several horses, the three explorers left Adelaide early in March. They drove up to Port Augusta, at the head of Spencer's Gulf, buying other horses on their way, and fitted them with pack-saddles, which they carried in the waggon. Stores were sent up by team to the Peake. Reaching Beltana, Giles met his black boy Dick, who offered to accompany him, and was accepted, but the rascal bolted on reaching the Gregory River. At Mr. Bagot's Cattle Station a young man, named Alf. Gibson, tendered his services. “Can

you shoe ; can you ride ; can you starve ; can you go without water ; and are you afraid of being speared by the blacks ?" was the short but somewhat stiff *viva voce* examination which he had to pass. He declared he could do everything mentioned, cared nothing for the blacks, and was forthwith engaged.

They now got horses shod, extra shoes fitted, and everything ready for the road. The party consisted of four members, viz. :—The leader, W. H. Tietkins, Alf. Gibson, James Andrews (Jimmy) ; and they had twenty pack, four riding horses, and two little dogs. Giles decided to start from a spot known as Ross's Water-hole, in the Alberga Creek, one of the chief tributaries of the Finke—in latitude $27^{\circ} 8'$, and longitude $135^{\circ} 45'$. They set out on Monday, the 4th of August, 1873, and having ascended the creek for some distance, they camped in an old telegraph hut. Next day, after a thorough drenching from a rain storm, they reached Hamilton Creek. Two dusky lads of the soil here turned up, and were very objectionable, until the guns were discharged for cleaning purposes, when they promptly disappeared. The party then advanced up the Hamilton, and reached some hills, which were called Anthony's Range. They had passed through some splendid country, covered with vegetation, and could see ranges some forty miles to the W.N.W., separated from them by a region of scrub and spinifex. This they entered, and Jimmy, who had been a sailor, was sent up a tree to report on the proximity of the main creek. He said it lay a mile to the N., in which direction they were marching ; but after travelling two miles they found that he was mistaken. Mr. Tietkins fortunately discovered enough water for the horses, having explored during the night in the neighbourhood. Still pushing on, hills were sighted to the N.W., and called Ayers Range, and they camped at a rocky plain, which was named the Turtle Back. Next day, with three horses, Mr. Tietkins and the leader started for Ayers Range, which lay to the westward. Having reached and crossed this chain, they named Mounts Reynolds, Barrow, Cavenagh, and Sir Henry, and afterwards—the whole party having reunited at a creek—they camped with plenty of wood, water and grass. It was now the 30th of August, being Mr. Tietkins' twenty-ninth birthday, in honour of which the stream was named Tietkins' Birthday Creek. The two leaders again went ahead, named Mount Conner, and sighted some fine inviting hills to the south, which were

called the Everard Range. Having climbed a high mountain, Giles discovered that his barometer had got broken in the ascent. Here he showed himself to be a man of resource; for, by noting that water boiled at 206°, he was able to calculate that the hill rose 3,085 feet above sea level, and 1,200 feet above the surrounding country. Having christened this peak Mount Carnarvon, they returned to the camp, and found that Jimmy and Alf had shot some parrots and other birds.

On the 4th of September Giles had been a month in the field, and so far had met with success. They were now in a magnificent region, and at the head of a large watercourse, which trended to the southward, and ran through a long glen in that direction. The stream and the valley were called Ferdinand Creek and Glen Ferdinand. Having camped here, two mountains were discovered, and named Mounts Ferdinand and James Winter. These finely-grassed and well-watered districts were populated with natives to rather an uncomfortable extent. A large body suddenly were encountered by Giles and his friend, and were with difficulty dispersed, but no one being hurt on either side. The travellers found it prudent, however, to shift their camp, and in the meantime to leave this splendid tract of country to the rightful owners. Advancing to the W.N.W., the Currie and Levinger Creeks were found and named, after which more watercourses were crossed, flowing through a soil covered with a carpet of rich grass, with abundance of purple vetches, thousands of acres in extent. Fairies' Glen was named, and here the narrator—overcome by his feelings—waxes sentimental to the following effect:—
“No creature of the human race could view these scenes with apathy or dislike, nor would any sentient being part with such a patrimony, at any price but that of blood. But the Great Designer of the Universe, in the long past periods of Creation, permitted a *fiat* to be recorded that the beings whom it was his pleasure in the first instance to place amidst these lovely scenes must eventually be swept from the face of the earth. . . . On me, perchance the eternal obloquy of the execution of God's doom may rest, for being the first to lead the way with prying eye and trespassing foot into regions so fair and so remote; but being guiltless alike in act or intention to shed the blood of any human creature, I must accept it without a sigh.” Mount Oberon was here named after the King of the Fairies, and Titania's Spring, which bubbled up in Moffatt's Creek,

after his Queen. Still traversing these lovely scenes of fertility, Mount Olga came into view, bearing north west. Again they camped in a fair romantic spot, grass and water existing in copious abundance.

Next day they started N.W., towards Mount Olga, a chain of hills which they had named the Musgrave Range still running westward. Fraser's Wells were reached, Mount Olga still being fifty miles away to the north. At length they arrived at its base, and saw the tracks of Gosse's waggons, horses and camels. Giles found it impossible to scale Mount Olga, its sides being nearly perpendicular. Describing it, he writes:—"The appearance of Mount Olga from this camp is truly wonderful. It displayed to our astonished eyes rounded cupolas, giant minarets and monstrous domes. There they have stood, as huge memorials of the ancient times of earth, for ages—countless æons of ages since its Creation first had birth. The rocks are smoothed with the attrition of the alchemy of years. Time, the old, the dim magician, has ineffectually laboured here, although with all the powers of ocean at his command. Mount Olga has remained as it was born, doubtless by the agency of sub-marine commotion of former days, before even the epoch of far back history's phantom dream." After this flowery rhapsody, the explorer makes known the common-place fact that its latitude is $25^{\circ} 20'$, and longitude $130^{\circ} 57'$.

The 22nd of September found the travellers in a waterless district, the horses suffering severely. Fortunately a creek was discovered, and some fine rock basins, into which they plunged their weary frames. By the 28th they were on Gosse's dray track, and it could be seen that the horses smelt camels in the distance. On the 5th of November, after passing over splendid country, having encamped at Fort Mueller, Gosse's track was noticed going eastward, so there was now no hope of meeting his party, which was evidently returning to South Australia. By the 14th of October they had travelled some six hundred miles from the starting point, and halted in a valley for horse-shoeing, mending saddles, and general repairs—the place being named, in consequence, Shoeing Camp. Here they rested till the 18th. A few days afterwards they killed a wretched pack-horse, which was on the last verge of its existence, and found its flesh almost uneatable. Water now failed them, and to add to their distress, Jimmy accidentally set fire to the spinifex, and it

was only by the utmost exertion that their belongings were saved from destruction.

On the 9th of November Giles resolved on starting westward *alone*. Having hidden some eighteen gallons of water in a leathern bag up a tree, he rode some twenty-five miles the first day, and came upon a water-hole, which was choked up with dead animals, and in a putrid condition. Pushing on westward in the hope of finding water, he was unsuccessful, and found himself ninety miles from the camp, and fifty from where he had secreted the water-bag. He therefore turned back, and with difficulty reached the cache, and eventually the camp forty miles further east. By the 17th November they had perforce to make for Fort Mueller, their water being exhausted. Having reached this spot they departed for the Shoeing Camp on the 24th November, and having arrived there were almost devoured by ants. They left it on the 4th of December, camping a few miles off. By the 10th they reached Lightning Rock, when the leader felt symptoms of fever, and afterwards Gibson fell ill—so ill that the leader thought he would die—and, referring to his subsequent fate, he remarks, “Would to God he had died there!” By the 17th they were all fit to move on. Nothing of special importance occurred until Christmas Day, when, ignoring the injunction of “Peace on earth,” the aboriginals became so threatening that only discharges of firearms dispersed them. Gibson shot a wallaby for dinner, to which were added fried chops, in honour of the festival. The medical department also supplied a bottle of rum, and—although for some reason or other—they had eaten their Christmas pudding two days before—they thoroughly enjoyed themselves, with the thermometer 106° in the shade. Mr. Tietkins sang some ballads in a fine deep clear voice; Gibson obliged with several love songs, and then came Jimmy’s turn. He chose “Paddy Brennan,” being the adventures of a gentleman who was a highwayman in the Limerick mountains, and whose wild career was exciting in the extreme.

The New Year opened, and found the travellers still advancing, sometimes terribly harassed for lack of water, but on the whole singularly favoured in that respect. On the 14th of January, 1874, they were attacked fiercely by a band of blacks, but they were repulsed without bloodshed. On the 16th they left Fort Mueller, and again plunged into

the northern desert. By the end of January, after tedious travel, they reached the Rawlinson Range, stretching between the 24th and 25th parallels of latitude, and 127th and 128th meridians of longitude. Having made several excursions westward for some days, they rested at the Gorge of Tarns, and on the 18th of February, Giles met with a somewhat serious accident. He was riding a colt called Diaway, and having fallen off, his foot caught in the stirrup. He says in his narrative:—"It is one of the most horrible positions that the mind can well imagine—being dragged by a horse. In this case Diaway, finding me attached to him, began to lash out his newly-shod heels, bounding at the same time into a scrub thicket close by. Fortunately I was not dragged far, but was literally kicked from, and by, the frightened and uncontrolled animal. These continual kickings at length bent one or two of the nail heads which held me, and tearing the upper leather off my boot, ripped it off, leaving me free."

On the 20th of February, taking Jimmy and three horses, Giles journeyed to the S.W., and had a frightful experience among sandhills covered with spinifex, and quite devoid of water. With difficulty he retraced his steps to Marble Bar, where they could get water. They reached the depôt after a week's absence, and Giles got his first sound sleep since he left. Having travelled along the slopes of the Rawlinson Range, they found that it terminated in a peak, which was called Mount Russell; and further eastward they discovered a strangely-shaped hill, called Gill's Pinnacle, after Giles' brother-in-law. Here was also found a fine rocky basin full of fresh water, which was named Gordon Springs. Passing over poor scrubby ground, the dry bed of the Rebecca Creek was crossed, and Mount Sargood named. A chain of hills from the S.W. was called the Peterman Range. No water was found here, and they had to camp without it, in a hot, stifling atmosphere. Next morning they struck some strange ponds, some salt, some putrid, and some drinkable, although tasting of ammonia. They were called McBane's Springs. Blood's Range was sighted in the distance, to the N.E., from the summit of a high hill called Mount Curdie. As they travelled along the Livingstone Pass they suddenly surprised some natives hunting, who rushed off with frantic yells, collected their tribe, and followed the explorers. Having attacked them with flights of spears, the travellers had to resort to their

revolvers, which drove them off for the time being. Having advanced a few miles, the explorers were eating their midday meal, when the enemy again attacked them with augmented numbers. Again they were driven off by a few shots, and left about a hundred spears on the ground, which the white men smashed, and then finished their dinner. They had now come one hundred and thirty miles from their camp at Sladen Water, and again saw Mount Olga looming in the distance, bearing nearly due east. At a spot which they named Glen Robertson they retraced their route. They were soon again threatened by blacks, but took the simple method of mounting and outdistancing their pursuers, who actually followed the horses for some three miles. They reached their camp on the 19th of March, to the great relief of their two companions, who thought they must have perished, though they were only about ten days absent. On the 25th it was decided to kill one of the horses for food. His name was Terrible Billy, and he was found to be terribly tough. The smoke caused by curing his flesh attracted the natives, who were this time friendly for a change, and were much astonished at the two operations of smoking a pipe and firing a revolver.

The party steered for Fort McKellar on the 7th of April, and reached it two days afterwards. Giles and Gibson then pushed out west to a creek and tarn, where they had found water in January, called the Circus. The water was much diminished, and would not last more than another fortnight or so. Gibson and Tietkins made another trip on the further side of the range, but brought back no satisfactory news. Nevertheless, Giles was determined to travel another hundred miles to the westward, and informed his companions of his resolve on the 19th April. How any sane man with Giles' experience could have seriously contemplated so foolish and purposeless an exploit it is hard to surmise. All the surrounding circumstances were against him, and should have convinced him of the fatality and danger of such an attempt. The weather was hot and oppressive, their whole supplies amounted to a few pounds of flour and some smoked horse, while their ammunition was exhausted. Gibson volunteered for the trip, complaining that he was always left in the camp, and unfortunately it was agreed that he should accompany the leader.

They set out on the 20th of April, 1874, taking a week's supply of

smoked horse, two riding and two pack-horses, the latter to carry water. At twenty miles' distance the Circus was reached, where they encamped for the night. Next day water-bags and kegs were filled, and they rode forward, Giles ominously remarking to Gibson that this day was the anniversary of Burke and Wills' return to Cooper's Creek. After conversing on their fate, Gibson observed, "How is it that in all these exploring expeditions a lot of people die?" Giles responded, "I don't know, Gibson, how it is; but there are many dangers in exploring, besides accidents and attacks from the natives, that may at any time cause the death of some of the people engaged in it. But I believe that want of judgment, or knowledge, or courage, in individuals, often brought about their deaths. Death, however, is a thing that must occur to everyone sooner or later." To the latter somewhat trite and familiar observation Gibson replied, "Well, I shouldn't like to die in this part of the country, anyhow." To this remark attaches a sad interest in the light of subsequent events.

That day they made a stage of forty miles, and Giles discovered that they had not brought more than one-half a week's allowance of dried flesh. He had depended on Gibson's packing and calculation, an incredible and inexcusable piece of neglect on the leader's part. They camped without water, and were feasted on by ravenous ants. Next day they gave the two pack-horses a few pints of water each, and drove them back a mile, so that they might find their way back to the Circus. The two remaining horses were given all the water that remained in the two large water-bags, and the two five-gallon kegs of water they hung in the branches of a tree. This place they called The Kegs, and they had left it behind twenty miles when they halted on the 22nd. That night Giles' mare, Fair Maid, set her teeth in a small water-bag which had been placed in a tree, and forced the cork, allowing the precious contents to escape, so that they had only a pint or two left. They were now ninety miles from the Circus, and one hundred and ten from Port McKellar. Some ridges were visible in the distance, which Giles determined on reaching; and having with difficulty attained his object, saw a view which he believed indicated a change of country. Hills to the west were visible about thirty miles away, and the intervening valley seemed well timbered. "Oh, how ardently I longed for a camel!" cries the

helpless Giles in his diary. "How ardently I gazed upon the scene! At this moment I would even my jewel eternal* have sold for power to span the gulf which lay between! But it could not be, situated as I was, compelled to retreat—of course, with the intention of coming again with a larger supply of water—the sooner I retreated the better." The distant hills were called the Alfred and Marie Range, in honour of the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, and the travellers turned their faces eastward. They were in a critical position, for Gibson's horse refused to move further, and after being driven a mile without its rider, fell down and died. When thirty miles from The Kegs both travellers were on foot, speechless with thirst, and possessing only a pint of water. They each took a few gulps, thus finishing the supply, and when Giles could speak he said, "Look here, Gibson, you see we are in a most terrible fix, with only one horse, therefore only one can ride, and one must remain behind. I shall remain; and now listen to me. If the mare does not get water soon she will die. Therefore ride right on. Get to The Kegs if possible to-night, and give her water. Now the cob is dead, there will be all the more for her. Let her rest for an hour or two, and then get over a few more miles by morning, so that early to-morrow you will sight the Rawlinson at twenty-five miles from The Kegs. Stick to the tracks, and never leave them. Leave as much water in one keg for me as you can afford, after watering the mare and filling up your own bags; and remember, I depend upon you to bring me relief. Rouse Mr. Tietkins, get fresh horses and more water-bags, and return as soon as you possibly can. I shall, of course, endeavour to get down the tracks also. . . . I sent one final shout after him to stick to the tracks, to which he replied 'All right,' and the mare carried him out of sight almost immediately. That was the last ever seen of Gibson."

Giles had traversed the long thirty miles by noon on the 24th, and found that Gibson had watered his horse at The Kegs, leaving about two gallons. The leader's position was still perilous in the extreme. He was sixty miles from water, eighty from food, and his comrades could not reach him before six days. Then the cask was the only vessel in which he could carry water, and it weighed forty-five pounds with its precious

* The explorer's meaning is here a little nebulous. Although Richard III. was said to have offered his kingdom for a horse, we can scarcely conceive Mr. Giles exchanging his immortal soul for a camel.

contents. Worse than all, he had only about a pound of dry horseflesh left, his sole supply of food. Bending under a weight of about fifty pounds, Giles staggered on his way in a half-conscious state. At fifteen miles from The Kegs he noted that the tracks of the two loose horses, which had been sent back on their own account, had left the main trail, which ran east and west, and had diverged in an E.S.E. direction. To his dismay, he also observed that the footprints of his own mare, Fair Maid, had taken the latter direction. He felt sure, however, that Gibson would find out his mistake, and return ere too late. After an agonising journey through *triodia* as high as himself, the spines of which pierced him from head to foot, tortured by ants at night, weak with hunger, and parched with thirst, Giles found himself twenty miles from the Circus with an empty keg. How he covered the distance is a mystery to himself, but at dawn, after tramping all night, he reached the water, thankful indeed to have escaped from the very jaws of death in the desert. He had still twenty miles to travel, footsore and famished with hunger as he was. The following words from his narrative indicate his ravenous state:—
“Just as I got clear of the banks of the creek I heard a faint squeak, and immediately caught a small dying wallaby, whose marsupial mother had evidently thrown from her pouch. It only weighed about two ounces, and was scarcely furnished yet with fur. The instant I saw it, like an eagle I pounced upon it, and *ate it living, raw, dying—fur, skin, bones, skull and all.* The delicious taste of that creature I shall never forget. I only wished I had its mother and father to serve in the same way!” Who shall say that man is not a carnivorous animal after that revelation? Before dawn on the 1st of May, Giles reached the Gorge of Tarns, where he refreshed himself with water, and staggered into the camp at Fort McKellar just as the sun rose. He received a warm welcome, and after he had refreshed himself and rested, every effort was made to trace the unfortunate Gibson, even at the risk of their lives. He was never found, and the wilderness into which the unhappy man strayed, and where he must have breathed his last, was named Gibson’s Desert.

On the 21st May they left Fort McKellar, on their return journey, another horse having been killed, and its flesh smoked. No mishap or incident of special interest marked their progress, and on the 10th of July they exchanged their diet of tough horseflesh for a splendid meal of fat

corned beef, with mustard, also damper, butter, and jam ; all washed down with grog. Their host was Mr. Alfred Frost, a contractor for Government Telegraph Stations, whom they met with his teams at Crown Point when they were travelling down the Finke. Charlotte Waters was reached on the 13th of the month, thus terminating this expedition, after an absence of nearly a year. Although the main object of his long journey was not yet accomplished, it cannot be denied that Mr. Giles had opened up new and valuable tracts of country, and discharged his onerous duties as far as was possible without a larger equipment and the aid of camels ; the latter condition being, in his opinion, a *sine qua non* of such a journey. As will appear in a succeeding chapter, he shortly afterwards obtained camels, and achieved his purpose with brilliant success.





CHAPTER XXXII.

*Mr. Ernest Giles visits Fowler's Bay; after which, he conducts his
Third Expedition from Port Augusta to Perth.*

SO far having won his spurs, the chief desire of Giles was to complete the work of exploration which he had so well, and so economically, commenced. He pinned his faith on camels, and to his infinite satisfaction the beneficent Mr. Thomas Elder, the only large camel-owner in Australia, offered to supply these beasts of burden, and to send the explorer out in command of a thoroughly efficient expedition. His line of route was to lie as far as possible along the 29th parallel of latitude, and thence through the southern interior to the city of Perth. Before starting, however, Mr. Elder commissioned Giles to make certain investigations in the neighbourhood of Fowler's Bay, near the head of the Great Australian Bight. Horses alone were engaged on this work; because, although they had with them three camels, a bull, a cow, and a calf, the cow was in very poor condition, and the bull was unprovided with a pack-saddle. The surveys at Fowler's Bay having been accomplished, Giles made a trip to Eucla Harbour, on the boundary of South and Western Australia. He had then to proceed to Beltana, where Sir Thomas had a station and camel depôt, and here the main expedition was to receive its final equipment. Fowler's Bay lies four hundred and fifty miles N.N.W. from Adelaide; Beltana, about three hundred and seventy five miles from the bay, and four hundred and fifty miles N. from

Adelaide. Nevertheless, owing to divergences, and the interposition of Lake Torrens, the explorer had to travel about seven hundred miles—for the most part across unknown territory.

About a hundred and thirty miles to the N.N.W. there was said to be a native watering place called Youldeh, and Giles decided to make for this spot, after which his object was to steer eastwards for Beltana; thus to find a good travelling route by which to bring his camels westward, a month or so hence. On the 13th of March, 1875, the expedition left Fowler's Bay. In addition to the leader, there were Mr. Charles Roberts, the second-in-command; Mr. Thomas Richards, police-trooper; Mr. George Murray, and Peter Nicholls, who acted as cook. There were likewise "Jimmy"—an old black man—and two young native boys. They arrived, without adventure, at a charming spot called Pidinga, covered with flowering shrubs and green grass. Water was also abundant, and, as the weather was intensely hot, they erected tarpaulins and rested in the shade. Youldeh lay about thirty-three miles N.N.W., and was reached without difficulty. The heat here was almost unendurable, and the old well was dug out by some of the party, whilst others erected an awning. Youldeh was found to be a most disagreeable place at the bottom of a sandy funnel, the ants, flies, and heat being simply intolerable. Jimmy, who was known to Richards as a man of superior abilities and most honourable character, was consulted as to the watering places to the eastward. Making a sort of chart on the sand, he mentioned the following names:—Chimpering, Pylebung, Mowling, Whitegin, and Whynbring. The last named was the most distant, and was said to be a mountain, a water-hole, a lake, a spring, and a well, all in one. It was about "six sleeps," which was interpreted to mean one hundred and twenty miles. Beyond this combination halting-place, Jimmy knew nothing of the country. The result of this information was that Giles decided to send all the party back to Fowler's Bay, retaining one white man and the old native. He likewise intended to take three horses and the camels. I have already mentioned that the bull had been sent from Adelaide minus a pack-saddle. To remedy this deficiency Giles, assisted by Richards, constructed one, the iron saddle-trees of which turned out to be too weak, and thereby causing much pain to the animal, and annoyance to the explorer.

Having selected Peter Nicholls to accompany him, the leader bade farewell to the others, who started for the bay, while he and his small cavalcade steered eastwards. Nicholls rode the female camel, Giles and Jimmy having a horse each, the third horse carrying a load of water. Being unaccustomed to camels, the leader at first began to think that he had rather overrated their advantages. Nicholls had a dreadful time of it with the old cow, who sometimes refused to budge; then if he beat her, she would lie down, yell, spit and roll over in a most perplexing fashion. The bull behaved rather better, but the calf getting frisky, entangled itself in his mother's nose-rope, and dragged the button clean through the cartilage of her nostrils. This caused the poor creature much pain, and rendered her even more unmanageable. At Chimpering, some thirty miles from Youldeh, there were only a few buckets of dirty water, and having left it twenty-eight miles behind, Jimmy announced that at this spot Pylebung *ought* to be. There was no water visible, however—a wretched state of affairs after traversing a frightful country of dense scrubs, parched with thirst, and boiled with heat. Giles and Nicholls having lain down, it was noticed that Jimmy was absent. They thought he had absconded, but were agreeably surprised when the old fellow appeared, exclaiming:—“Big one, watta, watta; watta go that way, go this way.” They followed him with horses and camels over the moon-lit sandhills, until they saw, upon a piece of open ground, a large white glistening clay-pan, and upon this was an object something like the wall of an old house or a ruined chimney. It was found to be a circular wall or dam of clay, nearly five feet high, with a segment open to the south for the admission and retention of rain water. It contained only sufficient water to last a couple of days. This dam, constructed by the natives, is one of those very rare works of skill applied to building a storage of water to be found among the aborigines. It lies fifty-eight miles S.E. of Youldeh, in latitude 30° 43'. The next watering-place, Mowling, was found to be dry, after a journey of seventeen miles through scrubby sandhills. Whitegin was ten miles further east, and this rocky basin yielded only enough water for three horses. On the 31st of March they were on their way to Whynbring, having travelled some twenty-eight miles in a N.E. course from the last station. At ten in the forenoon, after another fourteen miles march, Jimmy pointed out a round bare mass of stone. In this

there was certainly a water-hole which held an ample supply for present requirements, but it by no means answered to the old guide's glowing description. Still it was an agreeable little oasis, with good feed for the animals. The rock and basin were in latitude $32^{\circ} 32'$, and this formed the limit of Jimmy's geographical knowledge. The old man strongly objected to travelling any further, and suggested a return to Fowler's Bay, which of course was out of the question.

The nearest *known* water on the route was now the Hon. Thomas Elder's station, at Finnis Springs, under the Hermit Hill, and distant about two hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies. A mountain was visible to the S.E., however, and Giles resolved to visit it on chance. Accordingly, on the 2nd of April, they turned their backs on Whynbring Rock, taking with them about fifty gallons of water. Giles rode a horse called Chester, Nicholls another called Formby, and Jimmy an old black beast, which bore no name. After a miserable experience over endless steep sandhills, they camped without water on the night of the 2nd, and had great trouble with the camels. Next day they reached the mountain, which lay about forty-five miles from Whynbring. It was quite destitute of water, and was named Mount Finke. At sixty-five miles from the last station they had to abandon Jimmy's anonymous old nag, on chance of his recovering and following them up, which, as he was very ill, he never did. Still advancing eastward, they passed through an awful region of salt lagoons, and had come one hundred and twenty miles from water. The old black was aghast at the terrible prospect, but Nicholls kept up his spirits. They now began to appreciate the camels, which were much more manageable. The poor creatures had laboured over the sandhills laden with water for men and horses, although they got none themselves. Giles remarks in his narrative:—"Whenever the horses were given any water we had to tie up the camels at some distance. The expression in these animals' eyes when they saw the horses drinking was extraordinary. They seemed to say, 'You give those useless little pigmies the water that cannot save them, and you deny it to us, who have carried it, and will yet be your only saviours in the end!'"

Giles had now to decide whether to advance or retreat. Although nearer in a straight line, they would have to travel some two hundred miles to reach Finnis Springs. The other alternative was to return one

hundred and twenty miles to Whyndring. To advance seemed to the leader their best course, and so they pushed on through dismal tracts of sandy, waterless scrub. At one hundred and fifty miles from Whyndring, the horse Chester fell, and as he was dying from thirst, was shot where he lay. Eighteen more miles were covered, when Formby, the other horse, breathed his last, and now they appreciated the wonderful powers of the patient, enduring camels. They pushed on with about three pints of water, which lasted them till the eighth day after leaving Whyndring, and brought them within one hundred miles of Finnis Springs. Old Jimmy was nearly dead, Nicholls was almost crazy, and their last drop was finished, when they came on a miniature lake-bed, in which was a supply of yellow water. This was indeed a God-send, and saved their lives. Having rounded the northern extremity of Lake Torrens, on the evening of the third day afterwards they fell in with two black fellows and their *lubras* shepherding Mr. Angas' sheep on Stuart's Creek station, and having encamped with them, were hospitably treated. Next day at dusk they reached the Finnis Springs. Having here obtained a couple of horses for himself and Nicholls, they started for Beltana, one hundred and forty miles east of south, from which the great Perth expedition was to start at the earliest possible date.

No time was lost at Beltana in getting the cavalcade into working order, and on the 6th of May, 1875, a start was made for Port Augusta, at the head of Spencer's Gulf, where most of the equipment and stores had been forwarded from Adelaide by Sir Thomas Elder. Mr. Giles was on this occasion accompanied by his former companion and second-in-command, Mr. William Henry Tietkins; Mr. Jesse Young, a young friend of the promoter, just arrived from England; Mr. Alec Ross, who with his father had endeavoured to bridge the desert in 1874; Peter Nicholls; Saleh, the Afghan camel-driver; and, for a short distance, another Afghan, Coogee Mahomet by name; also old Jimmy, who had suffered severely from influenza at Beltana, and was now to return to the bosom of his family. They arrived at Port Augusta without accidents, the leader having various disagreements with the Orientals, regarding what he considered their cruel treatment of the camels. Coogee remarked sarcastically on one occasion, when a dispute arose as to watering the animals, "Ah, Mr. Gile, you very smart master, you very clever man, only

you don't know camel. You'll see you'll kill all Mr. Elder's camels; you'll no get to Perth; you and all your party, and all your camel die. You'll see, you'll see. You no give poor camel water, camel he die, then where you be?" Giles was rather annoyed at this tirade, and replied, "You stupid ass, it was only yesterday you said you could take camels three hundred, four hundred, five hundred miles without water and with heavy loads; and now they have no loads, and we have only come about seventy miles, you say they will die if I don't give them water. How is it that all your countrymen continually brag of what camels can do, and yet when they have been only three days without water, you begin to cry out that they want it?" Before they arrived at Port Augusta we need not be surprised to learn that Coogee Mahomet's services were dispensed with. Having reached the Port, it took a week to load, re-arrange pack-saddles, &c. Before they had completed these operations, Mr. Charles Roberts, with whom Giles had parted at Youldah, made his appearance, and brought with him a young black boy called Tommy Oldham, who was glad to make one of the party travelling west.

They started from Port Augusta on the 23rd of May, 1875, with fifteen baggage and seven riding camels, the former carrying an average load of 550 lbs. each. By the 30th they reached the Elizabeth, having taken a northern course to the westward of Lake Torrens, and having camped for two days, came to a well, which Mr. Moseley, a squatter, had recently sunk, on the 6th June. Coondambo clay pans next gave them water, close to the northern shore of Lake Gairdner. The next known water was Whynbring, at a distance of about one hundred and seventy miles, but having left Coondambo on the 8th, they found a small supply in rocky basins on the 12th. Three days afterwards they came on Giles' former track eastward, and could see the summit of Mount Finke, which they had named in passing. On the 16th, a little rain-water was found, and they halted. Next morning two of the camels were found to be poisoned, through eating the leaves of the *Gyrostemon* tree,* but their lives were saved, although they were afflicted with spasmodic staggerings for several days afterwards. Forty-five miles from Whynbring, they camped near Mount Finke, the weather being much cooler than when on the eastward journey.

* Baron von Mueller thought that Giles was mistaken regarding this, and that it must have been a plant of the *Euphorbiaceæ* family which poisoned the camels.

On the 22nd of June, they came to Whyning, where they stayed a few days, and again left this pleasant oasis behind them on the 26th. Jimmy now became a very important member of the cavalcade, and, sharing a camel with Tommy, rode at the head of the troop. He assured Giles that he could guide the expedition to several watering places on a more northerly route, and enumerated on his fingers:—Taloreh, Edoleh, Cudye, Yanderby, Mobing, Bring, Poothraba—all on the way to Youldeh. The leader placed the party in the guide's hands, and sure enough, with unerring instinct, each place was found in the order named. The party reached the neighbourhood of Youldeh on the 5th of July. Giles and Tietkins rode on ahead, and instead of the red sandhills scorching the feet, as was the case in March, the surface now glittered with hoar frost in the shade, the thermometer having fallen to 28° Fahrenheit. Mr. Young, Saleh, and the others, came up some hours afterwards, and another arrival made its appearance in the form of a camel calf, the offspring of Jimmy's steed. We are told the youngster was no bigger than a *cat*, which seems strange; however, Mr. Giles, who christened her Youldeh, after her birthplace, says so, and he ought to know.

Giles had now business which necessitated a visit to Fowler's Bay. He therefore deputed Messrs. Tietkins, Young, and Tommy to explore northwards for another suitable depôt; while he went south accompanied by Alec Ross and Jimmy, who was soon to rejoin his family circle. Both parties started on the 9th, and the old black in high spirits promised Giles his daughter Mary, and Peter Nicholls was to have Jenny. On the 12th, however, on reaching Colona they heard that an epidemic had broken out, and both daughters had died in his absence. The poor black's grief was profound, and he refused to be comforted, even with presents for his wife. Tommy's father also fell a victim to the scourge; but his undutiful son seemed rather glad than otherwise. Having returned to Youldeh on the 26th, the explorer was well satisfied with what his two officers had done in his absence. A new depôt, named Ooldabinna, had been discovered ninety-two miles north, 20° west from Youldeh; and another native well ten miles nearer. Giles resolved to make for the former, and with nineteen camels (three had been consigned to Mr. Armstrong at Fowler's Bay) and eight months' provisions, they left the depôt on the 27th of July. After a somewhat slow and fatiguing journey of five and-

a-half days, Ooldabinna came in view—being a picturesque open space among the scrub, dotted over with mulga trees. There was no more water in the rock-holes than would last for a week, and the same two officers were directed to push further north, while Giles himself went west in search of a better supply.

On the 4th of August, Tietkins and Young, taking two riding camels and one for baggage, started northwards, being supplied with thirty gallons of water and ten days' provisions. At the same time, Giles, Ross, and Saleh set out westward with three riding and three pack animals, two of the latter carrying thirty gallons of water, and the third being loaded with rugs, provisions, and other gear. Peter Nicholls and Tommy were left in charge of the camp. Giles' party travelled one hundred and fifty-six miles from Ooldabinna before finding any water, and then only a limited quantity was found in a small native clay-pan. Next morning they discovered, to their dismay, that the camels had decamped during the night. In consequence of the splendid herbage in the oasis, they had been *long-hobbled*; hence they could travel at least as fast as a man on foot, and of course a hundred times as far. By singular good luck, however, they had not put forth their full powers of speed, and were overtaken by Alec Ross to the inexpressible relief of the leader. "Death itself," he writes somewhat hyperbolically, "in any terrors clad, would have been a more welcome sight to me than Alec Ross without the camels." One would have expected him to retreat, but it was the invariable practice of this explorer to take the very last ounce out of both himself and his animals. Hence, westward they still advanced to latitude $29^{\circ} 15'$, and longitude $128^{\circ} 3'$, being one hundred and five miles from the depôt. Returning to the clay-pan, which was called Boundary Dam, they camped on the 16th of August; and thereafter steered S.E., in order to see how far to the north the Great Southern Plain extended. This vast area, well grassed with spinifex or timber, known in Western Australia as Hampton Plains, Giles estimates to measure five to six hundred miles in length by about two hundred in breadth. On the 22nd of August, they camped fifteen miles from Ooldabinna at noon, and reached the depôt towards evening, finding barely sufficient water in the wells to satisfy the camels. Fortunately, some rain fell, which partly filled the holes, and enabled them to

replenish their vessels, so that for the time they were fairly well supplied. Tietkins and Young had returned some days before the leader got back, and their report was anything but cheering. They had travelled north to within a hundred miles of Musgrave Ranges, and had fallen in with natives, but could not find water, nor elicit any information as to its whereabouts.

Giles now determined to push westward, towards Boundary Dam. Here he felt confident of finding a certain amount of water, and was content to trust to Providence for a further supply as they advanced. Having collected every drop of water possible, with heavily loaded camels, they started on the 24th of August. Nothing of consequence occurred, and on the sixth night a welcome rain fell. Another of their camels calved—both mother and calf losing their lives in the operation. On the 3rd of September the dam was reached, and was found to be full to overflowing, containing, as it did, some six feet of water. This was a very beautiful oasis, covered with green grass and luxuriant herbage, with magenta coloured vetches, scarlet desert peas, and many leguminous plants, in which the hearts of the camels delighted. In order to recruit the camels, and to enable another to calve in comfort, they remained a week at this charming spot. I may be in error, but cannot help wondering that females were taken out long journeys in such a condition. It seems not only a cruel proceeding, but is surely contrary to the most approved methods of camel management. His future movements were now a matter of very serious thought to the leader. Surrounded with dark dreary scrub, they were in an utterly unknown region, and had, humanly speaking, nothing whatever but chance to guide their steps towards the occasional dam or watercourse upon which their very existence depended. He desired to make for Mount Churchman—so named by Augustus Churchman Gregory in 1846—where he expected to find water, although he had no record of its presence. This hill was at least six hundred and fifty miles away, so that if no water was found in the meantime they must inevitably perish. Personally, Giles had registered a mental oath to reach Perth or die in the attempt. To this effect he informed his company, and gave them the option of taking camels and rations, and returning, if so minded, either by Fowler's Bay or Eucla. He clearly explained to them that they were in probably the worst desert on earth, but that there would

be all the more glory in conquering it. Infected with their leader's enthusiasm, they one and all agreed to push forward, and dare all consequences. Accordingly, on the 10th of September they set out from Boundary Dam, full of sanguine hopes that watering place and propitious geographical features would reward their progress. After a few days of dense scrub they came upon a boundless open plain, which rolled before them in endless waterless undulations, and in its sad, silent desolation seemed even worse than the hideous scrub they had left behind. Totally destitute of inhabitant, either man or brute, was this wilderness into which they had come, and they were now one hundred and ninety miles from the nearest known water to the eastward. Still they pushed on, and on the eleventh day the plains ceased, and they re-entered scrub thickets, consisting of *mallee casuarinas*, sandal wood and *quandong* trees. After travelling two hundred and forty-two miles from water, some of the party wished to sacrifice the worst of the camels; but Giles declined to listen to such a proposal, and that day distributed eighty gallons—or little over four gallons each—among the thirsty animals. It certainly must have seemed like parting with one's life's blood under such circumstances. On Saturday, the 25th of September, they were about five hundred miles west of Youldeh, and Mr. Young was in advance, steering. He kept very close under the sun, and it being now so near the equinox, the orb of day set nearly west. Their course being 21° south of west, Giles went forward, and told him he was off his course. "He became indignant," writes the leader, "and saying 'Perhaps you'll steer, then, if you don't think I can,' he handed me the compass. I took it in silence, and steered more southerly. I mention this, as a circumstance hangs on it. The fate of empires has hung upon a thread, and our fate now hung upon my action. We had come three hundred and twenty-three miles without having seen a drop of water." Later on Tietkins was steering, and told Tommy to ride on to the top of a sandhill, to the southward, and report. Soon after the black boy came dashing through the scrub, having urged his riding-camel to its utmost speed. In a wild state of excitement he yelled out, "Water! Water! Plenty of water here! Come on! Come on! This way, come on! Mr. Giles find 'em plenty water." On being asked if it was a native well, which would have to be dug out, he answered, "No fear shovel; that fellow water sits down itself along a

ground. Camel he drink 'em himself." The long string of thirsty beasts was forthwith turned towards the sandhill, from which could be seen an oval space of grass land at the distance of about half-a-mile, surrounded entirely with pine trees. A small pond, about one hundred and fifty yards in circumference, and three feet deep, lay in the centre of a grassy flat, with a bottom of impervious clay, and no doubt it was permanent, being supplied by the drainings of the sandhills round about. Inexpressible was their thankfulness and joy thus to have struck water after three hundred and twenty-five miles of dry arid desert. It was, moreover, a most providential combination of circumstances which undoubtedly saved their lives. Had Young, as already recorded, steered correctly the day before they would have had this oasis on their course, and had his inaccurate guidance not been noticed and corrected, they would have missed it by more than two miles with a long sandhill intervening. Then, again, if Mr. Tietkins had not sent Tommy to reconnoitre, they would have probably missed this liquid treasure, which was hidden from view by a clump of trees. Overwhelmed with gratitude and relief, Giles honoured this desert and the oasis with the name of his Sovereign, calling them respectively Great Victoria Desert, and Queen Victoria Spring. The position of the latter is latitude $30^{\circ} 25' 30''$, and longitude $123^{\circ} 21' 13''$, but it would prove a most difficult place to find, if any traveller should be possessed with a desire to do so.

They rested and refreshed at the spring till the 6th of October, having arrived on the 26th of September; and had now to travel at least three hundred miles to Mount Churchman. Scrubs, sand-hills, and salt marshes, made their line of travel arduous in the extreme, and on the evening of the 11th they were completely hemmed in by briny swamps in which their camels got bogged, giving the explorers great toil and anxiety. On the 13th of October, having advanced two hundred miles to the westward of Queen Victoria's Spring, Tommy discovered a small native well, the first water they had seen. Soon afterwards he came across a fine large water-hole, and summoned the rest of the party. The blacks turned up here at first to the number of eight, and seemed to be amicably disposed. It was evident, however, that they had seen (if not eaten) white people before. On the 15th, Mr. Young elicited from them that the name of this oasis was Ulárring—with the accent on the second syllable. Wisely,

Mr. Giles remarks:—"It is a great relief to my mind to get it, as it saved me the invidious task of selecting only one name by which to call the place from the list of my numerous friends." Mr. Young also identified this delightful spot by cutting the leader's initials and the date upon a grevillea or beef-wood tree, thus—

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Nothing could have been more friendly than the behaviour of the blacks up till the evening of the 16th of October. Two of their number, who were anxious to accompany the party westwards, were sitting in the camp, and supper was just finished, when suddenly Mr. Young gave the alarm. He had noticed two natives making signs to their countrymen who were with us, and immediately afterwards could be seen a numerous body of warriors, painted, feathered, and armed to the teeth, with spears, clubs, boomerangs, and so forth. The whites had just time to seize their arms and fire a volley upon the enemy, who numbered about one hundred. One of the would-be guides actually attacked Giles, seizing him by the throat to prevent him firing. Frightened by the fire-arms, however, the blacks wavered and retreated, leaving a great number of spears and other weapons, which were destroyed by the explorers.

On the 18th they left Ulárring, which is situated in latitude $29^{\circ} 35'$ and longitude $120^{\circ} 31'$. Scrubs, rocks, and salt lakes impeded their progress; and, having reached a well on Sunday, the 22nd, they rested from their toil. Next day a calf-camel was born, which was only the size of a rabbit.* Owing to the number of pigeons, the place was named Pigeon Rocks, the latitude being $29^{\circ} 58'$. They left here on the 24th, and on the following evening, from the top of a cliff, could be seen Mount Churchman, at a distance of some thirty miles. So dense, however, were the thickets of intervening scrubs, that it was not until the morning of the 27th that Giles ascended this hill, where a native well was found. On the 3rd November, they turned southwards, and came to a sheep-station next day. Here they were supplied with an ample meal of mutton, while a black boy was sent to a neighbouring farm for coffee,

† The fact of one calf being dead, another the size of a cat, while the third was only as big as a rabbit, seems to show that the mothers should not have been used for exploring purposes.—Ed.

butter, eggs, and other luxuries. Arriving at New Norcia where they received a hearty welcome, Giles found a number of congratulatory telegrams awaiting him. On the 13th Mr. Phillips' station at Culham was reached, where they got their first glimpse of a white woman. At Newcastle and Guildford they were warmly welcomed, and sumptuously entertained. Eventually, having crossed the long wooden causeway which bridged the Swan River, outside Perth, they were received by the Mayor and City Council at the Town Hall, on the 18th November, 1875. Thus was concluded a long and skilfully conducted journey, of about two thousand five hundred miles, during which much valuable knowledge was gained, although the desolate waste through which Mr. Giles forced his way does not afford any large areas of country suitable for settlement. But this was not the explorer's fault; to him, of necessity, fell the duty of examining and reporting on the territory as he found it. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the easier the task, and the finer the land found, so much the more honour and glory falls to the share of the lucky explorer.





CHAPTER XXXIII.

Expeditions of Mr. William Hann to North Queensland.

Mr. W. C. Gosse's attempt to cross from Alice Springs to Perth; and

Mr. Ernest Giles' Journey from Perth to Beltana.

KENNEDY'S fatal venture in 1848, up the eastern slope of the long peninsula which terminates in Cape York, has already been recorded, and we have seen how the Jardine Brothers in 1864 accomplished a dashing trip to Somerset, a new settlement, situated close to the scene of the former explorer's murder. Neither of these expeditions gave much encouragement to the Queensland Government towards organising further exploratory enterprise. The discovery of gold in North Queensland, however, had the effect of stimulating the authorities to further efforts, since it was strongly suspected that the southern portion of the promontory just referred to, contained the precious metal in great abundance. An exploring party was accordingly equipped early in 1872, and placed under the leadership of Mr. William Hann, an old-time squatter of North Queensland. Accompanying the leader was Mr. Taylor, as geologist; Dr. Tate, as botanist; and Mr. Warner, as surveyor, with several others; and the party started from a station on Fossilbrook Creek. Their main object was to investigate the country as far north as the 14th parallel of latitude, chiefly with a view to its mineral resources, and especially to search for gold.

The explorers soon found themselves in a rough and repellent region, but certain auriferous signs being apparent, several days were spent in prospecting operations, which proved abortive. They then turned their faces towards the north, and on their advance came to a fine river, which was called the Tate. The Walsh River was found and named four days later, and from this stream they pushed on to the upper reaches of the Mitchell. Subsequently, they reached a creek already discovered by Kennedy, but not named. They called it the Palmer, and in this neighbourhood Mr. Warner found unmistakable indications of gold. Further investigation verified his report, and afterwards the Palmer Goldfields developed into one of the world's great auriferous areas. The Kendal Creek was reached further north, and here tracks of cattle were visible, being probably the progeny of some which had strayed from the Jardines' herd. The 14th parallel was reached on the 1st of September, 1872, and thereafter they scaled the range which divided the eastern from the western waters. On the 8th they came in sight of Princess Charlotte's Bay, an inlet of the Coral Sea.

They now steered on a southern route, found and christened the Normanby River, being attacked by a tribe of armed natives. The latter were scared by the reports of the firearms, however, and fled without damage on either side. On the 21st of September one of the best horses died of poison on the Endeavour River, and the leader found himself entangled in the same impenetrable thickets, rocks, crags and ravines which had perplexed the ill-fated Kennedy. Further advance on a southern course seemed impossible, their only alternative being to re-cross the ranges, and make for the Palmer River. On the 28th of October, after a most arduous journey, they arrived at the banks of the stream, and the entire party travelled home in safety by their outward route. This toilsome and laborious journey of William Hann was destined to bear much fruit, not only owing to the rich Palmer Goldfields which Warner discovered; but because it led to many other minor exploring expeditions, which had in special view the prospecting of the Leichardt, Lynd, Gilbert, and other rivers.

About the same time that Warburton's expedition was being fitted out by private enterprise, the Government of South Australia was organizing a similar project. Its main object was to explore the country between

the Finke River and the Port of Fremantle. The command was assigned to Mr. William Christie Gosse, afterwards Deputy Surveyor-General of the Colony. This explorer was the son of a medical man, and was born at Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire, England, in 1842. Having emigrated to South Australia with his father in 1850, he entered the Government Service at the age of seventeen, and was engaged on a trigonometrical survey in the northern districts.

The Central and Western Exploring Expedition left Alice Springs on the 23rd of April, 1873, just eight days after Warburton had started from the same place. Gosse's party consisted of five Europeans, including the leader's brother, three Afghans, and a native boy, with both camels and horses, the former having been supplied by the Hon. Thomas Elder. For a week their route lay on the track of the Overland Telegraph Line, after which they struck out to the westward. They soon found themselves in a waterless district, and endured much suffering. One of their horses died on the 14th of May, after a fifty-two hours' excursion without water. Landor Creek was discovered and a depôt formed, water having been obtained by digging, and after much scouting in various directions, Warburton Creek was found, and named after the gallant colonel. To this watercourse the main body was shifted, and similar tactics resumed of making short trips ahead in search of water. Early in June they came upon traces of Warburton, and they camped at the base of Mount Leibig, the westernmost peak of the McDonnell Range. From here they pushed on to Glen Edith, discovered and named by Ernest Giles, and in this neighbourhood they were lucky enough to find three bullocks, which had evidently strayed from Alice Springs. A long, fatiguing reconnoitring trip was now made, the leader travelling nearly ninety miles S.W. from a depôt which was formed at King's Creek. His route lay over endless sand ridges covered with spinifex, and his only notable discovery was an enormous mass of limestone rising abruptly from the plain. Its base was well supplied with water, and the place was evidently much frequented by the natives, who had decorated several of the cavities with strange devices. Having named this gigantic adamantine hill, Ayers Rock*—after Sir Henry Ayers, Premier of South Australia—on the 20th of July Mr. Gosse returned to the main depôt, crossing a portion of Lake Amadeus

* See Appendix for Gosse's description of Ayers Rock.

en route. The main body were now moved on to Ayers Rock. Rain soon after fell in abundance, and the leader was enabled to push to the westward. Skirmish Hill was reached, depôt No. 13 formed, and a bullock killed and jerked. A large white gum tree (found by Sir John Forrest the following year) was marked

G. O. S.

13.

Having discovered and named the Barrow Ranges, after the Treasurer of South Australia, Gosse formed his fourteenth and last depôt in a range which was named after the Hon. Wentworth Cavenagh, Commissioner of Public Works during the Ayers Ministry. The explorer was now fairly entangled in the terrible sandhill region, and he became convinced that to advance further would be perilous in the extreme. He had reached a point represented by $129^{\circ} 59'$ east longitude, from which he reluctantly turned his steps eastward on the 22nd September. His homeward route was past the Musgrave Ranges, and having discovered a river, which he named the Alberga, he travelled down its banks to within a short distance of his starting-point on the Telegraph Line, which he reached in the month of December. Although he failed in his main object, it must be admitted that this explorer did his work conscientiously and well. He laid down accurately many of the places discovered by Giles, who was in the field about the same time as Gosse, although the pioneers did not meet; and he discovered several ranges, streams and large tracts of country suitable for pastoral and agricultural occupation. Finally, it may be mentioned to his credit that, although he did not spare himself, he exposed the men under his command to no undue risks, and brought them back in safety to Adelaide. In recognition of his services, he received the appointment of Deputy Surveyor-General in 1875, but died after a comparatively short tenure of office, on the 12th of August, 1881, at the early age of thirty-nine years.

I now return to Mr. Ernest Giles and his party, whom we left eating, drinking and making merry in the hospitable city of Perth. Assuredly this intrepid band of explorers well deserved rest and refreshment after their long and dangerous march, and the sound of welcoming voices must have been doubly sweet, after the death-like stillness which reigns among the arid sandy stretches of the great Victoria desert. For two months

they resided at Perth, and fully appreciated their sumptuous fare after the scanty diet of the wilderness. Champagne, we are told, flowed so freely as to get the name of "Elder wine," in honour of Giles' liberal patron, who was knighted in 1878. The leader, with Messrs. Tietkins and Young, were quartered at the Weld Club, while the others were housed at the United Service Club Hotel. Saleh was in his glory, wearing silks and satins, with a ring on every finger, besides sporting no less than two silver watches and a jockey whip in each hand. His popularity was, of course, due to his having the custody of the camels, combined with his picturesque Oriental appearance. Tommy became "Mr. Oldham" (just like "Mr. Thomas Atkins when the band begins to play"), and made himself most agreeable among the drinking bars; while Alec Ross and Peter Nicholls assiduously devoted themselves to the fair sex. The leader observes in this connection, "I managed to escape these terrible dangers, though I can't tell how." I cannot help remarking that all through Giles' long narrative he makes constant reference to the beauty of this or that young native woman, whether married or single. Possibly his great admiration for the *dark* sex, as thus evinced, may have kept him invulnerable to the glances of their *fair* sisters. Sir Thomas Mitchell and Mr. Giles are certainly the two great exponents of the phrase, "black but comely." They seem both to have been warm admirers of the dusky damsels of the desert; but of the two, the last named explorer seems the more susceptible.

It might well have been expected that after his six months' trip Giles would disband his expedition. He had fully accomplished his object, and a voyage home by sea was his obvious course. But this insatiable explorer felt that he owed a further duty to his munificent patron, who had given him *carte blanche* as to his action. It will be remembered that in April, 1874, Giles, having pushed out west from Fort McKellar, accompanied by the ill-fated Gibson, sighted a distant chain of hills, which he called the Alfred and Marie Range. These mountains were inaccessible on that occasion to the explorer's great grief and disappointment, and his intention was now to travel northwards until a point between the 23rd and 24th parallels of latitude was reached, and then to advance eastwards to the Rawlinson Range. By so doing he would reach the range in question from the westward, and also ascertain how far

west Gibson's Desert extended. In fact, he wished to connect his horse expedition of 1874 with his present one.

Messrs. Tietkins and Young sailed for Adelaide, the former having private business which compelled him to return, and Giles tells us that he did not invite the latter to make one of his return party. On the 13th of January, 1876, the leader, Ross, Nicholls and Tommy set out on a journey of four hundred miles to the north, after which their long eastward march would begin. They had quite a triumphal progress through the intervening towns and settlements, where they were welcomed and entertained in princely style. Consequently it is not until the 10th of April that Giles' narrative informs us, "We bade farewell to our two kind friends (Messrs. Burgess and Wittenoom), the last white men we should see. We finished the champagne, and so we parted!" I need not follow their footsteps northward, over a changeful route. By the 1st of May, having passed the valley of the Gascoyne, they had reached Mount Labouchere, three thousand four hundred feet above sea-level, and on the 6th—the anniversary of their departure from Beltana—they were in a rough, hilly country, poorly supplied with water. On the 10th, they discovered a charming glen, containing a large fresh water reservoir, which was named Glen Ross, after Alec, who was now second-in-command. On the 10th of May they encamped upon the upper part of the Ashburton River, a very slight trickling stream at this point, flowing east and west; and on the 13th they arrived at a spot where three other creeks joined this river. Here they remained for thirteen days, calling the place Grand Junction Dépôt, its latitude being $24^{\circ} 6'$ and longitude 119° . A subordinate excursion northward was made from here by the leader and Ross, during which Mount Robinson and the Governor Mountain were sighted and named, in honour of the present Sir William F. C. Robinson. In painful remembrance of an agonising malady, by which Giles was rendered temporarily blind, a mountain chain was named Ophthalmia Range. Having penetrated several miles north of the Tropic of Capricorn, the leader was forced to return, having no eye-lotion with him, and sadly needing the shade and repose of the dépôt. Having turned southward on the 18th, they came to a singular valley, through which a creek flowed, so deep as almost to drown their camels. Having left Glen Camel, as they named the place, on the 22nd, with clothes, saddles and

food soaked, they arrived at the depôt next day. The thermometer was about 95° in the shade; nearly everybody had a more or less severe attack of the "blight" (the Australian for ophthalmia), and the swarms of flies were maddening. Anything was better than their miserable condition of discomfort, therefore they were not sorry to make a move on Friday, the 26th of May. Still following up the course of the Ashburton, they were surprised to find more water in the upper channels than in the lower portions, possibly owing to a local rain-fall. By the 29th they had reached the head of the river, about three hundred and fifty miles in a straight line from its mouth. Giles had now no certainty of finding water until he had reached Rawlinson Range, which lay about four hundred and fifty miles as the crow flies to the eastward, and of the intervening country he was, of course, entirely ignorant. By the 1st of June they were on the edge of the desert, and as this had to be crossed at all hazards, the party boldly faced the red sandhills of this dismal wilderness. On Monday, the 5th, having left the last water some twenty-five miles behind them, they were alarmed to discover that several of the camels had eaten some poisonous plant, and appeared to be dying. Emetics and other remedies were administered with good results, but on the 8th others were affected, and the whole country seemed covered with the *Gyrostemon*, the pendulous fringe on which dreaded poison bush gives it a horribly weird and uncanny appearance. "Once bitten, twice shy," seemed, however, to be the Bactrian motto, for when they had once suffered from its effects, the camels usually refrained from further indulgence.

On the 11th the cavalcade again moved eastward. All the camels had suffered more or less from the *Gyrostemon*, except Buzoe—an old female usually ridden by Alec Ross. In their weakened state eighteen miles was a full day's march, and they camped without water. At five miles on the following day a native well was found. This was the last water found until the 18th, when they dug a tank in a moist channel, and gave the camels the first drink for two hundred and thirty miles! Here old Buzoe paid her last debt to nature through old age and natural decay. She was one of Sir Thomas Elder's original stock, imported from India in 1861.* This watering place, which lies in latitude 24° 33' and longitude

* One cannot help thinking that this venerable matron might have been spared the fatigue of these marches through the desert.

123° 57', was named in honour of this "sheer hulk of the desert," Buzoe's Grave. After four days' travel they came in sight of the Alfred and Marie Ranges, and passed by the northern end, where a little rain water was found on the 25th of June. They rested till the 27th, and after five days' further march Rawlinson Range came in view. The next water reached was at the Circus already mentioned, where the rock-hole was full and deep. Giles had already visited this oasis on January 29th, April 9th, and 29th, 1874, and on each of these occasions he narrates having observed a solitary eagle perched on the highest peak of a bare ridge of rock. Now, on the fourth visit—after more than a year's absence—he states that "the recording eagle still was sitting immovable on his crag, Prometheus-like, apparently chained to the rock."

So far as exploration was concerned, Giles' expedition was now at an end. The hundreds of miles which still lay between the travellers and settled districts, had already been traversed, as previously related. It will, therefore be unnecessary to follow their path towards home. Suffice it to say that without misadventure they reached the Peake Telegraph Station on the 23rd of August, where they were welcomed by all the inhabitants of the place.

Having rested a few days at the Peake, their southward journey was resumed, and at Beltana Station their faithful camels were handed over to their caretakers. The Blinman Copper Mine was their next stopping place, and there the explorers were entertained to a congratulatory dinner. Then at the Burra-Burra Copper Mines they attended another banquet, and finally took the train to Adelaide. Thus ended Mr. Giles' last public expedition. In recognition of his enterprise and ability, he was awarded the Patron's Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, in addition to which the late King Victor Emanuel sent him a decoration and diploma of knighthood of the Order of the Crown of Italy.





CHAPTER XXXIV.

*Mr. Alexander Forrest's Expedition from the De Grey River
to the Overland Telegraph Line and Port Darwin.*



FIND it impossible, in common with other writers, to preserve strict chronological sequence in dealing with the numerous exploring expeditions throughout the vast area of the Australian Continent. In order, therefore, to give the following important enterprise the space to which it is entitled, I am obliged to introduce it in a chapter preceding one which contains minor journeys which were antecedent in point of time. With this explanation I proceed.

The Government of Western Australia, always foremost in the field of discovery, resolved on sending out another expedition from the De Grey River to Port Darwin. The command of the enterprise was entrusted to Mr. Alexander Forrest, already mentioned in connection with his distinguished brother, the present Premier of the Colony. The party consisted of Mr. F. Hill, second-in-command, and Messrs. John Campbell, James Carey, Matthew Forrest (another brother), and Arthur Hicks, besides the natives, Pierre and Dower. They had twenty-six horses, and provisions for six months. Having arrived at Cossack on February 3rd, 1879, after a stormy passage, horses were collected from various neighbouring settlers, and the party moved to the De Grey River Station, where final preparations were made. On the 25th they started—their first destination being Beagle Bay—after which they were bound overland

for the Telegraph Line and Port Darwin. They travelled towards the bay through a poor and inhospitable territory along the coast line, and were sorely tormented with mosquitoes of a peculiarly malignant type. Forrest thus describes their misery in his interesting journal, of which it is gratifying to find that the Library of the British Museum contains a copy.*

“ March 20th.—The mosquitoes are so troublesome that no person can sleep. They are something positively dreadful. Of a peculiar grey colour, they stand erect until filled with blood, when they generally drop dead. Their sting is very sharp, far more severe than that of the ordinary kind.” And again on the 22nd—“ At night hordes of mosquitoes again tormented us. We left the camp and sought refuge in the bush, but our enemies resolutely followed up. Some of the party even climbed trees in desperation, but even this resort proved of no avail.” Owing to heat, fatigue and thirst, their horses and men were much distressed, but at length they reached the point which marks the first stage of their wearisome journey. Forrest’s narrative runs thus:—“ April 9th.—My brother and I made a start this morning for Beagle Bay. . . . I climbed a tree and saw Beagle Bay, a short distance ahead. Two pearling boats were in the Bay, lying about two miles from the shore, and on the highest sandhill I made a fire as a signal, and discharged my rifle, but without any success in attracting the attention of the crews. After a time several natives came up who could speak broken English. They showed us some water, and we made tea, returning afterwards to the beach. The natives made several large fires to arouse the boatmen, but again in vain, so after writing a note and giving it to some of the blacks to deliver, we set off, accompanied by five of them, for the camp.” Having rested and recruited themselves and their horses, they started for the Fitzroy, following the coast line, and on the 8th of May they reached the steep banks of the “magnificent Fitzroy River,” as Forrest calls it. Their allowance of rations during their journey up its course was, for each man, $1\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of bacon, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of tea, and 3 ozs. of sugar per diem. This was supplemented, of course, by a considerable amount of game shot, and fish captured.

Having followed the Fitzroy for 240 miles, Oscar Range (named after

* Unfortunately, many of the Australian explorers’ journals, diaries, notes, maps, and charts are absent.—ED.

the King of Sweden) barred their further progress, and Forrest's diary, on the 1st June, reads as follows:—"To-morrow we bid good-bye to the Fitzroy, the longest and largest river in Western Australia. It flows through magnificent flats, which contain about four millions* (sic) of pastoral lands, and are capable of depasturing at least a million sheep, a larger number than the whole of the settled portions of the Colony now carry."

On June 6th Leopold Range was discovered, and named after King Leopold of Belgium, in recognition of the great interest taken by his Majesty in exploration, and on June the 14th another hill was named Mount Humbert, in compliment to the King of Italy. They were travelling on a northerly course, diligently and painfully searching for a pass through these towering crags, and at length found themselves imprisoned between the sea and the mountains. The gallant explorer thus describes their predicament and their heroic struggles against formidable obstacles:—

"June 18th.—This morning we had proceeded but half-a-mile, when we were suddenly brought to a standstill by perpendicular cliffs, which fell abruptly into the sea. It was difficult to decide what to do. I knew, however, that the pass seen yesterday was only about half-a-mile further on, so—telling the party to follow me—I went on ahead, and after turning and twisting through intricate gorges, and finally descending a most fearfully precipitous incline, we at last reached the pass in comparative safety. A few of the horses had fallen and somewhat injured themselves, and one was missing, which, however, Pierre and Campbell brought back after a short search. Upon reaching the pass, I fired off a volley from my revolver, in honour of a feat which will seem almost incredible to those who in future visit this place."

To aggravate Forrest's troubles, Carey became seriously ill, and his brother Matthew was the victim of a severe sunstroke. The leader and Hicks resolved to make one more attempt to surmount the barriers which had baffled them, but it was hopeless, and on June 24th he writes:—"So we gave up at last in despair, and made straight for the party, having walked fourteen miles altogether on the roughest country I ever saw." Their best course now seemed to be to return to the Fitzroy, and

* Acres, of course, are meant.—ED.

accordingly they turned their steps in this direction. On the 1st of July Forrest tasted horse-flesh for the first time, but not till a later date does he venture an opinion as to its merits.

July 8th brought them again to the banks of the Fitzroy, in latitude $17^{\circ} 51'$, at a distance of three hundred and fifty miles from the Telegraph Station; and on the 12th they reached a tributary named the Margaret, which they followed up. On the 16th they were skirting the high table range, which forced them further south than suited the leader's object. Eventually, however, they reached the summit, and saw a splendid country before them, seeming doubly charming in contrast to the miserable territory through which they had been toiling.

On the 31st of July they ate the last of their bacon, and their provisions were growing very scarce. Their latitude was now $17^{\circ} 6'$. A fine stream was discovered on August the 2nd, and named the Negri, after Commander Christopher Negri, of Turin, and afterwards they found and christened the Ord River, in compliment to the Governor of Western Australia.

Three hundred miles still separated them from the Telegraph Line, and they possessed about twenty-five days short rations, so that their position was decidedly critical. An additional misfortune was the serious illness of the two natives. That both should be taken ill at once was an extraordinary and distressing circumstance. By the 4th of the month Pierre's mind was wandering, and he could not sit on his horse. Forrest began to get much alarmed, as any delay was dangerous in the extreme.

He thus refers to their condition in his journal, under date August 4th:—"I went out this afternoon to take some angles, and instructed the party to kill one of the horses during my absence, for these continued halts to rest the sick natives make it necessary that we should eke out our scanty means of support with horse flesh. On my return I found the horse already killed and dressed, and a very sorry sight it was, most miserably poor—at the best of times a horse's carcase looks very different from that of a bullock. We could not help entertaining a feeling of sentimental regret that the poor beast which had served us so long and so faithfully should come to such an unfortunate end; but it was necessary to relieve our hunger by some means or other, for since leaving the Fitzroy we have never had enough to eat, which is not surprising

when one considers that we have only eaten a pound of flour per day apiece, and for meat depended upon what we could shoot. . . . I have often read of horse-flesh being as good as beef, or nearly so; but to my taste it is dry, hard and tasteless."

On the 18th of August they arrived at a stream which was recognised as the Victoria River of Stokes, and the 21st found them with flour sufficient for ten days, and a hundred miles between them and the Telegraph Line. Water was very scarce, and on the 22nd the leader remembers that it is his brother's (Sir John Forrest's) birthday, consequently he expected that fortune would smile upon the tired travellers. "Bad luck: no water," is the vexatious verdict. Next day, the 23rd, found them parched and thirsty, although Mr. Hicks shot a turkey weighing twelve pounds. On the 24th they reached a fine pool, where they refreshed themselves and their exhausted horses, of which they had now only eight left out of twenty-six—their flour being reduced to sixty pounds. Still, as the leader remarks, if they had only a little rain, two or three days travel would land them at the Telegraph Line. Another horse was slaughtered on the 25th, and they advanced over a dry undulating country towards their destination.

Forrest now resolved to push on ahead with Hicks, using all possible speed, and so obtain succour for the main body. After the first twenty-nine miles the two explorers came upon a small pool; but after thirty-two miles, which they covered the next day, they had to camp without water. Their only hope was now to struggle on to the Telegraph Line, as long as an ounce of strength remained; and here an unfortunate omission was discovered in the explorers' outfit. They had no chart of the line, and thus had no means of accurately shaping their course. The leader's acute mental and bodily sufferings are clearly shown by the words of his journal on the last day of August. He writes as follows:—

"August 31st.—An hour before daylight we started, steering east for fourteen miles before we rested. The country was similar to that passed over yesterday. During the mid-day halt we walked about searching for water in the dry swamps, but were unsuccessful. Here we killed a large snake, and made off it a miserable meal, thinking that it would relieve our thirst. It made us, however, a good deal worse than we were before. We had only two quarts of water with us, and we both decided not

to touch this until reduced to the last extremity, as we knew not how far we might have to go before coming to water. At one o'clock we were in the saddle again, and continued on the same course until sundown, when we gave our horses a short rest. They were very tired, and did not seem able to keep up in the state they were for much longer. As for ourselves, we were so thirsty we could scarcely speak. We shot a hawk and cut his throat, in order to drink the blood, but it did us no good. What would we not have given for water. No one can have an idea what thirst is unless he has experienced it under tropical heat.

"When I left the camp I did not suppose that the Telegraph Line was any more than 100 miles off, and as we have already travelled that distance, we cannot possibly be very far from it. But we have no chart of the line, and it is impossible to say how far we may have to go. We must hope for the best. We are in God's hands, who has guided us safely so far. To go back would be impossible, but unless on our onward journey we reach water by this time to-morrow, we shall probably go to swell the list of those who have perished of thirst in the bush. After eating our hawk, we saddled up and steered E.N.E. for two miles, when we reached a creek trending N.W. We thought there might be water in it lower down, so we followed it for a mile or two, when the horse I was riding knocked up, and by lying down compelled us to halt." Having rested for a while, at half-past ten at night they moved forward, Hicks leading Forrest's horse, and the latter following on foot. Scarcely had they travelled a mile, when Hicks suddenly caught sight of the Telegraph Line, and shouted the joyful news to his companion. "I could scarcely believe the evidence of my own eyes," writes the explorer, "and, forgetting our thirst, out through the night rang our cheers. When the first tumult of our joy was over, we sent up a short prayer of thanksgiving to the Almighty for His mercies during our long journey, and for guiding us safely in our great distress." On the 4th of September they came upon a large mob of horses, and saw several tents. These belonged to a repairing party, under a Mr. Woods, from whom the travellers received every kindness, including a change of raiment, wholesome food, and the loan of four horses, in order to bring up the main party from the Dépôt Camp, where they had been left. Here Forrest learnt that Katherine Telegraph Station was still fifty miles distant.


Having rested, they steered west towards their companions, whom they met travelling towards the Telegraph Line, having followed up the leader's tracks, a rather risky and injudicious proceeding, which might have led to serious disaster. Having joined forces, they slowly advanced, and on the evening of September the 19th the whole party reached Katherine Telegraph Station in safety, where they received the hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Murray. From here they sent numerous telegrams, and received many congratulatory messages. Forrest tells us that he was weighed, and found that the Australian bush had reduced his bulk by twenty pounds. They rested at the Station till the 26th, and after an uneventful journey, the township of Southport was reached on the 6th of October, whence they took steamer to Palmerston, the capital of the Northern Territory. Till the 15th they halted and recruited, starting on that day for Sydney by the s.s. *Atjeh*.

This long journey was the means of opening up a vast area of pastoral and agricultural land, most of which lies within the confines of Western Australia, and its successful issue at once places Alexander Forrest in the category of distinguished explorers. He had many dangers and difficulties to contend with; but each as it came was met with calmness, and surmounted with adroitness and determination. The ill-health of several members of his party was a very serious drawback and source of anxiety. James Carey suffered from fever and ague for several months, and a severe sunstroke disabled his brother Matthew for a considerable time. During the last three hundred miles the two aboriginals, as already narrated, were both together on the sick-list, and one of them, poor Tommy Pierre, only lived long enough to reach King George's Sound, there to receive burial in his own native district. The other four members of the party kept in good health, with the exception of occasional attacks of sore eyes. Western Australia owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Alexander Forrest, who, during his trip, opened up some of the finest country in the northern part of the Colony—lands which are now stocked with cattle and sheep, and in the district of Kimberley, which he traversed, considerable mineral wealth has been developed.



CHAPTER XXXV.

*Expeditions of Messrs. Hodgkinson (West of the Diamantina),
Lewis (on the Lake Eyre Rivers), Ernest Favenc
(Queenslander Expedition and to Carpentaria Rivers),
David Lindsay (to Arnheim's Land), and Harry Stockdale (at
Cambridge Gulf); Elder Expedition, &c.*

 HE name of William Oswald Hodgkinson has been already mentioned as forming one of the party under Burke and Wills, in 1860, and as being McKinlay's lieutenant in 1861. On his return from the latter trip, he settled in Queensland, devoting his attention to mining and journalism. In September, 1875, the Queensland Government selected this gentleman to command an expedition to explore and report on the country to the westward of the Diamantina River, more especially with the view of ascertaining whether good pasture land extended to the South Australian boundary. The second-in-command was Mr. E. A. Kayser, mining surveyor and mineralogist. Owing to the approach of the wet season it was judged advisable to delay the departure of the party until the following year, and meantime they occupied their time examining the region between the Etheridge Goldfield and the auriferous area on the Cloncurry River.

From the latter place the expedition set out in May, 1876, crossed the dividing range to the Diamantina, and traced its course into the neigh-

bouring Colony, passing over country for the most part taken up by settlers. Beyond Eyre's Creek a stream was found named the Mulligan, and followed up to its head, after which the explorer got on to the Herbert, imagining he was still on the same channel. His error arose from the extraordinary manner in which some Australian rivers dwindle down to nothing, and suddenly reappear. After an absence of over a year, Mr. Hodgkinson returned to Queensland, having bridged the gap between Sturt's turning point in 1845, and Landsborough's investigations of the Herbert River district, in 1862. After holding various honourable posts in the Colony, the Hon. W. O. Hodgkinson, M.L.A., J.P., F.R.G.S., became Secretary for Public Instruction on the return to power of Sir Samuel Griffiths, in August, 1890. He was by birth an Englishman, having been born in Wandsworth, Surrey, in 1838, educated at Birmingham Grammar School, after which went out as an apprentice in the merchant service to Australia, in 1851, remaining at Castlemaine in the capacity of license clerk. From this humble position he rose to distinction by rectitude, energy and ability.

During the previous year, Mr. J. W. Lewis, who had accompanied Colonel Warburton, headed another expedition, which was equipped by the Hon. Thomas Elder. Starting from the Overland Telegraph Line, he succeeded in tracing the courses of the chief stream which enter South Australia from Queensland, especially Eyre's Creek, Cooper's Creek, and the Diamantina, all flowing into Lake Eyre.

In 1878, two brothers, named Prout, accompanied by one companion, crossed the Queensland border into South Australia, in search of eligible pastoral land in the Northern Territory. All three pioneers perished in the desert, the bones of one brother, and those of several horses, being discovered many months afterwards by Mr. W. J. H. Carr-Boyd. From some fragments of a journal which were found at the same time, it was evident that they had succumbed to thirst on their homeward journey, after having penetrated several hundreds of miles into South Australian territory.

A Queensland surveyor, Frank Scarr by name, who had followed on the tracks of Hodgkinson, and corrected his error of confounding the Herbert with the Mulligan River, made an excursion from the borders of his Colony towards the Overland Line in 1878, but was compelled to

return through lack of water. In the same year, Messrs. Weinnecke and Barclay started from Alice Springs, by order of the South Australian Government, with the object of reaching the Queensland border, but failed to reach their destination owing to a similar cause. Two years afterwards, however, Weinnecke undertook the journey, and succeeded in reaching the border, having taken a route by Buchanan's Creek.

In 1878, Mr. Ernest Favenc led an expedition to ascertain the nature and value of the settled districts between Brisbane and Port Darwin, and to examine the geographical features of the unoccupied and unexplored regions on the same line of route. This exploratory enterprise had its origin in a projected line of railway between the above-named places, while for the organisation and equipment of the party, Mr. Gresley Lukin, the then proprietor of the *Brisbane Courier* and *Queenslander* newspaper, was responsible.

Mr. Favenc, to whom the command was entrusted, was born in London, educated in Berlin, and emigrated to New South Wales in 1863. After a year's residence in Sydney he went to Northern Queensland, after which he was engaged in "overlanding," and wrote for the Press under the *nom de plume* of "Dramingo." In 1888 he issued his standard work—*The History of Australian Exploration*. He has also written *The Great Australian Plain*, *Western Australia*, and this year I note that Messrs. Blackie and Son, of London, have just published a novel by this author, having for its subject the fate of Leichardt.*

The exploring party, consisting of the leader; Mr. S. G. Briggs, Surveyor; Mr. G. R. Hedley, and a black boy; started from Blackall, on the west boundary line of Queensland, and proceeded across settled districts until Cork Station, on the Diamantina, was reached. They then struck out to the N.W., traversing the unexplored region between the Burke and Herbert Rivers. Having arrived at the Rankin, they followed its course for a time, eventually crossing to Buchanan's Creek. They then steered to the north, finding, among other lakes, a fine permanent sheet of water, which was named Corella Lagoon. At this place we learn that several hundred natives had assembled to perform some religious ceremony. The travellers were unmolested, however, and still pushing on to the southward, came upon a splendid creek flowing from the east,

* *The Secret of the Australian Desert*. London: Blackie and Son, 1896.

which was christened the Cresswell. They travelled along its banks till it disappeared—the last of its water gaining the name of the Adder Waterholes, from the multitude of death-adders which infested the neighbourhood.

The Telegraph Line was some ninety miles distant from this point, and they endeavoured to reach it over cracked and fissured plains, and under a blazing sun. So intense was the heat and irksome the travelling, that they had to return to the Adder Waterholes, and on their way back three of their horses died of thirst and fatigue. Their only hope of advance now lay in the occurrence of a friendly rain-storm, and during their enforced detention at the camp, many reconnoitring excursions were made throughout the surrounding territory. They managed to eke out their supply of provisions by means of game, horse-flesh, and two wild Australian vegetables, known as the blue-bush and the pig-weed. Mr. Favenc, in his diary, tells us that Mr. Hedley did most of the hunting, fowling, and so forth. Up to the 11th December we note that their somewhat heterogeneous game-bag was composed as follows:—50 parrots (*corellas* and *galars*), 350 ducks (black ducks, teal, whistling ducks, wood ducks and widgeons), 150 pigeons (principally flock), 11 geese, 4 turkeys, 8 spoonbills, 7 water-hens, 2 shags, 1 emu, 1 native companion—in all 584 birds. In addition to these, one hundred fish were caught and consumed. Referring to the above, the explorer writes as follows:—“All of them were shot for actual food; nothing had been wantonly destroyed. We considerably added to this *menu* afterwards, including such choice delicacies as eagle-hawks and frogs. Crows and hawks we carefully reserved to the last, when all else should fail. The absence of kangaroos and other marsupials is a marked feature in this list, there being none on these wide-spreading downs.”

The long-desired line was sighted in January, 1879, and the explorers lost no time in proceeding to Powell Creek Station, after which they reached Port Darwin by a known route. They were received with acclamation by the inhabitants of Palmerston, being looked upon as the pioneers of a welcome railway line, which would bring their distant regions and vast tablelands of splendid pastoral country into contact and connection with the civilised world.

Mr. Favenc's expedition to Port Darwin having thus fully attained its object, in 1883 he undertook to trace the heads of the rivers debouching

into the Gulf of Carpentaria, near the Queensland boundary, and in the following year he commanded a more important expedition from the tableland across the coast range to the estuary of the MacArthur River. Having crossed from the border to the Telegraph Line—their line of route lying for the most part over open downs—they followed up the creek which supplies the chain of lagoons known as Newcastle Waters. They then struck out to the eastward, and after considerable suffering through lack of water, they reached a watercourse, which was appropriately named Relief Creek. This was afterwards found to be one of the sources of the MacArthur River, and in the basin which the latter drains, some fine land was found to be well adapted for settlement. Having traced the course of the stream to near its mouth, Favenc led his party safely home by way of Daly Waters Telegraph Station.

Early in 1883 the authorities in South Australia resolved on an expedition to Arnheim's Land, in the Northern Territory, in order to complete the examination and survey of that region. Mr. David Lindsay was selected for the leadership, and in May of that year he sailed to Port Darwin. Having arrived in safety with his party, they made their final preparations, and left Palmerston on the 4th of June. Proceeding by way of the Katherine Station, they reached the district lying north of the Roper River, from whence they travelled to Blue Mud Bay. While on their journey thither, they barely escaped extermination at the hands of hostile natives, who speared four of their horses. Having got into a rocky, impracticable tract of country, they made their way with difficulty to the Telegraph Line; and on their return Lindsay was able to report favourably on much of the land he had crossed. On the whole, this may be said to have fulfilled his task satisfactorily; and, although the great problems of the interior had all been solved before he entered the lists, such commands as he has been entrusted with he has filled with credit and distinction.

Regarding William Lindsay's last expedition, for the expenses of which Sir Thomas Elder held himself responsible, I refer the reader to the Appendix. It is not for me to criticise the action of the promoter of this enterprise, which came to a premature conclusion. I have therefore allowed the explorer to speak for himself; and have likewise included some remarks from the local press.

As will be seen in the final chapter, I have resolved to equip an exploring party on similar lines, and no effort on my part will be wanting to render it a success.

In 1884 Mr. Harry Stockdale, an experienced bushman, explored the country in the vicinity of Cambridge Gulf. Early in September of that year he sailed for north-west in the s.s. *Whamboa*, and landed at the bay on the 13th of the month. He was accompanied by seven men and a sufficient number of horses. Travelling inland, the explorers encountered a chain of hills, in which a pass was found, and named the latter after the commander. They then advanced over a fertile, well-watered territory, encamping at a stream which was called Birdie Creek. Well-grassed country favoured their advance to another watercourse, which was named Patrick Creek, after which they pushed on to a stream, which acquired the title of the Forrest River. Here they halted to recruit their horses, which were somewhat distressed. Their next camp was at Margaret Creek, after leaving which they found themselves in a hilly region, where rocks, crags and ravines greatly hindered their progress.

In the middle of October the Lorimer and Buchanan Rivers were discovered, and on the 21st a main depôt was formed, from which the leader and three men proceeded southward on a reconnoitring trip. In about a fortnight the explorers returned, having traversed some splendid country, admirably adapted for settlement, and having been attacked by the natives on the 2nd November. Stockdale was much annoyed to find that during his absence some of the horses had been ridden in kangaroo hunts, with which his men had beguiled the time. So knocked up were the animals by this unwonted exercise, that they were unfitted for the journey which Stockdale had laid down. After some delay, they advanced towards the Ord River. Their destination was now the Telegraph Line, and on their way thither two of the men—Ashton and Mulcahey—lost heart, and declared that they could travel no further. Stockdale treated them with great kindness and consideration, although he had strong suspicions that they were shamming. The last named was one of the ringleaders of the kangaroo-hunting exploits, and also confessed to having stolen apples, biscuits, jam, flour and peas from the common store—a very serious crime under the circumstances. Delays are proverbially dangerous, but especially so when a desert has to be

crossed with a limited supply of rations, so that constantly-recurring halts to rest the *invalids* were vexatious and irritating in the extreme. "It is a very trying situation for me," writes the perplexed leader, "and I trust God will guide me, and help me to do what is right and just to all in my charge. . . . We all forgave him (Mulcahey) the wrong he had done us, freely and truly."

Every means were used to induce these two malingerers to pluck up heart. They ate heartily, had strong, lusty voices and muscular frames, but to march with the others they declared to be impossible. Matters came to a crisis on the 17th of December. We are told that it was a fine morning, after a cool night, the thermometer at daylight registering 60° Mulcahey and Ashton (the latter of whom had lost himself some two months previously, thereby causing much trouble and delay), although appearing to be in good health, came to Stockdale and asked for three weeks' rations, with permission to spell on the river. They likewise expressed a hope that help would be sent to them when the main body reached the Telegraph Line. To use the leader's words—"I tried all in my power to induce them to struggle on a little further, if only as far as the Wilson River, but could not alter their determination. Called the rest of the party together, and as they one and all thought it was best under the circumstances, I had to consent; so, with Mr. Ricketson's assistance, I measured out to them twenty pannikins of flour, ten of white sugar, ten of peas, fifteen of dried apples, four pounds of tea, and a tin of preserved meat. Left them two double-barrelled guns, &c., with about one hundred and fifty cartridges, fish-hooks and lines, and camped on the Lawrence River. We then packed up the remainder, and with sad hearts bade them good-bye, and firmly advised them to get either fish or game, as game is fairly plentiful around them."

Both men then wrote a few sentences in the leader's diary, and Ashton gave him a letter for his aunt in England. Mulcahey would write to neither wife, parents or relations, and so this precious pair of stubborn poltroons were left to their self-chosen fate. Poor Stockdale thus feelingly records his reflections:—"It is a dreadful state of affairs, the two biggest and strongest of our party collapsing like this, and has had a very depressing effect on me, though I must not show it, for fear of causing a despondent feeling in the others. I do hope we shall now have fair

travelling, and reach Panton and Osman's Station, so as to send back horses and relief to those left behind. They have had any amount of provisions, meat excepted, sometimes five meals a day, and never less than three."

In conclusion, I may state that Stockdale failed to make the station just mentioned, and eventually found it necessary to form a depôt, from whence he, with one comrade, pushed on to the Telegraph Line. From there assistance was procured, so as to bring up the main body. As to Ashton and Mulcahey, a relief party was organised, and diligent search was made for them. They had left their camp on the Lawrence, however, and were never again seen, having either perished in the desert, or fallen victims to the blacks.





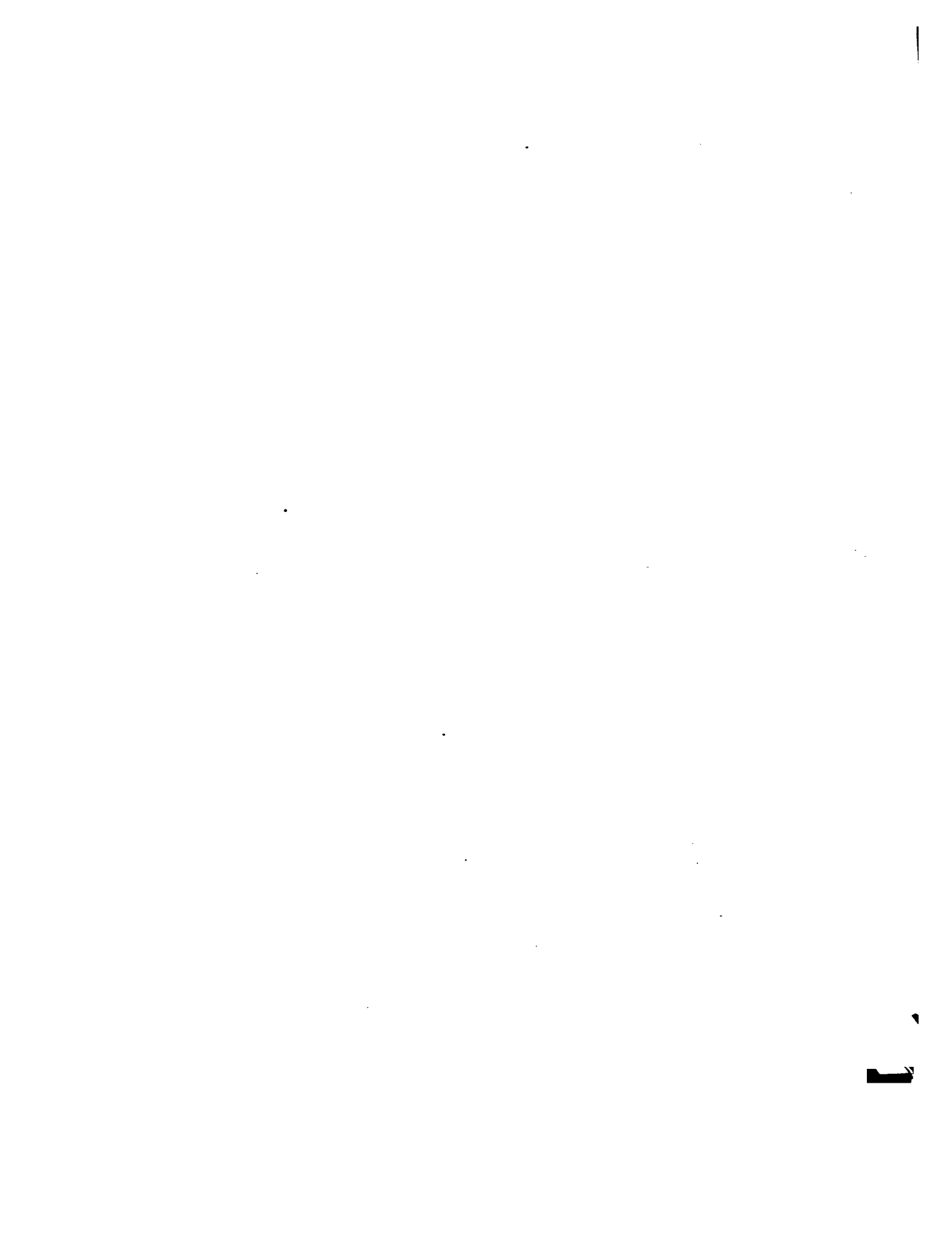
CHAPTER XXXVI.

Future Exploration. The Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition.

THUS ends the chronicle of Australian Exploration from 1844 to the present day. My other book published last year:—*The Exploration of Australia from its First Discovery till 1844*,* gives a record of the earlier period. I cannot pretend to have included the names of *all* those who have contributed to the opening up of the Great Island Continent. Hundreds of farmers, squatters, and minor explorers have added their *quota* to the elucidation of the problems of the interior; but to describe every journey in search of information throughout the giant territory would be a task of years, and the *data* would in many cases be impossible to obtain. Moreover, any book which contained such a history would run into many volumes, would involve the work of many pens, and, even if written, hardly anyone would be found who would wade through its dreary pages.

I do not, however, think I have left out the name of any leader of distinction who has conducted exploratory expeditions throughout about three millions of square miles, which comprise the vast area of—Canada excepted—the most extensive possession of the British Crown. If, perchance, I have omitted mention of any man whose achievements

* London: George Phillip & Son (1895).



entitled him to such permanence in history as I might have been enabled to give him, he must take the will for the deed; for I have endeavoured to set down the facts regarding every expedition from the 26th of March, 1797, when Captain Arthur Phillip, first Governor of New South Wales, first hoisted the British flag at Sydney Cove, until the present day.*

So much for the past. It will be noted, however, that the present work practically ends with the unfortunately abandoned Elder Expedition, recalled in 1892—whether rightly or wrongly it is not my business to enquire. I go on to 1896 in this book, as explained in the following pages.

As I pen these words, an Expedition, fitted out at my own expense, starts to explore the as yet unexamined regions of Western and South Australia. It will be conducted almost exactly on the lines of Sir Thomas Elder's Expedition, ably led by Mr. David Lindsay; but with certain modifications, which experience suggests. As everyone well knows, Western Australia has been the Colony of my heart, and I should have been glad if the Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition could have started under the auspices of the West Australian Government. But for various reasons this was not to be; and so long as I achieve my object of mapping out the blank spaces in the map as supplied by the South Australian Branch of the Geographical Society of Australia, the means I have been able to employ are quite a secondary consideration. My plans are fully laid down in the correspondence which I publish in the Appendix, taken in connection with the map herewith produced. For obvious reasons, I leave out certain names, the letters being, to some degree, confidential.

As chief of the Expedition, I have selected Mr. L. A. Wells, in whose eminent capacity I, in common with the South Australian Geographical Society, have every confidence. He is a veteran in the field of Australian Exploration, and Mr. David Lindsay's testimonial regarding his qualifications, bears ample testimony to his ability for carrying out the task allotted to him.†

The included map shows exactly what has to be done. The country to be traversed amounts in area to about 280,000 square miles, more than five times greater than that of England. The time to be spent in

* Regarding this statement, my readers must note that I include my former work, which may well be taken as a first volume, of which this is the second, although I have seen fit to make them separate books.

† See Appendix. Elder Expedition, 1892.

the work must naturally depend on circumstances ; but it will probably extend to between fifteen and eighteen months ; and I have given orders that no detail of equipment shall be lacking. At the last moment, it was suggested to me that rockets should be carried, in case minor exploring parties starting out from the main body might possibly be lost in the bush. The reason is clear. Richard Cunningham's life might possibly have been saved had these fireworks been carried. I take the liberty of quoting from my previous book on the first period of Australian Exploration in this connection. In explanation, I may say, Richard Cunningham, brother of the gallant explorer, Allan Cunningham, accompanied Major Mitchell in 1835 in his second expedition. They started with a large retinue on the 9th of March, 1835. On the 17th of the next month Cunningham was lost in the bush. Regarding the incident I have thus written :—*

"On the 17th, being anxious to obtain water for his cattle, they endeavoured to make the Bogan River, and the Major galloped forward three miles in search of the stream. On his return he was informed that Mr. Cunningham was missing. His occasional absence was not uncommon, and at first caused little anxiety. Again the leader went off in search of water, and this time was successful. On reaching the camp at eleven at night, he says in his journal, 'I had the pain to learn that Mr. Cunningham was still absent, and what was worse, in all probability suffering for want of water. I had repeatedly cautioned this gentleman about the danger of losing sight of his party in such a country ; yet his carelessness in this respect was quite surprising. The line of route after being traversed by our carts looked like a road which had been used for years, and it is almost impossible to doubt that he would fall in with it next morning.'

"On April 18th, however, he was still missing. They continued to sound the bugle, and fire shots till eleven o'clock. Their cattle needing water, and, it being thought that Mr. Cunningham was probably ahead of the party, they moved on towards the Bogan. They travelled due north for eight miles, and came on the dry bed of the river. After tracing its course up and down for some distance, they came upon a pond, where they encamped, Cunningham being still absent.

* See *Exploration of Australia* by Mitchell, London: George Philip & Son, 1895.

“ Knowing full well the awful predicament of his young fellow-traveller lost in the bush, Mitchell passed a sleepless night, and could only relieve his anxiety by at once organizing a search in different directions. His journal of April 19th, runs thus:—‘ The darkness of a second night of dreary solitude had passed over our fellow-traveller under the accumulated horrors of hunger, horror and despair ! It was most mysterious that he had not fallen in with our route, which was a plain, broad road, since the passage of our carts, and had a direction due north and south for ten miles. The last time he had been seen was ten miles back, or about two miles from the bed of the creek, where I changed my direction from N.W. by compass to due S., that I might thereby sooner reach the Bogan for the sake of water. Several parties went in opposite directions, and after a weary day’s search returned to camp without tidings of their lost companion, who was mounted, and was accompanied by a kangaroo dog.’ Next day they explored every open space, and examined every bush in a wide circle; but in vain. The greatest danger to be apprehended was from the natives, who are apt, on a stranger approaching, to act on the offensive. On the 22nd they rode further southward, and seeing distant smoke approached it, only to find some bushes lighted by the natives.

* * * * *

At length, on the evening of the 28th, two of Mitchell’s men returned, bringing a saddle, a bridle, a whip, and one glove. They had found the track of his horse in the scrub, and had followed it till they reached the animal’s dead body. I need not pursue the long, painful search which was continued during eighteen days, from the 19th of April till the 6th of May. Cunningham was eventually tracked to the Bogan, where it was supposed that he had killed and eaten the dog. Eventually, many months afterwards, it was discovered that he had been slain by the blacks.”*

To return to my original theme, it is the recollection of the above and similar accidents, have prompted me to give special instructions that nothing shall be forgotten, which will prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe.

As already stated, correspondence will be found in the Appendix,

* See *Exploration of Australia from its first Discovery till 1844.* By Albert F. Calvert. London: Phillip & Son. Appendix, page 234.

which will more fully describe my intentions than any further remarks of mine would do. With a well-equipped outfit, and with the dearly bought experience of their predecessors, I most confidently hope that the issue of the Calvert Expedition will be a success.

Regarding those minor expeditions conducted by myself, I hope I shall approach the subject with due modesty. I may say, I have never put myself forward as an explorer in the truest sense of the word. The real work of the explorer had been accomplished before I went through certain territories of West Australia and elsewhere, more in the capacity of a prospector than anything else. Therefore I say very little about myself in that capacity, although I can fairly assert that I have carefully examined many thousands of square miles of Western Australia alone, with an increasing belief in her great auriferous and mineral wealth. I may be excused from referring further to my last visit to the Colony, considering that, although it in every way confirmed my belief regarding the richness of the ground I went over and examined, I had the misfortune to lose my younger brother, from an attack of typhoid fever, while I myself was struck down by sun-stroke. These mishaps in a great measure hampered my movements, but in no degree daunted me concerning my original intentions. The terrible heat-wave which passed over Australia last January was a matter beyond and above human calculation.*

Personal considerations, although entering into the hearts of all, are of small account to me regarding the collection and issue of the foregoing facts with such care as my leisure afforded. Finally, I confidently hope that Mr. Wells and his chosen band will enable me to fully complete the EXPLORATION OF AUSTRALIA.

It is not without regret that I conclude what has been to me a labour of love. No one could possibly follow the footsteps of the Australian explorers without intense admiration for their heroic exploits and absorbing interest in their splendid work. Truly, it may be said that they leave behind them "footprints on the sands of time," even although the rains and winds may have blotted out the tracks of their long marches through the interior of Australia.

THE END.

* Heat Wave in Australia, Appendix.



APPENDIX.

*Sir Thomas Mitchell's Last Expedition. Extract of
Mr. Walter Bagot's Letter.*

“20th January, 1844.

“The country beyond the Darling for the first few miles from the river exhibits the same features as on its southern bank, the soil blackish, soft and yielding; the trees principally myall, and a species of myall called by the squatters, rosewood, interspersed with the small and gnarled forest oak. About ten miles from the river, and nearly parallel with it, is the Warramble, a sort of swamp, boggy and difficult to cross its course. From thirty to forty miles beyond this is the Nareen Creek. Here, except in very dry seasons, water stands. This I know from the Nareen blacks coming into the Barwin, only at those times; although they are in much danger from the Barwin blacks, who are extremely hostile to them. I cannot tell where the Nareen joins the Barwin. As far as I am acquainted with it, it is nearly parallel to it, slightly converging to the river westward. Between the Warramble and Nareen there is no perceptible rising ground; from the harder nature of the soil, the plain becoming more open, and the timber straighter and larger, I have no doubt that there is a gradual ascent. The grass is extremely luxuriant, like all the unstocked portions of rich ground in this country—the long kangaroo grass rising to the saddle skirts. The *brigalow*, which I have never seen in any but high ground, is here, too.

“I now come to the reports of the blacks, which are:—That about three

days' journey of theirs (ninety miles) beyond the Barwin is a lofty range of mountains (I have heard of these mountains also from a gentleman who got a distant view of them from a plain near the Nareen), that a river called the Culgoa runs at the foot of these mountains, which river, from the similarity of the name, I am inclined to think is one which empties itself into the Barwin about one hundred miles lower down than the junction of the Castlereagh. I have remarked that the word Culgoa, in the *Wilem* dialect, signifies 'water-fall,' which adds to the likelihood of its being a mountain stream; that after crossing the mountains, which occupies one day (thirty miles), and travelling for two days (sixty miles) still north-west, they reach a large river, deeper and broader than the Barwin, the waters of which river never fail. Their name for this river I cannot now recollect. The old black, who gave the clearest account of this river, and who was the only one I have seen who admitted having been actually at this river, distinctly described its course to be different from that of the Barwin, and perhaps north or south-west. Might not this river be a tributary to one of the large rivers which flow into the Gulf of Carpentaria? If so, how well adapted for a line of road traversing its valley to the Gulf. I have often wished while residing on the Barwin to make up a party to explore the size and course of this river; but the dangerous character of the black tribes in its direction, with the long-continued drought, were enough to prevent it."

Leichardt's Fate.

No writer has had more ample opportunity of sifting the evidence regarding the probable fate of Ludwig Leichardt than that well-known author and high authority, the Reverend Tenison Woods. I, therefore, think his views on the subject should find a place in the appendix to this work. We are reminded by him that the route taken by the unfortunate explorer is now no longer in dispute, at least that it is *almost* a matter of certainty. Mr. Hovenden Hely was the first of the Doctor's successors to find traces of the party. Certain relics were found by him, which may or may not have belonged to the missing traveller. Then there were discovered two camps with trees marked with an "L," within which were the letters "X V A." He naturally supposed that these were marked by Leichardt; for it was most unlikely that Mitchell could have done so. A man called Luff accompanied Kennedy, but he would scarcely be permitted to place his initial upon

two trees in two camps. "E K," moreover, were the letters which Kennedy invariably used, which was only natural. It has been suggested that the mysterious letters "X V A" might have meant the 15th of April; but we find that the Rev. H. B. Clarke seems to give undoubted proof that Leichardt could not have been at either place on that particular date.

It has been suggested, with some show of reason, that the letters may have been cut before Leichardt visited the camps in question. This view is supported by the fact that the Doctor, accompanied by Mr. Bunce, found on the Maranoa River a tree marked with the letter "L." The explorer's diary contains these words: "September 4th.—We travelled about four miles south, when we came to the place where we had first met the dray-track of Sir Thomas Mitchell. A little further on we marked a tree with 'L' and a *cross* in the wood.

"September 8th.—Mr. Bunce discovered very old horse-dung at the plans where we camped. We continued to follow up the river, and had scarcely gone three miles when dray-tracks were observed, which were very old and faint, and evidently belonged to Mitchell's expedition. Fresh horse-tracks were seen coming down the river, and apparently turning up to the N.W. of Mitchell's track (April, 1846). These horse-tracks were observed all along our road, and at one place an 'L' was cut into a small water-gum tree with a blackfellow's tomahawk."

From this entry it is clear that Leichardt observed the letter "L," which belonged to some one else, and it is possible that the "X V A" has something to do with the cross mentioned. So much for Hely's discovery.

Next we read of Gregory finding a tree on the Upper Barcoo, upon which the same letter "L" was cut, and Mr. Walker came upon another at the distance of a few miles. It is somewhat difficult to surmise what course Leichardt took after leaving the Barcoo River. It apparently was either along the Alice or the Thompson. Mr. Walker found, on the Flinders, traces of a numerous expedition, steering in a N.W. direction. Mr. Landsborough, however, says that these were not the tracks of Leichardt, and writes to the Rev. H. B. Clarke as follows:—"In a journey in 1860 to search for runs, I went from Rockhampton to near the junction of what is now called the Bowen, and the Burdekin. As I could not proceed to the north-west owing to the flooded state of the country, I went to the southward until I reached Tower Hill, and thence on a southerly course about sixty-six miles to near the junction of the Aramac Creek with the Landsborough. I then followed the Aramac to near its head, which was about sixty miles to the S.W. Then crossing a valley (probably the Alice) got to the watershed of the Belyando,

and then proceeded by Peak Range. In that expedition we, from time to time, marked trees 'L L.' We always marked many trees thus at our camps on the route. You will see by my journal that I think the main head of the Thompson is to the west of the Landsborough. . . . Although continually on the look-out for traces of Leichardt in all my expeditions, and although I have often travelled on his route, the only tree that I ever saw that was marked by him, was one at the junction of Skull Creek with the Isaac River." In connection with this letter, Mr. Woods remarks, "Walker's traces of Leichardt must, I fear, be abandoned after this. Two things, however, should be noted. Though Walker said the tracks he saw were made in wet weather, and Landsborough states that the country was flooded at the time of his visit, yet Landsborough admits having seen some tracks on his homeward route in 1862, which he could not account for. At one time he saw cart-tracks, and imagined he was near a home station. He afterwards found that there was no station near. The country could hardly have been settled so early. Whose, then, were the cart-tracks? If they were recent (and unless they were, Landsborough could hardly have imagined them to belong to a recent settlement), there is an end of the idea that Leichardt's party formed them. On the Flinders, also, Landsborough saw what he believed to be the tracks of Walker's party, while, according to the map, their routes never crossed. This fact may, however, be due to an error in their calculations, for the tracks were not very far off at the time. Lastly, Mr. Buchanan told Captain Norman that he had seen the tracks of Burke and Wills two hundred miles to the west of Mount Norrien. These were thought to be Burke's return tracks; but, as we know, Burke returned by his outward route, and that near the place indicated would be on Walker's route. Perhaps, therefore, the latter gentleman was right after all—that is to say, of course, if Buchanan did not know which tracks were Landsborough's, which is hardly possible, as Buchanan (unless I am under a mistake) was out with Landsborough, and made one of his former party."

It will thus be recognised how extremely difficult it is to settle this vexed question. Mr. Woods thinks that Leichardt was not killed by the aborigines, but that the party journeyed by the Barcoo, and, having reached the desert to the westward, that there they died of thirst.

The Rev. Mr. Clarke, who knew him personally, is of opinion, however, that the explorer did not follow the course of the Barcoo; and I give his reasons in his own words:—"Previous to Leichardt's last departure from Sydney, he was on a visit to me, and we occupied some time in collecting

information on the possibility of his overland journey to Swan River, and when I pointed out to him the great improbability that a direct route existed by means of oases in the desert, which was a favourite idea of his, he built very much upon a fact mentioned by Gregory and his brother, in his account of the country to the N.E. of Perth, that a great accumulation of the bones of supposed buffaloes had been met with. Leichardt insisted that these were *not* the bones of buffaloes, but of *bullocks*, which had crossed the country from the western frontier of this Colony; and he argued that if cattle could get across, it must have been by oases, where grass could be found, and that he could cross also.

"But after a great deal of reflection, he considered that it would be best to *skirt the desert*, and that, therefore, his final intention was to follow up the Burdekin to the river he named after myself, and then proceed from the head of the Clarke, which he had not seen, to the westward; and so attempt to reach the country where the bones were found, by crossing the track along the N.W. and the W. coast, which, so far as I believe, offers very little hope of success in any season.

"That this was always in the mind of Leichardt may be inferred from what he himself published regarding his second expedition, from which he was driven back by fever. Here are Leichardt's words:—'The object of the new expedition here alluded to, is to explore the interior of Australia, *to discover the extent of Sturt's Desert, and the character of the western and north-western coast*, and to observe the gradual change of vegetation and animal life from one side of the Continent to the other. I do not expect to be able to accomplish this *overland journey to Swan River (i.e., by way of the bounds of Sturt's Desert)* in less than two years and-a-half.'"

The Rev. Mr. Clarke thinks it unlikely that Leichardt would ever rashly venture into the desert, and that he might have perished near the north-west Victoria (visited by Mr. Gregory in 1856), and not on the Barcoo, where the same explorer found the mysterious letter "L."

This letter he attributes to one, Luff, who was out with Sir Thomas Mitchell on many occasions. If ever Leichardt's remains are found, Mr. Clarke thinks it will be far to the north-westward of any search yet made. Another conjecture he puts forward as possible, is that Kennedy may have cut the solitary letter on the tree in latitude 146° E, because this marked the *fiftieth* of his camps.

Poison Plants.

Having described the sufferings endured by Mr. R. Austin's horses during his expedition of 1854, it may be interesting to note a few particulars regarding these pests of the vegetable kingdom. Mr. Tenison Woods states his opinion that the mischief in Austin's case was caused by a small species of the *Gompholobium*. Just ten years later, the Jardine Brothers lost eight animals through a similar cause in the neighbourhood of the Batavia River.

A well-known writer, Mr. Ernest Favenc, has compiled some facts which may be reproduced with advantage in the appendix to this volume. It appears that the properties of these plants are very imperfectly known, comparatively few specimens having been chemically examined. There are supposed to exist many of the dangerous species, but no very adequate investigation has as yet been made. One of their worst features is the fact that they generally grow close to the ground, and are hence liable to be *accidentally* eaten. They usually occur in greatest quantity on inferior land, on superior land only occasional small patches being found. Among the more noxious of their kind may be enumerated, *Datura Stramonium*, and *Datura Tatula*—these two herbs, strangely enough, being smoked largely in this country and elsewhere for the alleviation of asthma. Then there are the *Excæcaria Agallocha* and the *Lolium Termulentum*.

The indigo plant, *Swainsona Galegifolia*, is a glabrous perennial or under-shrub, with erect flexuous branches, sometimes ascending, or even climbing to the height of several feet. The flowers are rather large, and deep red in the original variety; pod very much inflated, membranous, one to ten inches long. The species varies, with light, purplish-pink flowers—*S. Cornillafolia*, and white flowers—*S. Albiflora*. The plant drives the sheep who nibble it, completely mad, their insanity continuing until death eases their misery.

Next, we have what is known as the "Darling Pea," *Swainsona Procumbens*. This is glabrous, or the foliage slightly silky. Sometimes, however, pubescent or hirsute, with procumbent ascending or erect stems of one to three feet; leaflets varying from oblong, and almost linear, and quarter of an inch long, to lanceolate, and above one inch long. Flowers, large and fragrant, violet or blue; pod, sessile, and above one inch long.

The list, likewise, includes the "pitchuri plant," *Authocercis Hopwoodii*, a glabrous tree or shrub. Leaves, narrow-linear, acutely acuminate, with the point often recurved, entire, rather thick, narrowed into a short petiole, two to four inches long; fruit unknown.

Then comes "Australian tobacco" (vile stuff to smoke, I may mention), *Nicotian Sauveolens*. It is an erect annual or biennial, standing one to two feet. Flowers, white or greenish on side, and sweet-scented, especially at night.

We read also of plants which are less virulent in their action; for example, *Typhonium Brownii* and *Colocasia Macrorrhiza*, *Crinum Flaccidum* and *Crinum Pendunculatum*, the latter two being bulbous herbs; *Carcubum Populifolium* and *Carcubum Stillingiaefolium*, tall shrubs; *Duboisea Myoperoides*, and *Duboisea Leichardtii*; *Aristolochia Pravenos*, and *Aristolochia Pubera*; together with *Chama Fistula Lavigata* and *Chama Sophera*, both erect glabrous shrubs.

Besides these there are the "Nightshade," *Solanum Nigrum*, and the "Bean Tree," *Castanospermum Australe*.

Altogether, this is a fairly long list, considering that it is stated to be incomplete, and it furnishes another instance of the extraordinary inconsistencies of the strange paradoxical Continent of Australia. Doubtless the kangaroo, the native bear, the wallaby, the emu, and other animals indigenous to the soil, are not in the slightest degree inconvenienced by the presence of these baneful herbs. Nor, indeed, do the rabbits seem to have suffered. As time goes on, and as the vast territory becomes peopled, we doubt not that a remedy will be found. Meantime, I would assure my readers that the evil has been much exaggerated. The plant is easily detected and eradicated; it is only dangerous at certain seasons of the year, and infests only a mere fraction of our great Antipodean Dependency. Moreover, the West Australian Government offers special inducements for farmers to take up land upon which the plant is known to grow. The Act runs shortly thus:—A lease for twenty-one years of not less than 300 acres of poisoned land may be obtained at a yearly rent of 20s. per thousand acres, on condition of

(1) Paying expenses of survey.

(2) Fencing.

(3) Eradicating poison plants.

When this has been done, the land becomes the property of the lessee.

Ladies' Leichardt Search Expedition.

Everything connected with the fate of the unfortunate Dr. Leichardt will be regarded of interest, although, as I have already stated, there is now but little hope that the mystery of his total disappearance will ever be solved. I

therefore append some particulars regarding an extraordinary fiasco in this direction. In a few words I describe what is reported to have occurred.

Dr. Von Mueller, the ready recipient of all rumours—a man of highest eminence as a botanist—determined to leave no stone unturned with the view of unveiling the secret. He received a telegram in the spring of 1865, to the effect that Mr. Duncan McIntyre had seen one of the trees on the Flinders marked with the cabalistic letter L. About four thousand pounds were subscribed for the further elucidation of the facts. Sixty horses and sixteen camels, with full supplies and equipment, were provided under the auspices of the ladies of Victoria. The command of the expedition was given to Duncan McIntyre, and a certain doctor was his second. They took with them, it appears, ten men, including Afghans and one young black boy. Having encamped after a short journey on the Paroo River, McIntyre advanced, in order to find a water-hole which he had previously visited. It was dry, and the leader having returned, left the horses and the main party encamped, going ahead himself with the camels and the native. He was some time absent, travelling up and down in vain search for water, which he at last found.

Meantime one of the men in charge of the main body, impatient of delay, declared that they had been betrayed, and that the expedition was a failure. He knew, it seems, the marked bags which contained the brandy, carried in case of sickness. These were ripped open with a knife while on the horses' backs, and a few bottles taken out. One man—to his credit be it recorded—refused to drink, but the others imbibed freely. Then succeeded madness and frenzy among them, as recorded by the only sober person in the party. Had McIntyre not returned all would probably have died, but as a matter of fact, he turned up in the nick of time to save them. The fate of the expedition was, however, sealed, by the death of the leader from malarial fever, before the party left the settled districts, near the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Probable Fate of Leichardt.

The following is a theory propounded by Mr. Favenc in a recent work, based upon the present general consensus of opinion among bushmen and explorers:—

“Turned back by the dry country west of the Diamantina River, the explorer probably followed that river up, and crossed the main water-shed on to

the head of some river running north into the Gulf of Carpentaria; in fact, the same track afterwards followed by the ill-fated Burke and Wills. Leichardt could then easily reach the route he pursued on his first expedition to Port Essington—the only successful one he made, and on which his reputation is based. This course would then lead him around the foot of the Gulf to the Roper River, where he would leave his old route, follow the Roper or a tributary to its head, and strike S.W. into the scantily watered waste of the interior. This view is borne out by the fact that trees, marked with what appears to be a letter L, have been found on or near this suppositious line of travel; and A. C. Gregory—the leader of one of the search expeditions—discovered the framework of a small hut, seemingly built by white men, on a creek he called the Elsie, a tributary of the Roper River.”

Robert O'Hara Burke's Notes.

The following extracts are from the memorandum-book of Mr. Burke:—

Mr. Archer, to whom the task of transcribing was entrusted, writes this preface:—“I went carefully through Mr. Burke's note-book last night. It is an ordinary memorandum-book, with a clasp and a side-pocket for a pencil. It is much dilapidated, and several of the leaves are torn out; some so torn had been written upon. I have numbered these consecutively throughout. The following is a copy, letter for letter, and word for word, of all that remains of Burke's pencillings. I have queried all doubtful points:—

No. 69.—Line of cour i ing (?) on bags 1, 4, 19, 20, 11, 3. Think well before giving an answer, and never speak except from strong convictions.

16th December.—Left depôt 65; followed by the creek.

17th.—The same. 66.

18th.—The same. 67.

19th.—We made a small creek, supposed to be Otta Era (?) or in the immediate neighbourhood of it. Camp 69.

20th.—Made a creek where we found a great many natives. They presented us with fish and offered their women. Camp 70.

21st.—Made another creek. Camp 71. Splendid water, find feed for the camels; would be a very good place for a station. Since we have left Cooper's creek we have travelled over a fine sheep-grazing country, well watered, and in every respect well suited for occupation.

22nd December, 1860.—Camp 72. Encamped on the borders of the desert.

23rd.—Travelled night and day, and encamped in the bed of a creek, as we supposed we were near water.

24th.—Encamped on the morning of this day on the banks of Gray's Creek, called after him because he was detached on horseback from the party, and found it good water. The third day without it. Now for a retrospective glance. We started from Cooper's Creek, Camp 66, with the intention of going through to Eyre's Creek without water. Loaded with eight hundred pints of water; four riding-camels carried one hundred and thirty pints, each horse one hundred and fifty, two pack camels fifty each, and five pints each man.

25th.—Christmas Day. Started at 4 a.m. from Gray's Creek, and arrived at a creek which appears to be quite as large as Cooper's Creek. At 2 p.m. Golah Sing (camel) gave some very decided hints about stopping, by lying down under the trees. Splendid prospect.

26th December, 27th December, 28th December, 29th December.—Followed up the creek until it took a turn to the south-east, which I thought rather too much to put up with, and therefore left it on the morning of the 30th Dec. 12.30 on the road. Started at seven o'clock. Travelled eleven hours.

31st.—Started at 2.20, sixteen and-a-half hours on the road; travelled thirteen and-a-half hours.

1st January.—Water.

2nd January.—From King's Creek. Eleven hours on the road; started at seven. Travelled nine and-a-half hours; desert.

3rd January.—Five started; travelled twelve hours no minutes. (*sic*)

4th.—Twelve hours on the road.

5th.—Water at Wills' or King's Creek. It is impossible to say the time we were up, for we had to load the camels, to pack and feed them, to watch them and the horse, and to look for water; but I am satisfied that the frame of man never was more severely taxed. [Then follows an entry for March 28th, commencing thus:—"March 28th.—At the conclusion of"—. Then some of the leaves appear to have been torn out from page 43 to 55.]

13th January, 1860.—As I find it impossible to keep a regular diary, I shall jot down my ideas when I have an opportunity and put the date. Upon two occasions—at Cooper's Creek and at King's Creek, on New Year's Day, wherever the natives tried to bully or bounce us, and were repulsed, although the leaders appeared to be in earnest, the followers, and particularly the young ones, laughed heartily, and seemed to be amused at their leader's repulse. The

old fellow at King's Creek, who stuck his spear into the ground, and threw dust in the air when I fired off my pistol, ran off in the most undignified manner. Names for places:—Thackeray, Barry, Bindon, Lyons, Forbes, Archer, Bennet, Colles, O. S. Nicholson, Wood, Wrixton, Cope, Turner, Scratchley, Ligar, Griffith, Green, Roe, Hamilton, Archer, Colles. (*sic*)

18th January.—Still on the ranges. The camels sweating profusely from fear.

20th January.—I determined to-day to go straight at the ranges, and so far the experiment has succeeded well. The poor camels sweating and groaning, but we gave them a hot bath in Turner's Creek, which seemed to relieve them very much. At last through —, the camels, bleeding, sweating and groaning. [Leaves 35 to 39 torn out, and eight leaves preceding torn out. No marks of writing visible on the remnants. Leaves 24 to 33, both inclusive, blank on both sides.]

28th March.—At the conclusion of report it would be well to say that we reached the sea; but we could not obtain a view of the open ocean, although we made every endeavour to do so.

Leaving Carpentaria.—Flour, 83 lbs.; pork, 3 lbs.; D. meat, 35 lbs.; biscuits, 12 lbs.; rice, 12 lbs.; sugar, 10 lbs. (page 15 blank). Return party from Carpentaria arrived here last night, and found that the D. party had started on the same day. We proceeded slowly down the creek towards Adelaide, by Mount Hopeless, and shall endeavour to follow Gregory's track, but we are very weak, the camels are done up, and we shall not be able to travel faster than five miles a day at most. Gray died on the road from hunger and fatigue. We all suffered much from hunger, but the provisions left here will, I think, restore our strength. We have discovered a practicable route to Carpentaria, the principal portion of which lies in the 140th meridian of east longitude. Between this and the Stony Desert there is some good country, from there to the tropic. The country is dry and stony between the tropic and Carpentaria. A considerable portion is rangy, but it is well watered and richly grassed. [Pages 20 and 21 torn, no writing apparent; pages 22 and 23 contain a memorandum of stores, but without any particular reference to time and place.]

The Nardoo Plant.

This plant, known to botanists as *Marsilea Macropus*, answers the purpose of flour among the Australian aboriginals. It is very similar in appearance to

the clover of the United Kingdom, but is quadifoliate instead of trifoliate. Its seed is a little larger than that of the mustard plant, and grows in rows along the stem. It is in some degree related to the fern family, or, to be more accurate, the *Lycopodiums*.

Sensations of Starving.

For the first two days through which a strong and healthy man is doomed to exist upon nothing, his sufferings are perhaps more acute than in the remaining stages; he feels an inordinate, unspeakable craving at the stomach night and day. The mind runs upon beef, bread and other substances, but still, in a great measure, the body retains its strength. On the third and fourth days, but especially on the fourth, this incessant craving gives place to a sinking and weakness of the stomach, accompanied by nausea. The unfortunate sufferer still desires food, but with a loss of strength, he loses that eager craving which he felt in the earlier stages. Should he chance to obtain a morsel or two of food, he swallows it with a wolfish avidity, but five minutes afterwards his sufferings are more intense than ever. He feels as if he has swallowed a living lobster, which is clawing and feeding upon the very foundation of his existence.

On the fifth day his cheeks suddenly appear hollow and sunken, his body attenuated, his colour is ashy pale, and his eyes wild, glassy, and cannibalistic. The different parts of the system now war with each other. The stomach calls upon the legs to go with it in quest of food; the legs, from weakness, refuse. The sixth day brings with it increased suffering, although the pangs of hunger are lost in an overpowering languor and sickness. The head becomes dizzy; the ghosts of well-remembered dinners pass in hideous procession through the mind. The seventh day comes, bringing increasing lassitude, and further prostration of strength. The arms hang listlessly, the legs drag heavily. The desire for food is still left to a degree, but it must be brought, not sought. The miserable remnant of life which still hangs to the sufferer is a burden almost too grievous to be borne; yet his inherent love of existence induces a desire still to preserve it if it can be saved without a tax on bodily exertion. The mind wanders. At one moment he thinks his weary limbs cannot sustain him a mile; the next he is endowed with unnatural strength, and if there be a certainty of relief before him, dashes bravely and strongly forward, wondering whence proceeds his new and sudden impulse.

*The Last Letter of W. J. Wills to his Father,
entrusted to John King.*

“Cooper's Creek, June 28th, 1861.

“My dear Father,—These are probably the last lines you will ever get from me. We are on the point of starvation, not so much from absolute want of food, but from the want of nutriment in what we can get.

“Our position, although more provoking, is probably not near so disagreeable as that of poor Harry* and his companions. We have had very good luck, and made a most successful trip to Carpentaria and back, where we had every right to consider ourselves safe, having left a depôt here, consisting of four men, twelve horses, and six camels. They had provisions enough to have lasted them twelve months, with proper economy; and we had every right to expect that we should have been immediately followed up from Menindie by another party with additional provisions and every necessary for forming a permanent depôt at Cooper's Creek. The party we left here had special instructions not to leave until our return, *unless from absolute necessity*. We left the creek with nominally three months' supply, but they were reckoned at little over the rate of half rations. We calculated on having to eat some of the camels. By the greatest good luck, at every turn we crossed to the Gulf through a good deal of fine country, almost in a straight line from here. On the other side the camels suffered considerably from wet. We had to kill and jerk one, soon after starting back. We had now been out a little more than two months, and found it necessary to reduce the rations considerably, and this began to tell on all hands, but I felt it far less than any of the others. The great scarcity and shyness of game, and our forced marches, prevented our supplying the deficiency from external sources to any great extent; but we never could have held out but for crows, hawks, and the *portulac*. The latter is an excellent vegetable, and I believe, secured our return to this place. We got back here in four months and four days, and found the party had left the creek the same day; and we were not in a fit state to follow them.

“I find I must close this, that it may be planted, but I will write some more, although it has not so good a chance of reaching you as this. You have great claim on the Committee for this neglect. I leave you in sole charge of what is coming to me. The whole of my money I desire to leave to my

* Harry, his cousin, Lieutenant Le Vescompte, who perished with Sir John Franklin.

sisters. Other matters I will leave for the present. Adieu, my dear father.
Love to Tom.*

“(Signed), W. J. WILLS.

“P.S.—I think to live about four or five days. My spirits are excellent.”

[This letter was read by Wills to Burke in King's presence, before Burke left with King.]

Rescue of King.

Extract from journal of Mr. Edwin J. Welch, second-in-command to Mr. A. W. Howitt :—

13th September, 1861.—Shortly after leaving camp this morning Howitt and I, accompanied by Brahe, rode on down the creek ahead of the party, to the depôt at Fort Wills, hoping against hope that we should find Brahe's plant empty, and some record of the missing men. We were doomed to disappointment. After a careful examination of the spot, Brahe declared that everything was as he had left it six weeks before. The cache had not been disturbed, and nothing but a few blacks' tracks in the loose soil existed to show that any human life had broken the solitude. We therefore continued our way, wondering what could have become of them, and discussing with keen interest the suggestions offered by each to guide us in our future movements. We camped our horses and camels about three p.m., on the banks of a great water-hole in the creek, covered with wild fowl, and partly surrounded by a dense growth of dead trees of great size and height.

14th September.—Proceeded slowly westward, along the north bank of the creek, carefully searching for tracks. . . . Several times during the day we noticed blacks stealthily watching our movements from a distance, and travelling through the long grass in the direction we were taking. In the afternoon Howitt, who had been riding well out from the creek, returned with the news that he had struck fresh camel tracks trending northward, apparently those of a lost camel.

15th September.—Left camp at eight a.m. Howitt, with one of the black boys, started to run the camel-track seen yesterday. I gave Sampson, the leading man of the file, a compass-bearing to follow, with instructions to keep as closely to it as the windings of the creek would permit; and rode ahead, actuated by curiosity as to the movements of our black friends of yesterday. After travelling about three miles, my attention was attracted by a number of

* Tom, Wills' brother in Melbourne.

niggers on the opposite bank of the creek, who shouted loudly as soon as they saw me, and vigorously waved and pointed down the creek. A feeling of something about to happen excited me somewhat, but I little expected what the sequel was to be. Moving cautiously on through the undergrowth which covered the banks of the creek, the blacks kept pace with me on the opposite side, their cries increasing in volume and intensity, when suddenly, rounding a bend, I was startled at seeing a large body of them gathered on a sandy neck in the bed of the creek, between two large water-holes. Immediately they saw me they, too, commenced to howl, throw their arms about, and wave their weapons in the air. I at once pulled up, and considered the propriety of waiting the arrival of the party, for I felt far from satisfied regarding their intentions. But here, for the first time, my favourite horse—a black cob, known in the camp as “Piggy,” a Murray Downs bred stock horse of good local repute, both for foot and temper—appeared to think that his work was cut out for him, and the time arrived in which to do it. Pawing and snorting at the noise, he suddenly slewed round, and headed down the steep bank, through the undergrowth, straight for the crowd, as he had been wont to do after many a mob of “weaners” on his native plains. The blacks drew hurriedly back to the top of the opposite bank, shouting and gesticulating violently, and leaving one solitary figure, apparently covered with some scare-crow rags and part of a hat, prominently alone in the sand. Before I could pull up I had passed it, and as I passed, it tottered, threw up its hands in the attitude of prayer, and fell on the ground. The heavy sand helped me to conquer “Piggy” on the level, and when I turned back the figure had partially risen. Hastily dismounting, I was soon beside it, excitedly asking, “Who in the name of wonder are you?”

He answered, “I am King, sir.”

For the moment I did not grasp the fact that the objects of our search was attained, for King, being only one of the undistinguished members of the party, his name was unfamiliar to me.

“King?” I repeated.

“Yes,” he said. “The last man of the exploring expedition.”

“What, Burke’s?”

“Yes.”

“Where is he and Wills?”

“Dead—both dead, long ago.”

And again he fell to the ground. Then I knew who *stood** before me.

* This looks much like an Irish bull on the part of Mr. Welch.—Ed.

Jumping into the saddle, I rode up the bank, fired two or three revolver shots to attract the attention of the party, and on their coming up, sent the other black boy to cut Howitt's track, and bring him back to camp. We then put up a tent to shelter the rescued man, and by degrees, as he recovered from the excitement of the meeting, we got from him the sad story of the fate of his leaders. We got it at intervals only between the long rests which his exhausted condition compelled him to take.

Summarised Narrative of John King, Sole Survivor of the party of four (Burke, Wills and Gray), who travelled from Cooper's Creek to Carpentaria, 16th December, 1860, and returned 21st April, 1861.

We left the depôt in charge of Brahe, at Fort Wills (Cooper's Creek) on the 10th December, 1860, with six camels, one horse, and provisions for three months. The stock was in splendid condition, and we were in high spirits. Keeping a steady course northwards, we reached salt water and Mangrove swamps, on—I can't tell you the date; you will find it in Wills' field-books. He said it was the Gulf of Carpentaria, and we were satisfied. We could not get through the mangroves, and never saw the open sea, but we had accomplished the object of the expedition.

We did not follow our own tracks all the way back, but hurried as much as possible to reach the depôt in time. On the way back we killed the horse and one camel for meat, and one of the camels got away from us, so that we had only two left to finish the journey. We all walked, and threw away everything except the rations, a gun, and the clothes we had on. At one of the camps we buried all Mr. Wills' instruments, but I don't remember which one it was. Gray was getting knocked up, worse and worse every day, and then he got to taking more of the flour and sugar than his share when he got the chance. Mr. Burke threatened him, and boxed his ears for this, and when he turned in one night, about two days before we expected to reach the depôt, he said he felt he would not live till morning; and sure enough he didn't. When we turned out at daylight Gray was dead, so we stopped there that day and scooped a hole in the sand about three feet deep, with our hands, and buried him in it.

Mr. Burke, Mr. Wills and I reached the depôt at Cooper's Creek, on April 21st, about half-past seven in the evening, with two camels—all that remained of the six Mr. Burke took with him. All the provisions we then had consisted of a pound and-a-half of dried meat. We found the party had gone the same day, and, looking about for any mark they might have left, found the tree with "DIG." Mr. Wills said the party had left for the Darling. We dug and found the plant of stores. Mr. Burke took the papers out of the bottle, and then asked each of us if we were able to proceed up the creek in pursuit of the party. We said not; and he then said that he thought it his duty to ask us, but that he himself was unable to do so, but that he had decided upon trying to make Mount Hopeless, as he had been assured by the Committee in Melbourne that there was a cattle station within one hundred and fifty miles of Cooper's Creek. Mr. Wills was not inclined to follow his plan, but wished to go down our old track. At last, however, he gave way to Mr. Burke's wishes. I also wished to go down our old track.

We remained four or five days to recruit, making preparations to go down the creek by stages of four or five miles a day, and Mr. Burke placed a paper in the plant, stating what were our plans. Travelling down the Creek we got some fish from the natives, and some distance down one of the camels—Landa—got bogged, and although we remained there that day and part of the next trying to dig him out, we found our strength insufficient to do so. The evening of the second day we shot him as he lay, and having cut off as much meat as we could, we lived on it while we stayed to dry the remainder. Throwing all the least necessary things away, we made a load for the remaining camel—Rajah—and each of us carried a swag of about twenty-five pounds. We were then tracing down the branches of the creek running south, but found that they ran out into earthy plains. We had understood that the creek along Gregory's track was continuous; and finding that all these creeks ran out into the plains, Mr. Burke returned, our camel being completely knocked up.

We then intended to give the camel a spell for a few days, and to make a new attempt to push on forty or fifty miles to the south, in the hope of striking the creek. During the time that the camel was being rested, Mr. Burke and Mr. Wills went in search of the natives, to endeavour to find out how the *nardoo** grew. Having found their camp, they obtained as much *nardoo* cake and fish as they could eat, but could not explain that they wanted to be shown how to find the seed themselves. They returned on the third day, bringing some fish and *nardoo* cake with them. On the following day the camel

* For botanical description of this plant see Appendix, p. 335.

—Rajah—seemed very ill, and I told Mr. Burke that I thought he could not linger out more than four days; and as on the same evening the poor brute was on the point of dying, Mr. Burke ordered him to be shot. I did so, and we cut him up with two broken knives and a lancet. We cured the meat and planted it, and Mr. Burke made another attempt to find the *nardoo*, taking me with him. We went down the creek, expecting to find the natives at the camp where they had been last seen, but found that they had left; and not knowing whether they had gone up or down the creek we slept in their *gunyahs* that night, and on the following morning returned to Mr. Wills.

The next day Mr. Burke and I started up the creek, but could see nothing of them, and were three days away when we returned, and remained three days in our camp with Mr. Wills. We then made a plant of all the articles we could not carry with us, leaving five pounds of rice and a quantity of meat, and then followed up the creek to where there were some good native huts. We remained at that place a few days, and finding that our provisions were beginning to run short, Mr. Burke said that we ought to do something, and that if we did not find the *nardoo* we should starve, and that he intended to save a little dried meat and rice to carry us to Mount Hopeless. The three of us then came to the conclusion that it would be better to make a second attempt to reach Mount Hopeless, as we were then as strong as we were likely to be, our daily allowance being then reduced. Mr. Burke asked each of us whether we were willing to make another attempt to reach the South Australian settlement; and we decided on going. We took with us what remained of the provisions we had planted—two and-a-half pounds of oatmeal, a small quantity of flour, and the dried meat—this, with powder and shot and other articles, made up our swag to thirty pounds each, and Mr. Burke carried one billy of water and I another.

We had not gone far before we came to a flat, when I saw a plant growing which I took to be clover, but on looking closer I saw the seed, and called out that I had found the *nardoo*. They were very glad when I found it. We travelled three days, and struck a watercourse coming south from Cooper's Creek. We traced this as it branched out, and re-formed on the plains, until at last we lost it in flat country. Sandhills were in front of us, for which we made, but travelled all day and found no water. We were all greatly fatigued, as our rations now consisted of only one small Johnny cake and three sticks of dried meat daily. We camped that evening about four o'clock, intending to push next day until two o'clock p.m., and then, should we not find water, to return. We travelled, and found no water, and the three of us sat down and

rested for an hour, and then turned back. We all felt satisfied that had there been a few days rain we could have got through. We were then, according to Mr. Wills' calculation, forty-five miles from the creek. We travelled on the day we turned back very late, and on the following evening reached the nearest water at the creek. We gathered some *nardoo* and boiled the seeds, as we were unable to pound them.

The following day we reached the main creek, and, knowing where there was a fine water-hole and native *gunyahs*, we went there intending to save the remainder of our flour and dried meat for the purpose of making another attempt to reach Mount Hopeless. On the following day Mr. Wills and I went out to gather *nardoo*, of which we obtained a sufficient supply for three days, and, finding a pounding-stone at the *gunyahs*, Mr. Burke and I pounded the seeds, which was such slow work that we were compelled to use half flour and half *nardoo*. Mr. Burke and Mr. Wills then went down the creek for the remainder of the dried meat we had planted, and we had now all our things with us, gathering *nardoo* and living the best way we could. Mr. Burke requested Mr. Wills to go up the creek as far as the depôt, and to place a note in the plant there, stating that we were then living on the creek, the former note having stated that we were on our road to South Australia. He also was to bury there the field-books of the journey to the gulf. Before starting he got three pounds of flour and four pounds of pounded *nardoo*, and a pound of meat, as he expected to be absent about eight days. During his absence I gathered *nardoo* and pounded it, as Mr. Burke wished to lay in a supply in case of rain.

A few days after Mr. Wills left, some natives came down the creek to fish at some water-holes near the camp. They were very civil to us at first, and offered us some fish. On the second day they came again to fish, and Mr. Burke took down two bags, which they filled for him. On the third day they gave us one bag of fish, and afterwards all came to our camp. We used to keep our ammunition and other articles in one *gunyah*, and all three of us lived together in another. One of the natives took an oilcloth out of this *gunyah*, and Mr. Burke, seeing him run away with it, followed him with his revolver, and fired over his head, and upon this, the native dropped the oilcloth. While he was away the other blacks invited me to a water-hole to eat fish, but I declined to do so, as Mr. Burke was away, and a number of natives were about who would have taken all our things. When I refused, one took his boomerang and laid it over my shoulder, and then told me by signs that if I called out for Mr. Burke, as I was doing, he would strike me. Upon this I got them all in

front of the *gunyah* and fired a revolver over their heads, but they did not seem at all afraid till I got out the gun, when they all ran away. Mr. Burke, hearing the report, came back, and we saw no more of them until late that night, when they came with some cooked fish, and called out "White fellow!" Mr. Burke then went out with his revolver, and found a whole tribe coming down all painted, and with fish in small nets, carried by two men. Mr. Burke went out to meet them, and they wished to surround him, but he knocked as many of the nets of fish out of their hands as he could, and shouted out to me to fire. I did so, and they ran off. We collected five small nets of cooked fish. The reason he would not accept the fish from them was, that he was afraid of being too friendly, lest they should be always at our camp. We then lived on fish until Mr. Wills returned. He told us that he had met the natives soon after leaving us, and that they were very kind to him, and had given him plenty to eat, both on going up and returning. He seemed to consider that he would have very little difficulty in living with them, and as their camp was close to ours, he returned to them the same day, and found them very hospitable and friendly, keeping him with them two days. They then made signs to him to "be off." He came to us and narrated what had happened, but went back to them the following day, when they gave him his breakfast, but made signs for him to go away. He pretended not to understand them and would not go, upon which they made signs that they were going up the creek, and that he had better go down. They packed up and left the camp, giving Mr. Wills a little *nardoo* to take to us.

During his absence, while Mr. Burke was cooking some fish, in a strong wind, the flames caught the *gunyah* and burnt it so rapidly that we were unable, not only to put it out, but to save any of our things excepting one revolver and a gun. Mr. Wills having returned, it was decided to go up the creek, and live with the natives if possible, as Mr. Wills thought we should have but little difficulty in obtaining provisions from them if we camped on the side of the creek opposite to them. He said he knew where they were gone, so we packed up and started. Coming to the *gunyah*, where we expected to have found them, we were disappointed, and seeing a *nardoo* field close by, halted, intending to make it our camp. For some time we were employed gathering *nardoo*, and laying up a supply. Mr. Wills and I used to collect and carry home a bag each day, and Mr. Burke generally pounded sufficient for our dinner during our absence. But Mr. Wills found himself getting very weak, and was shortly unable to go out and gather *nardoo* as before, nor even strong enough to pound it, so that in a few days he became almost helpless. I still continued gathering, and Mr.

Burke soon began to feel very weak, and said he could be of very little use in pounding. I had now to gather and pound for all three of us. I continued to do this for a few days, but, finding my strength rapidly failing, my legs being very weak and painful, I was unable to go out for several days, and we were compelled to consume six days' stock which we had laid by. Mr. Burke now proposed that I should gather as much as possible in three days, and that with this supply, he and I should go in search of the natives—a plan that had been urged upon us by Mr. Wills, as the only chance of saving him and ourselves as well, as he clearly saw I was no longer able to collect sufficient for our wants. Having collected the seed as proposed, and having pounded sufficient to last Mr. Wills for eight days, and two days for ourselves, we placed water and firewood within his reach, and started. Before leaving him, however, Mr. Burke asked him if he still wished it, as under no other circumstances would he leave him, and Mr. Wills again said he looked upon it as our only chance. He then gave Mr. Burke a letter and his watch, for his father, and we buried the remainder of the field-books near the *gunyah*. Mr. Wills likewise said that in case of my surviving Mr. Burke, he hoped I would carry out his last wishes in giving the watch and letter to his father.

In travelling the first day Mr. Burke seemed very weak, and complained of great pain in his legs and back. On the second day he seemed to be better, and said that he thought he was getting stronger, but on starting did not go two miles before he said he could go no further. I persisted in his trying to go on, and managed to get him along several times, until I saw that he was almost knocked up, when he said he could not carry his swag, and threw all he had away. I also reduced mine, taking nothing but a gun and some powder and shot, with a small pouch and some matches. On starting again we did not go far before Mr. Burke said he would halt for the night, but as the place was close to a large sheet of water, and exposed to the wind, I prevailed on him to go on a little further to the next reach of water, where we camped. We searched about and found a few small patches of *nardoo*, which I collected and pounded, and with a crow which I shot, made a good evening meal. From the time that we halted Mr. Burke seemed to be getting worse, although he ate his supper. He said he felt convinced he could not last many hours, and gave me his watch, which he said belonged to the Committee, and a pocket-book, to give to Sir William Stawell, and in which he wrote some notes. He then said to me, "I hope you will remain with me here until I am quite dead—it is a comfort to know that some one is by; but when I am dying it is my wish that you should place the pistol in my right hand, and that you leave me unburied as I lie."

That night he spoke very little, and the following morning I found him speechless, or nearly so; and about eight o'clock he expired. I remained a few hours there, but as I saw there was no use in remaining longer, I went up the creek in search of the natives. I felt very lonely, and at night usually slept in deserted *wurleys* belonging to the natives. Two days after leaving the spot where Mr. Burke died, I found some *gunyahs*, where the natives had deposited a bag of *nardoo*, sufficient to last me a fortnight, and three bundles containing various articles. I also shot a crow that evening, but was in great dread that the natives would come and deprive me of the *nardoo*.

I remained there two days to recover my strength, and then returned to Mr. Wills. I took back three crows, but found him lying dead in his *gunyah*, and the natives had been there and had taken away some of his clothes. I buried the corpse with sand, and remained there some days; but finding that my stock of *nardoo* was running short, and being unable to gather it, I tracked the natives who had been to the camp by their footprints in the sands, and went some distance down the creek, shooting crows and hawks on the road. The natives hearing the report of the gun came to meet me, and took me with them to their camp, giving me *nardoo* and fish. They took the birds I had shot, and cooked them for me, and afterwards showed me a *gunyah*, where I was to sleep with three of the single men. The following morning they commenced talking to me, and putting one finger on the ground and covering it with sand, at the same time pointing up the creek, saying "White fellow," which I understood to mean that one white man was dead. From this I knew that these were the tribe who had taken Mr. Wills' clothes. They then asked me where the third white man was, and I also made a sign of putting two fingers on the ground and covering them with sand, at the same time pointing up the creek. They appeared to feel great compassion for me, when they understood that I was alone on the creek, and gave me plenty to eat. After being four days with them I saw that they were becoming tired of me, and they made signs that they were going up the creek, and that I had better go downwards; but I pretended not to understand them. The same day they shifted camp, and I followed them, and on reaching their camp I shot some crows, which pleased them so much that they made me a breakwind* in the centre of their camp, and came and sat around me until such time as the crows were cooked, when they assisted me to eat them. The same day one of the women, to which I had given part of a crow, came and gave me a ball of *nardoo*, saying that she would give me more only she had such a sore arm she was unable to pound. She showed me a sore

* Similar to a breakwater.—Ed.

on her arm, and the thought struck me that I would boil some water in the billy, and wash her arm with a sponge. During the operation the whole tribe sat round, and were muttering one to the other. Her husband sat down by her side, and she was crying all the time. After I had washed it, I touched it with some nitrate of silver, when she began to yell, and ran off crying out "*Mokow! Mokow!*" (Fire! Fire!) From this time she and her husband used to give me a small quantity of *nardoo*, both night and morning, and whenever the tribe were about going on a fishing excursion, he used to give me notice to go with them. They used to assist me in making a *gourley* (or breakwind) whenever they shifted camp. I generally shot a crow or a hawk, and gave it to them in return for these little services. Every four or five days the tribe would surround me, and ask me whether I intended to go up or down the creek. At last I made them understand that if they went up I should go up the creek, and if they went down, I should also go down; and from this time they seemed to look upon me as one of themselves, and supplied me with fish and *nardoo* regularly. They were very anxious, however, to know where Mr. Burke lay, and one day when we were fishing at the water-holes close by, I took them to the spot. On seeing the remains, the whole party wept bitterly, and covered them with bushes.

After this they were much kinder to me than before, and I always told them that the white men would be here before two moons; and in the evening, when they came with *nardoo* and fish, they used to talk about the white fellows coming, at the same time pointing to the moon. I also told them that they would receive many presents, and they constantly asked me for tomahawks, called by them *bomayko*. From this time until the relief party arrived—a period of about a month—they treated me with uniform kindness, and looked upon me as one of themselves. The day on which I was released, one of the tribe, who had been fishing, came and told me that the white fellows were coming, and the whole of the tribe who were then in camp sallied out in every direction to meet the party, while the man who had brought the news took me across the creek, where I shortly saw the party coming down.

Rescue of King.

In his Introduction to "Australia Twice Traversed," Mr. Ernest Giles writes as follows:—

"At this time (September, 1861) a friend of mine, named Conn, and I were out exploring for pastoral runs, and were in retreat upon the Darling, when we

met Howitt going out. When farther north I repeatedly urged my companion to visit the Cooper, from which we were then only eighty or ninety miles away, in vain. I urged how we might succour some, if not all, of the wanderers. Had we done so we should have found and rescued King, and we might have been in time to save Burke and Wills also; but Conn would not agree to go. It is true we were nearly starved as it was, and might have been entirely starved had we gone there, but by good fortune we met and shot a stray bullock that had wandered from the Darling, and this happy chance saved our lives."

From the above it would appear that if they had rescued King they would have lost the bullock, with the result of three starving men being stranded on the Barcoo. For obvious reasons it seems a fortunate circumstance for King that he was left in Howitt's hands. Poor Conn, we are told, was not only killed, but eaten, in the following year (1862), by wild natives, near Cooktown, on the coast of Queensland.

*Burke and Wills' Expedition.**Liberality of the Victorian Government.*

It is gratifying to record that pensions were conferred by the Government of Victoria on the relations of Wills, on King, the sole survivor of the expedition, and on Mrs. Dogherty, Burke's nurse. The following particulars are from the Melbourne *Herald* :—

"In Committee of supply, various notes of a special character were taken before Parliament broke up. Among them were the following:—£3,125 for the purchase of debentures (to remain the property of the Government), the interest of which to be paid as an annuity to King, the survivor of the exploring expedition; £2,000 for the purchase of debentures in a similar manner, the interest to be paid as an annuity to Mrs. Wills, the mother of Wills; £500 to each of the two Misses Wills; £125 to Dr. Wills (to pay his passage to England); £200 to an Indian camel-driver, who lost the use of an arm by the bite of a camel while on the exploring expedition; and a similar sum to Mr. Welsh, whose eyes were seriously injured by a stroke of light when he was taking an observation while he was a member of Howitt's searching party; and £1,000 for the purchase of debentures, the interest on which will be paid to

Mrs. Ellen Dogherty, the foster-mother of poor Burke on account of his gallant but fatal expedition."

In addition to the above pensions, and the heavy cost of a magnificent public funeral, we learn that at an ordinary meeting of the Royal Society (Melbourne), held on the evening of the 11th November, 1861, it was stated by the Hon. Secretary, Dr. Macadam, M.L.A., that the Government intended to recommend an appropriation of £2,000 for the erection of a monument to Burke and Wills; and the members of the Society were further informed that Mr. Oliver Summers, of Melbourne, had been requested to prepare a suitable design, and that the site for the memorial would be selected from one of the most eligible reserves in the metropolis.

It must be remembered that this princely generosity was extended by a Colony which had no direct interest in, or need for exploration within her own borders, and all this honour was conferred upon a leader who had signally failed. Had he succeeded, it is hard to estimate the magnitude of the reward he would have received at the hands of the generous and appreciative colonists of Victoria.

Stuart's Tree, Marked J. M. D. S.

The Minister of Education received the following telegram from the Hon. J. L. Parsons, Government Resident Northern Territory:—

"Port Darwin, October 20th, 1885.

"Returned safely. Ascended South Alligator River over thirty miles in the s.s. *Palmerston*; East Alligator fifteen miles in the *Palmerston*, and twenty miles more in the launch. The land is much the same as on the Adelaide River. Plains with jungles and *pandana* flats. The jungles are limited in area, and sandy. All the plains can be easily drained. Reports will follow by Messrs. McMinn and Holtze. Stuart's tree, marked J.M.D.S., was found to be almost exactly where it is placed on the map accompanying his report. The report itself is strikingly accurate in the description of country and *flora* as now, except that he used the word *valley* instead of *plain*. The tree was surrounded with undergrowth, and without the Woolna native would not have been found, although it had been visited and reported upon by Surveyor Hingston and party two years ago. The tree is about fifty feet high, and the splendid Crown letters are almost filled up with new bark, but are distinctly visible. Mr. McMinn, with four hands, travelled south to the coast, hoping to find the tree

on which the flag was planted, and where the case containing the document was buried; but the result did not coincide with the description. Instead of open beach he came to dense mangroves. He examined every large tree upon the west side of the point, but failed to discover the case. He then made a survey of Stuart's Point, and built a mound on the Open Beach Cemetery. Great credit is due to Mr. McMinn in connection with the tree discovered. For years he has gathered information from natives, and by the aid of one of Hingston's party he first found it. An old man of the Woolna tribe says that the tree where the flag was hoisted has fallen down. The natives who were with us have gone to find this old man, and look for the tin case where the tree stood."

Water Trees.

Those who go out to grapple with the dangers, the hardships, and the mysteries of the Australian desert regions should, above all things, instruct themselves in bush lore. It has happened more than once that in these dread torrid wastes the body has been found, lying beneath a tree, of some poor wanderer who had died from the lack of water, even while there was within a few inches of him a plentiful supply. In some waterless regions of Australia are to be found trees which actually provide a supply of water to those who know where or how to look for it. A correspondent of *Science Siftings* says:—"I shall not soon forget my first introduction to a water-tree. I was in the northern territory of South Australia, and I was making my first journey through the desert in company with a friend who was a well-informed bushman. It was towards the end of the day, and, as we had been detained for several hours owing to an accident, we had still fifteen miles to travel. The water-bag had been drained hours before, and in that dreadful desert our sufferings had already become intolerable. Suddenly my friend plunged his spurs into his weary horse, and dashed away at full gallop towards a tree some fifty yards off, shouting to me to follow. Flinging himself from his saddle, he clawed with his fingers the sand at the base of the tree, and presently laid bare one of its spreading roots. This was torn from the earth to the length of about six feet, and, breaking off a piece about a foot and a-half long, my companion, signing me to follow his example, applied one end of the piece of root to his parched lips, and elevated the other end. I followed suit, and, to my indescribable joy, a cool, refreshing draught of water rewarded me. The one root amply sufficed

for our wants. There were some ten or eleven left, enough to have satisfied a dozen thirsty men. Some of the water we drained into our water-bags. It was clear and cool, but after standing for a few hours I noticed that it became discoloured."

Port Essington and Raffles Bay.

Port Essington, named after Vice-Admiral Sir William Essington, and Raffles Bay, named after Sir Stamford Raffles, were discovered by Captain King in April, 1818, during his voyage in the *Mermaid* cutter. Owing to his favourable report, it was resolved to form a settlement at the former place. It was not, however, until August, 1824, that the *Tamar*, commanded by Captain Bremer, and accompanied by the *Countess of Harcourt* and the *Lady Nelson*, arrived at Port Essington, and, after taking formal possession of the north coast of Australia, between the 129th and 136th degrees, fixed a site on Melville Island, and built a log redoubt, which was called Fort Dundas. This formed the nucleus of a settlement numbering eighty-one male settlers, four females, and forty-five prisoners of the Crown. (What Colony could be expected to flourish with such a ridiculously small proportion of the fair sex?) The natives, who were at first friendly, subsequently took to thieving, and, on the settlers resenting their constant larcenies, serious hostilities broke out between the blacks and whites. It finally became unsafe to leave the camp unarmed, both the surgeon and the commissariat officer having been murdered by the savages. Then scurvy broke out among the settlers, and the supply of fresh water was found to be deficient. The colonial brig, the *Lady Nelson*, had been left with them, but she sailed for Timor, and never was more heard of. It was likewise expected that the Malays would trade with the inhabitants, but these hopes were not realised.

At length it became evident that the experiment was a failure, and on the 18th of June, 1827, Captain Stirling founded a new settlement in Raffles Bay, on the mainland, to which was given the name of Fort Wellington, in compliment to the conqueror at Waterloo, fought twelve years previously. Melville Island was finally abandoned early in 1829, all stock and other property being removed to the new depôt, which was under the command of Captain Barker. Scarcely had the colonists settled down in their new quarters, when a similar course of thieving, retaliation and revenge began between the blacks and the settlers. The climate, too, was the cause of bitter

complaint, and doleful reports were sent to Sydney. The authorities seem to have wasted but little time in deliberation, for orders were sent to abandon the place in August. The new settlement was accordingly deserted on the 28th of August, 1829. Orange, lime, lemon, banana, fig, and many other trees were left, in the hope that the natives would find out their value; also a buffalo bull and three cows, a horse and mare, pigs and poultry. Having nailed the Union Jack on the fort, the party bade a last farewell to the little northern Colony.

Again in 1838 Sir Gordon Bremer and Lieutenant Stanley, commanding the *Alligator* and the *Britomart*, were sent to Port Essington to found another settlement—this time on a purely military footing. It received the name of Victoria, and was visited in December, 1845, by the ill-fated Dr. Leichardt, on the occasion of his memorable journey from Moreton Bay to Port Essington. This attempt was as grievous a failure as the former one. The soil proved to be unproductive, while fever and ague were regular visitants. Hurricanes destroyed the shipping, and in November, 1839, almost swept away the entire town. Earthquakes added to the miseries of the settlers, and altogether their difficulties were overwhelming. Thus, in 1850, it was resolved to relinquish what seemed to be a hopeless effort, and the north coast of Australia was left to its aboriginal owners.

Escape Cliffs.

From the following episode, while H.M.S. *Beagle* was at Adam Bay, Escape Cliffs derived their name. It was thus described in Captain Stokes' journal:—

“Messrs. Fitzmaurice and Keys went ashore to compare the compasses. From the quantity of iron contained in the rocks, it was necessary to select a spot free from its influence. A sandy beach at the foot of Escape Cliffs was accordingly chosen. The observations had commenced, and were about half completed, when, on the summit of the cliffs, which rose about twenty feet above their heads, suddenly appeared a large party of natives, with spears poised and quivering, as if about immediately to deliver them. Stamping on the ground and shaking their heads to and fro, they threw out their long shaggy locks in a circle, whilst their glaring eyes flashed with fury, as they champed and spit over the ends of their long beards—a custom with Australian natives when in a state of wild excitement. They were evidently in earnest, and bent on

mischievous. It was, therefore, not a little surprising to behold this paroxysm of rage evaporate before the happy presence of mind displayed by Mr. Fitzmaurice, in immediately beginning to dance and shout, though in momentary expectation of being pierced by a dozen spears. In this he was imitated by Mr. Keys, and they succeeded in diverting them from their bad designs, until a boat landing in a bay drew off their attention.

“Messrs. Fitzmaurice and Keys had firearms lying on the ground within reach of their hands; the instant, however, they ceased dancing and attempted to touch them, a dozen spears were pointed at their breasts. Their lives hung upon a thread, and their escape must be regarded as truly wonderful, and only to be attributed to the happy readiness with which they adapted themselves to the perils of their situation. This was the last we saw of the natives in Adam Bay, and the meeting is likely to be long remembered by some, and not without pleasant recollections; for, although at the time it was justly looked upon as a serious affair, it afterwards proved a great source of mirth. No one could recall to mind without laughing the ludicrous figures necessarily cut by our shipmates, when, to amuse the natives, they figured on the light fantastic toe, and literally danced for their lives.”

Camels.

In the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, vol. xiv., p. cii. (1844), we find Sir Roderick Murchison using these words—“Others again say with our member, Mr. Gowen, that a thorough exploration of the interior of Australia will never be effected until we import thither camels from our eastern possessions, and thus at once get rid of the vast difficulties attending the want of water.”

This suggestion seems to have borne fruit, for in 1846 we find Mr. Horrocks using a camel during his expedition through South Australia. Messrs. Burke, Wills and McKinlay also were provided with these animals, but they were never very plentiful, until Mr. Elder resolved to introduce them on a large scale. In 1866 a gentleman named Stuckey was despatched by him to India, for the purpose of purchasing camels and asses. Out of one hundred and twenty-four of the former shipped at Kurrachee, one hundred and twenty-one were landed in South Australia in perfectly good condition, three having died from lung disease on the voyage.

Three different breeds were imported, viz.: The fast, or Mekrana camel, for

riding purposes ; the hill camel, from Scinde, suitable for riding or baggage, being the common camel of Western India ; and the hairy camel, from Candahar, a fine, strong, thick-set animal, eight, nine, and ten feet high, the best kind for heavy loads.

It has been found that the Australian vegetation is admirably adapted for camels, in fact they seem to thrive better in barren, than in rich districts. From the height and long neck of these animals, they are enabled to feed upon the bushes, which form their natural food, at a distance from the ground far above the reach of horse or bullock, and therefore they can live and flourish where either of the latter would infallibly starve ; for though grass is frequently a scarce commodity, yet the most sterile tracts of Australia are commonly clothed with scrubby shrubs.

Another merit possessed by these animals, is that the peculiar construction of the stomach enables them to pass several days without water, and yet suffer no serious inconvenience from the privation. Training, however, is necessary to develop this capability, and a camel, unaccustomed to abstinence is apt to neglect to husband its store, while another inured to privation would carefully conserve sufficient water to last for several days.

The female breeds about four times in five years, and at four years of age the young camels shed two teeth, and continues this each year, like the sheep, until the seventh, when it is full-mouthed, with eight teeth. At ten years the camel is in his prime, and may be likened to a four-year-old horse. It continues in good working condition for thirty years longer. Little trouble is required to break them in. They are handled when quite young, and are capable of bearing a light load at three years old. A European can learn to manage camels in a few weeks, and with patience will attend to them as well as an Afghan, but he must remember that a drove of camels require different treatment from a team of bullocks. The harsh shout and the whip employed in driving the latter must be given up, and kindness substituted. The native drivers have often warned white men against irritating the camel by ill-usage, and with good cause. When excited to anger he becomes a terrible antagonist, and if he attacks a man he will probably kill him. His strength, long neck, height, weight and huge tusks, make it almost impossible to beat him off single-handed ; and he has an awkward habit of suddenly dropping on his knees upon the body of a prostrate enemy, which is almost certain to crush his life out. One inconvenience in using camels in Australia is the strong antipathy towards them shown by horses and bullocks. They seem to regard the camel with a combination of astonishment and dread, especially if he happens, when feeding

alongside, to turn his strange, ungainly head, and look them in the face. But this difficulty is by no means insurmountable, and training gradually eradicates the prejudice of our faithful friends, the horse and the ox.

Letter from Col. Warburton to the Hon. Thomas Elder, entrusted to Mr. Lewis.

Camp on the Oakover, Lat. 21° 9'.
December 13th, 1873.

Dear Mr. Elder,—We are alive, and that is all. We have lost everything, and have only two camels left out of seventeen. Our journey has been difficult beyond all I had supposed possible. We are reduced to such a state by famine that we can scarcely crawl one hundred yards, and are quite incapable of hard work, or indeed, any work at all.

I send two men with camels to try to get some help from the station on the De Grey, and this goes by them. I cannot now give you details, not knowing who your agents in Perth are. I have written to the Governor of Western Australia to take steps through your agent to send a small craft to take us to Perth. This is the only way we can get there. We are unable to go by land. It would require an entire new fit-out, and would cost much.

I may safely say that no exploring party ever endured such protracted suffering as we have done, nor did any one ever cross with their lives so vast an extent of continuous bad country. A man gets great credit for exploring such a country as we are now in—it is mere child's play (*sic*); whilst we unfortunates, I suppose, shall be called fools for fighting for months against misfortunes and difficulties which have turned back others in two or three days. I hope to be able, when in Adelaide, to satisfy you that I have done all that could be done to get across. We have succeeded, and that is one consolation, but our lives have been saved only by the mercy and goodness of God. Our own arm could not help us out of the shadow of death that has fallen darkly upon us on several occasions.

We are gaunt pictures of suffering, and have nothing but the few rags we stand up in.

The monsoon may delay me. I shall, of course, hasten to Adelaide.

Ever yours faithfully,

(Signed), P. EGERTON WARBURTON.

The Hon. T. Elder, M.L.C., Adelaide.

*Colonel Warburton on Camel Meat.**Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. xix., p. 45.*

" We had to eat seven of them (camels). I daresay when the animal is fat, and well fed on oil-cake, &c., the flesh cannot be very bad; but when he has been worked to that extent that he is unable to stand, and is shot only because it would be a pity to leave him to rot, his meat is not very good, and is interlaced with large sheets of (something like) parchment. He looks a very large animal, but there is very little meat on him. He is more bone than anything else, and I can assure you that of all our buckets of meat—for the bucket was our cooking vessel—that we cooked when a camel was killed, never in a single instance that I can remember was there one single bubble of grease on the surface. The head is somewhat of a delicacy, and the feet are really very good, for his condition does not affect the feet much. In our distress, however, we were obliged to eat him inside and outside too; and his hide is pretty good when you can get nothing else, but if anybody here has had the boldness to taste the contents of a carpenter's glue pot, it comes to much the same thing. We were compelled by absolute starvation to eat our last camel, all but the hair, clean through from end to end, and after the bones had been lying in the sand for some days they were broken up to make broth of, and in the course of a short time, I don't think there was any of the animal to be seen. The advantage of the camel is that he can work until he cannot work any longer, and then you can eat him."

With all respect to Colonel Warburton, I fail to see the force of the last sentence, for it may surely be said of *any* beast of burden that "he can work until he cannot work any longer," and when he arrives at this stage there is nothing to prevent his master killing and eating him.

*Extract from Colonel Warburton's Speech before the Royal
Geographical Society.*

When the summer began—that is about September—when our provisions ran short, and our camels began to fail—the heat became so excessive that we dared not travel during the day. The camels would have been knocked up in the course of two days, and we would have been left helpless in the desert.

We were therefore compelled to travel in the dark when it was a little cooler, and the consequence was that we were cut off from finding water during our march. When we came to our halt for the day, we were so tired that we were unable to go out and look about us. Not only were we thus compelled to seek our rest in the day time, but the greatest annoyance perhaps of all was caused by these insignificant insects, the ants. They gave us no peace. It was impossible to go to the shady side of the bush without being immediately covered. We could not sit down, or attempt to write, or make any calculations, without being literally covered with these creatures. We had to travel all night, and we could not sleep in the day, which was another thing that caused us to fall into such a miserable state. When our hopes became rather depressed, the best thing we thought we could do was to stay some time at one place where there was water, recruit our camels as much as possible, and then risk all upon a final rush to reach the Oakover River, where we were sure of water. It was a subject of very much deliberation with me, and of great anxiety. Of course, it was "neck or nothing." The distance was about one hundred and sixty or one hundred and seventy miles, and if the camels could reach that distance, well and good, if they could not we should fail. But there was no alternative. We could not sit down there and starve, and we thought we might as well die in going as in sitting still. But we were unable to do that, and but for the interposition of Providence in bringing us on two occasions to water, we certainly never could have got through it. Water was found by our companion, Charley—a black-fellow whom we took with us from Alice Springs, and a very good boy he was. One morning he left us without saying a word. None of us knew where he was. We were greatly alarmed, for he was a favourite. I was in great perplexity at his non-return. There were six of us there. It was death to stay, and it seemed a most cruel and inhuman thing to leave the poor lad. We therefore did not know what to do, and as a compromise I stayed two or three hours, and at nine o'clock, whether he came or not, I decided we must go. He did not come, and we started. We had bells on our camels' necks to make a little noise, and in the middle of the night, about eleven or twelve o'clock, we heard what in Australia is called a *coo-ey*—a voice calling to us—and we were inexpressibly delighted to find our black boy cheerily turn up. He came out at right angles upon us. It is evident that had we started off an hour later he would have crossed our track and missed us. Had we been at all earlier we should have passed the point, and he would have gone behind us. It was too dark to see our tracks; but it so happened under providential dispensation that we exactly cut each other. He had been to a native camp, and had

got information about water, so we immediately sat down and drank all we had with us, and then we went on to the new supply, and that gave us a fresh start. On a subsequent occasion the poor lad—as he was willing to go single-handed to a native camp, we keeping the animals and the rest of the party out of sight so that the natives might not be alarmed—was treated very kindly, and they gave him water, he no doubt thinking that the negotiation was amicably settled. But the instant they saw the camels they were, I supposed, frightened, and imagined that some treachery was intended against them; so they put one spear through his back and another through his arm, and hit him a blow on the head that would have split half-a-dozen European skulls, and they nearly broke his jaw. The natives were driven off as soon as the camels could come up. The lad, I am happy to say, recovered, and he is now in my house in Australia—or was there—doing exceedingly well. I do not know whether you are aware of it—it may seem a very trifling thing—but a black fellow's skull is about five times the thickness of a European's. It really is.* I do not mean as to his intelligence, for there I daresay he is as sharp as any of us, but I mean in actual thickness; and unless it were so I do not know how he could possibly sustain the blows with most massive clubs that are administered on his head. I never had the pleasure of seeing one of the women's skulls, but I imagine they must be even thicker than the men's, for they have to endure even more blows.

I must not trespass longer on your time, except to give you a faint description of our miserable condition just at the last. We had succeeded in our object. We had traversed the whole of the unknown country, and were located on Gregory's furthest point, on the Oakover. We had reached that water by a miserable night march, in which I, being somewhat too old for the work, was obliged to be strapped to the back of a camel, because I could neither sit nor stand. We reached that point, but were not able to go any further. We had eaten the greater part of our camels, and had only three left. One could not work at all, and the question with us was how we were to get from that point to a station which we thought existed somewhere on the De Grey, though we did not know where. It turned out that the station was one hundred and seventy miles away from us. We had no beasts to carry us. We were utterly unable to walk one hundred yards, and therefore it was quite clear we could not have got down in the ordinary way. I therefore took the two camels that were tolerably capable of work, and sent the

* This must be wrong. Col. Warburton could never have compared the transverse section of the European skull with that of an Australian Aboriginal. My own medical adviser, Dr. William Coryn, of Brixton, at once confirmed my opinion, and the statement is so absurd on the face of it, that I need go no further.—*EDITOR.*

two strongest of our party down the river to look for the station, and to endeavour, as a last resource, to procure some provisions and beasts to carry us. During their absence we lay there on the bank of the Oakover, which at that time had not a drop of water in it. We had, however, a water-hole, separate from the river. We lay there for a great many days, not knowing when our party would come back. Sometimes we caught a bird, and there were plenty of fish in the water-hole close by our side. We had hooks and lines, but they would not bite, and we had no nets. So we saw the fish, and they were there whilst we were starving. There were also plenty of ducks about, but they would not settle on that water where we were, and we could not walk after them, though we had powder and shot. Day by day we went down for bathing; but for nothing else, and we were being cruelly starved to death. To show you what changes are met with in Australia, I may mention that the bed of the Oakover at that point was three hundred or four hundred yards in width; but there was not a drop of water in it, and probably there had not been for a long time. We went to bed one night, when the channel of the river was quite empty, but at three o'clock in the morning it was full to the bank, with plenty of ducks and large trees borne along by the current, floating on its surface. It was then a splendid river. The party that I had sent down behaved admirably. They reached Messrs. Grant, Harper and Anderson's station, where they were received with the greatest kindness. Horses and provisions were at once supplied, and to the liberality and promptitude of these gentlemen we entirely owe our lives. Not only did we receive such kindness from individuals, but we were treated in the same manner by every community we passed through. We were regarded by the Government as guests of Western Australia from the moment we set foot on the inhabited parts. We were franked back to our own shores close to the seaport of Adelaide, and I owe the authorities a very great debt of gratitude, which I take this opportunity of expressing.

Professor Owen on Australia.

The following remarks on the physical configuration of Australia and its geological causes, by Professor Owen, were communicated in a note to a friend of Colonel Warburton. It runs thus:—

In one of these wave-movements of earth's crust, which, at its height,

divides the waters, and "makes the dry land appear," the present Continent of Australia resulted. But as such earth-wave attains the level which the sea is compelled by gravitation to keep, the contest begins between land and water. Attaining the upper fathoms of the sea, put in motion by planetary, atmospheric and terrestrial influences, the opposition of the risen crust to the currents, undulations and storm-waves, leads to wear, waste and destruction, proportionate to the time elapsing ere the headlands finally emerge above the dash of the highest tide-waves.

The south-eastern part of Australia has benefited by this battle, through the resulting loss, or capture, by the sea of much of the later (tertiary) deposits which it had received during its time of submergence, prior to the upheaval.

The consequent exposure of the older secondary, but especially of the primary, or palæozoic formations, is the main geological condition, not only of the access to mineral wealth, but of the fertility of the Provinces of Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, through the quarternary subaerial formations which have here and there accumulated since those parts of Australia became dry land. Where the tertiary submarine formations have escaped the denuding actions of the land's rise, they are, in the main, of a barren, sandy nature, opposing thirsty spinifex plains to the progress of the explorer.

Under the name—Western Australia, about one-third of the Continent is assigned to this province. Such observation as has hitherto been made, recognize a poor or barren sand or sand-stone with small oases. The testimony of Colonel Warburton coincides with this view of its geology; *but conclusions should not be arbitrarily stretched beyond experience, nor further explorations discouraged.*

Since these words were written, Western Australia has revealed her vast auriferous wealth, and every day brings her nearer the time when she will prove to be the greatest gold-field in the world.

Ayers Rock (from the Journal of W. C. Gosse).

July 19th.—The hill was one immense rock, rising abruptly from the plain. The holes I had noticed were caused by the water, in some places forming immense caves. I rode round the foot of the rock in search of a place to ascend, and found a water-hole on the south side, near which I made an

attempt to reach the top, but found it hopeless. Continued along to the west, and discovered a strong spring coming from the centre of the rock, and pouring down some large deep gullies to the foot.

This seems to be a favourite resort of the natives in the wet season, judging from the numerous camps in every cave. These caves are formed by large pieces breaking off the main rock and falling to the foot. The blacks made holes under them, and the heat of their fires causes the rock to shell off, forming large arches. They amuse themselves covering these with all sorts of devices, some of snakes very cleverly done. Others, of two hearts joined together; and in one I noticed a drawing of a creek, with an emu track going along the centre.

Interview with Mr. David Lindsay.

GERALDTON, January 21.

I had an interview yesterday with Mr. David Lindsay, the leader of the Elder Exploring Expedition. Mr. Lindsay is prohibited from supplying the Press with detailed information, and therefore I did not glean much respecting the work thus far accomplished by the expedition. Owing to the failure of water believed to be permanent, and from which Block A was to have been traversed, the first great section of the work entrusted to the expedition was not so thoroughly explored as was originally intended. Mr. Lindsay, however, is of opinion that his ride across the country from the vicinity of Mount Hamilton to Fraser Range, demonstrates that the S.E. portion of Block A is a sandy desert. He is confident of having better luck later on; and he is anxious to get out Eastward of the Murchison Goldfield, in order to explore the North Eastern portion of Block A. He believes the expedition will be able to perform its work more thoroughly by having its base of operations on the settled districts. Mr. Lindsay cannot give any reason for the resignation of the scientific members of the expedition, but I should judge the leader has not had a "rosy" time of it, and that he will be glad to have, as substitutes for the men who have resigned, others inspired with strong enthusiasm for the great work which the expedition has undertaken. Mr. Lindsay is a fine-looking man, one whom, I should judge, to be a typical bushman, and possessing all the intrepidity and courage which should characterise the leader of such an expedition as Sir T. Elder contemplated. Although circumstances have been so far against him, he is likely to redeem the past partial failure by future brilliant successes. He is waiting in town for further instructions from the Geographical Society. I

should mention that Mr. Lindsay has reason to believe that this expedition will reveal the existence of a belt of auriferous country running parallel to Yilgarn, Murchison and Pilbarra.

Mr. David Lindsay in Adelaide.

On the return of Mr. Lindsay, the leader of the Elder Exploring Expedition to Adelaide, on January 1, he was interviewed by a representative of the *South Australian Register*. The following is the report of the interview:—

The returned explorer courteously received our reporter, and told him a few interesting facts of a general character. On the score of health the eight months' trip has done Mr. Lindsay immense good. He is the very picture of health. He brings with him that long dark beard which always forms such a distinctive feature in Mr. Lindsay's personal appearance; it was not shaven the whole journey, and he says that he has not had a day's sickness since he quitted Adelaide in April. "Are all the party well, too?" asked our reporter. "Oh, yes. We have all kept in splendid trim right through." "Fared well, I suppose?" "Yes. We have had even as many as four meals a day sometimes. We have not carried out that programme all through; it was impossible to do so without water. As far as food goes, no expedition has been better equipped. We have had plenty. The water was the trouble." "And where are the doctor and the other scientific officials who were in the expedition?" "They are not a great distance from my camp, some fourteen miles from the Murchison Goldfields. The camp of the expedition is at the woolshed on Cruickshank's station, one of the most outlying settlements. Our party are pretty nearly on the verge of the unexplored region of Western Australia."

The members of the expedition who have resigned are apparently doing nothing. Being within such a short distance of the new goldfields, it is not unlikely that some of them will go there and see what the reefs are made of. Mr. Lindsay cannot say what they propose to do. All he knows, is that they are not now connected with the expedition. "Is it not probable that they will return to South Australia? What are they waiting for?" "Waiting to know if their resignations have been accepted, I expect," replied Mr. Lindsay. "I received intimation when I was at Geraldton that their resignations had been accepted, but Geraldton is some 330 miles from Cruickshank's station, and though I sent off word almost immediately, it is hardly possible for the news to

reach them till about now." The members of the party who have resigned in addition to Mr. Leech are:—Dr. Elliott (the medical officer), Mr. V. Streich (geologist and mineralogist), Mr. R. Helms (botanist and zoologist), and Mr. R. G. Ramsay (assistant). Mr. George Lindsay left Geraldton for the camp a few hours after the leader started for South Australia. Jurak, the Afghan for whom Mr. Lindsay specially sent to this Colony to take the place of Hadji, who did not suit, is expected to get to the camp at Cruickshank's in a day or two. Jurak, in charge of a team, preceded George Lindsay from Geraldton by some days. George Lindsay will have charge of the camp during the leader's absence.

Questioned as to stores, Mr. Lindsay remarked:—"We have purchased locally all the stores we want, and do not intend to touch any of the supplies that have been sent to Hope's Station, at the head waters of the Murchison. We shall reserve those for our trip after we have completed the Block A country."

"Then you intend to proceed further with the country which you were unable to explore on account of the scarcity of water?" "Yes," replied Mr. Lindsay, and he spoke with confidence of success, as he roughly outlined his scheme, which he will submit to his directors in Adelaide. "I intend to complete the whole of the exploration of that country. We are now on the edge of the unexplored territory, and it is proposed to make flying surveys eastwards, with the object of finding water, and getting across to the track we made when going south-west to Queen Victoria Spring and Fraser Range. That would mean a distance right across of about 350 miles, and if there is no water we shall fall back upon camels carrying nothing but water in our rear, and we shall also have, as I have already pointed out in my despatches to the Geographical Society, the known waters on the north-west part of this region to rely upon. In every way the expedition will be in a much better position to carry on operations than formerly, as we can depend upon supplies from the Western Australian side."

During Mr. Lindsay's absence, Mr. Wells, the surveyor, of whom the leader speaks in most praiseworthy terms, will in all probability make a trip eastwards with several camels. He has at any rate about two months' work to carry on while Mr. Lindsay is away.

Mr. Lindsay said that he had nothing to make public about the travels of the expedition other than the information that has already been forwarded in his despatches to the Geographical Society. "You know the results of our journeyings so far, and I don't know that I can add anything. It would have

been absolute destruction to have continued the trip further north than we went after leaving the Fraser Range in order to make for the Murchison and explore the intervening country. The drought was something severe, and with the short supply of water that we had, our camels would never have stood it. There was indeed nothing before us but to come out at Yilgarn and go round to the Murchison that way, and carry on operations as we now propose to do."

"Your camels shaped well, considering everything?" "Yes; we lost two, but the vacancies have been filled. We have forty-three camels, and since Hadji left, the Afghans have done their work very well. We have lost no camels since leaving Fraser Range; the wonder is that the beasts came through alive, considering the hundreds of miles of poisoned *gastrolobrium* and other stuff growing thick along our line of march. Altogether we have travelled, I should think, about 3,000 miles, and we stopped a month at Fraser Range and thirteen days above Yilgarn."

We asked Mr. Lindsay how he proposed to fill the places left vacant in the expedition. "I cannot say exactly," was his reply. "That is a matter for the Council of the Geographical Society to determine. I shall consult them in a day or two, and then we shall see what arrangements can be made."

Incidentally the traveller was questioned concerning the Yilgarn and Murchison Goldfields, as well as the nature of some of the good country that the expedition traversed, but Mr. Lindsay refrained from giving any information on these matters.

Mr. Lindsay had a remarkably quick passage over. He left Geraldton at midnight on Saturday week by the steamer *Flinders*, arrived in Fremantle on the Monday morning, and took the noon train for Albany, where he arrived in plenty of time to catch the mail steamer for the Eastern Colonies. He cannot tell the duration of his stay in Adelaide.

Mr. Lindsay's Latest Report.

At a meeting of the Council of the South Australian branch of the Royal Geographical Society, held in Adelaide on February 2nd, Sir Samuel Davenport presiding, a letter from Mr. Lindsay, dated Geraldton, January 19, was read. The chief portions of this communication were as follow:—

I have the honor to again communicate you, giving a brief report of our movements since leaving Golden Valley. A map accompanying this will show

roughly the route we travelled. If we had had the detail maps of the country we could have made the distance a little shorter by keeping to the east of Lake Austin, but I should have lost the very great advantage of having a track for the camels to follow, and would have gained nothing in point of time. You will understand the very great difference for poor, tired, leg-weary camels there is in following a track, as against breaking their way through dense mulga and other thickets. The country from Lake Deborah, for about 20 miles north-west, is in patches fit for grazing, but the majority of it is miserable thicket on a sandy soil, with granite outcrops. From there to a point 8 or 9 miles east of Mount Churchman, the country is miserable in the extreme. Granite outcrops were seen to the westward, but our course led us over sandy undulations with very dense thickets, through which we had difficulty in forcing our way. Continuing our northerly course, we crossed some narrow salt lakes and flats, extending east and west as far as we could see, around which is very good pastoral country, good saltbush, and many other edible bushes with belts of mallee. Climbing on to a table-land, we entered dense mulga, and in six miles came on a cattle-pad, which led us in one mile easterly to a well, Pindeburra or Chilandee or L. Gelanding—just according to the plan or map you have—on the Warne Flats, where a Chinaman was drawing water for one hundred and fifty head of cattle belonging to A. J. Clinch. This being the seventh day without water for the camels, with very great heat, I was much pleased at striking into this well. Spelled here one day, and then proceeded along a dray-track up the Warne Flats to near Mount Kenneth, when the track led us north-westerly to a station of Broad's, "Wargee," where Mrs. Broad received us very kindly. Owing to the drought they had lost half their sheep, and had none at the station. Resumed our journey next day under the guidance of a native, who was to take us to a new station of Fogarty's, where we could depend on getting some good mutton. In four miles we left the track and went north through a great extent of poison bush until we struck another track, which went north-west again, and in twenty-two miles led us to Fogarty's new station, Nalbaralla, where there was no white man, so that we could not get a sheep. A track was still followed to near Bura Spring, when we went due north, and then into Watson's station. Since leaving Pindeburra all the country is very well adapted for stock—mulga country principally—with very good water at shallow depths, five to twenty feet. It being Christmas Eve when we reached Watson's, we remained on the next day, and were compelled to stay the following one also, as a camel was missing and not found till evening. Northwards the track led us past Jones's station, who was very kind to us.

We were now nine miles west of the Mount Magnet diggings, but I did not visit them, and then still north, through good stock country with plenty of water at shallow depths, passing around the west shore of Lake Austin, we struck the main road.

Extract from the Journal of the Elder Exploring Expedition, 1891.

On my arrival at Warrina, I found that Mr. Leech, the second officer, had the evening before, when wrestling, sprained his knee.

The medical officer next morning reported that if a bed could be arranged on a camel during the march, and perfect rest allowed Mr. Leech while in camp, for about three weeks, there would be no risk in taking him on, and that he did not consider the injury serious enough to necessitate Mr. Leech being left behind.

Arrangements were made for Mr. Leech's comfort on the march and in camp, and five weeks later he was able to dispense with the crutches.

The death of poor Bowden, at Cootanoorinna, a week after the expedition left Warrina, was an unfortunate loss to the expedition, as he was a man of long experience in the bush and with camels, and might have given valuable help in the troublesome times which followed.

We left Warrina on the 2nd May, 1891; were detained seven days in the vicinity of Cootanoorinna by rains, a week at Arcoellinna Well through the stupidity of the Afghans in losing seven camels.

We followed Chamber's pad and road to a few miles north-west of Chamber's Bluff, when we left it and travelled straight for the Everard Ranges, distant about thirty-six miles, which were reached on the 2nd of June.

Mount Illbillie, the highest point in the Everard Ranges, is a trigonometrical station, and the point decided upon as the starting point, from where, according to the printed instructions, we were to proceed "thence on a westerly course into the section of unexplored country marked (A) on the plan." Formation, granite with diorite dykes. The country was in good condition owing to recent rains. Water in nearly every gully.

From Illbillie we proceeded westerly, examining and fixing the position of all hills, and marked the southerly limits of the hills. Flying parties were detached at various points, as shown on the map, until we reached the province boundary, where we expected to find a range of mountains thirty miles long.

At the position assigned to this range—the Blythe Range—only a group of detached hills was found, with a few rockholes in granite outcrops four miles to south and south-west.

Having left the country which had been visited by rains and entered a region so dry as to lead us to the conclusion that no rain had fallen for two or three years, we went on to the range of which Skirmish Hill forms the south-western end, in the hope of finding water, but again met with disappointment, for the country was still drier; even the spinifex, or, more properly speaking, the porcupine, was dead, and the mulga nearly so. Mr. Wells here rejoined us, and reported that the country to the south was all sandhills and sandstone ridges, with small quantities of water in rockholes. We now considered our best course was to go to Fort Mueller and Barlee Springs, form a depôt, according to our printed instructions, from which to detach parties northerly into block B to search for Gibson, and southerly into block A, exploring and searching for water. Fort Mueller being absolutely dry, I went west and found at Forrest's rockhole, and at some holes unseen by the previous explorers, a fair supply of water, while the sandhills were covered with the green water-bush (*Pollechia Zeylanica*). After watering the camels at a rockhole found near Borrow's Hill, we moved on and formed a depôt, sending the spare camels some fifteen miles back to depasture on the water-bush.

From the depôt (camp 33) Mr. Wells went south-west; Mr. Leech north-west into block B to look for traces of Gibson—owing to the lapse of years it was not surprising that the search proved fruitless—I and Mr. Streich rode around and through the Barrow Ranges, only finding one small rockhole, Then Dr. Eliot and I went west, visiting Barlee Spring, which was practically dry, and all the watering places discovered by Giles and Forrest to the west side of the Warburton Ranges; when, finding all the waters dried up and all the rockholes empty, and evidences of the drought having been long continued, I concluded that no water would be found at the Sutherland Ranges, one hundred miles further on, and that Alexander Spring would certainly be dry also, I decided to return to the depôt. I have since learnt from Mr. W. W. Mills that in 1883 he found Alexandra Spring dry.

Mr. Wells returned, reporting miserable country, with only very few small rockholes. At one place, one hundred and thirty miles south-west, he left three hundred gallons of water in a hole. Our position was somewhat perplexing, as we had not enough water to give the camels a drink and to fill up our casks; there was none for a reasonable distance behind us. The few natives we saw were living on the rockholes, and those with whom we got

speech said no water to the south and south-west. But as a good number of natives had made towards Mount Squires from all directions, and as there were evidences of rain having fallen on that mountain during the last three months, we considered it likely that a closer search in the gullies and gorges would result in the discovery of some waters. After full consideration, we decided that if we could get enough water in the neighbourhood by emptying all the rockholes, to go across to Queen Victoria's Spring by way of the rockhole found by Mr. Wells.

We proceeded south to Mount Squires, having brought in the camels, which had been now three weeks without water, and after searching, found abundance of water. Gave the camels a drink, sent water twenty-five miles on the intended course, gave the camels another drink, filled all our water vessels, and headed for Queen Victoria Spring, on the other side of the Great Victoria Desert, and distant about four hundred miles. No sign of minerals so far.

When we reached the rockholes found by Mr. Wells, we found a mob of natives camped there, and the quantity reduced to ninety gallons of very dirty water. Gave it to the camels, and proceeded over a useless country of sandhills and sandstone ridges all through to Queen Victoria's Spring. The fine growth of *Eucalyptus endesmioides* (desert gum) extending for over one hundred miles, gave the country a very pleasing aspect, but there were very few stock bushes and no grass. In latitude $29^{\circ} 20'$, two hundred and seventy miles from Mount Squires, the eastern edge of good pastoral country was touched. The geologist expressed his opinion that water would be found by sinking, and he also reported "an extinct mound spring," the position of which I have shown on the map. The average height of the plains is about 1,600 feet, or 1,700 feet, while the mountain tops reach to a height of 2,500 feet above sea level; the lowest noted flat was 750 feet above sea level, and Queen Victoria's Spring is 836 feet, showing a very considerable fall.

Queen Victoria's Spring was reached on the twenty-fifth day at a distance of three hundred and ninety-three miles from Mount Squires, and found to be dry. Our position now was somewhat critical, for the camels had been twenty-five days without water, and were not only thirsty but leg-weary. To go north back into the desert was not possible, and the only safe course to take was to make for the nearest certain water, which, after consulting the map, was found to be at Fraser's Range, one hundred and twenty-five miles distant. It was questionable whether the camels would travel another week without water. A well was sunk fifteen feet deep, and sixty gallons of water obtained, to which we added forty gallons out of the casks, enabling the camels to have two

and-a-half gallons each. When about half way to the range we passed out of spinifex and entered a good country of rich red soil, producing many good stock bushes, including saltbush and bluebush, but all extremely dry. Fine forests of high mallee and eucalyptus were passed through. At twenty-nine miles we crossed a belt of country worthy the attention of prospectors.

On the thirty-fourth day we reached Fraser's Range, having travelled five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Mount Squires without loss of camels or equipment. One camel died the day we reached Queen Victoria's Spring from urinic poisoning. Up to this point we had travelled two thousand seven hundred and ten miles, of which one thousand eight hundred and thirteen miles were through unexplored country.

From October 4th to the 2nd November the party was encamped at Fraser's Range, during which time I went on horseback to Esperance Bay, one hundred and sixty miles distant, to report progress by telegraph to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society. I obtained the consent of the Council to go *via* Hampton Plains, when, if no water was found there, to go west until water was found.

On the 2nd November, we started again, and travelled ninety-eight miles through new country to Mount Monger, and then twenty miles to Hunt's Slate Well. All the country very well adapted for stock, but no surface water, and now suffering from a long drought. The inability of our native guides to show us any water, and the camels having been seven days without water, and eating saltbush every day, it was absolutely necessary to go west along Hunt's route to find water. When Hunt was exploring here in 1864, he sank wells, constructed dams and tanks at which to form depôts, and it was at some of those wells that I hoped to find water. All the officers saw the gravity of our position, for our camels were really looking worse than when we reached Fraser's Range, and the weather was very hot. All agreed as to the necessity of again making for known water. I did not consult them on the matter, as there were only two courses to pursue—one leading on to certain destruction and loss of the whole party, and the other the course we followed, which took us to within thirty miles of Southern Cross township before sufficient water was obtained, *viz.*, at Karoling. Unfortunately there was only a limited amount of camel food, and an abundance of *Gastrolobium*—a dreaded poison bush—which prevented us remaining more than one day.

Karoling is about two hundred and fifty miles from the edge of the unexplored country, and it was quite impossible for us to attempt to go there. The country was suffering from drought, and all our camels were in a very low

and weak condition, as was clearly shown when a week later, at a suitable spot, I had to order a fortnight's rest for them.

Our only course now was to make our way as direct as possible to the Murchison through the outer edge of the settled country, where we could get water at moderate stages from the settler's wells, doing away with the necessity of carrying large quantities of water. We had a stage of ninety miles without water, from Elichapatten to Pindeburra Well, which occupied us, owing to the dense thickets and the weak state of the camels, seven days. We then followed a drag track to Broad's Station, fifty-three miles. Then across country a day's stage to the Nalbaralla Well, when a drag track served us for half-a-day, when we again made across country to Watson's Station, from where a new track was followed to Coodardy Station on the Murchison-Geraldton road.

As soon as I established a depôt at Annean Station and made necessary arrangements for supplies, &c., I started for Geraldton to place myself in direct telegraphic communication with the Council. The journey of three hundred and thirty miles was accomplished in ten days, and after a few telegrams had passed between the Council and me I was much distressed at receiving imperative instructions to return to Adelaide to consult with the Council. I felt that a loss of time and much needless expense would accrue.

Before leaving Geraldton I wrote full instruction to Mr. Wells what to do during my absence. Fortunately for him, the night after he left with a light party to examine the unexplored country lying to the east of our depôt, in accordance with my instructions, the three years' drought broke up, and splendid rains fell all over the country, so that he was enabled to send the water team back to the depôt and travel fast and far, accomplishing in the six weeks he was away a very important work; he travelled eight hundred and thirty-four miles, discovered some fine ranges and hills, a large extent of pastoral country, and some auriferous country, but no permanent surface waters.

Briefly, the country traversed is from Welbundinum Well (the depôt camp) which is about forty miles east of Annean station, for fifty miles good pastoral country, crossing the Montagu Range, 2,260 feet above sea level. Then a narrow belt of sand ridges with spinifex was crossed (fourteen miles in width), when good pastoral country was again entered, extending for one hundred and seventy miles to the eastward; at fifty miles (in the good pastoral country) auriferous country was met with, extending for one hundred miles easterly, the lay of the country being north-west and south-east, with fine hills and ranges, and two large gum creeks, in one of which, the Erlistoun, Mr. Wells considered a permanent soakage exists. There can, I think, be very little doubt that

water is to be obtained at reasonable depths, making this country worthy the attention of the pastoralist. Then sixty miles of sand ridges were traversed, when auriferous country was again met with. Then for forty miles the hills and ridges and good pastoral country, broken by belts of sandy spinifex country, continued, when the edge of the Great Victoria Desert was entered upon, and nothing could be seen to the east but sand ridges, whose spinifex covered surface was relieved by the bright green foliage of the desert gum by black patches of mulga. Mr. Wells then travelled north-east over sand ridges for sixty-two miles, when he turned west for twenty-four miles to a long range (the Ernest Giles) having a north and south trend, and an elevation of 2,170 feet above the sea level, surrounded by good stock country. Descending the western slopes, a belt of sand ridges, broken by mulga-covered hills, continued for twenty-eight miles to a long narrow salt lake (Lake Wells), which is surrounded by high hills and splendid pastoral country, extending for one hundred and twenty miles westerly, and as far north as could be seen; small patches of sandy country to be seen to the southward. Then twenty-two miles of sandy country was crossed, and good pastoral country was entered upon, extending for one hundred and sixty miles to the depôt at "Welbundinum Well," passing at thirty-six miles to a spot where permanent water is considered to exist.

The pastoral country discovered is equal to that now occupied by settlers on the Murchison, and no doubt will ere long be taken up and stocked with cattle. The auriferous country will probably be found capable of supporting a fairly large population, which will hasten on and render profitable the stocking of those extensive valleys which, according to the description given, consist of "rich chocolate loam covered with good stock—mulga, acacias, saltbush, and grass."

Immediately on Mr. Wells' return to the Murchison, he proceeded, in accordance with the instructions awaiting him, to disband the expedition, which was most unfortunate, as the drought having now broken up all over Western Australia, the remainder of the unexplored regions in Australia could have been quickly and easily examined.

Natives.

Of the natives little need be said, as no doubt the medical officer will hand in his full report. During the whole expedition very few were met with. Four men in the vicinity of the Everard Ranges were the first seen; they were friendly, and travelled with us for some weeks. Then one old man was seen, and then about one hundred and ten miles from the Everard six men visited us, speaking the same language and practising the same rites of circumcision and incision. These left us quickly, and a week later we had thirteen natives in the camp, friendly and with the same habits and customs, medium stature, but strong and healthy, and in good condition. No women or children were seen. For the next sixty miles we had with us numbers varying from three to thirteen. Many footprints of women and children were seen. At Pernamo Hill they refused to go any farther, saying there was no more water. The next natives seen were an old man and old woman, near Skirmish Hill; the next at camp 33, in the neighbourhood of which between fifty and one hundred or more were living at different rockholes. Women and children were seen, but all were so frightened that no communication could be held with them. The men, fine fellows some of them, were very afraid and excited, and wanted us to leave their district, but they showed no hostility to us. Mr. Wells saw a few on the sandhills. Mr. Leech surprised some in block B, and I saw some to the westward. At Mount Squires we were visited by twelve men, most of them of fine physique, who were very frightened. I gave them some presents, and they left. Next seen were in the sandhills at a rockhole, where they attacked Mr. Wells and myself, but we were able to overcome their hostile intentions, and hold friendly intercourse with them. At the rockholes one hundred and twenty miles south-west of Mount Squires, we surprised a mob, who were inclined to attack us, but were overawed by our numbers and the camels. After a little trouble we talked with the men and gave them some red handkerchiefs. So far as we could ascertain in the few minutes we had with them their language and customs were still the same as those seen farther back. No more natives were seen until we reached Fraser's Range Station, where many were employed by a dam sinker. The dialect spoken was quite different, and they were an inferior type, being smaller and not so well formed. A woman and a man—brother and sister—were seen, both having six toes on each foot, and six fingers on each hand. From Fraser's Range on to the Murchison, natives were only seen at the stations. As many words as possible were obtained from them on every

opportunity, and I beg to attach a list of words as obtained by Mr. Wells and myself. Mr. Wells saw one woman east of the Murchison, and she was too afraid to give any information.

Summary of Work Done.

From May 2nd to June 2nd, 1891, we travelled to reach starting point, 255 miles. From June 6th to October 3rd, 1891, we travelled through unexplored country, 1,813 miles; through explored country searching for water, &c., 306 miles; flying trips same routes, afterwards travelled by caravan, 336 miles. From October 4th to November 2nd, 1891, in depôt at Fraser's Range. From November 2nd to November 26th, 1891, through new country, 98 miles; looking for water in explored country, 225 miles. From November 27th to December 7th, 1891, resting camels near Golden Valley. From December 7th, 1891, to January 3rd, 1892, travelling through mapped country, 412 miles. From January 4th to February 22nd, 1892, resting camels, taking stores from Moorowie to Murchison, and shifting depôt. From February 23rd to April 4th, 1892, flying trip (by Mr. Wells) through unexplored country, 834 miles. Total, 4,279 miles, which gives an average rate of travel for eleven months, that is from May 2nd, 1891, to April 4th, 1892, including all stoppages, of nearly fifteen miles per day. Area explored and mapped, over 80,000 square miles. Total mileage through unexplored country, 2,745 miles.

In conclusion, I unhesitatingly affirm, without fear of contradiction, that the course pursued under the circumstances of prolonged drought was on each occasion right and proper. When at Mount Squires, had we spent any more time in searching for water, the camels would have been unfit for the long journey to Queen Victoria's Springs, and the weather would have been so hot that the camels would have been unable to do such a long distance without water. Had we returned from Mount Squires and gone northwards we should still have had the drought to contend with, much time would have been wasted, and all the arrangements upset.

With the training our camels had undergone, I consider the risk of going the four hundred miles to Queen Victoria's Springs was a fair one to take—every member of the party was with me in that decision—and the fact that I was able to lead the whole caravan one hundred and fifty miles further without any loss of camels and equipment was a sufficient proof that my judgment

was sound, and that had Queen Victoria's Spring not failed us we should have easily, from there as a depôt, completed the examination of block A, and been only two or three weeks' behind time at the Murchison depôt. When on the western side of the desert we found that the drought had been on for three years, and the natives living on water obtained out of roots, it would have been madness to have attempted to take the caravan across direct to the Murchison. And the camels were quite unfit to be sent out searching for water.

The vicinity of Fraser's Range was not a suitable place for a lengthened stay, as the bushes were very dry, and provisions for the party could not easily be obtained. That, when Hampton Plains failed us, the course followed of going to the Murchison, where there was plenty of feed and water for the camels, and provisions for the party, and from where the remaining portion of block A could be easily attacked and examined by lightly-equipped parties, was the proper one, was proved by after events. Even if the drought had not broken up, I could, as I advised the Council from Geraldton, have gone on with the work and completed the exploration of Australia. But when the drought broke up we were in a splendid position, and all our camels were fat and fit to go on, and if I had been allowed to fill the vacancies in the party and continue the work, I have no hesitation in saying that not only would block A have been examined, and probably new goldfields opened up for Western Australia, but blocks B, C, and D would have been explored by this date.

The abandonment of the expedition was a terrible disappointment to me. That men who had so little sense of their duty to their leader and to their generous employer, should have been the primary cause of the break up of such a splendidly-equipped expedition, causing the opportunity of completing in such a thorough manner the exploration of those extensive unknown regions in Australia to be lost, is a matter that not only those intimately associated with the expedition, but geographers throughout the world, must ever regret.

I desire again to place on record my full appreciation of the splendid loyalty and assistance of Mr. L. A. Wells,* the surveyor, and afterwards second officer, and also of the loyalty, good behaviour, and willing attention to his duties shown by Alfred Warren.

I have, &c.,

DAVID LINDSAY.

Adelaide, October 4th, 1892.

* This is the gentleman selected as leader of the Calvert Expedition.

Unprecedented Heat in Australia.

Having had some painful personal experience of the recent heat-wave in the North-West District, I append the following from the *London Pall Mall Gazette* :—"The long spell of heat which passed over the whole of Australia during January, 1896, was the most severe and disastrous weather affliction ever experienced in that sun-baked Continent. Men, animals, and vegetation alike withered and died under the scorching rays, combined with the dust-laden furnace blasts of the northern hot winds. In Adelaide, the glass showed 172 in the sun, and 111 in the shade. Other record *shade* temperatures were: Melbourne, 112; Hoptoun, 113; Swan Hill, 116; Bourke, 118; Mildura, 120.

"At Bourke, New South Wales, a town of three thousand inhabitants, thirty-five deaths occurred in a week from sunstroke or heat apoplexy. People dropped down in the street, and died without regaining consciousness. In this, and many other country districts men were found dead in the roads, and some in an advanced stage of decomposition. A woman attending on her dying husband, became suddenly ill, and preceded his demise by an hour. A son-in-law, who was making their funeral arrangements, complained of not feeling well, and died almost immediately. Babies and aged people slept, and never awakened. In Sydney the death-rate more than doubled itself in one week. The Cemetery Trustees were compelled to employ supernumerary hands to bury the dead. Residents on the plains were panic-stricken, and left their homes for the mountainous districts of the Australian Alps. The various Colonial Railway Departments considerably reduced the fares, so as to enable people to travel to cooler localities. Cattle and sheep died in large numbers through want of food and water, the grass along the main stock tracks being dried up and desiccated almost to a powder. In Queensland, cattle have gone up twenty-five shillings a head, and sheep two shillings. At Mysia, Victoria, Scotch thistles mixed with straw were being used as food for the stock. The native birds fell from the trees and died in great numbers. There were innumerable bush fires, which intensified the disaster and discomfort. Millions of fish perished in the lakes owing to the water drying up, and thousands of pelicans thronged the edges of Copago Lake, Wilcannia, and reaped the benefit of their misfortune. The wax cells of beehives melted, and imprisoned or bogged large numbers of bees, who thus died, surfeited by their own sweetness. Some one will be glad to know the heat wave has, temporarily, considerably reduced Victoria's butter export to the English market, through the reduction

of milk returns. Many grape crops were completely destroyed. In Sydney one hundred tons of ice were consumed daily, and the supply of lemons ran out. At many of the mining centres smelting was altogether suspended, and surface labourers had to stop work. The heat wave was followed by heavy thunderstorms and lightning. Roofs were torn off, trees smashed down, chimneys demolished, and windows shattered. But the change, rude and rough as it was, met with a hearty welcome from every sap-dried sufferer in the sunny south."

The Recent "Heat Wave" in Australia.

AN UNPARALLELED RECORD.

From the *London Pall Mall Gazette*, May 20th, 1896:—"The Australian summer of 1896 will not readily be forgotten by the inhabitants of New South Wales. Let English readers who had experience of the terrible rigours of the winter 1894-5 in the British Isles conceive, instead of that cold, a term of heat of corresponding intensity and duration. A few figures at the outset will help the imagination. From a thermometer hung in the shade of a verandah overlooking the River Darling, the largest stream in New South Wales, the following registrations were taken. The records are for the following consecutive days—from January 1 to January 26 of this year—namely, 112 degrees, 107 degrees, 112 degrees, 114 degrees, 118 degrees, 121 degrees, 123 degrees, 118 degrees, 115 degrees, 114 degrees, 124 degrees, 117 degrees, 121 degrees, 120 degrees, 128 degrees, 128 degrees, 124 degrees, 129 degrees, 119 degrees. It must not be forgotten that these are shade temperatures. On Thursday, January 23, the heat of the sun in Adelaide, South Australia, was 172 degrees, the shade at the same time being 111·2 degrees. It may be parenthetically remarked that on January 18, 1882, a record was taken in Adelaide, which showed the heat of the sun to be 180 degrees. When one realizes the sensations of a London summer shade temperature, which, for one day, might register—to the English experience—the extraordinary figures of 95 degrees, to be followed by a considerable drop in the temperature as night comes on, some idea may be formed of the experiences of the inhabitants of inland Australia, who for twenty-five days had to endure a shade heat that never went below 105 degrees, and on occasions rose to 129 degrees. But, worst of all, night brought no relief. In many instances, at no time during the night did the mercury sink

lower than 100 degrees; whilst from several townships reports were received stating that, at three a.m., the thermometer stood at 106 degrees. Hot though the Australian summer always is, it is no uncommon occurrence for the thermometer to show a shade heat ranging from 100 degrees to 110 degrees, with an occasional jump to 115 degrees, according to the locality. Such phenomenal weather as prevailed in January of this year is without parallel in the history of Australian colonization. After the lapse of a week, when, contrary to the experience of ordinary years, the temperature, so far from subsiding, showed every indication of increasing, it began to be generally recognized that something abnormal in meteorological conditions was preparing. Public interest became aroused: alarm and dread, it can rightly be said, being the sensations of those living within the area where the summer heat is always severe: curiosity and sympathy on the part of those fortunate enough to be without the area more particularly affected. The heat wave, indeed, extended over the whole of the Continent, embracing even an ocean area. Interest at large, however, mainly centred upon Bourke, a township in New South Wales, having a population of about three thousand inhabitants, situated some five hundred miles inland from the sea-coast. Bourke enjoys the unenviable reputation of being one of the hottest places in Australia. It is by no means a rare circumstance in the Bourke district for the thermometer to rise to 117 degrees in the shade. This may occur more than once during the summer. The residents of Bourke, however, could not from these annual "sultry" experiences have been warned, or even have remotely anticipated the terrible spell of heat that was to be their unhappy portion for the space of three awful weeks, and some days—roughly speaking, for a month. Some notion of the extreme heat that prevailed may be gauged from the rate of mortality, purely and directly attributable to this cause. The period only covers the space of twenty-five days, the time during which the extreme heat lasted, and the figures apply only to New South Wales. In the township of Bourke alone, some thirty deaths were reported. For the whole Colony the mortality for the first week was put down at 250. How many fell victims for the full period will probably never be ascertained with any certainty. But an average for one week of 250, out of a population of 1,277,000, carries its own significance."

The following, which may almost be said to furnish a typical example of the reports which appeared from day to day in the metropolitan Press, is taken from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and will afford illustration of the intensity of the heat, and its destructive influence upon human life. The paragraph was published under a headline that had become stereotyped in the daily press:—

"TERRIBLE RECORD AT BOURKE.
TEN DEATHS CAUSED."

"The thermometer is standing at 114 degrees in the shade. Ten deaths were reported to-day, caused by the unprecedented heat. The following is a list of the victims:—Mrs. C., found dead in her chair this afternoon; Mr. T. H., found dead; Mrs. C., the daughter of Mrs. E., killed by the excessive heat; Mr. J. F., admitted to the hospital, died shortly after; two children, died from convulsions; J. A., homestead lessee, died from failure of the heart's action, caused by the heat; Mr. D. M., caretaker of the Government Bore at Pera, died from heat apoplexy; Mr. G. M., a well-known coach driver, died suddenly in his bathroom yesterday."

Lonely deaths in the bush from thirst, and from the intense heat alone, occurred almost daily. Many indeed were the tragic and pathetic incidents of this fearful reign of heat that will for ever go unrecorded. The following sufficiently tells its own story. We give it as published in the same journal that contained the report of the "ten deaths" above quoted:—

"A LONELY DEATH FROM THIRST."

"COLLARENDABRI, Monday.—The Coroner returned last night from Burreen, where he held an inquest on the body of a man found dead on Saturday, on the line of the rabbit-proof fence, four miles from Moonie River. The following was scratched on the bottom of the dead man's billy:—'I, George S——, cut my throat. Am tired of life.' No sign of violence, however, appeared, and it is supposed that the man perished from thirst. The jury returned a verdict of 'Found dead in the bush.'" The story is short, simple, powerful, and may be taken to be typical of scores of others that will never enter into ephemeral literature.

The following, again, is suggestive and typical, and is reprinted from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, exactly as it appeared:—

"THE AGONIES OF THIRST.
A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE."

"WILCANNIA, Thursday.—Mr. Charles May, manager of the Netallie station, reports that while driving in from the Fulham station yesterday, he picked up a man on the track in a terrible state from thirst, and took him on to the Government tank, twenty miles from here. The man was brought on by to-day's coach. When interviewed, he said that his name was Peter Baroffi, an Italian sailor, about thirty years of age. He started from Cobar last week on foot, for Wilcannia, for the purpose of trying to get work on the river

steamers. He left the Fulham station on Monday, at twelve o'clock, his water bag becoming exhausted on Tuesday, at twelve o'clock. He was picked up by Mr. May yesterday, at eleven o'clock, having been twenty-three hours without water. The man describes his sufferings as something terrible. He started to undress himself about nine o'clock yesterday, and took everything off but his trousers and singlet, and walked barefooted for miles. He was raving in his mind, and lay down at about ten o'clock, his tongue and lips being swollen terribly. He states that he intended to end his life by bleeding himself to death, by cutting an artery with a sheath-knife, if he had been left an hour longer."

The following also appeared in the same issue :—

"There is no abatement of the intense heat, the thermometer to-day registering 118 degrees in the shade. Four more deaths were reported to-day. A man named John Ryan, a boundary rider on Fort Bourke station, was found in a dying condition by the overseer. He was in terrible agony, and complained of shooting pains in the back of the head. The overseer stayed with him for two hours, when the sufferer became light-headed. The overseer then went for assistance to bring him to the station, but when he returned Ryan was dead."

Many and extraordinary were the incidents occasioned by the heat. In many of the inland townships the inhabitants became panic-stricken. Eye-witnesses describe the alarm as taking a superstitious form. This fact is curious, as confirming Buckle in his theory that ignorance and superstition the more largely prevail where the aspect of nature is the more startling and imposing. Government was petitioned to run special trains, for the express purpose of transporting the inhabitants of the heat-stricken districts to cooler parts of the Colony. These prayers were granted so far as to run a weekly cheap train from Sydney to Bourke, a distance of over five hundred miles. Birds dropped dead from the trees. Those that were alive could be captured easily by the hand, the wildest and shyest not excepted. Rabbits everywhere lay about dead. On some stations the remarkable sight was witnessed of the Australian magpie—wildest of birds—taking shelter among the domestic fowls of the yard, in their endeavours to escape from the fierce heat. Their behaviour was that of dazed and stupefied creatures. They were perfectly indifferent to the presence of human beings. Perhaps the most striking effect of the unexampled heat was furnished from a place named Nyngan, from whence came the brief, but pointed message, "*Mosquitoes are being killed by the heat.*"

The following is another item from the *Sydney Bulletin*. It is a gruesome story of the heat-spell :—

"A private coach, occupied by one passenger, was proceeding from Jundah

to Windorah (Q.). Overcome by the heat, the driver turned the coach aside and proceeded to camp underneath, while the passenger took a spell under a neighbouring tree. When he had rested sufficiently, he turned to rouse the driver, but found him dead. Lifting the corpse into the coach he started for Windorah, but overcome in his turn, fell out of the coach, unconscious, and lay on the road until rain fell and revived him. Again he made for Windorah with his gruesome load, and finally arrived there, to find the landlord of the only hotel in the place also dead of heat apoplexy."

Here are other illustrations:—

"A woman at Broken Hill died late in the afternoon from heat apoplexy. At half-past eight the same evening the daughter upon arrival found the mother's dead body in an advanced state of decomposition."

"At Broken Hill, also, the temperature of a body being taken by a doctor an hour and-a-half after death, was found to be 109½ degrees. At Bourke, in a fit of lunacy, induced by the excessive heat, a man procured an axe and cut down several telegraph poles before he could be secured by the police."

"The margin of Lake Copage was strewn with tons upon tons of fish, killed by the heat."

Many and varied were the theories offered in explanation of the abnormal heat in Australia, for the summer of 1896. Sir C. Todd, Government Meteorologist of South Australia, connects it with the drought of 1895, which prevailed throughout America, and was marked in England and on the Continent, both by unusual dryness and abnormal heat. The popular notion was all in favour of the "weather of last year" theory. In the interior of the Continent the dry season in question was doubtless a largely contributing cause. The rays of a fierce summer sun falling upon a region specially made receptive, concurrently with natural causes of world-wide range, produced the right conditions, and so made possible the abnormal spell of heat that has been the subject of this sketch.

The Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition.

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA,

February 4th, 1896.

ALBERT F. CALVERT, ESQ., Royston, Eton Avenue.

DEAR MR. CALVERT,

I regret very much that I was unfortunately unable to see you during your recent visit to this city.

The Hon. Secretary is forwarding to you copies of his replies by this mail, to your London address. The Council commended to you the names of Messrs. * * * * and Mr. Wells. Mr. Wells did good work on our Government Survey Staff, on the Queensland Boundary, having defined the line between Queensland and South Australia under great difficulties, in oftentimes most trying, rough, dry country. He has seen you, is available, and would gladly undertake and perform the duties in an efficient expedition.

Mr. * * * * also is well known, is experienced, and would do his work well if he undertook it.

May I enumerate some points for your consideration, referring generally to the outlines of such a project as is indicated by your letters. I enclose a map (prepared for the Elder Expedition), showing in red the "unexplored" and "unmapped" spaces of Australia; some spaces, though traversed and known, are not mapped. Spaces A and B may now be accounted really as "mapped." E, C, D, F, and H, remain practically unexplored, and unmapped for the most part. These together have an area of two hundred and sixty thousand square miles. An expedition staying in the field for twelve or fifteen months, could fairly well exhaust these spaces, filling up all important information concerning them, as to the natural features, fauna, flora, climate, &c., &c.

Composition and Outfit of the Expedition.—Subject to your special wishes as to members, the party should preferably be chosen, or at least be approved, by the leader. Should either Mr. Wells or Mr. * * * * be entrusted with charge of the expedition, the selection might very safely be left with them, or (as to scientist) in consultation with the Council of the Geographical Society. A small party of selected, experienced bushmen would perform the work to the satisfaction of all interested.

About one-half (say twenty) the number of camels taken by the recent Elder Expedition, would suffice to carry the party really needed.

Trained, acclimatized animals would be preferable; your own experiences would guide you in this matter. Camels could be purchased, and outfit for them obtained on the desert frontier of Western Australia. Stores, too, could be obtained there, thus effecting saving in both time and cost in getting into the field.

Necessary scientific outfit could be taken by the leader, nothing needless or unnecessarily expensive included; only such instruments as are essential to efficient and accurate work. More than this would only needlessly hamper and add to cost.

Photographs.—Deferring to the results of your own experiences, I would suggest that two or three kodaks should be taken, with sufficient supply of

film for the journeys. Natural features, trees, natives, weapons, specimens of native paintings, &c., &c., could be secured in picture form at least, so adding immeasurably to the value and interest of journals, and publications thereof. Photography was unfortunately a very weak point in the last—the Elder Expedition.

Country to be examined.—It is generally recognised that space C is the part of "unexplored" Australia round which the interest chiefly centres. Geographically, because of the probable existence of a string of salt lakes trending away to the N.W. of Lake Macdonald; because too possibly high ranges of hills may be found in the north easterly part of its area. You yourself have, of course, traversed its N.W. area, and therefore know what exists there.

Historically, because Baron Sir F. Von Mueller is of opinion that possibly traces of the long lost Leichardt may be found there; and should your expedition unravel the mystery of his fate, it would do a great deed.

Commercially, because, through the eastern part of space C will probably be found a stock route, if there is to be one, opening communication between our northern territory and N.W. Queensland, with the Goldfields to the S.W. of West Australia.

Spaces D, F and H remain for examination, but doubtless you would be again in Australia before the expedition arrives at that stage of its work. Spaces F, G and H could, perhaps, be mapped *en route* for the head of the S. A. Railway line, if it be decided that they should be filled up on the map.

Finance.—I presume you have your accredited agent, who would attend to the expenditure of the cost of the enterprise, and who, in conjunction with the leader, would have the sole responsibility in the matter of finance, under your orders. May I say that the Council of the Geographical Society would very assuredly prefer not to have any responsibility as to expenditure of money in this connection, though it would gladly render any possible assistance in the way of approval of expenditure, or supervision, in conjunction with your responsible representative. Your leader would be fully competent to incur only judicious and needful expenditure.

Records, Journals, Maps.—The Society would, if you wish, receive, check, and forward to you or your London representative, or to the Royal Geographical Society, all the records, maps, charts, &c., of the expedition, upon completion of the work. I presume that you would wish to follow the rules of the Geographical Societies of England and Europe, in spelling and pronunciation of aboriginal words and names—aboriginal names of natural features, as far as may be preserved.

Specimens.—I venture to ask that, as far as possible, the Directors of the Adelaide Museum may receive duplicate specimens of fauna and flora, &c., results of the expedition, as it holds and desires to continue to hold the premier position as to our Australian collection. This, if you are good enough to approve.

Organizing the Expedition.—May I refer to the desirableness of promptness; not that a hasty immature scheme is at all desirable, but all past experience is available here. Your leader will certainly be a man of first-class training in good Government service, experienced as a surveyor and bushman, accustomed to outfit similar parties, and knowing just what is needed, and where and how to get it at best advantage. Our hon. treasurer (S. A. Branch of R. G. S. of A.), Mr. Thomas Gill, of the Treasury, Adelaide, offers to formulate a code, to be arranged through the Agent-General's office, London, for use for the purposes of the expedition. I hope he may have sent it on. Will try and advise you by this or our early mail.

As soon as possible (after receiving letters by this mail from our hon. secretary, Rev. C. F. Newman, from Mr. L. A. Wells, and the present letter, in all of which together you will learn the general lines of proposed action), it would be well to send out a cable message, empowering your representative to provide sufficient funds to fit out the expedition, authorising the engagement of men, purchase of needed stores; and instructing the leader therein, authorising him to get into the field early and attack space C on its southern edge, working first E., then N.W., and then E. towards the line. Before he touched the region S.E. from Roebourne, you yourself could either be in Australia, or by written instructions could meet him at that part of the journey. Cable message, too, should come to the President of the S. A. Branch of the R. G. S. of Australasia, informing the Society of your decision; letters could follow. I preserve copy of my letter, so that the Society would know what has preceded the forwarding of your message. Mr. Wells' letter would be, I presume, similarly available for similar end.

The leader could forthwith proceed to Cue, W. A., or a point near there; fit out the party, and go to work ere the season becomes too far advanced. He should be there in some six or seven weeks from now, I believe, to get the true benefit and advantage of the present year. It is prompt, but you know your men, the country, and the nature of the work to be done.

One scientific man, as geologist, naturalist collector, and botanic collector, would meet the case. The work of the "expert" is done at home (as to the two latter), and not in the field.

Time presses.—I write thus fully, though hurriedly, to save time. There is no time to summon the Council, and we have nothing authoritative at this stage from you to place before it. Your cabled suggestions would meet the case in face of our three letters.

With all apologies for the length of this letter,

With all best wishes for the success of your enterprise, if you enter upon it, and with earnest wishes for your complete restoration to sound health, after your recent Western Australian experiences, believe me to be,

Very sincerely yours,

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ADELAIDE, S. A., February 4th, 1896.

DEAR SIR,

I am taking the present opportunity of writing you in accordance with a promise made on board the *Australia*, *re* the unexplored portions of this country, and in compliance with your wishes I have called on two of the members of the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society and informed them of our interview. These gentlemen have promised to at once communicate with you on the subject.

As you are probably aware, the work of exploration contemplated by Sir Thomas Elder was not completed by about $\frac{2}{3}$ (two-thirds) of the whole area, the principal portions of which are comprised in three large blocks of about two hundred and sixty thousand square miles of unknown country.

In my opinion the latter end of the summer is the most suitable time to commence such a work, say about the end of March or April. This would give cool weather for a start, and enable the members of a party and the camels to get in good training for the following summer months.

I consider the following strength for such an expedition would be quite sufficient, *viz.*, leader, second in command, one scientist (including Botany and Geology), one assistant, two camel drivers, and one cook (in all seven men), twenty camels and necessary instruments, outfit, stores, &c.

The work of exploration should not occupy longer than from twelve to fifteen months, and there would be, in addition, the preparing of plans, reports, &c., on the return of officers to Adelaide.

I should be glad to render an offer should you think fit to entrust me with

the position of leader, or at any time I will be glad to supply you with any information on the subject in my possession.

I am, dear Sir, yours faithfully,

L. A. WELLS.

A. F. CALVERT, Esq., Royston, Eton Avenue, N.W.

LONDON, April 30th, 1896.

Copy of cablegram forwarded to the President of the Geographical Society of South Australia.

"I have decided to equip an expedition to explore and examine the unexplored and unmapped parts of Australia. I nominate Mr. L. A. Wells as leader. Instructions for guidance of leader and members to be on precisely the same lines as those issued to the officers of the Elder Scientific Exploring Expedition. Members of the expedition to be appointed by the leader, subject to the Council of the South Australian Branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia. One of the members to be a competent photographer. I suggest that expedition to commence work from the Murchison district, W. A. Reply by cable as soon as you possibly can, date of starting."

A. F. CALVERT.

My latest information by mail and cable concerning the preparations for, and the start of The Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition, reach me as these last pages are going through the press, and I add these last few lines in an apologetic mood, by reason of my own connection with the venture. Mr. A. T. Margarey, who has carried out all the preliminary arrangements in Adelaide on my behalf, writes me, under date May 20th, as follows:—"Everything conceivable has been done. We may claim, I believe, that a more perfectly selected and equipped expedition to do Australian exploration, has never been sent away. All that experience and foresight could dictate has received the most careful attention."

I have before me a bundle of newspaper cuttings from the Adelaide journals, containing verbatim reports of a public banquet given on the 18th of May, to the leader and second-in-command of the expedition. The Surveyor-General of the Colony, Mr. W. Strawbridge, presided, and amidst the heartiest

good-feeling, the explorers were wished a successful journey and a safe return. Mr. Margarey, in his last letter to me, says:—"At this function, which I attended by invitation to represent yourself, the conspicuous and pleasing features were the openly expressed high esteem with which the leaders were regarded, and also the perfect confidence with which all looked forward, as a matter of fact, to the ultimate success of the venture."

Mr. L. A. Wells and his party left Adelaide for Western Australia on May 22nd, with instructions to call on Sir John Forrest, in Perth, to consult on some points in connection with the work before proceeding to Geraldton, where the camels required for the journey, and a portion of the outfit and scientific apparatus was awaiting them. My latest cable information is as follows:—"Expedition started on June 19."

With a hearty good-bye, and a heart-felt God speed, I take leave for the present of this adventurous little party. My deep interest in the exploration of our great Australian Continent, and my gratification at being connected, even—if I may so term it—as a non-combatant in this warfare against the hostility of the wilderness, is my apology for referring at some length to the newly-started expedition.

Telegrams:
"SPINIFEX, LONDON."
Telephone No. 12022.

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