

Five Years in New Zealand eBook

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CHAPTER I.

How I came to emigrate.

I was one of a family of nine, of which four were sons. My eldest brother was destined for the Church; the second had entered a mercantile house in Liverpool; and I, who was third on the list, it was my father's intention, should be educated for the Royal Engineers, and at the time my story opens I was prosecuting my studies for admission to the Academy at Woolwich, and had attained the age of sixteen, when my health failed, and I was sent home for rest and change. I did not again resume my studies, because it was soon after decided that I should emigrate to New Zealand.

The decision was principally, if not entirely, due to my own wishes. I had long entertained a strong bent to seeing the world for myself, and the idea was congenial to my boyish and quixotic notions of being the arbiter of my own fortunes. I recollect I was much given to reading tales of wild life in America and elsewhere; they contained a peculiar attraction for me, and influenced my mind in no small degree detrimental to continuing my studies for the Army or any specified profession at home.

When I first proposed what was in my mind it created somewhat of a sensation in the old home, and my father would not hear of any such madness as to throw up my studies after having advanced so far, and go away to the antipodes on a mere wild-goose chase, *etc.* On consulting his friends, however, many advised him to let me have my will; others (more wisely perhaps) expressed their opinions that I should be forced to resume my work, and that the ill-health was imagination, or foxing! (I have often since been inclined to agree with the latter supposition.)

The final decision, however, was that I should emigrate to Canterbury, New Zealand, in the following April. This colony was at that time about fourteen years' old, and was highly thought of as a field for youthful enterprise, and it was then the fashion to consider such tendencies as I expressed to be an omen of future success which should not be balked.

A young friend, C——, son of a neighbouring squire, offered to accompany me as my chum and partner. He was six years my senior, and had had considerable experience in farming, so was considered very suitable for a colonial life; whereas I knew literally nothing of farming or anything else beyond my school work.

Our preparations were put in hand, and our passages booked by the good ship "Mary Anne," to sail from St. Katherine's Docks, London, on April 29th, 1859.

When all was finally settled my elation was supreme. The feeling that school grind was past and gone, that the world was open to me, and that I was free to do and act as I would was exhilarating. I felt that I had already attained to manhood, and that the world

was at my feet, and a glorious life before me; well, I suppose most boys prematurely let loose would think the same, and I don't know that it is any harm to start under the circumstances with a hopeful and happy heart.

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The day of parting at length arrived. It was a bright and lovely morning, about the middle of April, when I said goodbye to all my playmates at the old home, took a last look at the guns and fishing-rods, visited the various animals in the stables, gave a loving embrace to the great Newfoundland Juno, whom I could not hope to see again, submitted to be blessed and kissed by the servants and labourers, who had assembled to see me off, and took my seat on the car with my father, mother, and eldest brother, for the railway station, where C—— was to meet us.

C—— and I went direct to Liverpool from Drogheda, to which place my eldest brother accompanied us. My father and mother, having business *en route*, were to meet us there on the following day.

We had a rough passage to Liverpool, and the steamer was laden with cattle and pigs, the stench from which, combined with sea-sickness, was, I recollect, a terrible experience, and it was in no enviable condition of mind or body we arrived at the Liverpool Docks on a foggy, wet and dismal morning. My mercantile brother, Tom, came on board, and had all our belongings speedily conveyed to the lodgings we were to occupy during our stay. On the following day my father and mother arrived, and we spent a few days pleasantly seeing the lions of the great city and visiting friends. On arrival at London we found that we had a week or more before the ship sailed. Neither my father nor mother had been in London before; all was as new to them as to us, and we made the best of the time at our disposal.

On the evening of the day before the ship sailed, after seeing our luggage on board, and cabins made ready for occupation, we accompanied my father, mother, and brother to Euston Station, where they were to bid us God-speed. I was in good spirits till then, but when on the railway platform, a few minutes before the train started, my dear mother fairly broke down, and the tears were stealing down my father's cheeks. The less said about such partings the better; it was soon over, and the train started. I never saw my dear old father again.

C—— and I, after watching the train disappear, started for the docks, and before bedtime had made acquaintance with some of our future *compagnons de voyage*.

The scene on deck was confusing and affecting. Upwards of four hundred emigrants were on board, and the partings from their friends and relatives, the kissings and blessings and cryings, mingled with the shouting of sailors, hauling in of cargo and luggage, and general noise and confusion incident to starting upon a long voyage, continued without intermission until we were fairly under weigh about 11 o'clock at night.

After the unusual exertion and excitement of the day, we both slept soundly, and when we awoke next morning, off Gravesend, we were disappointed at having missed the "Great Eastern," lately launched and then lying in the river.

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By 12 noon we were fairly out at sea, with a favourable breeze, and the pilot left us in view (it might be the last) of the old country we were leaving behind.

Before my eyes again rested on the cliffs of old England I had seen many lands and people, had mixed and worked with all sorts and conditions of men, had many experiences and adventures; and although I did not find the fortune at once which I thought was waiting for me to pick up, I found that there is always a fortune, be it great or small, according to their deserts, waiting for those who determine to work honestly and heartily for it, and that every man's future success or failure depends mainly on himself.

CHAPTER II.

The voyage and incidents thereon—rats on board, the white squall, harpooning A shark, burial of the twins, A tropical escapade—icebergs—exchange of courtesies at sea, etc.

The “Mary Anne” was, as I stated, an emigrant ship, and carried on the voyage about four hundred men, women, and children, sent out chiefly through the Government Emigration Agents. Persons going out in this way were assisted by having a portion of their passage paid for them as an advance, to be refunded after a certain time passed in the colony. The only first-class passengers in addition to C—and myself were two old maiden ladies, the Misses Hunt, who, with the doctor and his wife, the captain and first-mate, comprised our cabin party. In the second-class were three passengers—T. Smith, whose name will frequently appear in these pages, and two brothers called Leach, going out to join a rich cousin, a sheep farmer in Canterbury. Smith was the son of a wealthy squire, with whom, it appeared, he had fallen out respecting some family matters, and in a fit of pique left his home and took passage to New Zealand. His funds were sufficient to procure him a second-class berth, but on representing matters to the captain, who knew something of his family, it was arranged that he should join us in the saloon, hence he became one of our comrades, and eventually a particular friend.

The captain's name was Ashby, and he soon proved to be a most jolly and agreeable companion. The first-mate, Lapworth, also became a favourite with us all.

The doctor was usually drunk, or partly so, and led his wife, a kind and amiable little lady, a very unpleasant life. The Misses Hunt were elderly, amiable, and generally just what they should be.



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Our cabins we had (in accordance with the usages of emigrant ships) furnished ourselves, and they were roomy and comfortable, but I will not readily forget the horror with which I woke up during the first night at sea, with an indescribable feeling that I was being crawled over by some loathsome things. In a half-wakeful fit, I put out my hand, to find it rest upon a huge rat, which was seated on my chest. I started up in my bunk, when, as I did so, it appeared that a large family of rats had been holding high carnival upon me and my possessions; fully a dozen must have been in bed with me. I had no light, nor could I procure one, so I dressed and went on deck until morning. As a boy I was fond of carpentering, and was considerably expert in that way. My father thinking some tools would be useful to me, provided me with a small chest of serviceable ones (not the ordinary amateur's gimcracks), and this chest I had with me in my cabin. On examination I discovered several holes beneath the berth, where no doubt the previous night's visitors had entered. I set to work, and with the aid of some deal boxes given me by the steward, I had all securely closed up by breakfast, where the others enjoyed a hearty laugh at my experience of the night. The captain said there were doubtless hundreds of rats on board, and seemed to regard the fact with complacency rather than otherwise. Sailors consider that the presence of rats is a guarantee of the seaworthiness of the ship, and they will never voluntarily take passage in a vessel that is not sound.

The captain's supposition proved true enough, and it was not unusual of an evening to see these friendly rodents taking an airing on the ropes and rigging, and upon the hand-rails around the poop deck, and while so diverting themselves, I have endeavoured to shake them overboard, but always in vain; they were thoroughbred sailors, knew exactly when and where to jump, and flopping on the deck at my feet would disappear, with a twist of their tails amidships.

I do not think that the sailors approved of the rats being destroyed, and rather preferred their society than otherwise.

We soon settled down to our sea life, and the groans of sickness and the screaming of children from between decks ceased in time. Our own party of nine had the poop to ourselves, and were very comfortable; we soon got to like the life, and generally arranged some way of spending each day agreeably. We had a fair library, chess, backgammon, whist, *etc.*, and when we got into the Tropics and had occasional calms, we went out in the captain's gig; then further south we had shooting matches at Cape pigeons and albatrosses, and in all our amusements the captain and Lapworth took part.

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There were not many incidents on the voyage worthy of note, but I will mention the most interesting of them which I can recollect. The first was when we encountered a white squall about a week out from England. It was a lovely evening, a slight breeze sending us along some four knots under full sail. We were lounging on deck watching the sunset, and occupied with our thoughts, when suddenly there was a cry from the “look out” in the main fore-top which created an instantaneous and marvellous scene of activity on board. It was then that we witnessed the first example of thorough seamanship and discipline; the shrill boatswain’s whistle, the captain shouting a few orders, passed on by the mates, a crowd of sailors appearing like magic in the rigging, and in another instant the ship riding under bare masts; a deathlike stillness for a few seconds, and then a snow white wall of foam, stretching as far as the eye could reach, came down upon us with a sweeping wind, striking the ship broadsides, and over she went on her beam ends. Half a minute’s hesitation or bungling would in all probability have sent us over altogether. There was a shout to us novices to look out—away went deck chairs and tables. The Misses Hunt—poor old ladies—who had been quietly knitting unconscious of any coming danger, were unceremoniously precipitated into the lee scuppers. I seized the mizen-mast, while C—— falling foul of a roving hen-coop, grasped it in a loving embrace, and accompanied it to some haven of safety, where he stretched himself upon it until permitted to walk upright again. The officers and crew appeared like so many cats in the facility with which they moved about; so much so that deciding to have a try myself, I was instantly sent rolling over to the two old ladies, creating a shout of laughter from all hands. The squall lasted about half an hour, and was succeeded by a fine night and a spanking breeze.

[Illustration: *Harpooning A shark.*]

Another bit of excitement was the harpooning and capture of a shark which had been following the ship for days. This is always an omen of ill-luck with sailors, who are very superstitious, believing that a shark under such circumstances is waiting for a body dead or alive, and will follow the ship until its desire is appeased. They are always, therefore, keen to kill a shark when opportunity offers. Fortunately, for our purpose, a calm came on while the shark was visiting us, and he kept moving about under the stern in a most friendly manner. The plan of operations was as follows:—A large junk of pork was made fast to a rope and suspended from the stern, letting it sink about a foot under the surface. C——, Smith, and I were in the captain’s boat, with three sailors, under the orders of Lapworth, who had taken his stand immediately above with a harpoon. The shark came up, nibbling and smelling at the pork, so close to us in the boat that he almost rubbed along the side

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without apparent alarm or taking any notice of our presence. He was a monster, nearly nine feet in length, and as he came alongside, his back fin rose some inches above the surface. He did not seem inclined to seize the pork until Lapworth had it quickly jerked up, when the brute made a dash at it, half turning as he did so, and at the same instant received the harpoon through his neck. I recollect the monster turning over on his back, Lapworth swinging himself over into the boat, a little organised commotion among the men, and in a few moments running nooses were passed over head and tail, and he was hoisted on deck and speedily despatched. The body was cut up and divided amongst the crew, some of whom were partial to shark steak. A piece of the backbone I secured for myself as a memento of the occasion.

As if to bear out the superstition I have mentioned, a few days subsequently a death, or rather two deaths, did actually take place; they were the twins and only children of a Scottish shepherd and his wife, both on board. Pretty little girls of eight, as I remember them, playing about the deck, and favourites with all, they died within a day of each other. The father was a gigantic fellow, and I have pleasant recollections of him in after years, when time and other children had helped to assuage his and his wife's grief for the loss of their two darlings at sea by one stroke of illness.

There is something more affecting in a burial at sea than one on land. In this instance the little body was wrapped in a white cloth, to which a small bag of coals was fastened, and laid upon a slide projecting from the stern of the vessel ready for immersion. The captain read the Burial Service, all on board standing uncovered. At the words "Dust to dust," etc., the body was allowed to slide into the sea—where it immediately disappeared. The mother was too ill to be present, and the father's grief was severe, as it might well be, to witness his child laid in so lonely a resting place in mid-ocean without sign or mark. The following evening a similar scene was enacted when the body of the other little sister was committed to the deep, and the father had to be taken away before the service was completed.

No ceremonies I ever beheld impressed and affected me so much as the burial of the little twins at sea.

While in the Tropics we had occasional calms, sometimes lasting for two or three days; the sea was like molten glass, and the sun burnt like a furnace. On such occasions we were permitted to row about within a reasonable distance of the ship, so that if a breeze suddenly sprang up we might not be left behind. Once this very nearly occurred, when we had rowed a long way off, after what was supposed to be a whale spouting. We suddenly felt a gentle breath of air, and noticed the glassy surface giving place to a slight disturbance. We were a mile off the ship, but could distinctly hear the summons from aboard,

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and noticed the sails filling. We rowed with all our strength, stripped to the waist, and succeeded in getting up when the ship was well under weigh. It was a stiff piece of work, and the captain was so concerned and annoyed at our disobedience of his orders that he refused to allow us to boat again during the voyage. We suffered sorely for our escapade, for not knowing the strength of a tropical sun, we exposed ourselves so that the skin was burned and peeled off, and we were in misery for several days, while our arms and necks were swathed in cotton wool and oil.

After leaving the tropics we had a pleasant voyage and fair winds until we rounded the Cape, where we encountered some rough weather, and at 56 deg. S.L., it being then almost winter in those latitudes, we passed many icebergs of more or less extent. Few of them appeared to be more than ten or fifteen feet above water, but the greater portion of such blocks are submerged, and considerable caution had to be observed night and day to steer clear of them. They were usually observable at first from the large number of birds resting on them, causing them to appear like a dark speck on the horizon. One of these icebergs (according to an entry made in the ship's log) was stated to be five miles long and of great height, and we were supposed to have passed it at the latter end of the night so near that "a biscuit might be thrown upon it." I am afraid the entry was open to criticism, and that the existence, or at any rate, the extent of this particular iceberg might have been due to an extra glass of grog on the mate's imagination.

We sighted no land during the voyage, except the Peak of Teneriffe, as it emerged above a cloud; and but few vessels, and of those only two closely. One was a Swedish barque, homeward bound, the other a large American clipper ship. We spoke the latter when the vessels were some miles apart, but as the courses were parallel, she being bound for London, while we were from thence, we gradually neared, when an amusing conversation by signals took place. Our captain, by mistake of the signaller, invited the Yankee captain to dinner, and the reply from the American, who good-naturedly took it as a joke, was "Bad roadstead here." Our captain thought they were chaffing him, and had not the mistake been discovered in time, the rencontre might not have ended as pleasantly as it did. Our captain and second mate went on board the Yankee, and their captain returned the visit. While this was proceeding the two ships appeared to be sailing round each other, and the sight was very imposing. When the ceremonies were over, and a few exchanges of newspapers, wines, *etc.*, were made and bearings compared, the vessels swung round to their respective courses, up flew the sails, and a prolonged cheer from both ships told us this little interchange of courtesies in the midst of the South Pacific was at an end.

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I think it was the same night that we experienced a very heavy gale; the lightning, thunder, rain, and wind were terrific, and the sea ran mountains high. I stayed on deck nearly all the night, half perished with wet and cold; but such a storm carries with it a peculiar attraction, and one which I could not resist. I do not know anything more weird and impressive than the chant of the sailors hauling on the ropes, mingled with the fierce fury of the storm, and every now and again the dense darkness lit up by a vivid flash of lightning; the deck appears for the moment peopled by phantoms combined with the fury of the elements to bring destruction on the noble little vessel with its precious freight struggling and trembling in their grasp.

The following morning the storm had quite abated, but the sea was such as can be seen only in mid-ocean. Our little ship (she was only 700 tons) appeared such an atom in comparison with the enormous mountains of water. At one moment we would be perched on the summit of a wave, seemingly hundreds of feet high, and immediately below a terrible abyss into which we were on the point of sinking; the next we would be placed between two mountains of water which seemed going to engulf us.

I always took a place with the sailors on emergencies, to give a hand at hauling the ropes, and got to be fairly expert at climbing into the rigging. The rope-hauling was done to some chant started by the boatswain or one of the sailors—this is necessary to ensure that the united strength of the pullers is exerted at the same moment. One of the chants I well remember. It was:—

“Haul a bowlin’, the ‘Mary Anne’s’ a-rollin’. Haul a bowlin’, a bowlin’ haul; Haul a bowlin’, the good ship’s a-rollin’; Haul a bowlin’, a bowlin’ haul.”

The chant is sung out in stentorian notes by the leader, and on the word in italics every man joins in a tremendous and united pull.

Crowds of Cape pigeons and albatrosses accompanied us all across the South Pacific. These birds never seem to tire and but rarely rest on the water, except when they swoop down and settle a moment to pick up something that has been thrown overboard; this is quickly devoured, and they are again in pursuit. The albatrosses, some white, some grey, and some almost black, are huge birds; some that we shot, and for which the boat was sent, measured nine feet from tip to tip of wings.

On August 1st we rounded Stewart’s Island, the southern-most of the New Zealand group. It is little more than a barren rock, and was not then inhabited, whatever it may be now. Although it was the winter season, and the latitude corresponded to that of the North of England, we remarked how mild and dry was the atmosphere in comparison. Indeed the weather was glorious and seemed to welcome us to the land we were coming to.

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On the 3rd of August we sighted the coast of Canterbury, and at daylight on the 4th we found ourselves lying becalmed about 12 miles off Port Lyttelton Heads, from whence the captain signalled for a pilot steamer to take the ship to harbour. In the clear rare atmosphere, and the pure invigorating feeling of that glorious morning, we were all impatient of delay. A couple of fishing boats were lying not far off, and we begged the captain to let us row out to them and he permitted us, conditionally that we returned and kept near the ship, because immediately the tug arrived we would start. We rowed to the boats and obtained some information from the fishermen, with whom were two of the natives, Maori lads; indeed, I think the boat partly belonged to the Maoris, for these people do not take service with the white settlers. They pointed out to us where the entrance lay, and told us that Port Lyttelton was some five miles further down a bay.

Before we returned to breakfast we had decided to anticipate matters by going ahead of the ship. We quietly laid in a small supply of food and appeared at the cabin table like good and obedient boys. Incidentally, one of us asked the captain if it would be easy to row into port, and he replied that it would be very risky to attempt it; it was a long way, and the wind or a squall might get up at any moment, or the tide might be contrary, and he positively forbade us to entertain any such idea. All this, however, only increased our desire for the "lark," as we called it, and about 9 o'clock, having rowed about quietly for a while, we suddenly bade good-bye to the "Mary Anne" and steered straight for the Heads, where we had been told Port Lyttelton lay. Our crew consisted of Smith, the two Leaches, C——, and myself, with a man named Kelson, who was a good oarsman, and we thought he would be useful as an extra hand, but he had no notion of our freak when we started, and was considerably chagrined when he discovered our real intention; he had a young wife on board, whom he feared would be in distress about him.

For some time we pulled away manfully, but at length began with some dismay to notice two facts, one, that we were losing sight of the ship, and the other that the hills did not appear to be any nearer!

Some one suggested returning, but as that would have looked like funk, it was overruled, and we went to the oars with renewed vigour. After some hours pulling we had the satisfaction to find that although the masts of the ship were scarcely visible we were certainly drawing nearer to the land, and could occasionally distinguish waves breaking on the rocks. The coast apparently was quite uninhabited, with no sign of life on land or sea. We had evidently been working against the tide or some current, for we had been rowing steadily from 9 to 4, which would have amounted to less than two miles an hour, whereas we could pull five. Our course must have been true, as also the directions we received, for on entering

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between the heads we found ourselves in a lovely bay stretching away to where we were able to discern the masts of vessels in the distance, and soon after a large white object lying upon the shore. To satisfy our curiosity and obtain news of our whereabouts we rowed over and found that the white object was the carcass of a whale which had been washed on shore, and on which several men were engaged cutting it up. These speedily discovered our “new chum” appearance, but with true Colonial hospitality at once offered us a nip of rum, at the same moment somewhat disturbing our equanimity by telling us that if we went on to the Port we would be put in choky for leaving the ship before the Medical Officer examined her.

It was strange and very pleasant to feel the solid ground under our feet after 94 days at sea, and we sat awhile with the whale men before resuming our boat. Then we proceeded quietly down the Bay, which was very beautiful, the dense and variegated primeval forests clothing the lower portions of the hills and fringing the ravines and gullies to the shore, the pretty caves and bays lying in sheltered nooks, with a mountain stream or cascade to complete the picture, and all undefiled by the hand of man. The bold outline of the bare rocky summits, the deep blue of the silent calm bay, and the distant view of the little Port of Lyttelton picturesquely sloping up the hillside.

Seeing no sign of the ship, and fearing to approach the town, we rowed into a little sandy cove, where we fastened the boat and proceeded to ascend the hill to endeavour to discover the ship’s whereabouts. About half-way we came upon a neat shepherd’s cottage in one of the most picturesque localities imaginable, and commanding a magnificent view of the bay and harbour. On calling we found the cottage occupied by the shepherd’s wife, a pleasant buxom Scots-woman, who immediately proffered us food, an offer too tempting to be declined, and we presently sat down to our first Colonial meal of excellent home-made bread, mutton, and tea, and how delighted we were to taste the fine fresh mutton after many weeks of salt junk and leathery fowls on board the “Mary Anne”!

We had finished our hearty dinner, and were giving our loquacious hostess all the news we could of the old country, when the ship hove in sight, towed by a little tug steamer. We ran for our boat and gave chase, but only reached her side as the anchor was being dropped in Lyttelton Harbour. We received from the Captain and Lapworth a sound but good-humoured rating, but there would be no opportunity of further “larks” from the “Mary Anne”! The voyage was over, and a most pleasant one it had been, especially for our small party, and I am sure that no voyagers to the New World ever had the luck to travel with kinder or more sympathetic captain and officers, or with abler seamen, than those in command of the good ship “Mary Anne.”

Poor Mrs. Kelson was in sore distress about her husband, whom she persisted in giving up for lost, and doubtless she looked pretty sharply after his movements for a while.

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CHAPTER III.

LYTTELTON AND CHRISTCHURCH.—CALL ON OUR FRIENDS.—VISIT
MALVERN HILL.

Port Lyttelton at the time was but an insignificant town in comparison with what it has since become, although from its confined situation it is unlikely ever to attain to any great size. It is the port of the capital of the province, Christchurch, from which it is separated by a chain of hills. A rough and somewhat dangerous cart road led from it to the capital, along and around the hill side, which was twelve miles in length, but there was also a bridle track direct across the hills, by which the distance was reduced by one-half. This path, however, could be used only by pedestrians, or on horseback with difficulty. In 1862 it was decided to connect the port with Christchurch by a railway, cutting a tunnel through the hill, and the project was completed in 1866. In 1859 Port Lyttelton was built entirely of wood, the houses being for the most part single-storeyed. There was a main street running parallel to the beach, with two or three branch streets, running up the hill therefrom; there were a few shops, several stores, stables, and small inns. The harbour was an open roadstead, and possessed but a primitive sort of quay or landing place for boats and vessels of small tonnage.

We were invited on shore by the Leach's sheep-farming cousin, who had come to meet them, but we returned on board to sleep. The following morning, getting our luggage together, we all four started for Christchurch on hired horses, sending our kit round the hill by cart. The climb up the bridle path (we had to lead the horses) was a stiff pull for fellows just out of a three months' voyage, but we were repaid on reaching the top by the magnificent panorama opened out before us. To our right was the open ocean, blue and calm, dotted with a few white sails; to the left the long low range of hills encircling the bay, and on a pinnacle of which we stood. At our feet lay Christchurch, with its few well-laid-out streets and white houses, young farms, fences, trees, gardens, and all the numerous signs of a prosperous and thriving young colony, the little river Avon winding its peaceful way to the sea and encircling the infant town like a silver cord, and the muddy Heathcote with its few white sails and heavily-laden barges. While beyond stretched away for sixty miles the splendid Canterbury Plains bounded in their turn by the southern Alps with their towering snow-capped peaks and glaciers sparkling in the sun; the patches of black pine forest lying sombre and dark against the mountain sides, in contrast with the purple, blue, and gray of the receding gorges, changing, smiling, or frowning as clouds or sunshine passed over them. All this heightened by the extremely rare atmosphere of New Zealand, in which every detail stood out at even that distance clear and distinct, made up a picture which for beauty and grandeur can rarely be equalled in the world.

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Upon arrival at Christchurch we put up at a neat little inn on the outskirts of the town, called Rule's accommodation house. It was a picture of neatness, cleanliness, and comfort. We found it occupied by several squatters of what might be called the better class, who, on their occasional business visits to Christchurch, preferred a quiet establishment to the larger and more noisy hotels, of which the town possessed two.

These gentlemen were clothed in cord breeches and high boots, with guernsey smock frocks, in which costume they appeared to live. English coats and collars and light boots were luxuries unknown or contemned by these hardy sons of the bush, whom we found very pleasant company, but who, it was apparent to us before we were many minutes in their society, regarded us as very raw material indeed. According to bush custom it was usual to dub all fresh arrivals "new chums" until they had satisfactorily passed certain ordeals in bush life. They should be able to ride a buckjumper, or, at any rate, hold on till the saddle went, use a stockwhip, cut up and light a pipe of tobacco with a single wax vesta while riding full speed in the teeth of a sou'-wester, and be ready and competent to take a hand at any manual labour going.

After dinner some of our new acquaintances entertained us with some miraculous tales of bush life, while others looked carelessly on to see how far we could be gulled with impunity. An amusing incident, however, occurred presently which rapidly increased their respect for the raw material. C—— was a young giant, six feet three in his stockings, and the last man to put up with an indignity. One of the party—a rough, vulgar sort of fellow, who had been romancing considerably, and who evidently was not on the most cordial terms with the rest of the company—carried his rudeness so far as to drop into C——'s seat when the latter had vacated it for a moment. On his return C—— asked him to leave it, which the fellow refused to do. C—— put his hand on his collar. "Now," said he, "get out! Once, twice, three times"—and at the last word he lifted the chap bodily and threw him over the table, whence he fell heavily on the floor. He was thoroughly cowed, and with a few oaths left the room. It needed only such an incident as this to put us on the friendliest terms with them all, and we enjoyed a pleasant afternoon and gathered much information.

[Illustration: THE ARRIVAL OF LAPWORTH.]

The following morning, whilst waiting for breakfast, sitting out on the grass in front of the house, we heard a stampede coming along the road from the direction of the Fort, and presently there hove in sight Lapworth astride a hired nag, coming ahead at a gallop, one hand grasping the mane and the other the crupper, while stirrups and reins were flying in the wind. In his rear were Bob Stavelly, third mate, and the boatswain, astride another animal, Bob steering, and the boatswain holding on, seemingly by the tail.

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Lapworth, a quarter of a mile off, was shouting “Stop her! Stop her!” but the mare needed no assistance; she evidently understood where she was required to go, and decided to do it in her own time and way. Galloping to the grass plot on which we were standing she suddenly stopped short and deposited Lapworth ignominiously at our feet. The other animal followed suit, but did not succeed in clearing itself, and after some tacking Bob and the boatswain got under weigh again and steered for the “White Hart,” where they were bent on a spree.

Christchurch at this time was about fourteen years in existence. It consisted of only a few hundred houses, chiefly single-storeyed and entirely constructed of timber. The streets were well laid out, broad, and on the principle of the best modern towns, but few of them were as yet made or metalled. There were not many buildings of architectural pretensions, but all were characterised by an air of comfort, neatness, and suitability, and it was apparent the rapid strides the young colony was making would ere long place it high in the rank of its order. There were two churches, a town hall, used on occasion as court house, ball-room, or theatre; three hotels, some very presentable shops and stores, and a few particularly neat and handsome residences standing in luxuriant grounds, such as those occupied by the Superintendent, Bishop, Judge, *etc.* The suburbs were extending on all sides with the fencing in of farms, erection of homesteads, and conversion of the native soil into land suitable for growing English corn and grass.

Through the rising city wound the little river Avon, only twenty to thirty yards in width, spanned by two wooden bridges, and a couple of mills had also been erected upon it. The river was only about fifteen miles from its source to the sea, and at the time to which I refer was almost covered with watercress. This plant was not indigenous; it was introduced a few years before by a colonist, who was so partial to the vegetable that he brought some roots from home with him, and planted them near the source of the river, where he squatted. The watercress took so kindly to the soil that it had now covered the river to its mouth, and the Colonial Government were put to very considerable annual expense to remove it.

As I have already stated, we had been provided with introductions to some of the most influential families in Christchurch—namely, the Bishop, the Chief Justice Gresson, and some others. The following day we made our calls and were most hospitably received, especially by Mr. and Mrs. Gresson, who from that time during my stay in New Zealand were my constant and valued friends. We were introduced to many of the best up-country people, and a month was passed pleasantly visiting about to enable us to decide on what line we would take up as a commencement. We possessed very little money, so a life of service in some form was an absolute necessity at the beginning.

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While awaiting events, C—— and I were invited by young Mr. H——, son of the Bishop, to visit his sheep station at Malvern Hills, some forty-five miles distant across the plains, where we could see what station life was like and have some sport after wild pigs, ducks, *etc.* Procuring the loan of a couple of horses we all started early one morning, what change of clothes we needed being strapped with our blankets before and behind on our saddles, and I carried a gun.

It was an exhilarating ride in the cool, fragrant atmosphere, although a description would lead one to think it would be monotonous to ride forty-five miles over an almost perfectly flat plain, with no more than an occasional shepherd's hut, a mob of sheep, or an isolated homestead to break the surrounding view. The plain was almost bare of vegetation, beyond short yellow grass here and there burnt in patches, and now and then a solitary cabbage tree (a kind of palm) dotted the wide expanse. Beyond a few paradise ducks feeding on the burnt patches, or an occasional family of wild pigs, we met with no animal life. Quail used to be abundant, but the run fires were fast destroying them. We had before us the nearing view of the Malvern Hills, the sloping pine forests and scrub, with the long, undulating spurs running back to the foot of great snow-clad peaks.

The station, or homestead, stood on a plateau some fifty feet above the plain; it consisted of two huts, mud-walled and thatched with snow grass. One of these contained the general kitchen and sleeping room for the station hands, the other was the residence of the squatter and his overseer. Behind these there were a wool shed for clipping and pressing the wool, with sheep yards attached, a stockyard for cattle, and a fenced in paddock in which a few station hacks were kept for daily use.

On arrival our first duty was to remove saddles, bridles, and swags and lead the horses to some good pasture, where they were each tethered to a tussock by thirty yards of fine hemp rope, which they carried tied about their necks. Then, after a rough wash in the open, we were soon gathered round a hospitable table in the kitchen, where all sat in common to a substantial meal of mutton, bread, and tea, the standard food with little variation of a squatter's homestead.

Night had closed in by now, and we were soon glad to retire to our blankets, and the sweet fresh beds of Manuka twigs laid on the floor of Harper's hut, for the temporary accommodation of us visitors. We slept like tops till roused at daybreak to breakfast, after which the forenoon was spent in being shown over the station and in a climb to the forests, where we saw the pine trees being felled, and split up into posts and rails. After the midday meal a pig hunt was organised, and a few animals were accounted for, falling chiefly to Harper's rifle. (Pig hunting I will specially refer to later on.) We passed a pleasant and instructive week at Malvern Station, taking a hand in all the routine work, riding after the stock, working in the bush, and occasionally taking a cross-country ride of fifteen or twenty miles to visit a neighbouring station.

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CHAPTER IV.

A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO OCCUPATION.—EVENTUALLY LEAVE FOR NELSON AS CADETS ON A SHEEP RUN.

On our return to Christchurch we were beset with a diversity of advice not calculated to bring us to a speedy decision. Some advised us to go on a sheep run for a year or two as cadets to learn the routine, with a view to obtaining thereafter an overseership, and in time a possible partnership. Others advised our setting up as carters between the Port and Christchurch, while, again, others recommended us to invest what money we possessed in land and take employment up country until we had saved enough to farm it. All advice was excellent, and had we decided on one line it would have been well, or if we had had fewer advisers perhaps it would have been better. We were waiting and talking about work instead of going at it, living at some expense, and keeping up appearances without means to support them. But it was not easy under the circumstances to decide. To go upon a sheep station and work as a labourer or overseer was very obnoxious to C——. With his home experience of farming he expected too much all at once, and naturally I was guided by him. Farming on a small scale, even if we had sufficient money to buy and work a farm, would not pay. There was not then a large enough home market for the crops produced. Land-holders held on, hoping that as the wealth of the Colony increased and the town extended and peopled, land would proportionately increase in value, and market for their produce would be found at home or abroad. But the Colony was then very young, and the staple produce of the country upon which everything depended was wool, which was only partially developed. The country was not then a tenth stocked. Sheep-farming was decidedly the thing to go in for whenever we could contrive to do so, but in the meantime what were we to take up for a living. The answer should have been simple enough. But, however, there is no need to dwell on our petty disappointments; they were only what hundreds feel and have felt who have gone to the Colonies with too sanguine expectations that it was an easy and pleasant road to fortune. That it is a road to fortune is very true, if a young man is content and determined to begin at the beginning and go steadily on; but it is not always an easy road at first for the youngster who has very little or nothing to commence upon, especially if he be a gentleman born, and has only his hands to help him. He must put his pride in his pocket and learn to be content to be taken at his present value. If he does that he will find, that his birth and education will stand to him, and that no matter what occupation he may be forced to take up, if his life and conduct be manly and reliable he will command as much or more respect from his (for the time being) fellow workers as he would do under different circumstances. It is a huge mistake to suppose that the gentleman lowers himself anywhere—and especially in the Colonies—by undertaking any kind of manual labour. I have known the sons of gentlemen of good family working as bullock-drivers, shepherds, stockdrivers, bushmen, for a yearly wage, and nobody considered the

employment derogatory. On the contrary, these are the men who get on and in time become wealthy.

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A sad event occurred about this time, which, as it was in a way connected with our ship, I will relate here. It was the custom of Government at that time to send out to the Australian Colonies for employment as domestic servants, possibly wives for young colonists (women being much in the minority), a number of girls from the Reformatory Schools in London; and in the “Mary Anne” some twenty or thirty of them had arrived. While on board they were under the charge of matrons, and on arrival were received in a house maintained at Government expense, until they obtained service or were otherwise disposed of. This house was under the superintendence of a medical man, Dr. T——, whose acquaintance we had made on our first arrival. He was a middle-aged man, a thorough gentleman, a bachelor, and a great favourite in Christchurch society. Amongst the shipment of young women was a very handsome, ladylike, and well-educated girl, and an accomplished musician. The doctor was smitten, proposed to her, and married her quietly. On the day on which we first heard of the event we happened to be sitting with some acquaintances in the public room of the White Hart Hotel, when Dr. T—— entered, and walking over to the fire, called for a glass of water, nodding to us all round in his usual friendly way. On receiving the water, he threw into it and stirred up a powder which he took from his pocket, and immediately drank off the mixture. “I’ve done it now,” he said; “I have taken strychnine!” and remained standing with his back to the fire in an unconcerned manner. We scarcely heeded his remark, taking it as a joke, till he suddenly crossed to a sofa, and called to us for God’s sake to send for a doctor. One was sent for, but he arrived too late, if indeed his presence could have been of use at any time. A doctor knows how much to take to ensure death. After a few fits of convulsions, very terrible to witness, Dr. T—— was a corpse. The cause of his committing suicide was due to his discovery, very soon after his marriage, of the true character of the woman he had taken to his home.

I do not know whether the custom of sending out to the Colonies persons of this class still exists, but it certainly cannot be a good one, and I fear that but a very small percentage of them really turn over a new leaf. There must be now, at any rate, better means of disposing of the surplus members of reformatory establishments in the Old Country than sending them to run wild amidst the freedom and temptations of the new world—a custom as hurtful to them as to the Colony which receives them.

C—— and I at length decided to commence work as carriers; we rented a four-acre paddock, and built a small wooden hut, and were in treaty for the purchase of the necessary drays and teams, but it was all being done in a half-hearted way, as well as in opposition to the best of our advisers. C——’s aversion to undertake anything where he was not entirely his own master was unconquerable. Doubtless the carrying business would have answered very well, for a time at any rate, and there was no actual hurry, so long as we were employed and earning a living, but it was not to be.

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We were invited to meet at dinner at the Chief Justice's a Mr. and Mrs. Lee from Nelson Province. Mr. Lee was a large sheep-farmer, and before we left that evening we had accepted a most kind invitation from him to go to his run for a month or two at any rate, before deciding finally to take up the rough and uncertain business we had proposed for ourselves. The Judge so strongly advised this course for us both, that C—— could not refuse, although he was by no means keen about it. The judge explained that the opportunity was an excellent one, and would in all probability lead to his (C——'s) being offered the overseership, if he decided to take up the life after a fair trial. I did not know then, as I did soon after, that C—— had serious intentions of abandoning the country before giving it a fair trial; everything he saw was obnoxious to him, and he evidently yearned for his home in Ireland and his little farm again.

I purchased for my own use a small but powerful bay mare, C—— obtained a mount from Mr. Lee, and in the course of a few days we started in company with Mr. and Mrs. Lee, all on horseback, for their station of Highfield.

Highfield was, as well as I recollect, nearly three hundred miles from Christchurch, and we accomplished the distance in a little over a week, Mrs. Lee riding with us all the way. Indeed, there was no other means of travelling over that wild track, and she was, like most squatters' wives in those days, an experienced horsewoman.

Our luggage was carried on three pack horses, which we drove before us, and in this manner we accomplished from thirty to forty miles each day.

At night we rested, either at a rough accommodation house (a kind of private hotel) or a squatter's station, and during the day's ride we sometimes halted for lunch at any convenient locality where we could find water to make tea and firewood to boil it with. Then the packs and saddles were removed from the horses, which were allowed to roll and feed on the native grass while we refreshed the inner man with the usual bush fare, of which a sufficient supply was carried with us.

After crossing the Hurunui river, the boundary between Canterbury and Nelson, we soon left the plains behind and entered a fine undulating country watered by abundant streams and some large rivers, which latter could be forded only with considerable care and judgment, being sometimes full of quicksands, and always rapid.

On approaching our destination, which, as its name implies, stood on an elevated situation, the gorges and river-bed flats, along which our track ran, narrowed and became more wooded and picturesque, till we at length passed through the narrow precipitous gorge that led us to the open plateau upon which the station buildings stood. These comprised the dwelling house, a long, low, commodious building, furnished most comfortably in English fashion; the men's huts, comprising three sleeping rooms, the kitchen

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and dining-room for the hands, the store, dairy, *etc.*, with an enclosed yard, formed one group, while at some distance away stood the woolshed and sheep yards, paddocks, stock yards for cattle and sheds for cows and working bullocks. In front of the dwelling was a pretty and rather extensive garden plot, through the centre of which wound a small stream of pure spring water. The entire group of buildings, with the garden, paddocks, *etc.*, occupied the centre of a piece of undulating land, open towards the south, where a fine view of the country over which we had journeyed was visible, and on all other sides was bounded by hills, which to the north and west stretched away to the Alps. It was a grand site to make a home upon, although I could not help the feeling that it was a somewhat lonely one; the nearest neighbours were fifteen to twenty miles distant.

Mr. Lee's run comprised about 30,000 acres, principally hills, with occasional stretches of flat land upon which the cattle and horses grazed, while the sheep fed on the mountain sides.

We speedily fell into the life, and found it exhilarating. Mr. Lee was a fine specimen of the English country squire, a good horseman and sportsman, and he could put his hand to any kind of work. He had a large store and workshop near the yards, where every conceivable thing needed for use on a station so far from supplies was kept, and he was an excellent carpenter and smith. Indeed, a great portion of the rather extensive buildings and yards he had erected himself, with such assistance as he could derive from raw station hands, while only such articles as doors and windows, furniture, and suchlike were brought from Christchurch. The house walls, roofs, and floors were all of green timber cut in the neighbouring pine forest. The walls of the living houses were composed of a framing of round pine averaging 4 or 5 inches thick, covered on the outside with weather boarding, and on the inside with laths, the space between of four inches being filled with clay and chopped grass, and the whole surface afterwards plastered with clay and mud-washed. The roofs were made of pine framing covered with boards and pine shingles. The outbuildings were usually built with roughly squared framing to which heavy split slabs would be vertically fastened, the inside being left rough or plastered with mud as desired; and the roofs were of round pine framing covered with rickers (young pine plants) and thatched with snow grass. Squatters soon learnt to be their own architects, and very good ones many of them turned out.

The country immediately surrounding the station was almost treeless, and Mr. Lee was doing a good deal of planting, and had a very fine garden under formation. Some two miles to the rear of the station, in a deep cleft of the hills, lay a considerable black and white pine forest. It is a peculiarity of New Zealand that the pine forests indigenous to that country (and which bear no similarity to European pines) are invariably found in more or less accurately defined patches, growing thickly and never scattered to any appreciable extent. One may ride twenty miles through spurs and hills with no

vegetation on them, and then suddenly stumble on a densely wooded ravine or mountain side so accurately contained within itself as to lead one to imagine it had been originally planted.

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Within twenty miles of Highfield was another station, called Parnassus, belonging to Mr. Edward Lee, our Mr. Lee's brother. We soon rode over to see him, and made excursions to other neighbours, none living nearer than ten miles.

There were upwards of one hundred horses at Highfield, including all ages and sexes, of which the main body of course ran wild, while a few were kept in paddocks for use. The horse Mrs. Lee rode from Christchurch was a new purchase and a very fine animal, named Maseppa, and, strange to say, although he carried her perfectly all the journey to Highfield, he had now, after a few weeks on the run, developed into a vicious buckjumper. One day, when Mr. Lee wanted to ride him, he was driven in with the mob and saddled. Immediately he was mounted the brute bucked and sent Mr. Lee flying. Fortunately the ground was soft, and he escaped with a few bruises. C—— then had a try, with more success, but the horse was never safe for a lady to ride, and he was soon after disposed of to a stock-rider on the Waiou.

It may be interesting here to give a general sketch of a sheep-farmer's life and work on his station, obtained from my experience at Highfield, and occasionally on other runs, during my five years' residence in the country, and this I will endeavour to do in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

WORKING OF A SHEEP-RUN—SCAB—C——'S DEPARTURE FOR HOME, ETC.

The intending squatter might either purchase a sheep run outright, if opportunity offered, or if he was fortunate enough to discover a tract of unclaimed country, he could occupy it at once by paying the Provincial Government a nominal rental, something like half a farthing an acre. This would only be the goodwill of the land, which was liable to be purchased outright by anybody else direct from Government, at the upset price fixed, which in Nelson was one pound per acre for hilly land, and two pounds for flat land suitable for cultivation. Nobody could purchase outright a run or portion of it while another occupier held the goodwill of it without first challenging the latter, who retained the presumptive right to purchase.

To protect themselves as much as possible from land being purchased away from them, or from being obliged to purchase themselves, goodwill holders were in the habit of buying up the best flat land, as well as making the land around their homesteads private property. A run so divided and cut up would not be so tempting to a rich man, and would effectually debar the man of small means, as the present occupier would not sell his private property unless at a price which would reimburse him for the loss of his interest in the goodwill of the run, and the new-comer, if he did not possess the scraps of private property as well as the remainder of the run, would be continually harassed by

the previous owner occupying the best portions, and would be liable to fine for trespass, *etc.*

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When a tract of country is occupied for the first time, it will usually be found covered with tussocks of grass scattered far apart and lying matted and rank on the ground. The first thing to do is to apply the match and burn all clean to the roots, and after a few showers of rain the grass will begin to sprout from the burnt stumps. Then the sheep are turned on to it, and the cropping, tramping, and manuring it receives, with occasional further burnings, renders it in a couple of years fair grazing country. An even sod takes the place of the isolated tussock, and the grass from being wild and unsavoury becomes sweet and tender.

It takes, however, three to five years to transform a wild mountain side (if the land be moderately good) into an ordinarily fair sheep-run calculated to carry one sheep to every five acres—that is, of course, for the native or indigenous grass; the same ground cleared and laid down in English grass would carry three to five sheep to the acre.

A settler having obtained his run is bound by Government to stock it within a year with a stipulated number of sheep per 1,000 acres, failing which he forfeits his claim to possession. A man holding a fairly good run of 30,000 acres may feed from 3,000 to 4,000 sheep upon it, making due allowance for increase and disability to dispose of surplus stock.

The farming is conducted as follows: The flock is divided into two or more parts, in all cases the wethers being kept separate from the ewes and lambs, and occupying different portions of the run, the object being that the ewes and lambs may have rest, the wethers being liable to be driven in for sale or slaughter.

A shepherd is put in charge of each flock, and he resides at some convenient place on the boundary, whence it is his duty to walk or ride round his boundary at least once a day, and see that no sheep have crossed it. If he discovers tracks made during his absence he must follow them until he recovers his wanderers.

It is not necessary that a shepherd should see his sheep daily; he may not see a third of his flocks for months, unless he wishes to discover their actual whereabouts; he has only to assure himself that they have not left the run, and it is practically impossible for them to do so without leaving their footprints to be discovered on the boundary.

The breeding season is spring and the shearing season summer, which corresponds to our winter in England. The usual increase of lambs, if the ewes be healthy and strong, is 75 to 95 per cent. in about equal proportions of male and female.

When the lambs are about six weeks old the entire flock is driven in for cutting, tailing, and earmarking. The tails are cut off and the ear nicked or punched with the registered earmark of the station, and a certain number of the most approved male lambs are reserved. A good hand can cut and mark two thousand lambs per day, and not over one per cent. will die from the consequences. When the operation is over, the flock is

counted out and handed over to the shepherd to take them back to their run until the shearing season.

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At this time a complete muster is made; all hands turn out on the hills, and every sheep is brought in that can be found. Not infrequently in the hilly country an exciting chase is had after a wild mob that have defied the exertions of the shepherds and their dogs for a considerable time. These animals will run up the most inaccessible places, skirt the edges of precipices at a height at which they can be discovered only by the aid of a telescope, and have been known to maintain their freedom in spite of man or dog for years. When at length caught they present a ludicrous appearance; their fleeces have become tangled and matted, hanging to the ground in ragged tails, and can with difficulty be removed, their feet have grown crooked and deformed, and they rarely again become domesticated with the flock.

The shearing is carried on in a large shed, divided into pens or small compartments, each connected separately with the attached yards. It is usually done by contract, the price being L1 to L1 5s. per hundred sheep. Each man has his pen, which is cleared out and refilled as often as necessary, and at each clearance the number therein are counted to his name. The shorn sheep are passed direct to the branding yard, and from thence to a common yard, from which all are counted out at nightfall for return to the run.

A good shearer will clip one hundred sheep in a day, the average for a gang of men being 75.

Upon the fleece being removed it is gathered up by an attendant placed for the purpose, and handed over to the sorter, who spreads it upon a table and removes dirty and jagged parts, and sometimes it is classed. It is then rolled up and thrown into the wool press to be packed for export.

The wool bales so pressed measure 9 ft. by 4 ft. by 4 ft., and contain on an average one hundred fleeces, and each fleece runs from three to four pounds in weight. The lambs' wool is pressed separately, and commands a higher price than that of the adult sheep.

The hand press is a wooden box, made the size of the canvas bale, which is suspended therein by hooks from the open top; the box has a movable side, which is loosened out to give exit to the bale when pressed. The pressing is done by the feet, assisted by a blunt spade, and the bales are generally very creditably turned out, the sheep-farmer priding himself on a neatly pressed bale. When pressed the end is sewn up and the bale rolled over to a convenient place for branding, when it is ready for loading on the dray.

Previous to shearing, the sheep are sometimes driven through a deep running stream and roughly washed, to remove sand and grease. Wool certified to have been so cleaned will command a higher price than unwashed wool.

At the time to which I refer, most of the runs in Nelson Province were “unclean”—that is, infected with scab; and it became so general that it was considered almost impossible to eradicate. The disease was most infectious. A mob of clean, healthy sheep merely driven over a run upon which infected sheep had recently fed would almost surely catch the disease.

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A sheep severely infected with scab becomes a pitiful object. The body gets covered with a yellow scaly substance, the wool falls off or is rubbed off in patches, the disease causing intense itchiness, the animal loses flesh and appetite, and unless relieved sickens and dies.

The Nelson settlers, although they could not hope to speedily eradicate the pest, were nevertheless bound by the Provincial Government to adopt certain precautions against its spreading. Every station was provided with a scab yard and a tank in which the flocks were periodically bathed in hot tobacco water, and such animals as were unusually afflicted received special attention and hand-dressing. These arrangements strictly enforced proved successful to a great extent in keeping the disease in check.

Mr. Lee's run was scabby, although not so bad as some of his neighbour's, and the strictest precautions were observed to keep it as clean as possible.

Upon arrival at Highfield we had immediate opportunity to see for ourselves the most interesting part of the working of the run. The cutting season had just commenced, and the mustering and shearing would ere long follow.

My chum C—— was a particularly smart fellow at everything appertaining to this kind of life. He speedily picked up the routine, and made himself so generally valuable that Mr. Lee offered him the post of overseer, with L60 a year as a beginning, and all found. But C——, on the plea that the pay was too small, refused it. This was his great mistake, to refuse what ninety-nine men in a hundred would have jumped at in his circumstances! It would have been the first step on the ladder, and with his abilities and experience he had only to wait a certain time to become a partner. But his heart was not in the country, and nothing would reconcile him to remaining in it. Within two months of our coming to Highfield he determined to return home.

This resolution being taken, nothing would shake it, and the day was fixed for his departure. He and I were badly suited I fear to work together, and had he had some other chum perhaps he might have agreed with the new life better, and turned out a successful colonist; for most certainly, although we were not able to see it at the time, he had eminent opportunities open to him for becoming one.

I rode twenty miles with him on his way to Christchurch. He was to stay the first night at a station twenty-five miles from Highfield. On the bank of the Waiou river we parted—— we two chums who had come all the way from the Old Country to work and stick together. I thought it then hard of C——, although I had no right to expect him to stay in New Zealand in opposition to his own wishes and judgment to please me. As I watched him cross the river and presently disappear between the hills further on, a feeling of strange loneliness came over me. Well, I was not much more than a child!

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I must have sat there ruminating for a considerable time, for when I came to myself it was dark, and I remembered that I was in an almost trackless region which I had passed through only once before in daylight, and in company, when we had a view of the hills to guide us, and that I was at least seven miles from the nearest station (Rutherford's), but of the exact direction of which I was not certain. However, I had been long enough in the country to have passed more than one night in the open air, and at the worst this could only happen again, and I was provided with a blanket strapped to my saddle. I was not, however, to be without bed or supper. I mounted my mare, which had been browsing beside me, and gave her her head—the wisest course I could have taken. After an hour's sharp walk I discovered lights in the distance, which soon after proved to be those of Rutherford's station, where I was most hospitably received.

Considerable astonishment was expressed at C——'s—to them— unaccountably foolish action in throwing over, after two months' trial, an opportunity which most men situated as he was would have worked for years to obtain.

C—— reached the Old Country in due time, resumed his small farm, married, had a large family, and died a poor man.

The following morning I returned to Highfield feeling myself a better man and more independent now that I had myself only to depend on.

CHAPTER VI.

SHEPHERD'S LIFE—DRIVING SHEEP TO CHRISTCHURCH—KILLING A WILD SOW—ARRIVAL IN CHRISTCHURCH.

I passed nearly a year at Highfield, during which time I made myself acquainted with all the routine of a sheep-farmer's life. I learned to ride stock, shoe horses, shear sheep, plough, fence, fell and split timber, and everything else that an experienced squatter ought to be able to do, not omitting the accomplishment of smoking. Mr. Lee then offered me what he had offered C——, and I agreed to accept it pending a visit I meditated making to Christchurch to consult my friend Mr. Gresson about a desire I entertained of entering the Government Land Office and to become a surveyor.

I had done my best to like the life of a sheep-farmer, but I was becoming weary of it, and something was always prompting me to seek for more congenial employment. So far as stockriding, pig-hunting, and shooting were concerned, the life was delightful, but such recreations could be enjoyed anywhere. To sheep and sheep-farming I conceived a growing aversion as a life's work, and although I was prepared to hold to it if nothing better to my mind presented itself, I was equally determined to find something else if it were possible.

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Mr. Lee had three shepherds at this time in charge of flocks, who resided in different places at least four miles from each other and from the home station. Two of these were the sons of gentlemen in the Old Country, and one of them a distant relation. The life of the boundary shepherd is a peculiarly lonely one, especially if he be young and single. His residence is a little one-roomed hut, sometimes two rooms, built of mud and thatched with grass, an earthen floor, with a large chimney and fireplace occupying one end. His furniture consists of a table, bunk, and a couple of chairs, and if he be an educated man and fond of reading he will have a table for his books and writing materials. He is supplied monthly with a sack of flour and a bag of tea and sugar, salt, *etc.* His cooking utensils are a kettle, camp oven, and frying pan, to which are added a few plates, knives and forks, and two or three tin porringers. He always possesses at least one dog and a horse, and possibly a cat. The only light is that procured from what is called a slush lamp, made by keeping an old bowl or pannikin replenished by refuse fat or dripping in which is inserted a thick cotton wick. He cooks for himself, washes his own clothes, cuts up his firewood, and fetches water for daily use. Such luxuries as eggs, butter, or milk are unknown. Perhaps once a month he may have occasion to visit the home station, or somebody passing may call at his hut, or he may occasionally meet a neighbouring shepherd on his round. With these exceptions he has no intercourse with his fellow-beings, and all his affection is bestowed on his dog and horse; he would be badly off, indeed, without them.

One of these young men, by name Wren, became a great friend of mine, and many a time I visited him or spent a night in his lonely little hut, which was located in a small clearing surrounded by dense bush and immediately over a small and turbulent stream, which he used to say was always good company and prevented his feeling so lonely during the long dark nights as he otherwise would. It is strange how in the course of time a person will get accustomed to such a lonely life, and many like it, but it cannot be good for a young man to have too much of it, and fortunately for Wren a few years would see him located at headquarters. To take charge of a boundary was part of his education as a cadet.

It was different with the other. He was an unfortunate of that class so frequently met with in the Colonies, a "ne'er-do-well" who had while at home contracted habits of dissipation, and he was sent out to New Zealand under the then very mistaken supposition that he would thereby be cured. But there is no permanent cure for such a man; his life may be prolonged a little by enforced abstinence, but he will never, or rarely ever, recover his power of will so far as to avoid temptation if it comes in his way. If it be possible to do such a man any real good, there may be some chance for him at home, where he

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would have the care and influence of his friends to support him, but there is no chance for him in the Colonies. Such a man will under pressure abstain for months, but the moment that pressure is removed he will make for the nearest place where his propensity can be indulged, and give himself up to the devil body and soul, so long as he has the means to do so, or can obtain what he desires by fair means or foul. He knows no shame; all honourable and manly feeling has become callous within him; and it is a happy release indeed for all connected with him when his pitiable life is ended.

It was a custom of Mr. Lee's to send yearly to Christchurch a flock of fat wethers for sale, and as I wished to proceed there on the business I referred to, I was to be entrusted with the charge of them, in company with a Scottish shepherd, by name Campbell, who was a new arrival in the country.

The sheep numbered four hundred, and we had to drive them nearly three hundred miles, and deliver them in as good condition as when they left. We started early in December, the hottest time of the year, carrying what we needed for camping out on one pack horse. It was by no means a pleasure journey to drive, or rather feed, sheep along for three hundred miles at ten to fifteen miles a day, over dry and hot plains with not a tree to shelter one, and to stay awake turn about night after night to watch them. Mr. Lee accompanied us as far as the Waiou river, over which it occupied the best part of a day to cross the sheep, then he left us to proceed to Christchurch to seek and bring back the Government Scab Inspector to meet us at the Hurunui river, the boundary, and there to pass the sheep, otherwise they would not be permitted to enter the Canterbury province.

It may appear strange that it would occupy a day to cross 400 sheep over a river, but it is a very difficult thing to induce sheep to take to the water; indeed, by merely driving them it is impossible. Where the water is at all fordable, several men wade in, each carrying a sheep, and when half-way across the animals are loosed and sent swimming to the other side, but not infrequently this plan fails, by reason of the sheep turning and swimming back to the mob, and the operation may have to be repeated many times before it is successful. The object is to give the mob a lead, and when sheep get a lead they will follow it blindly, no matter where it will lead them to. When the river is too deep for wading, men on horseback ford or swim over, carrying sheep on their saddles, and drop them in midstream till the required lead is obtained. As soon as the mob understand they have to go, a panic seems to take them, and they make such frantic efforts to rush on that to prevent them hurting each other is sometimes impossible. An unfortunate instance of this occurred while I was at Highfield. We were driving a large mob of sheep to the yards to be dipped, and had to pass them over one side of the rocky gorge leading to the Highfield

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plateau before mentioned. Some of the leaders near the edge took alarm, and a few fell over the cliff. Seeing their comrades disappear, others followed, and then the whole mob made for the precipice, and jumped frantically over. The fall was about twenty feet only, but the animals followed each other with such rapidity that in a few minutes some three hundred sheep lay in a mass, piled on top of each other. It was with great difficulty the dogs and men prevented the whole mob following suit, in which case there would have been great loss; as it was, nearly one hundred sheep were smothered before it was possible to extricate them.

There is another danger to which they are exposed when driving them over new ground. There is a small plant, I forget the name of it, but it is well known to every shepherd, and grows in luxuriance along some of the river beds. It is about a foot high and has dark green leaves. If by any chance a mob of hungry sheep are driven into this plant, they will attack it ravenously, and in a few minutes they will stagger and fall as if intoxicated, and if not immediately attended to they will die. The only chance for them is to bleed them by driving in the blade of a small knife each side of the nose. The blood will flow black and thick, and the animal will speedily recover, but delay is fatal.

We travelled steadily about 15 miles each day, and in due time reached the north bank of the Hurunui river, only to find no sign of Mr. Lee or the Inspector. This was specially disappointing as our supply of flour and sugar was getting very low, and we were promised a fresh supply at this point. For several days neither the supplies nor Mr. Lee appeared. The little flour remaining was full of maggots, our tea and tobacco were finished, and we had to live on mutton boiled in a frying-pan (we were obliged to kill a sheep). There was no feeding ground near the river, the country having been recently burnt, and so we were obliged to take the sheep daily a couple of miles inland, carrying with us some of the mutton and water, and drink the latter nearly hot, travelling back to the river-bed at nightfall to camp the sheep in an angle between two streams, by which means we contrived to obtain a little rest.

One day we varied our food by securing some fresh pork in a somewhat novel manner. There were many wild pigs about but we had no means of shooting or otherwise killing them. One day while driving our sheep inland, we came across a mob of pigs in a dry nallah, all of which bolted except a full-grown sow and a litter of young ones, which could not run with the herd; and as the mother would not leave them behind, she decided to stay, and if need be fight for her family. It was a touching picture, no doubt, but there is not much room for sentiment when the stomach is empty and the body weary and unsatisfied. The prospect of fresh pork that night in lieu of the everlasting mutton, the cooking of which we had varied in every way we could devise was very tempting, and we set to work to make some plan for capturing the sow; the baby piggies were too young and delicate for our taste.

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We possessed no weapons but our pocket knives, and they would be of small use against so powerful a brute as a wild sow in defence of her young. The dogs shirked her neighbourhood altogether. At length, in our extremity, we were struck by the idea that we might strangle her with one of the tether ropes carried around the horses' necks. We unloosed one, and each taking an end thirty feet apart, approached to the encounter. To our amazement and joy the sow herself here contributed in a quite unexpected manner to her own capture. Immediately the rope was within her reach she snapped viciously at it, and retained it in her mouth. Discovering that she persisted in holding on, and that the rope was far back in her jaws, we shortened hand rapidly, and ran round, crossing each other in a circle, keeping the rope taut meanwhile. By this means we quickly twisted the rope firmly over her snout, so that had she now desired she could not have rid herself of it. The rest was easy; we shortened hand till near enough to despatch her with our clasp knives. We cut up the beast and carried off as much of the meat as would last us some days, and that night supped sumptuously off pork chops.

[Illustration: KILLING THE WILD SOW.]

After ten days of this very undesirable existence, Mr. Lee arrived and informed us that the Inspector would be up on the morrow. Very welcome news; and we were further gladdened by a fresh supply of the necessities of life which Mr. Lee had brought on a led pack horse. The delay was owing to the Inspector having been called away to a distant part of Canterbury, and Mr. Lee had a ride of nearly a hundred miles to find him.

In those days the postal arrangements were very primitive. Once a week only the mails were carried, and some stations distant from the line of route were obliged to send a horseman 20 to 50 miles to fetch their post.

The sheep were safely crossed on the third day, and we started afresh for Christchurch.

We had up to this time been more than a month on the journey, at the hottest season, without a tree to shelter us and with only the bare ground for a bed. One blanket and one change of clothes had I. Campbell, I think, had not so much. For a part of the time mutton and water seasoned with dust was our food, and the open sky our covering day and night; however, we were none the worse for it, and to a certain extent I enjoyed the life, for had I not then rude health and a splendid constitution, which subsequently carried me safely through rougher, if not more enjoyable, experiences than driving sheep.

The rest of the journey was comparatively easy, and fifteen days saw us in Christchurch with the sheep in excellent condition. Here I found letters from home awaiting me, those from my father and mother almost insisting on my return and to resume my studies. This was due to the accounts given them by C——, for I took special care to

write in glowing terms of everything. The letter had, however, no effect towards altering my determination to stay in New Zealand.

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Through Judge Gresson's influence I obtained temporary employment under the Land Office, but to join permanently would require the payment of a fee for which I had not sufficient funds in hand. It was suggested that I should write home and ask for assistance, but this I objected to do. I merely mentioned the circumstances, leaving the rest to chance, and in the meantime I was engaged to accompany a survey party down the coast, which would start in a few days.

CHAPTER VII.

I JOIN A SURVEY PARTY—TRAVEL TO THE ASHBURTON.

The survey party consisted of a Government Surveyor Mr. D——, his assistant H——, and myself, with a few labourers, and our destination was Lake Ellesmere, some 15 to 20 miles down the coast, where a dispute between the squatters and the Provincial Government boundaries was to be decided.

We started in a rough kind of two-wheeled cart, into which Mr. D——, H——, and I, with our provisions for ten days and the survey instruments, were all packed together with our respective swags of blankets and the cooking utensils. This vehicle was pulled by one horse, and as we had no tents we would have to camp out most of the time.

We reached our destination the same evening, when, tethering the horse, we proceeded to make ourselves comfortable for the night round a camp fire, whereon we boiled our tea and fried chops, and after placing the usual damper under the hot ashes so as to be ready for the morning, we rolled our blankets around us and with feet to the fire, slept soundly.

My duties consisted in dragging the chain or humping a theodolite knee deep in water or swamp, but I learned much even in this short experience which proved of subsequent value.

On our return, Mr. D—— had to diverge to a small farm, if it could be called such, owned by two brothers named Drew, having some work to look into for them. These Drews were the sons of a clergymen in England, and they had lately come to New Zealand with a little money and no experience, taken a small tract of land in this swampy wilderness, and settled down to farm it. The buildings consisted of a wretched mud hut, some twelve feet square, a small yard, and a few pigsties. What a habitation it was, and what filth and absence of management was apparent all over it! Failure was stamped on these men, and on their surroundings; it was clear they could not succeed, and yet they were not drunkards or scamps or reckless; on the contrary, they were quiet and good-natured, and appeared to be hard-working, although it was difficult to see what work they really did.

For two days we stayed here, all five of us sleeping at night on the floor of the hut. There were no bunks. I was very glad when that duty was over.

These Drews soon after gave up the farm; one died, the other I saw two years afterwards, the part-proprietor of a glass and delph shop in Christchurch, but only for a time. That inevitable tendency to failure engraved on the Drews followed him to the glass shop, and the latter became, in due course, the sole property of Drew's partner.

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If these men had gone upon a farm or sheep-run for two or three years' apprenticeship, investing their money safely meanwhile, they might have become in a few more years, prosperous colonists. It was their absolute ignorance, added to a want of sufficient means to carry out what they undertook to do, that brought depression and failure upon them. And a percentage of the emigrants who go to the Colonies act under similar circumstances as they did, and from being on arrival strong, hopeful and brave, they, from lack of something in themselves or from want of the needful advice and sense to adopt it, gradually deteriorate past all recovery. I recollect the billiard-marker at one of the Christchurch hotels was the younger son of a baronet. He worked as billiard-marker for his food, and as much alcohol as he could get. I believe he was never unfit to mark, and never quite sober. He died at his post, but not before he had learned that he had succeeded to the baronetcy, and seen relatives who had come from home to search for and bring him back. It is a strange error of judgment which sends such men as this to the Colonies, but perhaps those who are responsible consider they are justified by the removal of the scapegrace and finally getting rid of him by any means.

On our return to Christchurch I met my old friend and fellow voyager T. Smith, who had just been appointed overseer of a sheep and cattle station down south. He pressed me to accompany him to the locality, pending arrival of letters from home, and as I had nothing just then on hand, I accepted his invitation. It seemed very apparent that I was fast becoming a rolling stone, but though I stuck to nothing long, it was not altogether my fault, and I was always at work, increasing my stock of experience, such as it was. This departure to Smith's station on the Ashburton led me away on an entirely new line for some time.

The station to which Smith had been appointed overseer was about 100 miles from Christchurch. The owner did not live there, so the entire management was in Smith's hands. The route lay across the Canterbury plains by a defined cart track, with accommodation houses at certain distances along its course, so no camping out was needed.

The Canterbury Plains are supposed to be the finest in the world, extending as they do, about 150 miles in length by 40 to 60 in width, and over this immense space there was not a forest tree or scarcely a shrub of any size to be met with, except a description of palm, called cabbage trees, which grow in parts along the river beds, and occasionally dot the adjacent plain. The plains are almost perfectly flat, with no undulations more than a few feet in height. They are intersected every ten to twenty miles by wide shallow river beds, which during the summer months, when the warm nor'-westers melt the snow and ice on the Alps, are often terrific torrents, impassable for days together, while at other times they are shingle interspersed with clear rapid streams, more or less shallow, and generally fordable with ordinary care. Some of the principal rivers such as the Rakaia, Rangata and Waitaki, are at all times formidable.

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The Rakaia bed, for example, is, or was, nearly half a mile wide, a vast expanse of shingle, full of treacherous quicksands, in which the course of the different streams is altered after every fresh. One might approach the Rakaia to-day and find it consist of three or four streams from twenty to one hundred yards wide, and not exceeding one to two feet in depth; to-morrow it might be a roaring sea a quarter of a mile in width, racing at a speed of five to ten miles an hour.

At the crossing of this river, accommodation houses were established at each side, both establishments providing expert men and horses who were constantly employed seeking for fords and conducting travellers across.

Nowadays, doubtless fine bridges, railways, and smart hotels have taken the place of what I am endeavouring to describe as the condition of things fifty years ago. The Rakaia is fifty miles from Christchurch, and that was our first day's ride. The accommodation house on the north side was a weird-looking habitation, a long, low, single-storeyed desolate-looking building, partly constructed of mud and partly of green timber slabs rough from the forest, but it was, even so, a welcome sight after our long monotonous ride.

The house consisted of a small sitting-room or parlour for the better class of guests, not uncomfortably furnished, and about twelve feet square, two small bedrooms, a kitchen and a bar, the former serving for cooking purposes as well as a sitting and a bed-room for those travellers who could not afford the luxury or were not entitled to the dignity of the parlour. Separated a little way from this tenement was a long low shed used as a stable for such animals as their owners could afford to pay for so much comfort and a feed, in preference to the usual tussock and twenty yards of tether on the well-cropped ground around the hostelry.

It was a rough place, and a rough lot of characters were not unfrequently seen there. The Jack Tar just arrived from the bush or some up-country station with a cheque for a year's wages, bent on a spree, and standing drinks all round while his money lasted, the Scottish shepherd plying liquor and grasping hands for "Auld Lang Syne," the wretched debauched crawler, the villainous-looking "lag" from "t'other side," the bullock puncher, whose every alternate word was a profane oath, the stockrider, in his guernsey shirt and knee boots with stockwhip thrown over his shoulder, engaging the attention of those who would listen with some miraculous story of his exploits, mine host smilingly dealing out the fiery poison, with now and again the presence of the dripping forder from the river, come in for his glass of grog and pipe before resuming his perilous occupation.

Smith and I put up in the parlour, and when we had dined and lit pipes proceeded to look after our horses, after which we paid a visit to the kitchen for a little hobnobbing with the motley assemblage collected there, and, of course, we stood liquor round in the usual friendly way. We soon retired, and ere long the kitchen floor, too, was covered with sleepers rolled in their blue or red blankets without which no colonist ever travelled.

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Early the following morning we were piloted over the river, and in the afternoon made the Ashburton, where was a very superior house of entertainment, conducted by a Mr. Turton, a man above the general run of bush hotel keepers, and who, I believe, subsequently became a rich squatter, as he well deserved.

The third day's ride brought us to our destination. There was a comfortable rough dwelling house and the usual adjuncts in the way of station buildings.

The situation was pleasant, at the opening of a wide gorge at the foot of the downs, and a fine stream ran along the front of the enclosure. A considerable portion of the run was hilly, and was at that time one of the best in the province.

It was on this journey that I first came across the most wonderful optical illusions, called mirages, that I had seen, and there is something in the atmosphere maybe of the New Zealand plains that lends itself specially to the creation of these beautiful phenomena.

We were riding over the open plain on a clear morning, near the Ashburton river bed, more than twenty miles from the nearest hills, when suddenly within fifty yards of us, appeared a most beautiful calm lake, apparently many miles in extent, and dotted with cabbage trees (like palms), whose reflections were cast in the water. Neither of us had seen the like before, and for a while really believed we were approaching a lake, although how such could possibly exist where a few moments before had been dry waving grass, was like magic. We rode on, and as we went the lake seemed to move with us, or rather to recede as we advanced, keeping always the same distance ahead. The phenomenon lasted for about a quarter of an hour, and then cleared away as magically as it came.

In the same district I subsequently observed some extraordinary optical illusions of a like nature—once, in the direction of the sea where no hills or other obstacles intervened, I saw a beautiful inverted landscape of mountains, woods, and other objects like castles. The picture or reflection seemed suspended in the air, and extended a long way on the horizon. It must have been a reflection of some scene far from the place where the phenomenon presented itself.

I spent a month with Smith, but as it was the slack time of the year there was little routine work on the station, and much of our time was passed in amusement.

The best fun was pig hunting, in which we were frequently joined by neighbouring squatters.

CHAPTER VIII.

WILD PIG-HUNTING.

It is said that Captain Cook introduced pigs into New Zealand. They were at the time I write of, the only wild quadrupeds in the land, except rats (for which I believe the country is also indebted to Captain Cook), but together they made up for no end of absentees by their prodigious powers of breeding.

Most of the middle island was infested with pigs; they principally inhabited the low hills and river bed flats and swamps, and would come down on to the large plains in herds for feeding on the root of a plant called spear grass, to obtain which they would tear up the sward and injure large tracts of grazing land.

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Their depredations became so extensive that the Provincial Government was obliged to take steps for their extermination by letting contracts for killing them off, at, I think, sixpence per head, or rather tail, and by this means I have known a single district cleared of 8,000 to 10,000 pigs in a season.

Pig-hunting on the hills is not the inspiring amusement it is on the plains. In the former they must be hunted on foot, and shot down, riding being impracticable, while on the plain they were hunted on horseback with dogs bred for the purpose, and the huntsman's weapon is only a short heavy knife sharpened on both sides to a point like a dagger, and suspended in a sheath attached to the waist belt. Spears were sometimes used, but they were of a very rough and primitive description, and not effective. Pig-sticking on the modern scientific principles was not then practised in New Zealand.

For a day's pig-hunting on the plains a party of men on strong and fast horses, with a few kangaroo dogs and a bullock dray in attendance, formed the hunting party. The location of the herd is previously noted and kept quiet. The dogs are held in leash till well within sight, say, from half to one mile off. The animals are easily startled, and they know that their best chance of safety depends on their reaching the hills before their pursuers overtake them.

With a fast horse, giving full-grown pigs a start of a mile, it will be all the huntsman can do to pick them up in a gallop of 3 to 5 miles, and the best chance in his favour is when there is a herd, and not only a single pig or small number of strong hardy fellows. Until pressed the herd will keep pretty much together, and if by good management the hunters contrive to get to leeward of them as well as to intercept them from making direct for the cover of the hills they are sure of good sport.

The kangaroo dog (so called) was a cross between a stag-hound and mastiff, very fast and powerful, and he ran only by sight. A well-trained dog on overhauling his pig will run up on the near side and seize the boar by the off lug, thereby protecting himself from being ripped by the animal's tusks. Then the hunter should be on the spot to jump off his horse and assist the dog by plunging his knife into the beast's heart from the off side.

With a good dog the danger to which the experienced hunter is exposed is slight. A properly trained, courageous dog will hold the largest boar for several minutes in the manner described and will not let him go till forced to from sheer exhaustion. But if he is obliged to disengage himself before assistance arrives, he will very probably be ripped or killed.

The trained bush horse will stand quietly where his rider leaves him, never attempting to move further from the spot than to nibble the grass will necessitate.

One day, having heard that a large mob of pigs had come down on the plains near the gorge of the Rakaia, some fifteen miles off, we at once organised a hunt, and two neighbours from another station promised to join us.

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A rendezvous was fixed upon where we were to meet at daybreak, a bullock dray having been sent on the previous night. We were all well mounted and equipped with three fine dogs. After riding some ten miles we separated, taking up a long line over the plain, and using our field glasses to obtain an idea of the position of the herd as soon as possible, and thus give us time to arrange a plan of attack before coming to too close quarters, the animals being very quick to scent danger.

One of our friends, Legge, who was riding on the extreme left, was the first to discover the herd, and he galloped up to say that there were a considerable number of pigs about two miles further east, scattered amongst the cabbage trees near a small river bed. On approaching carefully till within view we could count upwards of fifty, and many seemed to be large boars; no young pigs were visible. The latter, indeed, seldom came far out on the plains, their elders probably fearing that in the event of surprise they would not be able to run with the rest of the herd.

The whole mob of pigs lay directly between us and the hills, which were almost five miles distant, so it became necessary for us to divide and make wide detours, so as to obtain a position on their further side without being seen. This movement took about an hour, but we succeeded under cover of snow grass and cabbage trees in approaching within half a mile of the herd, with the hills behind us, before they took the alarm. Then all were speedily in motion, but as our position prevented them from taking a direct line to shelter, they ran wildly, and so gave us a considerable advantage.

The order for attack was now given; the dogs were slipped, and away we went like a whirlwind, each singling out a pig and taking the boars first, as did the horses.

Owing to our first advantage we picked up with the leaders in a couple of miles, and two of the largest boars were immediately seized by the dogs close together in a piece of bad marshy ground, covered with snow and spear grass, much rooted and honeycombed. Smith, who was first in the running, narrowly escaped a broken neck. The huge sixteen hand mare he rode planted her feet in a hole and somersaulted, throwing Smith on to one of the boars and dog engaged, but the latter was game, and by his pluck and smartness saved his master and himself from being ripped, and before Smith was fairly on his feet the boar had six inches of steel through his heart and his career was ended.

[Illustration: ENCOUNTER WITH WILD BOAR.]

During the few minutes we were here engaged, the other boar, a powerful and fierce brute, had forced the dog which seized him some fifty yards down a dry gully, and it was clear that unless he was speedily relieved the dog would have the worst of the encounter. Smith and I rushed to his assistance none too soon. The boar, in his struggles, had already slightly ripped the dog on the shoulder, and the blood was streaming

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down his leg and breast, but the plucky hound still held on, lying close on the near side, while his teeth were fast through the boar's off lug, the latter striving all he could to get his head round and tusk the dog. Added to this the position they had contrived to get themselves into was unfortunate; the boar was so close to the bank it was impossible to reach his off side, and the dog lay so close he could not be touched on the other.

Smith was a powerful fellow, and in fun of this kind would have faced a boar singlehanded. He called to me that he would rush in and seize the boar by his hind legs and try to pull him round, while I watched my opportunity to jump between him and the bank. It was our only chance to save the dog, at any rate, and luckily it proved successful. As Smith laid on I jumped, and although I fell on all fours between the boar and the slippery bank, I contrived just in time to drive the knife into his heart, and the huge beast rolled over and with a few gasps died. We were both exhausted, and the poor dog, when the excitement was over, lay down with a low whine, thoroughly done up from exhaustion and loss of blood. We washed and bound his wound as well as we could and tied him to a bush of snow grass to await the dray.

Legge and Forde had already despatched a large boar and two full-grown sows, and were in chase of others. We came up with them when they were engaged with a fine young boar which had sheltered and come to bay in a clump of thorny scrub (wild Irishman, so called). Neither dogs nor men could reach him, and the only plan was to irritate him till he bolted. This was difficult, but at length successful, and the beast made a rush straight for us. However, he was bent on defence rather than offence, and we escaped his tusks. Legge was first mounted and away with one of the dogs in chase, but going over the rough, honeycombed ground I mentioned he too met with a bad fall which threw him out of the running, and now Smith, Forde, and I were in full cry with the two dogs.

By this time both dogs and horses were somewhat blown, whereas the boar having had a rest we feared would escape, and reaching a low swampy flat he disappeared in a large patch of snow grass and reeds. As we were not sure of his exact position, we decided to ride through in line, to endeavour to drive him again to the open. In doing so the boar broke covert under Forde's horse's legs, and ripped him below the hock. This rendered Forde and his horse *hors de combat*, and Smith and I had the chase again in our hands. For nearly a mile that boar led us a furious dance over villainous ground, through spear grass and swamp, in momentary danger of being thrown or torn by thorny shrub, twisting and doubling in and out of inaccessible places, but he was beginning to show signs of fatigue, and we saw he could not make much fight when once the dogs got hold. The latter were in fierce excitement, having lost their prey so often. After a final spurt of half a mile they pulled him down, and he was easily despatched.

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Our bag was now six pigs, of which four were boars, and we had been actually hunting for about three hours, including the time spent in making the detour. After cutting off a ham and the head of the last boar, we carried them back to where we left Forde with his wounded horse. Legge had already arrived, and we all sat down to take some food while awaiting the arrival of the dray.

The remainder of the herd had reached the hills long since, and there was no more sport to be had in the neighbourhood that day. Forde removed his saddle and bridle to be sent on the dray and turned his horse loose to find his way to the run, while he started on foot to the nearest station to procure another mount to carry him home. The rest of us proceeded to a flat near the first gorge of the Ashburton, where we succeeded in killing five other pigs before the evening closed. Forde's horse reached his station as soon as his wounded leg permitted him, but the wound being found more serious than anticipated, and that he would be lame for life, it was decided to destroy him.

CHAPTER IX.

CATTLE RANCHING AND STOCKRIDING.

While I stayed at Smith's Station, we made acquaintance with a young man, by name Hudson, a son of the famous Railway King. He had come to New Zealand a few years previously with slender means and was a pushing, energetic fellow. He settled on the Ashburton and set up business as a carter, investing his money in a couple of drays and bullock teams, with which he contracted to convey wool from the stations to Christchurch, returning with stores, *etc.*, and sometimes carting timber from the forest and such like. My first day's experience of driving wild cattle was in his company.

A stockrider's life is perhaps of all occupations the most enjoyable, and there is just that element of risk connected with it that increases its fascination, but to make it intelligible to the reader, a sketch of the working and management of a cattle station will be necessary.

Although most sheep farmers feed a certain number of cattle to enable them to utilise the portions of their run which may be unsuitable for grazing, there are some squatters who confine themselves to cattle alone, and the produce derived from such stations includes beef, butter, cheese, hides, horns, and working stock—that is, bullocks destined for use in pulling drays; such entirely taking the places of draught horses up country.

A cattle rancher may have from one to two thousand head of cattle running wild. Of these, one portion is milch cows, which are daily driven in for milking and from which the extensive butter and cheese dairies are supplied; another the fat cattle fed for the market, and a third, young stock for breaking in as working bullocks. As with sheep, the

cattle are periodically mustered in the stock yards for branding, selections for various purposes, and for sale.

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Mustering a large head of wild cattle is exciting work. Half a dozen men mounted on well-trained horses, each carrying his stockwhip, start for the run. The stockwhip is composed of a lash of plaited raw hide, twelve to fifteen feet long, and about one and half inches thick at the belly, which is close to the handle. The latter is about nine inches long, made of some hard tough wood, usually weighted at the hand end. The experienced stockman can do powerful execution with these whips, one blow from which is sufficient to cut a slice out of the beast's hide, and I have seen an expert cut from top to bottom the side of a nail can with a single blow from his whip.

The cattle are spread over perhaps twenty or thirty thousand acres of unfenced country, and each man follows his portion of the herd, collecting and driving into a common centre. For a time all goes well, until some wary or ill-conditioned brute breaks away, followed possibly by a number of his comrades, who only need a lead to give the stockman trouble. Then commences a chase, and not infrequently it is a chase in vain, and the fagged stockman and his jaded steed are obliged to give them up for that day, and proceed to hold what he has got in hand.

There is sometimes considerable danger in following up too closely these beasts when they begin to show signs of fatigue, as they then often turn to bay under the first scrap of shelter, and if the horseman unwarily or ignorantly approaches too near in his endeavour to dislodge them, they will charge, and the death of the horse or rider may be the result. Both, however, are generally too well aware of these little failings to endeavour to prevail over a jaded or "baked" beast, and prefer to let him rest.

Upon the cattle being yarded, the most exciting operation is the capturing and securing of the young beasts requiring to be broken in to the yoke. An experienced and expert stockman enters the enclosure carrying in his hand a pine sapling, 12 or 15 feet in length, at the end of which is a running noose of raw hide or strong hemp rope, attached to a strong rope which is passed round a capstan outside the stockyard and near to a corner post. With considerable dexterity, not infrequently accompanied by personal danger, the man slips the noose over the horns of the beast he wishes to secure, when he immediately jumps over the rails, and with the assistance of the men outside, winds up the rope till the struggling and infuriated animal is fast held in a corner of the yard. Another noose is then slipped round the hind leg nearest the rails and firmly fastened.

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The yard being cleared, a steady old working bullock is now driven alongside our young friend, and the two are yoked together neck and neck, the trained bullock selected being always the more powerful of the two. The ropes are then unfastened and the pair left free to keep company for a month or so, by which time the old worker will have trained his young charge sufficiently to permit of his being put into the body of a team and submitted to the unmerciful charge of the bullock puncher (driver). There is no escape for the novice then, yoked fast to a powerful beast with others before and behind, and the cruel cutting whip over him, in the hands of a man possessing but little sentiment: he must obey, and after a time becomes as tractable as the rest. Indeed, it is wonderful how intelligent and obedient these animals become under the hands of an experienced driver. There is a code of bullock punching language they soon get to understand; they answer readily to their names, and are, if anything, more sensible, obedient, and manageable than horses.

My ride with Hudson, which I referred to, was as hard a day's work as I have experienced of the kind. We started from the Ashburton at daybreak, and after a quiet canter of five miles, reached an open piece of river bed flat, on which were grazing some two hundred head of cattle, amongst which were five young bullocks of Hudson's he wished to cut out and drive to Moorhouse's station on the Rangitata, about twenty miles further south. The cutting out is more difficult than driving the whole herd, which will be apparent.

Having entered among them and found the animals we were in search of, we proceeded quietly to move them to a common place near the edge, from which we meant to drive them, and Hudson, who had considerable experience, succeeded after a while in collecting his five beasts in a favourable spot for our enterprise. We then took up positions on either side, and with a sudden spurt endeavoured to drive them on to the plain. We were partially successful, leaving only one of the five behind, and we got the other four clear away some miles before they seemed to be aware of the absence of their comrades, but with some smart galloping we were keeping them well together in the direction we wanted to go. We were not, however, destined to continue fortunate for long. After a while we unexpectedly came across a herd of fresh cattle, into which our charges at once bolted, and it took two hours hard galloping before we succeeded in extricating only two of them. With these we were obliged to be satisfied; our horses were showing signs of fatigue, and without fresh mounts and other assistance it would be impossible to cut out the others that day.

[Illustration: THE BAKED STEERS.]

Fortunately those we had went away quietly, and we hoped that no further impediment would occur. We were sadly mistaken. For six miles all went well, but it was then clear that the animals were getting baked (jaded); they were in too good condition for the hard cutting out twice repeated.

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On reaching an isolated cabbage tree one deliberately lay down, while the other backed against the tree and stood sulkily at bay. Being nearest, I ignorantly made at them with the whip, when I was saluted with a bellow and a sudden charge, which, had not my horse been more on guard than I was, might have maimed one or both of us. The beast, having charged, backed again to the tree, and stood with nozzle touching the ground, breathing heavily, with sunken flanks and half-glazed eyes, a picture of imbecility, recklessness, and fatigue.

Hudson, on coming up, saw it was useless to attempt driving him further, and so we left him and the cabbage tree, and resumed our course with one bullock, which we actually did succeed in getting to the stockyard as night was falling.

Here, unfortunately, we found the yards closed and no one by to open them, and whilst I dismounted to take down the rails, the infernal beast once more bolted, apparently as fresh as ever, and notwithstanding all our endeavours to overhaul him darkness and our jaded horses failed us, and we had no resource but to wend our weary way to the homestead, three miles up the river, disappointed, dead beat, and hungry.

We were most hospitably received by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Moorhouse, with whom for genuine kindness and hospitality few could compare, and they invited us to stay with them a day or two, which we gladly agreed to do. It was a real treat to pass any time in such a lovely locality and with such friends. The homestead was built on the river bed flat, a natural park covered with shrubbery palms, pines, and forest trees, along which on one side the turbulent Rangitata rushed in a confusion of waterfalls, whirlpools, and cascades, amidst huge masses of rock, and beyond which rose precipitous hills with their lower portions clothed in richest vegetation. The views up the gorge from this point were enchanting, but I will take another opportunity of describing some of the mountain scenery of the Southern Alps, the grandest in its own peculiar form of any in the world.

Mr. Ben Moorhouse was one of three brothers, two of whom were squatters, and the eldest superintendent of the Province of Canterbury. They had all been some years in Australia, and were exceedingly fine men over six feet in height and built in proportion, good shots and experts at most games of strength and skill, not amongst the least of which was the science of boxing. We were treated the morning after our arrival to a lesson with the gloves, subsequently often repeated, and following this we had turns each in trying to ride a very clever buckjumper, a late purchase.

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The faculty of buckjumping is, I believe, almost confined to Australian horses, and seems to be bred in them—perhaps the original rough breaking was responsible for the vice; but whatever be the cause it was then a fact that eight out of every ten horses could and did buckjump, and with many of them the vice was incurable. An experienced buckjumper will decide as the saddle is being put on him to get rid of it as soon as possible without any apparent reason for such reprehensible conduct. He will swell himself out so that the girths cannot be fully tightened, and when he is mounted will suddenly bound off the ground, throw down his head, and prop violently on his fore feet, and this he will continue to repeat till the saddle comes on to his withers, and the rider finds some other resting place. So long as the saddle keeps its position, and the girths hold, there is a chance for the rider, but if they go he must, although he frequently goes without them.

There is a special saddle made for buckjumpers, provided with heavy pads to prop the knee against, and so prevent the rider from being chucked forward, and this is sometimes assisted by securely fastening an iron bar with a roll of blanket around it across the pommel of the saddle. This presses across the thighs just above the knees, and affords great additional security, and a surcingle is strapped over the seat of the saddle as a further assistance to the girths.

There is also another plan adopted with a really bad brute—namely, a crutch of wood or iron fastened to a martingale below, with two rings above, through which the reins are led. This contrivance is to prevent the animal lowering his head, which is a necessary movement on his part for accomplished bucking.

CHAPTER X.

I UNDERTAKE EMPLOYMENT WITH A BUSH CONTRACTOR—GET SERIOUSLY ILL—START FOR THE SOUTH AND THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

I had now been more than a month on the Ashburton, but as I could not expect home letters yet for some weeks, and was getting tired of mere amusement, I accepted an offer made me to join in a new line of work.

A man named Metcalfe, a relative of a neighbouring squatter, had lately started work as a bush contractor, and had just then undertaken to construct a number of station buildings for a run holder on the Ashburton. Metcalfe was an experienced bushman and a good rough carpenter. He asked me to join him and I at once accepted.

We would have to fell and cut up our own timber in the forest, cart it down some forty miles, and construct all the works without other assistance.

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Our first business was to provide a habitation for ourselves in the forest, as we required to stay there a month or two while cutting the necessary timber. We laid out a space 10 feet by 12 feet, drove in posts at the corners, and nailed a strong rail on top, then we felled and split up into slabs a number of white pine trees, and set them upwards all round with their edges overlapping and nailed them at the top to the rail, or, more properly, wall plate, the feet of the slabs being set a few inches in the ground. Over this enclosure we made a sloping framework of wickers (fine saplings) and covered it with an old tent which Metcalfe possessed. At one end of the hut we constructed a wide fireplace and chimney in the same manner, and hung up an old blanket over the space left for a doorway. The inside of the slab walls and chimney we wattled with mud and laths, which we split up, and plastered over with mud and chopped grass. We made rough cots with wickers and slabs, raised a foot above the ground, so as to form seats as well as beds, and covered them with a thick layer of minuka branches, which made capital springy mattresses, and over all we laid our blankets. For a table we split and dressed fairly smooth a pine slab a foot wide in which we bored four holes and inserted therein wicker legs. Our mansion was now complete and it had not occupied two days to build.

We rose at daybreak, boiled a kettle of tea, which with cold baked mutton and damper formed our breakfast, then to work till 12 o'clock, when we took an hour for dinner, and again to work till dark, when we adjourned to the hut, and after a visit to the creek for ablutions, and seeing that our horses were watered and put on fresh pasture for the night, we sat down to supper by a rousing fire, then lit pipes and chatted or read till it was time to turn in, when the fire was raked over, and the damper of bread inserted under the hot ashes to be ready for the morning. During the evening also one of us made the bread; the camp oven would be put on the fire with sufficient mutton to last us for two or three days. It was a grand life for healthy, strong fellows as we were, living and working alone in a virgin forest, with no sound around us but the rippling of the brook and the whisper of the wind through the foliage of the tall pines, or the ringing of our axes, with every now and then the crashing fall of a huge tree.

I should remark here that the black and white pine (so called) of New Zealand is not by any means similar to that which grows in Europe. They grow straight and tall, it is true, but for fully half their height throw out heavy and numerous branches thickly covered all the year round with very small evergreen leaves. The trees are easily cut up and split into posts and rails, or sawn into boards. At the time I refer to the forests were free to all settlers for their home needs on the payment of a nominal fee to the Provincial Government.

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The timber in due time was felled, cut up, and carted to the station, and we removed our camp to the site of the operations. It was a bleak, wild place, three miles from the south mail track, and consisted only of a small slab hut or two with a wool shed and sheep yards. The owner, Mr. T. Moorhouse, had lately purchased the run, and was about to improve and reside on it. A description of our life here would not be interesting, so I will pass over three months during which we worked steadily and the buildings were nearly complete, when one day, as I was nailing the shingles on a roof under a powerful sun, I suddenly felt sick and giddy, and was obliged to go inside and lie down. The same evening I developed a severe attack of gastric fever which three days after turned to a kind of brain fever, and for nigh on six weeks I lay betwixt life and death. For half of this time I lay on the floor in a corner of the new building, the bare ground with a layer of tea leaves for my bed, the noise grinding into my brain when I was at all conscious, and only Metcalfe (good man that he was) with an old Scottish shepherd to look after me when they could find time to do so. No doctor, medicine, or attendance of any kind was procurable nearer than sixty miles away, with a weekly post. One night, to make me sleep they gave me laudanum (a bottle of which Metcalfe had with him for toothache) and the following morning I was discovered standing on the brink of an artificial pond nearly a quarter of a mile off, barefoot and half naked, to reach which I must have walked over places I could not easily have passed in my senses. This was when the brain attack came on, and for a week I lay, I was told, almost unconscious. Metcalfe contrived to send some information to Christchurch, and after I had been down for over three weeks Moorhouse arrived and removed me to his own hut, where he looked after me for some time. Then he had me carried to and fixed up in his dog cart and drove me sixty miles over the plains in a single day to Christchurch, where I arrived a good bit more dead than alive, but to find a comfortable room, and every attendance and luxury a sick man could wish for, prepared for me by my good friends Mr. and Mrs. Gresson. I must have taken a good deal of killing in those days, but the drive to Christchurch, severe as it was, saved me, and in three weeks I was myself again.

When I was convalescent I found letters from home awaiting me. My father sent a little money, but wished me to utilise it in paying my passage home, and appeared to have lost faith in my doing any good in New Zealand; but I was more determined than ever to remain. Was I not accumulating colonial experiences, and always found employment of some kind awaiting me? and I was still very young—only a little over eighteen. The free life I had spent for nearly two years had had its effect, and I could not consent to throw it up, at any rate not just yet.

The doctors who had attended me expressed their opinions that I had overtaxed my strength at work to which I was not accustomed, and forbade my undertaking anything of the kind for a while. This of course was nonsense, but I saw no reason why I should not enjoy a holiday for a month or so in Christchurch till I had settled future plans.

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Just at this time I received a letter from Smith, informing me that the run he had charge of was sold, and having thereby lost his appointment, he was coming to Christchurch *en route* for Otago on a voyage of enterprise, and invited me to join him. This was excellent; the wandering disposition was again strong upon me, and I looked forward to such a trip to a new part of the country in company with my old friend with the keenest delight. I agreed to his proposal at once, and immediately he arrived we set to work to make preparations for our journey south, although where that journey was to lead us or of what might be before us we were profoundly ignorant; but that knowledge or want of knowledge enhanced the glory of the movement. We were a couple of free lances starting to seek what might turn up, and eventually we were led into a new and very interesting experience, even if it did not turn out a remunerative one.

After paying my expenses in Christchurch, I possessed about L50 in cash and a valuable and well-bred mare. Smith's possessions were about on an equivalent. We decided to travel with one pack horse, and for this purpose we purchased between us for L15, a notorious buckjumper, called "Jack the Devil," and if ever deformity of temper and the lowest vice were depicted in an animal's face and bearing, this beast possessed them in an eminent degree. Although small and not beautiful to look at, he was very powerful, and had he been less vicious his price would have been treble what we obtained him for, but nobody cared to own him.

How well I remember the first time he was loaded, how quietly he stood with the whites of his eyes rolling and girths swelled until all was apparently secure, and then in less time than I can relate, how saddle and swags were scattered to the winds.

Smith was a determined fellow and a Yorkshireman to boot, and he had no intention of giving in to Jack; on the contrary, this little exhibition of devilry made him all the more determined to discover Jack's weak point and take the devil out of him.

The pack saddle was gathered up and taken to the harness maker along with the animal, and the two were put together in such a manner that if he again bucked it off, some part of Jack's personality would have to accompany it. The next trial was more successful, and after a few attempts he gave in, and from that day he became a most docile pack horse.

On the eve of starting we were joined by our mutual friend Legge, who had been some years overseer of a station. He was a smart, handy fellow, and although he did not contribute much in the way of financial assistance, we were glad to have him join our party, knowing him to be dependable, plucky, and good-tempered.

At length we started, and after journeying through the scene of our late life on the Ashburton and Rangitata, we arrived without adventure at the then small town of Timaru on the sea coast, about a hundred miles south.

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Here we found the inhabitants in great excitement over news just arrived that gold had been discovered in large quantities on the Lindis, about one hundred and twenty miles inland from Dunedin in Otago. We, in common with every one else, were, of course, immediately infected with the gold mania, the more so as we were bent on adventure of any kind that might turn up, and here was an unexpected piece of good fortune ready to our hands. During our few days sojourn at Timaru we made another addition to our party in the person of a man named Fowler, whom, at his urgent request, we permitted to accompany us in our now proposed expedition to the gold diggings.

We arranged to start at once, and deferred preparations until we would arrive at Dunedin, the capital and port of Otago, and which, with fair marching, we hoped to reach on the third day.

We travelled in the usual bush fashion, each man with his swags strapped before and behind his saddle, Jack the Devil carrying our provisions and cooking kit, *etc.* Upon halting for the night we selected some suitable spot near running water where wood for a fire could be obtained. Each unsaddled, watered, and tethered out his horse and carried his swags to the camping ground, where Jack's load was removed and placed ready for use. Then while one fetched water another collected a supply of firewood for the night. A roaring fire was made, water boiled for tea, flour and water mixed into a paste and fried in dripping or fat, with the meat we had brought along with us, or maybe a leg of mutton would be baked in the camp oven; and so, within an hour, we four bushmen would be squatting comfortably around our fire and enjoying an excellent supper.

The meal being over we carefully washed and put away the utensils and food ready for the morning, and after visiting the horses, settled ourselves in our respective positions for the night, lit pipes, spun yarns, or sang songs, till drowsiness claimed us, and we disappeared under our blankets with our saddles for pillows and slept only as those who lead the life of a bushman can.

We rose before daybreak, and ere the sun had well appeared had eaten our primitive breakfast and were in the saddle for the march. On the evening of the third day we reached the Waitaki river, which separates Canterbury from Otago, and is the largest in the South Island. The Waitaki was never fordable at this point, and passengers were ferried across in a small boat behind which the horses were swum. This latter is a somewhat dangerous operation unless expertly carried out; a horse which may be a powerful swimmer being able to work a swift stream so much faster than a boat can be rowed, there is danger that he may strike and overturn the latter, and so he must not be allowed to get above or ahead of the boat, but be kept in his place immediately behind.

The boat on being started from one bank or shingle spit must have fair room to work obliquely to a lower landing place on the opposite side, without running foul of shoals or

sandspits, and as the current runs with great rapidity the voyage across is usually three or four times as long as the stream is wide.

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At this river we found an accommodation house. I forget the name of the occupier, but I well recollect the appearance of the wretched structure, and of its landlord and landlady. What a pair of outcasts they looked, and how they existed on that wild bed of shingle! Their tastes must have been simplicity itself, and little satisfied them here below.

The landlord and his wife, with one other man, who assisted with the boat, were the only sojourners on this desert bed. Few travellers stayed at their wretched tenement, because being only ten miles from Dunedin they were generally able to push on, and partly because the locality did not possess pasturage for horses; and so with the exception of what they derived from selling an occasional nip of poisonous liquor to a passing traveller, their emoluments were derived from the ferry alone.

We were not fortunate enough to arrive in time to cross that evening, and were perforce obliged to stay at the accommodation hut till morning, or else return half a mile to where pasture was obtainable. The landlord, however, produced some hay and oats, and cleaned out his shed, in which we were able to put two of the horses, while the others were tied out, and so to save time and trouble we decided to make the best of what fare we could obtain.

The house comprised one room with a closet or bar off it. In the room, which was well enough when lit up by a good fire, we all supped together round a rough table with boxes from the bar for seats, our food the usual description, the junk of mutton boiled with lumps of dough called damper, and the landlady produced some plates, while we used our own clasp knives. Soon after, our weary bodies were strewn over the floor wherever we could individually select a fairly even spot, and the landlady, I believe, retired into the bar.

The following morning we put ourselves, horses, and baggage safely across the Waitaki, and by 10 o'clock arrived in Dunedin.

Dunedin was situated, like Port Lyttelton, on rising undulating ground, encompassed by an amphitheatre of hills which, to the south, extended to a point or promontory and gave shelter to the little harbour. Also, like Lyttelton, the latter was an open roadstead, but on the town front was bounded by a steep bank from which the narrow strand beneath was reached by a wide cutting. The town was quite in its infancy, but already possessed some well-laid-out streets and handsome wooden buildings.

As we anticipated, we found the good folk of Dunedin much exercised about the gold diggings. They were the first discovered in the country, and the town was in a fever of excitement for news of their success or otherwise. No very reliable information had come, but such as was obtainable appeared sufficiently satisfactory and encouraging to justify our making immediate arrangements for transporting ourselves thither.

CHAPTER XI.

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OUR EVENTFUL JOURNEY TO THE LINDIS GOLD DIGGINGS.

The Lindis was one hundred and twenty miles inland from Dunedin. There was no road, and but for a portion of the way up the valley of the Waitaki only a rough bullock dray track leading to some isolated sheep and cattle stations, beyond which there was literally no track at all. The country was mountainous, and early winter having set in, it was supposed that much of the higher latitudes would be covered with snow, but beyond the fact that numbers of pedestrians had during the past fortnight proceeded towards the Lindis, and that a ship-load of diggers had arrived from Victoria and were hourly leaving the town, we had nothing reliable to guide us. We heard that the few sheep-farmers on the route were much opposed to the influx of diggers, and had publicly notified that they would not encourage or give them any accommodation on their stations. This was alarming for the time, but fortunately the information proved correct in only one instance. It led us, however, to make such preparation for our journey as would render us to a great extent independent of assistance on the way.

We purchased a strong one-horse dray which we loaded with about 10 cwt. of provisions, in the form of flour, tea, sugar, salt, ship biscuits, a small quantity of spirits for medicinal use and tobacco. Also two small calico tents, some cooking utensils and blankets, with bush tools, spades, picks, and axes.

Legge's horse had been broken to harness, and mine was an excellent draught horse. I omitted to mention that at Timaru I had exchanged my mare for a strong gelding which had previously run in the mail cart, getting L10 boot. The swap proved a fortunate one for us, as neither Smith's nor Fowler's animals had ever been in harness, and "Jack the Devil" was out of the question. Legge's horse and mine therefore were destined for the dray, tandem fashion, and upon trial they pulled splendidly.

When the dray was loaded and covered over with a large waterproof tarpaulin, and our two fine horses yoked thereto, it looked a very business-like turn-out. Two of us took it in turn to walk beside the horses and conduct the team, while the other two rode, accompanied by "Jack," his pack-saddle laden with our needs for the day and night halts.

One fine morning in June, 1861, we started from Dunedin, with our handsome team, the first of its kind that ever travelled the road we were going, and we started from the smiling little town amidst the cheers and good wishes of those we left behind.

For the first few days all was fairly smooth sailing. We travelled about twenty miles each day, camping or resting independently of stations, and the track so far being formed by wool drays, was on the whole feasible, although we had occasionally to make good the crossings over creeks and rivers.

On the evening of the third day we arrived at a small cattle station belonging to a Mr. Davis, where were a number of diggers resting for the night. Mr. Davis was one of those hospitably inclined to the diggers, but as he could not be expected to feed such numbers for nothing, he notified that meals would be charged for at one shilling per head. This was eagerly and gratefully responded to, and upwards of two hundred men were assembled at the station the evening we arrived.

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The kitchen and dining hut being unable to accommodate more than twelve or fifteen at once, a multitude had to remain outside while each gang went in, in turn, to be fed.

Inside the scene was curious. An enormous fire of logs blazed on the hearth, which occupied one entire end of the hut, over which were suspended two huge pots filled with joints of mutton, beef, and doughboys, boiling indiscriminately together. They were frequently being removed to the table and others substituted in their place. The pots were flanked by large kettles of water, into which, when on the boil, a handful or two of tea would be thrown. After a few minutes the decoction would be poured into an iron bucket, some milk and sugar added, and placed upon the table, where each man helped himself by dipping his pannikin therein.

Fortunately the hungry seekers after gold were not particular about their meat being a shade over or under cooked; they were glad to accept what they got, and indeed right wholesome food it was. The doughboys were simply large lumps of dough, made of flour and water, used as a substitute for bread, of which a sufficient quantity could not be prepared for the immense demand.

We obtained our turn in due time, and after a hearty meal retired to the quarters we had pitched upon for the night—viz., a straw shed where we rolled our blanket around us and slept soundly.

The following evening, after a severe day's journey, we arrived wet and fagged at the next station, Miller and Gooche's. Here a similar scene was being enacted, and here, in common with many other diggers, we were obliged to remain for several days owing to severe weather setting in.

Miller and Gooche's station was situated at the junction of a tributary stream with the Waitaki, at the entrance of a rugged and mountainous gorge. From this point our real difficulties were to begin, as we would diverge from the main valley we had hitherto followed, and work our way over a rough tract of hilly country, up ravines and spurs to the great pass, then pretty certain to be covered with snow.

For the four days during which we were detained at this station it rained, sleeted, and snowed alternately and unceasingly. There were upwards of one hundred and fifty men there, and the station running short of flour, a supply had to be procured from Davis's, where luckily a large store had been collected.

Most diggers possessed nothing beyond the clothes they wore, with a blanket and a kettle, and many had no money wherewith to pay for food, so the squatters were obliged to make a virtue of necessity and give free where there was no chance of payment, and this they did right willingly. As for the diggers, I must say so much for them that, rough fellows as they were, they paid freely and gratefully all they could, and I did not hear of a single instance of robbery or outrage save one, and we were the

victims of that. It was merely the abstraction, emptying, and replacing on our dray of a case of "Old Tom," all the spirits we possessed, and we did not discover the loss until too late for any chance of detecting the delinquents.

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At Miller and Gooche's we passed four very miserable days. The two small huts and the sheep shed were filled to overflowing, and we lay on the floor of the latter at night, cold, stiff, dirty, and packed into our places like sardines. The rain and sleet, slop, cold, and offensive odour combined would need to be experienced to be appreciated; it was indescribable and the greatest and most disagreeable of anything I experienced before or since of such a mixture.

At length the weather cleared, and in company with another dray just arrived from Dunedin, and got up in imitation of ours, we started for the pass, not without grave misgivings of what might be before us.

The first day we made five miles. Our route lay along the course of a large creek bounded both sides by precipitous hills. The recent rain had swollen the stream, and either obliterated or washed away the rough dray track, which even at its best was not suited for the passage of a horse team. We were therefore obliged to cut a way in and out of the nullah wherever we crossed; so some idea may be formed of our day's work. We were fortunate in being accompanied by the fresh dray, indeed without it, and the assistance given by a number of the diggers who kept with us, and with whom we shared our food, I do not think we would have succeeded in getting over the Lindis Pass, at any rate not nearly so expeditiously as we did. When we came to an exceptionally difficult and steep pull, the drays were taken over one at a time with three horses yoked, and all hands helping them.

On the morning of the second day we were still four miles from the pass, and it took very severe work from men and horses to negotiate the remainder of that fast narrowing, steep and rugged bed, and late in the afternoon to reach the summit. It was, as we anticipated, covered with snow.

The cold that night was intense, and we had difficulty in procuring before dark set in enough brushwood to keep up a small fire for more than a few hours. It was here we discovered the loss of the "Old Tom" which we had meant to save for just such a special occasion as this. Now that we were half-frozen and without means of bettering our condition for the night, it was proposed to open the first bottle, and have a nip round for ourselves and comrades. Our chagrin and disappointment may be imagined when we found the twelve bottles to contain only water.

I often wondered how we got through that night; one or two of us alone must surely have perished. Our safety lay in our number. We rolled our blankets tightly round us and lay down close together on the wet and now fast freezing ground, and lit our pipes, and then we slept. Tired as we were, nothing could keep sleep from us—even if we were to be frozen during it.

For the horses we had collected a little grass and carried it on the drays, but they had a bad time of it, and the icicles hung from their manes and tails in the morning as they stood shivering with their backs turned to the keen mountain blast.

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However, we all survived, and were none the worse, and as soon as it was light we gathered enough brushwood to make a rousing fire, by which we melted the frozen snow and ice from our blankets, and from the harness before we could put it on the horses.

We soon finished a hearty breakfast of mutton grilled in the hot ashes, and hot tea, and proceeded to get ready for the day's work, which we knew would be a heavy one if we were to get over the pass before sundown.

It was two miles to the top, but such a two miles to take a horse dray over. The gradient was not only very steep and rough, but it was covered with six to eighteen inches of snow, except in some few exposed parts where it had drifted off and left the surface nearly bare. There was no track to guide us beyond a very uncertain and irregular one made by a few pedestrians and horses who had preceded us the evening before when we had been delayed by the drays.

We decided to take the drays over separately, yoking all four horses to each in turn, tandem fashion, by means of ropes with which we were well provided. Just as we were about to start the first, a party of diggers arrived, who volunteered to push and spoke the wheels. Thanks to these men and the game, honest horses, our difficulties were considerably lightened. Some went before to clear the snow where it lay thickest, but this was soon abandoned as labour in vain.

We found that the utmost efforts of the four horses, assisted by half a dozen men, were only sufficient to drag the dray from twenty to fifty yards at a spurt, then on stopping to take a breath a log was thrown behind the wheels, and after a few moments' rest another spurt was made, and so on.

Our progress was so satisfactory that before nightfall both drays were safely over the pass and we had proceeded down the opposite side as far as an out-station of McLean's, on whose run we now were. Here we learned to our joy that we were within twenty-five miles of the reported diggings, with a fairly passable track all the way.

Mr. R. McLean was a wealthy sheep farmer who had originally made his money on the Australian goldfields. His present attitude therefore towards the diggers was considered the more cruel. He had given orders at all his out-stations that neither food nor shelter was to be afforded them, and upon our arrival at the shepherd's hut aforesaid, the occupant, a worthy Scotsman, informed us with regret that we would have to arrange for our accommodation in the open, it being as much as his place was worth to feed or shelter diggers. This was unpleasant news, as we hoped to have taken up our quarters in his hut that night after our severe camping out the previous four days.

Although the diggings broke out in McLean's run he had no power to prevent the land being worked upon, excepting only such portions of it as were private property, but he

discouraged and put obstacles in the way of the diggers in any form he could, some said because he knew as an experienced digger himself that they would not pay. Whether this was the case or not, he might have understood the impossibility of stopping a gold rush in its infancy, while its value was still an unknown quantity.

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Our last stage the following day was for the greater part by one of the most picturesque valleys I had yet seen. Mr. McLean had made a very fair road from the Lindis Pass boundary to his home station, which latter was only some five miles from the diggings, so it was very different travelling to what we had experienced on the other side. The track first wound along a deep ravine with rugged precipitous sides, mostly clothed with evergreen underwood from which huge masses of rock would now and then emerge, and sometimes overhanging a rushing torrent which had been swelled by the recent heavy rains and thus enhanced the effect on this glorious sunny morning. The waterfalls and cascades sparkled in a hundred colours, wheeling, foaming, and dashing in a mad race amidst huge rocks, till lost in shadow beneath a precipice or overhanging mass of variegated bush. The gorge then opened out into a level amphitheatre, with the river, grown calm and broad, winding peacefully, and surrounded by the mountains in all their enchanting shades of colour, and the distant peaks capped with snow.

Then another gorge of more imposing grandeur with a magnificent view beyond and through it, closed in turn by a sombre pine forest swept by the river, now grown larger and deeper, dancing and racing like a living thing in the brilliant sunshine and rare atmosphere of a New Zealand morning.

How well I remember the whole trip with all its roughness and all its beauty, its very contrasts no doubt helping to impress it upon the memory. Such scenes and incidents are difficult to forget, even if one would, and each and all are as distinct to my mind in almost every detail at this moment as if I had been with them only yesterday, instead of more than forty years ago.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE ON THE GOLD DIGGINGS.

And now I will endeavour to picture my impression of the gold diggings as they appeared on that same evening.

After passing through one of the most beautiful of the Lindis gorges we found ourselves at the entrance of a wide tract of open and undulating country, almost bare of anything beyond short yellow grass, encompassed on all sides by hills which stretched away westward to the snow-crowned mountains. The extent of the open was from one to two miles square, and through its centre—or nearly so—the Lindis flowed in a rocky bed. Along the river and far up the downs on either side were sprinkled hundreds of little tents with their hundreds of fires and rising eddies of smoke. The banks of the river were crowded with men at work, some in the water, some out, others pitching tents or tending horses, some constructing rough furniture, cradles and long Toms for washing gold, hundreds of horses tethered among the tents or upon the open, and above all the suppressed hum of a busy multitude.

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On all new gold diggings it was usual to establish a self-constituted form of government among the diggers themselves, which in the absence of any regular police force or law of the land was responsible for the protection and good conduct of the entire community. Some capable man was elected as president and chief, before whom all cases of misdemeanour were heard, and whose decisions and powers to inflict punishment were final. Under such rule, crude as it was, the utmost good conduct usually prevailed, and any glaring instances of robbery or crime were not only rare, but severely dealt with.

To this man we reported our arrival, and a camping ground was pointed out to us. It was too late to do anything towards preparing a permanent camp that night, but at daybreak the following morning we were hard at work, and by evening had made ourselves a comfortable hut.

We marked out a rectangle of 12 ft. by 10 ft., the size of our largest tent, around which we raised a sod wall two feet high, which we plastered inside with mud. Over the walls we rigged up our tent, securing it by stays and poles set in triangles at each extremity. At one end we built a capacious fireplace and chimney eight feet wide, leaving two feet for a doorway. The chimney was built of green sods, also plastered within, and our door was a piece of old sacking weighted and let fall over the opening. Around the hut we cut a good drain to convey away rain water. At the upper end of the hut we raised a rough framework of green timber cut from the neighbouring scrub, one foot high and six wide, thus taking up exactly half of our house. Upon this we spread a plentiful supply of dry grass to form our common bed. Our working tools and other gear found place underneath, and with a few roughly made stools and the empty "Old Tom" case for a table, our mansion was complete.

It was not yet night when our work was done, and some of us strolled about to obtain any information available. This was not as satisfactory as we could have desired. Very many had been disappointed, gold was not found in sufficient quantities to pay, and prospectors were out in every direction. It was early yet, however, to condemn the diggings, and the grumblers and the disappointed are always present in every undertaking, so we comforted ourselves, and sought dinner and the night's sleep we were so much in need of.

The usual requisites for a digger are, a spade, pick, shovel, long Tom or cradle, and a wide lipped flat iron dish (not unlike an ordinary wash-hand basin) for final washing.

The long Tom consists of a wooden trough or race, twelve to fifteen feet long and two feet wide; its lower end is fitted into an iron screen or grating, fixed immediately above a box or tray of the same size. To work the machine it is set so that a stream of water obtained by damming up a little of the river is allowed to pass quickly and constantly down the race, and through the grating into the box at the other end.

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The “stuff” in which the gold is supposed to be is thrown into the race, where, by the action of the current of water, the earth, stones, rubbish and light matter are washed away and the heavy sand, *etc.*, falls through the grating into the box. As frequently as necessary this box is removed and another substituted, when the contents are washed carefully by means of the basin. By degrees all the sand and foreign matter is washed away, leaving only the gold.

The cradle is very similar to what it is named after, a child’s swing cot. It is simply a suspended wooden box, fitted with an iron grating and tray beneath into which the “stuff” is cradled or washed by rocking it by hand.

It takes considerable experience of the art of finding gold to enable a man to fix on a good site for commencing operations. There are of course instances of wonderful luck and unexpected success, but they are very much the exception, and form but a diminutive proportion of the fortune of any gold diggings. We hear of the man who has found a big nugget and made a fortune, but nothing of the thousands who don’t find any big nuggets, and earn but bare wages or often less.

On most diggings a large proportion of the men are working for wages only, and it not infrequently depends on the fortune of the employer whether the labourer receives his wages or not. It may be a case of general smash. We saw much of this on the Lindis diggings. They were not a general success at that time, as we soon discovered to our cost; and many who went there wildly hoping to find gold for the picking up, and with no means to withstand a reverse, were only too glad to work for those who had means to carry on for a while, for their food only.

We procured a long Tom, and spent some days prospecting with variable success—*i.e.*, we found gold nearly everywhere, each shovelful of earth contained gold, but in quantities so generally infinitesimal as to be not worth the time spent in working for it. The land was impregnated with gold, but the difficulty was to find it in sufficient quantity to pay.

We at length fixed upon a claim and set up our gear. From daylight to dark we worked day after day, excavating, cradling, and washing, each one taking it in turns to look after the horses and tent and fetch food from the camp, which was at some distance away. The final washing of the stuff was done twice daily, at noon and again at evening, and what an exciting and anxious operation this was! How earnestly the decreasing sediment was peered at to discover signs of the precious metal! How our hearts would jump with delight when a bright yellow grain was discovered, appearing for a moment on the dark surface, then more careful washing, with beating hearts and necks craning over the fateful dish as the mass got less and less, and then the sinking and disappointment to find that the day’s hard work of four men did not bring us five shillings worth of gold! But hope, with the young and sanguine, is hard to beat, and the following morning would see us at work as cheerily as ever.

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[Illustration: THE GOLD DIGGINGS.]

A fortnight after our arrival our provisions ran short, and we were obliged to have recourse to the stores, of which two had been started by an enterprising firm in Dunedin, and soon after we were nearly having a famine, owing to the stores themselves running short by reason of the drays conveying supplies having been snowed up in crossing the pass. McLean was applied to, but he refused, and it was fortunate for him that a caravan arrived before the diggers were actually in want.

With this caravan arrived a pedlar and a liquor merchant, two such characters as cannot well be found except on a gold diggings. They carried with them a plentiful supply of slop clothes, boots, tools, and spirits, *etc.*, and as luck—or ill luck—would have it, they pitched their camp alongside ours.

One of these men rarely did business without the other. If a digger came to purchase a pair of trousers or boots the bargain was never completed to the satisfaction of both parties without a glass of spirits at the adjacent grog shop to clinch it; and at night, when the diggers would drop round the latter for a glass, many pairs of breeches, boots, or other articles were disposed of under the happy influence of wine and company.

[Illustration: PEDDLARS AT THE DIGGINGS.]

These men are to be met with in all parts of the Colonies where crowds are collected, and they are usually of Jewish origin. There was nothing objectionable about them; they were simply shrewd, energetic men of business, ready without actual dishonesty to take every possible advantage of the wants and weaknesses of their fellow men. We had some pleasant evenings in their company, and many a jovial song and dance they treated us to, for which, no doubt, they succeeded in extracting good value for their wind and muscle.

Meat was scarce on the diggings, and at times for days together we had none. McLean indeed did not refuse to sell fat cattle, but he demanded prohibitive prices, and so it was customary to procure meat from a distance.

We had been now two months on the Lindis, our funds instead of increasing were diminishing, and we saw little or no hope of a change for the better. An exodus had already commenced, and the incomers were daily decreasing in number.

After holding a council meeting in our hut, it was decided that our camp be broken up, and that we should all return together as far as Davis's station, from whence two should proceed to Dunedin with the dray, while the other two should purchase some fat beasts and drive them to the diggings for sale.

The tents and tools were disposed of to a newly arrived group of Australian diggers at a fair enough price, and we disposed of all the remaining gear we did not actually need on the return journey, taking with us little beyond the empty dray, and all being ready we bade farewell to the Lindis diggings, and once more started on our uncertain and adventurous travels.

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I omitted to mention that during our residence on the Lindis we were sadly troubled with rats. There must have been millions in the locality, and it was very difficult to guard our food from their depredations. During the day they mostly disappeared until sundown, when they came in swarms to the tents. Sitting by the fire in the evening I have frequently killed a dozen with a short stick as they approached fearlessly in search of food, and during the night we got accustomed to sharing our common bed with a goodly number of the rascals.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE LEAVE THE LINDIS—ATTEMPT TO DRIVE FAT CATTLE TO THE
DIGGINGS AND FAIL—RETURN TO DUNEDIN.

On the return journey we had as much company as when we came, and the road was even worse, but the dray being almost empty we experienced less difficulty in proceeding. The first day took us out of McLean's run, and the second saw us at nightfall on Miller and Gooche's side of the pass, which was still snowed over, but the traffic had worked the track up into deep slush and mud, and late in the evening we were near losing the dray and horses in a swamp we had inadvertently entered while seeking a better passage. With the assistance of some friendly diggers we succeeded in extricating them, but the unfortunate accident prevented our proceeding further that night, and we passed it on the borders of the swamp where not an atom of firewood could be obtained. The ground was in a puddle of melted snow and mud, not a dry spot to be found. We were muddy and wet from head to foot, without the means of making even a pannikin of tea, and the night was pitch dark. We just crouched down together by the dray, hungry, shivering, and fagged. Sleep, of course, was out of the question, and we had constantly to clap our arms to keep the blood in circulation. Towards midnight intense frost set in. We smoked incessantly; in that, I think, was to a great extent our safety.

We did not remove the harness from the horses, which were tied to the dray without any food for the night. The following morning at eleven o'clock we arrived at Miller and Gooche's, where we had to melt the ice off our leggings and boots before we could remove them—and what a breakfast we ate! Nobody who has not experienced what it is to starve on a healthy stomach for thirty hours and spend most of that time on a mountain pass under snow and frost can understand how we appreciated our food.

The next day we reached Davis's, when Fowler and Legge left us for Dunedin, and Smith and I arranged with Davis for the purchase of a couple of fat steers for L12 10s. each, hoping that if we succeeded in driving them to the diggings we would double our money.

In the afternoon we went with Davis to the run, and selected the animals, which we drove with a mob to the stockyard. Here we separated our pair and put them in another yard for a start in the morning. Driving a couple of wild bullocks alone from their run is, as I have already explained, by no means an easy task, and Davis warned us that these would give us trouble—indeed, I believe he considered us slightly mad to attempt to drive the beasts such a distance at all.

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On first starting we had no small difficulty in preventing them returning to the run, and it cost us some hard galloping to get them away on the road to Miller and Gooche's, where it was our intention to yard for the night.

We had proceeded to within a mile of the station, when the brutes for the twentieth time bolted, on this occasion taking to the hills over some low spurs and rocky ground, intersected with ravines and gullies. I was riding hard to intercept them when I was suddenly sent flying on to my head, turning a somersault on to a rough bank of spear grass. Shaking myself together and somewhat recovering from the shock, I discovered the tail and stern of my steed projecting above the ground, the remainder of him being invisible. It appeared he had planted his fore feet in a deep fissure covered with long grass, and just large enough to take in head and fore parts. The shock sent me over, as I described, while he remained stuck.

It was a ridiculous position, and tired, sore from the spear-grass, and annoyed as I was, I could not refrain from a hearty laugh at our predicament before attempting to extricate my unhappy quadruped; this I succeeded in doing with some difficulty, and found him, with the exception of some few scratches, quite unhurt.

I again mounted, but the wily steers had disappeared, and Smith was nowhere to be seen, I rode quietly on and presently discovered the latter, himself and horse dead beat, and using very unparliamentary language at our bad luck, at the beasts, and at gold diggings in general.

We had nothing for it but to go back to Miller's for the night. The following day we returned to Davis's, where we found the bullocks had arrived the night before, and Davis, after a laugh at our misadventures, returned us the L25, and the same evening we left for Dunedin. We camped some ten miles further down the Waitaki, with a very eccentric personage in the form of an old retired clergyman of the Church of England. He lived like a hermit in a small hut under the hills, which he had built himself, as well as some outbuildings and a capital little bakery, which he was very proud of. He cultivated a small plot of ground, where he grew potatoes and other vegetables and kept a cow, and he possessed several cats and a couple of fine collie dogs. He gave food—especially bread—to any traveller passing who needed it, and free quarters for the night. He showed us a small canoe in which he was in the habit of paddling himself across the river, and was always ready to obey a call to any, even distant, station where his services were needed in a case of illness, death, or marriage. He was a most entertaining host, and we enjoyed the night we spent with him in his curious and lonely habitation. We heard that he had suffered some severe domestic calamity, which drove him to his present lonely life, but he spent his days in doing all the good that lay in his power, and doubtless many a passing traveller was the better in more ways than one for meeting the old recluse.

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On arriving at Dunedin we found that Legge had already disposed of the dray satisfactorily, and Smith finding a purchaser for his horse he parted with him, thus placing us all in funds. It was decided then that Smith and Legge should take the coasting steamer to Port Lyttelton, while I proceeded overland with my own horse and "Jack the Devil," arranging to meet at Christchurch. Fowler left us at Dunedin, and we saw him no more.

My journey back was uneventful, but happening to meet with Bains, of the Post, the original owner of my horse, we exchanged mounts for a consideration of L5 transferred from his pocket to mine. He wanted his harness horse back, while I needed only a saddle horse, so the exchange was a satisfactory one in every way, and enabled me to hasten my journey to Christchurch, where I found Legge and Smith awaiting me.

We sold Jack for twice what he cost us, and squared accounts for the trip, which, although it did not fulfill the brilliant expectations with which we started upon it, was nevertheless an interesting and pleasant experience, and one which we would have been sorry to have missed.

I found home letters awaiting me, with renewed requests from my father to return while there was time to resume my studies, and offering me further assistance if I needed it. I declined all, feeling that I could not now renounce the life I had chosen, and it would not be right of me, in opposition to his opinion, to accept any financial assistance even had I needed it, which was not the case. I had tried most phases of a colonial life, had gained a great deal of experience, and knew that I could always obtain remunerative employment, and after I had enjoyed a little more rambling and freedom I could decide on some fixed line to settle down upon. In the meantime there was no immediate hurry, and I was very young.

CHAPTER XIV.

LEAVE FOR MESOPOTAMIA—ROAD MAKING—SHEEP MUSTERING—DEATH OF
DR. SINCLAIR—ROAD CONTRACTS ON THE ASHBURTON—WASHED DOWN
STREAM.

I had only been a few days in Christchurch when I met a Mr. Butler whom I had once before seen up-country. He immediately offered me a post on his run at L60 a year, with all expenses paid, which I could hold for as long or short time as I needed. This exactly suited me in my present circumstances. I accepted his offer and started the following day for Mesopotamia, as he had quaintly named his station; it lay between two rivers.

[Illustration: MESOPOTAMIA STATION.]



Mr. Samuel Butler was a grandson of the late famous Bishop Butler. He had come to New Zealand about a year previously with a small fortune which, as he said, he intended to double and then return home, and he did so in a remarkably short time. Immediately he landed he made himself acquainted with the maps and districts taken up, and rode many hundreds of miles prospecting for new country. His energy

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was rewarded by the discovery of the unclaimed piece of mountain land he now occupied near the upper gorge of the Rangitata. The run, which comprised about 8,000 acres, formed a series of spurs and slopes leading from the foot of the great range and ending in a broad strip of flat land bounded by the Rangitata. Upon two other sides were smaller streams, tributaries of the latter—hence the name Mesopotamia (between the rivers) given to it by its energetic possessor. Mr. Butler had been established upon the run about a year, and had already about 3,000 sheep on it. The homestead was built upon a little plateau on the edge of the downs approached by a cutting from the flat, and was most comfortably situated and well sheltered, as it needed to be, the weather being often exceedingly severe in that elevated locality.

Butler was a literary man, and his snug sitting-room was fitted with books and easy chairs—a piano also, upon which he was no mean performer.

The station hands comprised a shepherd, bullock driver, hutkeeper, and two station hands employed in fencing in paddocks, which with Cook, the overseer, Butler, and myself made up the total.

At daybreak we all assembled in the common kitchen for breakfast, after which we separated for our different employments.

At 12 noon we met again for dinner, and again about 7 p.m. for supper, which meal being over, Butler, Cook, and I would repair to the sitting room, and round a glorious fire smoked or read or listened to Butler's piano. It was the most civilised experience I had had of up-country life since I left Highfield and was very enjoyable. I did not, however, remain very long at Mesopotamia at that time.

There was a proposal on foot to improve the track leading from the Ashburton to the Rangitata on which some heavy cuttings were required to be made. I applied for the contract and obtained it at rates which paid me very well. My supervisor was a man called Denny, who had been a sailor, and I knew him to be a capable and handy fellow, as most sailors are. He was quite illiterate—could not even read or write, but he was clever and intelligent and had seen a great deal of colonial life and some hard times. Every night when supper was over and we sat by the fire in our little hut, I read aloud, to his great delectation, and his remarks, pert questions, and wonderful memory were remarkable.

This work paid well, and I was soon in a position to make my first investment of £100 in sheep, which I placed on terms on Butler's run. To explain this transaction: I purchased one hundred two tooth ewes at a pound each, upon these I was to receive 45 per cent. increase yearly in lambs, half male and half female, and a similar rate of percentage of course on the female increase as they attained to breeding age. In addition I was to

receive L12 10s. per hundred sheep for wool annually. It was a good commencement, and I decided to stick to contract work if possible, and increase my stock till I had sufficient to enable me to obtain a small partnership on a run.

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Just at this time there arrived at Mesopotamia a friend of Butler's by name Brabazon, an Irishman of good family, it being his intention to remain for some time as a cadet to learn sheep farming. He became a great personal friend of Cook's and mine, and many a pleasant day we spent together when, during intervals of rest, I was able to pay a visit to the Rangitata Station.

On the completion of the road contract, the mustering season had begun, and I went over with my men to give a hand and remained for a month assisting at the shearing, *etc.*

I think it was at this time that a most sad occurrence took place, resulting in the death of Dr. Sinclair, who was travelling for pleasure in company with Dr. Haast, Geologist and Botanist to the Government of Canterbury. He and Dr. Haast with their party had been staying at Mesopotamia for a few days previous to starting on an expedition to the upper gorge of the Rangitata. They all left one afternoon, Dr. Sinclair, as usual, on foot. He had an unaccountable aversion to mounting a horse, and could not be induced to do so when it was possible to avoid it. Strange to say, a horse was eventually the cause of his death. He was a man of some seventy years of age with snow white hair, a learned antiquary and botanist, and old as he was, and in appearance not of strong build, he could undergo great fatigue and walk huge distances in pursuit of his favourite science.

The party had proceeded in company some few miles up the river, when Haast and his men went ahead to select a camping place, leaving Dr. Sinclair with a man and horse in attendance to come on quietly and take him over the streams, the intended camp being on the opposite side of the river.

[Illustration: UPPER GORGE OF THE RANGITATA.]

The plan adopted for crossing a stream, when there is more than one person and only a single horse, is as follows: One end of a sufficiently long rope is fastened round the animal's neck, the other being held by one of the men. One then crosses the stream on horseback, when he dismounts, and the horse is hauled back by means of the rope, when another mounts, and so on. In this instance the attendant rode over first, but the stream being somewhat broader than the rope was long, the latter was pulled out of Dr. Sinclair's hands. The man then tried to turn the horse back loose, but the animal, finding himself free, bolted for the run. Dr. Sinclair called to the man that he would ford the stream on foot, and although, as the attendant stated, he warned him against attempting to do so, he immediately entered, but the current was too powerful and quickly washed him off his feet. It was now nearly dark and the man said that although he ran as fast as he was able down the stream, he was unable to see anything of the Doctor. This was the miserable story the station hand gave in at the homestead when he arrived an hour afterwards.

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All hands turned out, and having mounts in the paddock, Cook and Brabazon were soon in the saddle galloping towards the fording place. Striking the stream some distance below where the accident occurred, both sides were carefully searched, as they worked up. When within a quarter of a mile of the ford Cook discovered the body of the Doctor lying stranded with head and shoulders under water. Life, of course, was extinct. He was drawn gently from the stream and laid on the shingle just as the foot men arrived with torches. It was a sad spectacle, this fine old man we all loved and respected so much, only a few hours before full of life and health, now a ghastly corpse, his hair and long white beard lying dank over his cold white face and glaring eyes. The scene was rendered all the more weird and awful by the surroundings, the still dark night, the rushing water, and overhanging cliffs under the red glare of the torches. His body was laid across one of the saddles while one walked on each side to keep it from falling, and so they returned to the station that lonely four miles in the dead of night.

He was laid in the woolshed and a watch placed on guard, and early in the morning a messenger was despatched to Dr. Haast with the sad tidings. His party were at first alarmed at his non-appearance the previous evening, but at length took it for granted that he must have returned to the station, and felt confident that with his attendant and a horse he could not possibly have come to any harm, the river being easily fordable on horseback, or even on foot by a strong man, but of course such a clumsy mistake as employing too short a rope never struck anybody. The attendant who was responsible was one of the hands employed on ditching and fencing, and possibly was not much experienced at river fording, and he said the Doctor delayed so long botanising that darkness was upon them by the time they reached the fording place.

Dr. Sinclair's remains were interred the following day about a mile from the homestead on the flat near the south bank of the Rangitata, where his tomb doubtless may now be seen, his last earthly resting place; and, dear old man, with all his strong antipathy to horses, what would he have thought could he have known that one was destined at last to be the cause of his death?

As a set-off against the previous sad story I may relate an amusing one, in which I was myself a principal actor, and which occurred soon after my arrival at Mesopotamia. Butler was much exercised about some experimental grass-growing he was carrying on about three miles from the station, on the further side of one of the boundary streams I first referred to, where he had recently secured another slice of country.

Early one morning I had started alone on foot for the paddocks, where Butler and Cook were to meet me later, riding, and if I found the stream too high to ford on foot, I was to await their arrival.

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On reaching the river it was so swollen as to be unsafe to attempt fording, and so, lighting my pipe, I sat down under the shelter of a large boulder, and presently fell asleep. When I woke up, after some considerable time, and remembered where I was, I feared that Cook and Butler must have passed while I slept, and was on the point of returning to the station, when I observed two horsemen a long way down stream, apparently searching for something. I speedily understood what was on foot. My friends were laboriously seeking for my dead body, having naturally supposed, when they could not find me at the paddock, that I had tried to ford the river and been washed away. The idea of these two men spending the morning hunting for a supposed drowned man, who was enjoying a sound sleep near them all the time, was so ludicrous that I could not refrain from an immoderate fit of laughter when they arrived.

Butler was hot-tempered, and anything approaching to ridicule where he himself was concerned was a mortal insult. He turned pale with passion and rode off, and I do not think he ever entirely forgave me for not being drowned when he had undertaken so much trouble to discover my body.

It was at Mesopotamia that I noticed so many remains of that extinct bird, the "Moa," and it appeared that some of the species had inhabited that locality not very many years previously. Indeed, some old Maoris I had met on the Ashburton said they remembered the bird very well. It was not uncommon to come across a quantity of bones, and near by them a heap of smooth pebbles which the bird had carried in his craw for digestive purposes, and I recollect one day employing a number of the bones in making a footway over a small creek.

A complete skeleton of the Moa bird is to be seen in the British Museum.

I had now obtained a fresh contract for making cuttings, draining swamps, and bridging over some ten miles in the Lower Ashburton gorge and Valley, and I was busily engaged all the summer and autumn. There were some extensive patches of swampy ground where great difficulty was experienced in passing the heavy wool drays, and to make a feasible road over them was one of my tasks, and an interesting one it proved, giving some scope to my engineering ability. Having laid out the proposed line of road over the marsh, I cut from it at right angles, and some 300 feet in length, a channel wide and deep enough, I calculated, to convey away the flood water during heavy rains, and from the upper end of this channel I cut four feeding drains, two running along the road line, and two diagonally, all four meeting at the top end of the main channel; over the latter, at this point, I constructed a wooden bridge of rough green timber from the forest, distant about eight miles. I sunk a row of heavy round piles or posts about a foot in diameter at each side of the channel, which was fifteen feet wide, securing them with heavy transverse

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beams spiked on to their tops; over this I laid heavy round timber stretchers, about nine inches in diameter and four in number, upon which were spiked closed together a flooring of stout pine saplings from two and a half to four inches thick. The floor between these was then covered with a thick layer of brushwood, topped with earth and gravel. The road embankment was then carried on from each side till the swamp was cleared. I am particular about describing this, as it was my first attempt at bridge building and draining, and of all the thousands of bridges I have since constructed, I do not think any one of them interested me more keenly than these in the Ashburton Valley when I was a lad of nineteen. The bridges and roads over the marshes proved quite satisfactory, and it was a real delight to me when the first teams of wool drays passed over safely. I was at the same time engaged on the cuttings, and got some of them completed before the severe winter set in.

I was so busy this season that much of my time was necessarily spent in supervising between the forest and the work, and I had a rough hut erected at the former, where I could live during my visits.

Once, on passing to the forest, I met with an amusing accident. I was riding a huge sixteen-hand black mare and had heavy swags of blankets strapped before and behind the saddle, in addition to which I carried a new axe, some cooking utensils and a large leg and loin of mutton, which I had called for at the station, fearing that my men were out of meat. Near the forest I had to cross a small stream with steep banks. There had been heavy rain the previous night, and the little stream was a rushing torrent, and as I forded it, the water reached to the girths. The opposite bank was steep and slippery, and the huge animal laboured so in negotiating it that the girths snapped, and the entire saddle, with myself, slipped over her tail into the rushing stream. In this manner we were carried down; immersed to nearly my armpits, but securely attached, for some two hundred yards, before I was able to extricate myself and incumbrances by seizing a branch as we swept by a bend in the stream.

With some difficulty I succeeded in getting all out safely and fortunately on the right side. The mare was quietly feeding where she had emerged.

Where the work went on in the valley I had a couple of tents for my gang of navvies, some of whom were sailors. I always found these excellent workers, and specially handy and clever in many ways, where a mere landsman would be at fault. I worked with them, and shared everything as one of themselves, even to a single nip of rum I allowed to each man once a day. They treated me with every respect, and I had not, so far as I can recollect, a single instance of serious trouble with any of them. They received good wages, and earned them, and if any man among them had been found guilty of reprehensible conduct, the others would have supported me at once

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in clearing him from the camp. When the day's work was over, these sailor navvies would all bear a hand to get matters right for the night and the next day. Mutton was put in the oven, bread made, and placed under the ashes, firewood collected, and water in the kettle ready for putting on the fire at daybreak, then the nip of rum and pipe alight, and yarns or songs would be told or sung in turn, till the blankets claimed us.

This was a very severe winter, and as the snow began to lie heavily I was perforce obliged to stop work for a month or two, and for that time I accepted an invitation from Cook and Brabazon to keep them company at Mesopotamia. Butler had left for Christchurch, where he would remain for an indefinite time.

CHAPTER XV.

WINTER UNDER THE SOUTHERN ALPS—FROST-BITE—SEEKING SHEEP IN THE SNOW—THE RUNAWAY.

In winter in these high latitudes, such as the Upper Rangitata, lying at the foot and immediately eastward of the great Alpine range behind which the winter sun dipped at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, it was intensely cold, and instances of frost-bite were not uncommon. I recollect a poor young fellow, a bullock-driver on a neighbouring station, getting frost-bitten one night when he had lost his way in the snow. He knew nothing of it until he arrived at the station in the morning, when, on removing his boots his feet felt numb and dead, and no amount of rubbing had any effect in inducing a return of circulation. It soon transpired that his toes were frost-bitten. A messenger was despatched to the Ashburton in hope of finding a doctor, but in vain, and the lad was sent to Christchurch, 150 miles, in a covered dray. This, of course, took a considerable time, and when he arrived gangrene had set in, and both feet had to be amputated above the ankles.

When the snow falls in large quantities it becomes an anxious time for the sheep farmer, and if the flocks are not strong and healthy they are sure to suffer. In snowstorms, the sheep will seek the shelter of some hill or spur, collecting together on the lee side, and here they are sometimes drifted over, when if the snow does not remain beyond a certain period they are mostly safe. As the snow drifts over them the heat of their bodies keeps it melted within a certain area, while the freezing and increase of drift and falling snow continue above and beyond the circle. In this manner a compartment is formed underneath in which the animals live and, to some extent, move about. The existence of these habitations is discovered by the presence of small breathing holes on the surface leading from below like chimneys, and sheep will live in this manner for a fortnight or so. When they have eaten up all the grass and roots available they will feed

on their own wool, which they tear off each other's backs, and chew for the grease contained in it.

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For a fortnight we had been completely snowed up at Mesopotamia. Upon the homestead flat the snow was four feet deep, through which we cut and kept clear a passage between the huts, and for fifty yards on one side to the creek, where through a hole in the ice we drew water for daily use. Fortunately we had abundance of food and a mob of sheep had previously been driven into one of the paddocks to be retained in case of emergency. The confined life was trying. We read, played cards, practised daily with the boxing gloves, and missed sorely the outdoor exercise. One day, however, we had a benefit of the latter which was a new experience to all of us.

The overseer was getting anxious about the sheep. Once or twice distant bleating had been heard, but for some days it had ceased, and as he wished to satisfy himself of the safety of his flocks, we decided to make a party and go in search of them.

When last seen, before the heavy snow began to fall, the flocks of ewes and lambs were two miles from the homestead on the lea of the great spur forming the north extremity of the run, and it was in this direction the bleating was heard.

We arranged our party as follows: Cook, Brabazon, and I, with two station hands, were to start early the following morning, while two men remained at the huts to be on the look out for us, and if we were late in returning they had orders to follow up in our snow trail and meet us.

We each dressed as lightly as possible, and provided ourselves with stout pine staffs to assist us in climbing and feeling our way over dangerous localities. Each of us carried a parcel of bread and meat, and a small flask of spirits was taken for use only in case of urgent necessity.

An expedition of this kind is always attended with danger. Travelling through deep snow is exceedingly tiring, and the glare and glistening from its surface tends to induce sleepiness. Many a man has lost his life from these causes combined when but a short distance from safety.

[Illustration: SEEKING SHEEP IN THE SNOW.]

We started in Indian file, the foremost man breaking the snow and the others placing their feet in his tracks. When the leader, whose work was naturally the heaviest, got tired, he stepped aside, and the next in file took up the breaking, while the former fell into the rear of all, which is, of course, the easiest.

Proceeding thus, we went on steadily for some hours, our route being by no means straight, as we had to utilise our knowledge of the ground and avoid dangerous and suspicious places. The aspect of a piece of country considerably changes in surface appearance under a heavy covering of snow where deep and extensive drifts have formed.

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Notwithstanding our deviations and undulating course, we made the summit of the great spur at midday. Such a scene as here opened out before us is difficult to describe. If it had been a flat plain with the usual domestic accessories there would be only a dreary circumscribed and more or less familiar picture, but here we were among the silent mountains untouched by the hand of man, in the clearest atmosphere in the universe, with magnificent and varying panoramas stretching away from us on every side. To the north we could see far into the upper gorge of the Rangitata, with its precipices and promontories receding point by point in bold outline to the towering peaks forty miles beyond, and below it the wide flats of the great river, with its broad bed and streams so rapid that they could not be frozen over. On the east the low undulating downs stretching away towards the plains, while westward they ran in huge spurs to the foot of the Alpine range, towering 13,000 feet above us. Turning southward was seen the lower gorge, with its hills almost meeting in huge precipitous spurs, with stretches of pine forests clothing their slopes.

Turn where we would over those immense panoramas all was white, pure, dazzling, glittering white, with a deathlike stillness over all. No life, no colour, save a streak of grey-blue on the broad river bed, and the shadow thrown by the mountains in the depths of their frowning gorges. The cold grey cloudless sky itself was scarcely any contrast. It was a magnificent wilderness of snow, and we viewed it spell-bound till our eyes ached with the glare and we felt a strange desire to lie down and sleep.

Such is invariably the attendant sensations under these circumstances, whence the danger. If one once gives way to the drowsiness and longing for rest, he is gone. The sleep comes quickly, but it is a sleep from which there is no awakening—hence the precautions taken on such an expedition to have as large a party of strong men as possible to assist each other in case of failure. The need for such caution was fully verified in our case.

We were fortunate in discovering a number of sheep on the leeward of the spur where the snow had drifted off and lay comparatively light, and some were feeding off the tops of tall snow grass which remained uncovered. In other places numbers were living under the snow as the breathing holes testified. The visit and inspection were as satisfactory as we hoped, and after a short rest and hasty lunch, we started on our return journey, which, as it would be in our old tracks, and for the most part downhill, would be very much easier than the previous one.

It was well that our homeward journey was easier, or the trip would not have ended as satisfactorily as it did. We all felt on starting that we had had nearly enough work, and looked forward longingly to the snug huts two miles distant. It was now half-past one, and by three o'clock darkness and severe frost would set in (indeed, it was freezing all day). We originally trusted to reach the station by that hour, but we had delayed longer with the sheep than we should have.

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We proceeded manfully and had accomplished about half the distance when Cook, who had been exhibiting signs of weariness, suddenly “sat down in his tracks,” and asked for some grog, which was given him. This revived him somewhat, and we again got under weigh, keeping him in the rear, but after a little while he again succumbed, and said he could go no further. He was quite happy, only looked a bit dazed, said he was tired and sleepy, and begged us to go on, and send a man and horse for him. This was what we feared. He was too far gone to remember that a horse could not walk where we had come. There was nothing for it but to carry, or assist him as best we could, and keep him moving, for if we had left him he would have frozen dead in half an hour. With this fear we received new strength, and two by two, we half carried and half dragged him for some distance when we were met by the hut keeper, and the remaining station hand, an old man, by name Darby—who, as agreed, had left to seek us, fearing some accident. With this additional assistance Cook was carried the remaining distance, and laid, now quite asleep, on a cot, where we rubbed his extremities with snow, till circulation returned, and then let him sleep, which he did, and indeed which we all did, until very late the following day.

The same winter a sad accident occurred on a run south of Canterbury, belonging to two brothers, by name, I think, McKenzie. They went alone to visit their sheep in the snow, and when returning, the elder got tired and could not proceed. He contentedly sat down, desiring his brother to go on to the station and send him assistance. The latter, fearing nothing, left him, and when the assistance arrived the man was found dead.

The close of winter was now coming on, and the snow was fast thawing from the mountains, while the river flats were almost clear where drifts had not formed. With the thaw the Rangitata came down in great volume, a sea of yellow foaming water a quarter of a mile in width.

During the time we were snowed up the mob of horses came almost every day to the stock yard for rock salt and we now took the opportunity to retain three, as the ground was clear enough for riding. I had brought with me from Christchurch a new purchase in the form of a big rawboned gelding, fresh off board ship from Melbourne, and had turned him to graze with the other horses on the run. He was now in splendid condition.

When we were all mounted the gelding showed some inclination to buck, but went away quietly after all, and we cantered along to the bank of the river. Returning, we wished to try the paces of our nags, and started for a race. My animal then showed his temper, and after a few bucks, which did not unseat me, he fairly bolted. I had only a light snaffle on him, while his mouth was like iron. The bridle, too, was old as ill-luck would have it, or I might have succeeded in stopping him; but after a few moments of vain endeavour to do so, the rein broke at the ring of the snaffle, and he was free. With a vicious shake of the head he threw the bit from his mouth and headed for the downs,

where I knew there was a large tract of burnt “Irishman” scrub, into which, if he took me, I would be torn to pieces.

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In an instant's thought I decided to get clear of him, then kicking my feet, as I thought, out of the stirrups, I sprang off. I remembered nothing more till I woke up, two hours later, in a cot in the hut, with an aching head and stiff back. The others said I could not have cleared both feet from the stirrups when I jumped, for it seemed to them that I was dragged for an instant. At any rate, I struck the ground on the back of my head and shoulders, and lay stunned; they first thought me lifeless. The huts were near, and I was carried up and resuscitated. The following day I was sufficiently recovered to give the gelding a lesson in running away he had cause to remember.

CHAPTER XVI.

START ON AN EXPLORING EXPEDITION TO THE WANAKA LAKE.

We had just now capital pig-hunting. The severity of the snow sent the animals into the flats, where we shot them down, riding being impracticable.

My visit being ended and the weather favourable, I proceeded to Christchurch preparatory to resuming work. I was accompanied by a young man named Evans, a stockrider from one of the Ashburton stations, and on arriving at the Rakaia, being in a hurry, we foolishly tried to ford the river without a guide, as I had frequently done at other times. The river was quite fordable, but the streams were fairly deep, taking the horses some way above the girths. We had nearly crossed the largest when my horse suddenly went down, and in an instant we were swimming in a swift current nearly to the waist. Evans's horse followed the other's example. They were both good swimmers, and took us out safely on the side from which we entered, some 300 yards down stream. Another try under the forder's guidance was successful, but the accident detained us at the north bank accommodation house for the night.

In addition to the completion of the Ashburton gorge road, I obtained a contract from a wealthy runholder in the neighbourhood to put up many miles of wire fencing, then just coming into use for dividing the runs, and also for the erection of several outstation buildings, all of which I had completed before the middle of the summer season, and I was in treaty for further work when I received an offer from Mr. T. Moorhouse, at whose station I had been so ill, to accompany him on an exploring trip to the head of the Wanaka Lake, in Otago Province. He had taken up (or imagined he had done so) some sheep country there, and the expedition was for the purpose of inspecting his newly acquired possessions. Nobody had yet seen this country, or at any rate, been on it.

The journey would be about 300 miles, in addition to the voyage up the lake by boat, about twenty miles. It would be a new experience for me, and I was delighted with the offer, the more so that I would receive a good return for my time with all expenses paid, and I was glad to have an opportunity of again visiting the Lindis and the country far

beyond my late travels, during the summer, when all would look its best and camping out be a real pleasure.

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As we were not to start for ten days, I went to Christchurch to receive payment for work, and I was anxious to purchase a good saddle horse in place of my big mare, which was too clumsy and heavy for our proposed ride to Otago. On the day on which I purchased the animal there was an auction sale of walers in the town, and I was sitting on the stockyard rails, looking on, when I saw a jockey riding a powerful bay up and down in front of the stand. This jockey proved to be an old acquaintance, and although some 60 years of age, was still an excellent rider. He was a popular little fellow, a character in his way, and was known by the name of "Old Bob." I was on the point of speaking to him, when the horse he rode was called for sale, and Bob was desired to show off his paces. For a turn or two the animal behaved well, and the bidding was brisk, when apparently, without any cause he bucked violently. I think Bob held on for four or five bucks, then the saddle went forward, and he was shot off, striking the hard road on his head. He seemed to roll up or double up, or something, and lay still, several people rushed to him, but he was past all help, his skull was split in two.

On my return to Moorhouse's our preparations were soon completed. In addition to our saddle horses we selected for pack animals as well as for occasional riding two of the best of the station hacks; one of them carried stores and some cooking utensils, while the other was laden with clothes and blankets. We travelled lightly, it being our intention to put up at stations or accommodation houses as much as possible till we arrived at our destination.

The route we followed was for the first 150 miles the same as that described in our journey to the diggings. We moved much faster and in six days reached Miller and Gooche's, the former of whom was now on the station. McGregor Miller was one of the finest men I had seen, a Hercules in strength and build, and as jolly and hospitable as he was a perfect gentleman. We stayed two days with him. The station as well as the country presented very different aspects to what they did on my previous visit. A new house had been built and furnished comfortably, and the surroundings were fast being improved under the guiding hand of the "boss," who worked with his men as one of themselves, and easy-going fox-hunting squire as he was in the old country a couple of years since, he could handle an axe, spade, or shovel with the best of them.

On the first day's ride from here we went over the Lindis Pass, the scene of so much hardship to us diggers, and on to McClean's station, where we received a hearty Scotch welcome and an excellent dinner, and sat up late with the old gentleman discussing whiskey toddy and chatting over old times. The Moorhouses and McCleans were old friends, and had been together in Australia on the diggings many years before. He was not, I recollect, much impressed with Moorhouse's speculation, but as he had a run at the south of the Wanaka and a homestead there he arranged for our reception and for a boat to take us a portion of the voyage up the lake.

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The next day's ride lay through the scene of the late Lindis diggings, but not a vestige of the encampments remained beyond the ruins of the hut walls and excavations. The gold diggings proved a failure, and within a few months of our leaving them they were deserted. They were, I understood, subsequently re-opened by a company who employed machinery with more success than was possible with manual labour.

The country beyond this was bleak and uninteresting, until the following evening when we arrived at the Molyneux river, where it flowed out of the south end of the Wanaka Lake. We were here again in the midst of mountains and very near to the great Alpine range which towered above us and which, although it was midsummer, was capped in snow.

Upon the opposite side of the river, and on the shore of the lake, stood the very fine group of station buildings erected by Mr. Robert McClean. His people having been advised of our coming, a boat was sent across, behind which we swam our horses, and were soon comfortably fixed for the night and hospitably received by the overseer, who had a boat ready to convey us the following day twenty-five miles up the lake to another station formed there.

The Molyneux struck me as being the clearest water I had ever seen; it was quite colourless, and though of great depth, even here at its source, the bottom was distinctly visible from the boat. It was a grand river, large and deep enough to float a small steamer.

Early the following morning we saw a large timber raft come down the lake and enter the Molyneux. There were extensive forests at the head of the lake, and an energetic contractor had engaged men to cut timber there, which he was now floating down the river to the coast some 200 miles distant. The raft was forty feet square, composed of rough round logs bound together and covered with a load of split and sawn timber, forming altogether a very valuable cargo. The contractor and four other men stood on the raft, each provided with a life belt, which he wore ready for accident, and fastened to the side of the raft lay several coils of stout rope with grappling hooks attached, by which they would be able to anchor by throwing the hooks round some object on the bank.

Notwithstanding these precautions there was considerable danger in navigating the river in some parts, where occurred rapids and rocks, and occasionally as we were informed, a raft would get overturned or broken up, in which case the men in charge would have to swim for their lives or drown unless they had taken the precaution to provide themselves with lifebelts.

We left our horses and most of the impedimenta there, and about mid-day took boat with three of the McClean men to assist at the oars. The boat was a fine one and

carried a light sail, which unfortunately was no use to us, the little wind there was being dead ahead.

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The Wanaka is, I believe, the largest and most beautiful lake in New Zealand. On one side, for nearly the entire length, it was bounded by steep hills, for the greater part clothed with forest and undergrowth crowned by noble promontories and headlands. Above and beyond were seen the mountains receding away to the snow line in their various and changing colours. The opposite side was more homely and less grand in outline, but still very lovely. The low hills were broken by extensive tracts of undulating or flat land, where flocks of sheep or herds of cattle grazed, bordered by sedges and marshes with flocks of wild duck in all the enjoyment of an undisturbed existence.

Looking up the lake to where the mountains seemed to meet, the colouring and grandeur of the scene was sublime. Since I voyaged up the Wanaka I have seen mountain scenery in many other lands, but I cannot call to mind anything which for beauty and grandeur surpasses that by which I was now surrounded. It had, may be, a peculiar wildness of its own not elsewhere to be met with, except in the Himalayas, and no doubt much of the effect is due to the exceeding rarity of the atmosphere, and hence the greater extent of landscape which can be observed at once.

CHAPTER XVII.

EXPLORATION TRIP CONTINUED—WEEKAS—INSPECTION OF NEW COUNTRY —ESCAPE FROM FIRE.

It was some time after dark when we arrived at Wynne's Station, which was situated in a bend behind a promontory, and not observable until close upon it. The owner was absent, but we were received by the overseer, Mr. Brand, and his assistants, two young gentlemen cadets. The run, which was recently taken up, was suited only for cattle which grazed on the extensive flats reaching inwards between the mountain ranges and the undulating hills. The mountain sides were too rough and scrubby for sheep as yet till fires had reduced the wild growth of small brush and induced grass to spread.

The homestead being yet in its infancy, all was crude and rough, but its surroundings were delightful. It stood on a small flat not yet denuded of the original wild growth which lay in heaps half burnt, or in scattered clumps, the cleared portions being partly ploughed up. The flat was enclosed by a semicircle of steep hills covered with rocks and brushwood in the wildest luxuriance, and almost impossible of passage even to pedestrians. The stockyards lay away some distance, and they, with the run generally, were approached by boats, of which three fine ones lay hauled up in front of the homestead. Indeed, a great deal of the work of the station was done by boat, including the fetching of supplies, bringing timber from the forest and firewood from an island in the lake, and visiting remote parts of the run only accessible inland by a rough and circuitous cattle track impracticable for a dray.

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Mr. Brand did not think much of Moorhouse's spec. He had seen the country, but had not been on it, and did not think it good or extensive enough to be worked alone. He offered not only to lend us a fine boat for the remainder of the journey, but to accompany us himself to the forest which was adjacent to our quest, having to convey some stores to his men there. It was arranged that on the third day we would proceed thither, and in the meantime I lent a hand at anything going on, and amused myself sketching, an occupation I was very fond of, and I had already collected a considerable number of views taken on the Rangitata and other places.

We left in the afternoon, intending to camp about ten miles up. We numbered five in all, and the boat was fairly well laden with stores for the forest. The pull was a stiff one and we took no sail, the wind at this season always blowing down the lake. It was some time after dark when we reached our proposed camping place, a narrow strand of white shingle sprinkled with clusters of shrubbery backed with thick underwood, which afforded shelter and firewood. The boat was made fast, and materials for supper and a huge fire were speedily under weigh. We were much pestered here with weekas (woodhens) who carried off most of our food which was not securely covered by night. These birds are the most persistent thieves, nearly as large as a common fowl, of a brownish colour, gamy looking, with long legs and very short wings, the latter only serving to assist them in running, for they cannot fly. They are to be found in every New Zealand bush, and unless travellers take the precaution to place provisions or any articles, edible or not, out of their reach, they will not long remain in ignorance of their proximity. When living in the forest I have frequently amused myself killing these birds in the following manner, while sitting at my camp fire at night. I procured two short sticks, at the end of one I attached a bit of red cloth or rag to be used as a lure. They are the most curious birds in existence, and this together with their thieving propensities is so powerful that when their desires for appropriation are excited they possess little or no fear. I would sit by the fire holding out the red rag, when in a few moments a slight rustle would be heard from the branches. After a little the bird would step boldly into the open firelight stretching his neck and cocking his head knowingly as he approached in a zig-zag way the object of his curiosity and desire.

So soon as he would come sufficiently near, and his attention was taken up with the bright object he hoped to possess, whack would descend the other stick on his head, and his mortal career of theft was at an end. Then I would roast the two drumsticks, having separated them from the body, skinning them, and eating them for supper; they are the only part of the bird fit for food.

The remainder of the body is boiled down for oil, which is invaluable for boots of any kind, making them waterproof and pliable.

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I have frequently killed six or eight weekas in a single evening at my camp fire. I did not, however, eat all the drumsticks.

We were up betimes, and after a hearty breakfast started for our last pull to the head of the lake, which we reached in the forenoon. The heaviest part of the work, however, had yet to come—namely, pulling the boat a mile up the stream which flows into the lake. This was unavoidable, as the land each side was an impassable swamp. For the last half-mile the current was so swift we could make no headway against it with the oars, and the water being only from one to two feet deep, we got out and waded, hauling the boat by hand to the landing place. Here we had to transfer provisions from the boat to our own backs and trudge on foot over nearly two miles of rough and partly swampy ground to the forest where Brand had his hut, in which we intended to camp that night. It was fairly late in the afternoon when we reached the hut, and we were not sorry to relieve ourselves of our burdens and partake of food.

It was a rough camp, and as wild a situation as one could find, and it was a rough-looking lot of men that night who occupied it, in the depth of a black pine forest with the glaring light of a huge fire illuminating the recesses of the overhanging trees and dense underwood, increasing the darkness beyond, with the ominous cry of the mawpawk and laughing jackass only breaking the dead stillness. We were soon rolled in our blankets around the fire, and slept like men who had earned their rest.

The following day we rested and prepared for our excursion into the new country, and expecting to be absent two days took with us enough food for so long. In addition to our blankets we carried each a bag of ship biscuits, some tea, sugar, and cooked mutton, with a small kettle and two tin panakins.

The first day we proceeded nearly five miles up the valley, which was from 1/2 to 3/4 mile wide, much of it swampy and scored by deep-water channels, many of which were now dry, but partly covered or concealed by long tussock roots more or less burnt. On each side were low rugged hills covered with dense scrub, some portions of which had been burnt by fires which had crept up there from lower down the lake. Where the fire had done its work the ground was a foot deep in ashes and charred bits of timber, while studded about, or covered over with burnt debris were innumerable half burnt stumps; altogether it was not a locality one would select for a pleasant walk.

In some few places where rain had washed away the ashes the tussock roots were beginning to sprout, and it was not difficult to see that in course of time there would be an improvement in the land, but there was not much of it on the flats, while the hills would be for years almost impracticable. Besides, it was exceedingly difficult of access and stock would in all probability require to be transported thither by boat.

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We were now walking over country in its pure native wildness; the first human beings, certainly the first civilised ones, who had ever trod upon it. We spent two days exploring as far in every direction as we could go, and as we went we steadily applied the match, setting fire to bush and grass alike, thus making our progress very evident to those in the forest and all down the lake. We were in a fearful state of filth, notwithstanding that we had washed ourselves in the clear stream daily, the ashes got ground into our skins and even the application of fine sand in lieu of soap would not eradicate it, only causing rawness with accompanying smarting. Moorhouse was really to blame for this, for, vain man that he was, he carried a little pocket looking-glass by which we discovered the condition we were in. Had he left the glass behind we would probably have remained black and happy till our return.

On the last day we had a close shave for our lives. We were crossing a narrow bushy point, the upper portion of which had caught a returning fire, and it was coming down upon us with the wind, with a deafening roar and volumes of smoke. Our chance of safety lay in getting into the open and across the water before the fire reached us, and we were nearly, very nearly caught. The bush grew denser as we went on, and was filled with "lawyers," which impeded our progress, so that in our extremity to tear ourselves away we left most of our scanty clothing and somewhat of our skins in their clutches, while a fresh breeze springing up, increased the pace of the terrible fire which came roaring towards us in a wall of flame, sparks and smoke, which had already nearly blinded us, the trees snapping, creaking, and falling behind us like reports of artillery. Singed, torn, and half naked, we just succeeded in escaping being charred as completely as any stump on the hills.

The "lawyer" (so-called) is a creeping, or rather climbing, plant common to the New Zealand bush. It grows in long thread-like tendrils, as thick as whip cord, armed with myriads of sharp hooked thorns turned backwards. The tendrils grow hundreds of feet in length, stretching from branch to branch, and often forming a maze or web extending over a large area. A person getting entangled in their embraces rarely escapes with a whole skin, and never with a whole coat.

We returned the evening of the third day as black as sloes, and with only a few shreds of singed clothes on our backs, thoroughly worn out with hard walking and insufficient sustenance. We remained one day for repairs and then, in company with Brand, had a glorious sail down the lake to Wynne's station.

Our return journey to Christchurch was without incident save one, worth mentioning. This was where we were both nearly drowned crossing the Lindis in a flood.

Moorehouse, I believe, sold his interest in the Wanaka district for a song.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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DEATH OF PARKER—ROYAL MAIL ROBBED BY A CAT—MEET WITH ACCIDENT CROSSING RIVER.

During our absence a sad occurrence took place, which I will record here. A Mr. Parks, a Government surveyor, and well-to-do sheep farmer on the Ashburton, had been engaged during the previous year in making surveys on the Rakia and Ashburton, and on his staff was a young man named Parker. This lad was another instance of the ideas some home people entertain, that for a youngster without intellect, energy, or application sufficient to obtain him entrance to a profession in England, the Colonies are the proper place. In their opinion he must get on there, or at any rate, he will be got rid of. The latter may be true enough, but as regards the former, the proofs are few indeed.

Parker was a weak, good natured, feckless lad, about eighteen or twenty years of age, and the only thing he appeared to be able to make anything of was playing the fiddle. Wherever he went his violin accompanied him. While fiddling he was happy, but it was pitiful to watch him trying to work at or take an interest in any employment which he could neither appreciate nor understand.

The survey party had proceeded up the gorge of the Rakia, and were absent about a fortnight, when Mr. Parks, requiring to send back to his station for some instrument he had forgotten, and Parker being the least useful hand on the survey, he decided to send him. The distance was twenty miles, and the route was across the open plain leading for a part of the way along the river. He was to go on foot, and put up the first night at Grey's station, about half-way.

Between the Camp and Grey's the path led along the bank of the Rakia, which was here very steep, upwards of a hundred feet perpendicularly above the riverbed, and occasionally subject to landslips.

A week passed without the return of Parker, and Mr. Parks, getting concerned for the lad's safety, despatched a messenger for information, when it was found that Parker had not appeared either at Grey's, or his own station, and for another week inquiries were made for him in every direction in vain.

At about the end of the second week from the date of Parker leaving the survey camp, a shepherd of Grey's, happening to descend into the Rakia river bed in search of some wandering sheep, came upon a roll of red blankets lying at the foot of a landslip. Going up, he found it to contain the body of a man half decomposed, and being eaten by rats. Upon the ground alongside was a pocket-book containing writing and a pencil.

The shepherd, taking the pocket-book, returned speedily to Grey's. Upon examination the book was found to contain a diary of five days, written by the unfortunate Parker, before he died of starvation, thirst, and a broken leg, at the foot of the landslip.

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From the entries it appeared that he had been fiddling along (in his usual absent manner, no doubt) very close to the edge of the Rakia bank, when a portion of it gave way under his feet, and he fell sliding and tumbling until he reached the bottom on a bed of shingle, his leg broken, and his body bruised and shattered. He succeeded in loosening the swag of blankets he had strapped on his back, wrapped them round him and lay down, occasionally calling, and always hoping against hope that some one would discover him. It was a vain hope, poor chap—not twice in a year's space was a human being seen on that wild river bed. He lived for five days in the agonies of hunger, thirst and despair, not even a drop of water could he reach, although the river ran within twenty yards of him, and at last death mercifully put an end to his misery.

I now returned to work, continuing at the same time the study of my books, which I kept at the Ashburton, to fit me for the duties of surveyor and contractor. I was deriving a good return from my sheep and could add yearly to their number. During the remainder of the summer and autumn I worked steadily at bush work, hut-building and run-fencing, and when the winter set in I rigged up a hut in the forest, where I lived alone and earned a good return for my time in felling and cutting-up firewood for which I received from the squatters—I think—ten shillings a cord, 9 ft. by 4 ft. by 4 ft. The Ashburton Valley road had been greatly improved, and the weekly mail which hitherto ran between Christchurch and Dunedin was now made bi-weekly, and the stations on the Ashburton and Rangitata gorges arranged for a regular postman on horseback to fetch the mail from the Ashburton immediately on arrival, in lieu of the old plan of having it conveyed from one station to another by private messengers.

I recollect a ridiculous accident which happened to one of these mail carriers, who had been despatched to fetch mails across the plains. I do not think I mentioned that there were numbers of wild cats to be met with all over the country. They were not indigenous, but domestic animals or their descendants gone wild, and with their wild existence they engendered a considerable addition of strength and fierceness. The shepherd's dog was the natural enemy of these animals.

On the occasion to which I refer, the messenger, an old Irish servant of Mr. Rowley's, was riding quietly on one of the station hacks, a horse called "Old Dan," a noted buckjumper in his day. Heavy saddle bags with the posts were suspended on either side, in addition to various packages tied on fore and aft. Suddenly Pat's dog put up a cat and went away in full chase. The plain was quite open, with no trees or shrubs nearer than the river bed, half a mile distant. The cat finding herself hard pressed, and despairing of reaching the river-bed before the dog would catch her, spied old Dan with Paddy and the post thereupon, and conceived

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that her only chance of safety lay in mounting too. No sooner thought than done. She doubled, sprang on old Dan's tail and fastened her claws in his hinder parts. Dan not approving of such treatment, set to bucking. First Pat went off, then the saddle bags and parcels, followed by puss. Old Dan finding himself free, ran for his life, the cat after him, and the dog after the cat, leaving poor Pat on the ground to watch the trio as they disappeared from sight.

[Illustration: PAT AND HIS MAIL-BAG DISLODGED BY A CAT.]

Pat had over ten miles to travel and carry the bags and parcels as best he could, and return the next day for the saddle. The story of how the cat robbed H.M. Mail was long laughed over on the Ashburton, and Paddy was unmercifully chaffed for his part in the performance.

I was busily employed till late in the following autumn finishing the works I had in hand, and lived a portion of the time at Glent hills, Mr. Rowley's hill station, where I had a considerable contract for wire fencing with which Mr. Rowley was dividing up into extensive sections the wide valley in which lay the lakes Emma and Clearwater.

[Illustration: GLENT HILLS STATION.]

During the summer I joined once again in the general mustering, and lived on the mountain sides for days and nights together. It was here I contrived to catch some cold which caused a singing like the bleating of sheep in my right ear, and for which I subjected myself to the very doubtful advice and care of old "Blue Gum Bill," the shepherd who was for the time being my comrade. "Blue Gum" was a "lag," that is, a ticket-of-leave convict, from Australia. One of his hands, I forget which, had been amputated, and in lieu thereof he had affixed a stump of blue gum wood, with an iron hook inserted at the end. As is not unusual in such cases, "Blue Gum" could do more with this iron hook than many men could accomplish with a hand. He was a character in his way, and whatever may have been the cause of his enforced exile from the Old Country many years before, he was now a most exemplary old fellow, for whom I entertained a great respect and liking.

He said he could cure my ear, into which he assured me some small animal had entered, and it would be necessary, in the first place to kill it, when the noise would naturally cease. He made me lie down with my bleating ear uppermost, and proceeded to fill it with as much strong tobacco juice as it would hold. This operation he repeated several times, and appeared greatly disappointed on my complaining that the animal still continued musical. The ear troubled me for a long time, and eventually the hearing became impaired. Whether the fact that I never more than half recovered my hearing in

that ear, and that for many years it has been almost completely deaf, is due to “Blue Gum’s” doctoring or not, is scarcely worth entering into now.

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When the winter had really set in, I started to pay a visit (my last it turned out) to my friends in Mesopotamia. On arriving at the Rangitata I met the wool drays on their return journey from Christchurch, waiting while one of the men was on horseback seeking for a ford, in which occupation he asked my assistance. The river was a little swollen and discoloured, and the course of the main stream had been altered during the flood. While seeking a fording place I unluckily got into a quicksand, and in an instant I was under the mare, while she was plunging on her side in deep water. I had released my feet from the stirrups upon entering, and was free thus far. I had hold of the tether rope round her neck, and presently we were both out, and as I thought safely. I mounted again, and after getting the drays safely over, I rode on to the station. Here, on putting my foot to the ground I found I could not stand, and from a queer feeling about the left knee, it was apparent that I had been kicked while under the plunging mare. For nigh three weeks I was unable to walk, and to this day I feel the effect of that kick.

I was, perforce, obliged now to keep quiet, and was not over-sorry, for the quarters were comfortable, and I was with my friends, and had leisure to read and work. Our evenings by the fire were very enjoyable, and many a story and song went round, or Butler would play while we smoked.

One evening, I recollect, he told us a very remarkable ghost story, the best authenticated, as he said, he had ever heard, and to those who entertain the belief that the spirits of the departed have power to revisit this earth for the accomplishment of any special purpose, the story will be interesting.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GHOST STORY—BENIGHTED IN THE SNOW.

Two young men—we will call them Jones and Smith, for convenience—emigrated to New South Wales. They each possessed sufficient money to start them, as they hoped, as young squatters, and in due time they obtained what they sought.

Jones became the owner of a small cattle ranch fifty miles from Melbourne, while Smith commenced sheep farming in partnership with an experienced runholder, forty miles further inland.

The friends occasionally visited each other, but in those days the settlers were few and months often passed without the cattle rancher seeing his friend or anybody to speak to beside the one man he retained on the station as hutkeeper, stockman, and general factotum.

It was about two years after Jones had settled on his ranch that his friend Smith, requiring to visit Melbourne, decided to take Jones on his way and stop a night with him.

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He left his homestead early and arrived at the ranch late in the afternoon. As he rode near he saw Jones sitting on the stockyard toprail, apparently enjoying an evening pipe. On calling to him Jones jumped down, but instead of coming to meet his friend he ran into the bush (wood) close to the stockyard. Smith, supposing he was playing a joke, dismounted and followed him; but neither hunting nor calling had any effect—Jones was not to be found. Smith, thinking he might be taking some short cut to the hut, which was a little way off, mounted and proceeded thither. Here, again, he was disappointed, and on enquiry from the hutkeeper learned from him that his master had left for Melbourne and England a month previously, and that he—the hutkeeper—was in charge till his return. Smith, not liking the man or his manner, pretended to accept his statement, and said nothing about having just seen his master. After taking some refreshment and a slight rest he proceeded on his way to Melbourne, where on enquiry at hotels and shipping offices he learnt that his friend had not been seen in Melbourne for a long time, and had not taken his passage for England.

He then told his story to a mutual acquaintance, who agreed to return with him and endeavour to discover what was wrong before taking steps. Together they journeyed back, and on coming within sight of the stock yard there was Jones sitting on the rail in his previous position, and, as before, jumped down and ran into the bush.

Smith and his companion now made an extensive examination of the locality, but were unable to discover anything to assist them. They then proceeded to the hut as if they had just arrived from Melbourne, and without mentioning that they had seen his master, got into general conversation with the hutkeeper, but failed to elicit anything beyond what he had previously stated, adding only that he did not expect his employer's return for five or six months.

They remained at the station that night and left early in the morning, apparently for Smith's homestead, but when they had ridden out of sight of the hut they wheeled and returned to Melbourne by another route.

The idea that occupied their minds at this point was that Jones was insane, probably led thereto by his lonely life; that he was wandering about in the bush in the neighbourhood of the hut, which he continued to visit, as they had seen, and that he had, with a madman's acuteness, purposely misled the hutkeeper about his going to England. Smith and his companion feared to mention their suspicions to the hutkeeper, believing that he would not remain alone on the station if he thought that a maniac was about. Seeing Jones a second time, apparently in his usual health, had divested their minds of any suspicion that the hutkeeper had deceived them, or was in any way responsible, and the real facts as they subsequently turned out had not presented themselves to their minds.

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They decided now to place the matter in the hands of the police. There were at that time (and no doubt still are) retained under the Australian police force a number of native trackers, called the "Black Police." These men were a species of human bloodhounds, and could follow a trail by scent or marks indistinguishable by the white man.

On representing the case to the chief of the police, that officer deputed a detective and a couple of constables, with a number of the "Black Police" to accompany Smith and his friend to Jones's ranch. They took a circuitous route, arriving as before at the stockyard without giving information to the hutkeeper, but at the same time directing two men to approach the hut unseen and watch it till further directions.

When the party on this occasion approached the stockyard Jones was not occupying his usual seat on the rails. The black trackers, on being shown the place and their work explained to them, they at once commenced the hunt. One of them presently picked up a rail which was lying near by on which he pointed out certain marks, calling them "white man's hair" and "white man's blood." Then after examining the ground around the stockyard they took up the trail leading into the bush at a point where Jones was seen to go. Working up this for some two hundred yards and pointing out various signs as they proceeded, they arrived at a small slimy lagoon or pond, on the edge of which they picked up something they called "white man's fat." Some of them now dived into the pond, where they discovered the body of Jones, or what remained of it.

The hutkeeper was immediately arrested, but denied any knowledge of the matter. After consigning the body of the unfortunate rancher to a hurried grave, the prisoner was taken to Melbourne, where he was tried for the murder of his master, and when he was convicted and sentenced, he confessed that he had crept up behind Jones when he sat smoking on the stockyard rail and killed him by a blow on the head with the rail picked up by the black trackers, that he then dragged the body to the bush, and threw it into the lagoon. I do not recollect whether Butler told us if the real object of the murder transpired, but the murderer turned out to be a ticket-of-leave convict well known to the police. The peculiarity of the story lay in the fact that the apparition of Jones twice appearing to his friend, and on one occasion to a stranger also, was sworn to in Court during the trial.

I was obliged, owing to business, to leave Mesopotamia in midwinter, and to save a very circuitous journey I decided to travel down the gorge of the Rangitata some twenty-five miles, to the station I referred to once before belonging to Mr. B. Moorehouse. The route lay partly along the mountain slopes overhanging the river, and then diverged across a pass as I had been carefully instructed, but there was no roadway, only a bridle path now pretty sure to be covered with

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snow, and there was no shelter of any kind over the whole distance. Although I had never made the journey, my former experiences gave me every confidence that I would be able to find my way without much trouble, and taking with me only a scrap of bread and meat and a blanket I started as soon as it was light enough to see, certain in my mind that I would reach Moorehouse's early in the afternoon. The first few miles through the run I knew so well I got along without trouble, but further on the difficulties began. It was impossible, owing to the slushy and slippery as well as uneven nature of the ground, to get out of a slow walk, and frequently I had to double on my tracks to negotiate a swampy nullah, and often to dismount and lead my animal over nasty places which he funk'd as much as I did.

By midday I had got over about half the distance, when I made the serious mistake of continuing down the gorge instead of turning over the saddle or pass to which I had been specially directed; but I was misled by sheep walks leading on towards the gorge, while the footpath over the pass was entirely obliterated by snow. I did not discover my mistake until I could go no further; the sheep walks led only to the shelter of some huge precipices, which here approached close to the river on either side, narrowing the stream to a fourth of its usual volume, and confining it in a rocky channel through which it thundered furiously.

The noise was deafening, and the position one of the grandest and wildest I had ever beheld, but I could not afford the time just then for sentiment. It was already getting dark, and I had scarcely a foot to stand on. It seemed indeed, for a moment, that I would not be able to turn my horse, which I was leading, on the narrow path we had now got on to, and if I succeeded in doing that I would have a considerable distance to retrace before reaching safe ground, a false step would send us headlong a couple of hundred feet into a rushing torrent, if we escaped being smashed on the rocks before we got there. I do not think I ever felt so lonely or alarmed, but I had to act, and that quickly. Fortunately my horse was a steady one, well accustomed to climbing over bad places, and no doubt the coming darkness and weird surroundings did not affect him as they did me, and my anxiety after all was then more on his account than my own, for without him I knew I could feel my way back alone.

As I moved to turn, the horse twisted round as if on a pivot and followed me like a cat, indeed he could see the track better than I could, and exhibited little nervousness as he crept along with his nose near the ground, and testing every step before he trusted the weight of his body on it. I was very thankful when we at length emerged from that frowning and dark chasm as it now appeared, with the foaming water away in its black depths and an icy wind blowing directly from it.

But what were we to do now? In the darkness it would be impossible to either go onward or return the way I had come, and the fact that I was benighted, and in a very

nasty position too, now struck me clearly; but there was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job.

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Outside the narrow gorge it was considerably lighter, and I had no difficulty in finding my way a bit up towards the pass, where I fortunately discovered a patch of tall snow grass between the tussocks of which the ground had been partly sheltered from the snow, and near this I stumbled on a quantity of "Irishman" scrub which had recently been burnt and was easily broken down. So far this was lucky, for it secured me the means of making a fire, without which it would have been impossible, I believe, to live till the morning, which was still some sixteen hours distant.

I tethered my horse to a tussock, and selecting a couple of large ones, knotted their tops together, forming thereby a little room about four feet long by two wide. In this I cut and spread some more snow grass and pushed my saddle and blanket to one end. This did not occupy many minutes, and now I had to break down and collect firewood to last me during the night. When all was done I felt terribly hungry, the little bit of food I had brought with me I had eaten early in the day, and the fact that I had not a morsel left increased my longing for it. Fortunately I had a supply of tobacco and a box of wax vestas, and I smoked continuously. I dared not attempt to lie down to sleep, for I had not covering enough to keep me warm, and indeed I felt no desire for sleep. I was too much concerned about the night; if heavy snow fell I would find it very difficult to move, even when daylight appeared, and it was now falling in a half-hearted sort of way. My poor horse stood as near the fire as he could, without any food, and shivering, and I was constantly standing up and clapping my arms and stamping my feet if the fire got low, then, when a bit warmed, I would crouch inside my den and sometimes I dozed, only to waken up from sheer cold and resume my exercise. After some hours I had the satisfaction to notice that the snow had ceased falling, and a brighter night, with frost, had set in. This was pleasant, as the probability of being snowed up was no longer to be apprehended, but the biting cold was terrible, and I knew that if I succumbed to sleep, I would be frost-bitten.

I scarcely know how I got through the night; one never does. I must have had periods of unconsciousness, and the heat emanating from the hot ashes, and what fire I was able to keep going, saved me. Had it not been for that, I could not have survived, and it was a piece of extraordinary luck my lighting on a patch of snow grass and scrub in that wild and desolate pass.

How I longed for daylight may be imagined, and the first tinge of light I noticed on the horizon was a welcome sight indeed. My firewood was long since burnt away, but the ashes were yet warm, and I thrust in my hands till I revived some life into them, and was able to collect more brushwood which I carried over, and had a rousing fire, and was enabled to get the saddle on to my horse. I was now undecided whether to retrace my steps to Mesopotamia or endeavour

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to find my way to Moorehouse's; on the latter, however, I decided, as I judged I was midway between the two, and started to explore the pass, leading my horse. The exercise revived us both, and I succeeded in finding the trail I needed. The journey was simple after what I had experienced on the other side, and I had the satisfaction of meeting one of Moorehouse's shepherds before the day was much older, who accompanied me to the station, and who would scarcely believe that I had passed the night where I did.

I found Mr. and Mrs. Ben Moorehouse at home, and was, as always, most hospitably received, and soon found myself with a change of kit, seated before an excellent meal, to which after thirty hours fasting I did ample justice. After that I slept till morning.

On my arrival at Christchurch an offer was made to me to join an expedition to the Fiji Islands, just then creating some interest as a possible place for colonists. The previous year some explorer had brought from thence a ship load of curiosities, including war clubs and spears of hard polished and carved wood, mats and numerous other articles in use among the cannibal tribes, and an exhibition of them was held in the Town Hall. I now learnt that an acquaintance of mine, a Mr. Gibson, had chartered a small vessel called the "Ocean Queen," 40 tons burthen, and intended to sail in her, with his young wife, for the Fiji Islands. Also that four other men had joined him in the enterprise. I knew Gibson to be a plucky fellow, but when it transpired that neither he nor the others possessed money beyond what the voyage would cost them, and that what they intended to do when they arrived at the Fiji Islands was to be left to chance, the proposed expedition assumed a different complexion. The Judge denounced it as sheer madness, specially for a man to take his wife to such a place. It was true that some missionaries had settlements there, but these are generally safe, as the savages, as a rule, fear and respect the missionaries of the Great Spirit, be it that of the white man or the black, and they know that the missionaries mean no harm to them or their possessions, but it would be very different in the case of a number of white men arriving unprotected in a small boat with the intention of settling on their land. However, nothing would dissuade Gibson and his party. Whether the "Ocean Queen" arrived at the Fiji Islands was never known. Certainly she and the party who sailed in her were never again heard of.

CHAPTER XX.

DECIDE TO GO TO INDIA—VISIT MELBOURNE, ETC.

For the following six months I kept steadily to work. I was gradually adding to my stock of sheep, and had nothing occurred to disturb me I should doubtless have continued at work and in time have become a veritable squatter. I was able to command constant

employment in any colonial capacity, and had been more than once offered the overseership of a run, but the old distaste for the life of a sheep-farmer was as strong as ever.

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It was in the month of May, 1864, when I received a letter from my brother in Bombay, saying that there were excellent openings in the engineering line there, to which he had interest enough to help me, and he pressed me to go to Bombay and try my luck. My brother was then representative of a large mercantile firm at Bombay.

I think neither he nor the others at home had ever divested themselves of the idea that I was not succeeding, and never would succeed in New Zealand, because I had not at once made a fortune out of nothing, or discovered gold for the picking up. Of course, they were not right. I had, considering my youth and ignorance on going out to New Zealand, done admirably. It was necessary to undergo a term of probation and education for the work of a sheep-farmer or any other in the Colony, and this I had not only accomplished, but I had been, and was, making money and a living, and had fair prospects before me should I decide to adopt the life of a squatter permanently. I consulted my friends and some of them were for following my brother's advice, but something within myself kept prompting me in the same direction, and I began to feel more and more that I had mistaken my vocation, and that I was bound to try before it would be too late to get into the swing of the more congenial employment for which I was longing.

The wandering spirit, too, mastered me once more, and I wished now to see India and all I had heard and read of that wonderful land, as I had originally desired to see New Zealand.

I did not decide hastily. I was aware that my leaving New Zealand now would to some extent throw me back, if at any time in the future I decided to return, but I was still very young, not yet 22, and a year or two would make very little difference, and I knew that if I returned to New Zealand I could always command immediate employment. I decided at length to see India at any rate, and I wrote to my brother to that effect.

The disposal of my sheep, horses, and other small possessions, was soon accomplished, and one fine morning in May 1864, I found myself at Port Lyttelton, accompanied by a number of old chums who had come to see me off by the steamboat to Dunedin, from whence I was to proceed by mail to Melbourne, and from thence to Bombay by the P. and O.

I felt sad indeed to look my last (it might be for ever) on the shores of Canterbury, where I had passed five happy years, endeared to me all the more on account of the varied and adventurous life I had led, and the good friends and companions I was leaving behind, and I leaned on the bulwarks of the little steamer as we passed out of the lovely bay and saw the shepherd's hut, high up on the cliff, where we wanderers from the ship five years before had been entertained by the Scotch housewife to our first New Zealand dinner, then on to where we visited the whalers and the head to which we rowed in the Captain's gig. The whole scene arose before me afresh; where were we all scattered to? I longed to do it all over again, and be with the old mates; and here I

was, a lonely wanderer once more, leaving all to go away to begin a new life in a strange land. It was not easy, but I tried hard to think I was doing right.

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By the time we passed out of the Heads it had grown dark, and my reverie was broken by the supper bell, and Burton (a friend who was going to Australia on a pleasure trip) telling me to rouse up, have some food, and make myself pleasant. How carefully I followed his advice during the next six weeks!

We reached Dunedin the following evening and had to remain there for a few days for the departure of the Melbourne mail boat. This time Burton and I contrived to spend very pleasantly. He was a wealthy young squatter, and I had a good sum of money with me, in fact, I was becoming a bit reckless; but I could not have foreseen that an accident would retain me far longer on the voyage to India than I supposed, and I saw little harm in enjoying myself with the money I had earned and saved. What kind of guardian angel was in charge of me from this time I cannot say, but he must have been an excessively pleasant and jolly one, for under his guidance I enjoyed a most delightful time.

Dunedin had improved marvellously since I had last seen it; it was already a town of considerable pretensions and possessed a theatre and several good hotels. On the fourth day we left for Melbourne in the s.s. "Alhambra," and now I believed that I had done with New Zealand for good and all, but I was mistaken.

After three days at sea we encountered south of Tasmania a terrific gale during which the shaft of the screw was broken, and the Captain had no resource but to return to Dunedin under sail, an operation which occupied seven days, to the great disgust of all on board.

At Dunedin we were again delayed for three days till another boat started which took us to Melbourne.

The voyage was pleasant and we steamed in nearly a calm sea close along the Tasmanian coast and through the Bass Straits, sighting land all the way from thence. Tasmania presented quite an English appearance after New Zealand, and we could trace the neat towns and well-wooded country dotted with homesteads and farms.

Melbourne possesses a very fine and well protected harbour, but the surroundings sadly lacked the native beauty of New Zealand. The countries present very different aspects to the new-comer; while New Zealand can boast of some of the wildest and grandest scenery in the world, that of New South Wales is almost the reverse, being homely and of a natural park-like appearance, which, although beautiful in a certain sense, is monotonous after the wild contrasts of plains and mountain, forests and rivers of New Zealand.

Melbourne proper lay some five miles from the port, which then possessed a fine wooden pier, alongside of which and in the adjacent roadstead, lay many fine merchant vessels and steamers awaiting their cargoes of wool, *etc.* The port and city were

connected by a railway, the first constructed in Australia, and almost parallel with it wound the River Yarrow, so named from its usually muddy or yellow colour.

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We proceeded to Melbourne by rail and put up at one of the principal hotels. Here we discovered that our accident had caused us to miss the China mail boat which was to have conveyed us to Point de Galle, and I would now have almost a whole month to remain at Melbourne. This news was I fear more welcome than otherwise. I wished to see something of Melbourne, and here was the opportunity forced upon me, so I decided to make the very most of my time.

Melbourne, even at this period, was a considerable city, handsome and well laid out on the most approved modern principles, with straight and spacious streets and squares, and possessing throughout architecture equal to that of the best modern English towns, in addition to some really magnificent public buildings. A considerable portion of the city stood on a gentle slope, and along many of the streets between the roadway and the footpaths, ran continuous streams of pure spring water, over which, when in flood, foot passengers were taken by carriage.

Along the banks of the Yarrow were lovely gardens and extensive parks, and many a pleasant row I had under the shade of the huge pine and gum trees. The river frequently overflowed its banks and submerged the low-lying country between the city and the port, at which times I have travelled by train while the rails were under water. Some of the suburbs and watering places around Melbourne, such as St. Kilda, were exceedingly picturesque.

A railway was just then opened from Melbourne to Ballarat, the scene of the famous gold diggings to which Melbourne is primarily indebted for her present magnificence and prosperity. Extensive quartz crushing by machinery was then being carried out, and a visit to the locality was most interesting. We made many excursions up country, and altogether thoroughly enjoyed our time. So much so indeed that had another accident detained me longer I would not have felt any regret.

Early in August I started by the P. and O. mail boat for Ceylon, with mutual regrets on Burton's part and on my own that our pleasant holiday was ended. I never met Burton again.

At King George's Sound, Northern Australia, was a small coaling station, possessing only a score or so of houses or stores, and one hotel so-called. On arrival we went on shore and were immediately greeted by a number of the most wretched specimens of humanity I had yet seen. They were diminutive in stature, perfectly naked with the exception of a dirty rag of blanket twisted about the shoulders and waist, out of the folds of which issued a wreath of smoke from the fire stick without which the Australian aboriginal rarely leaves his or her wigwam. Their hair was plastered down on the head with thick ochre paint, and they were disgustingly filthy and altogether unpleasant to look at. They invariably asked for "sixpence," which amount seemed to represent the sum of their earthly happiness, and with most of them was the only word of English they could speak.

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The men all carried boomerangs, a flat curved stick which they threw for our edification, and sixpences, very scientifically, and contrived to dispose of a good many to the passengers. We saw with them also some skins of that rare and handsome bird the emu, now I believe becoming very scarce.

A most remarkable thing about King George's Sound is the utter waste and wildness of the country, not a sign of life or cultivation. The few natives who inhabit this wild region subsist principally on roots and such wild fruits as are obtainable, or on birds which they can kill with their boomerangs. They are very little, if at all, superior to the lower animals, and I believe there is no institution of marriage or acknowledgment of domestic relations among them.

One thing, however, there was as a set off against all the rest—namely, the extraordinary wealth of flowers which grew thickly amongst the thousand varieties of rare ferns all over the land. What would be held as the most delicate hothouse plants in England here formed a brilliant carpet in their wild luxuriance. We literally walked knee deep in exotics.

We carried large bundles of them on board, when we left that night after a stay of only twelve hours.

Point de Galle was reached on the twelfth day, and here the mail steamer from Calcutta by which I was to proceed to Bombay had already arrived. A few of us went on shore with small caps on our heads and some with cabbage tree hats, but we speedily discovered they would not do. The heat on shore was intense, a muggy, stifling heat, which to us Australians was killing. We were guided to the Bazaar, and introduced to several hotels by some five score natives, whose numbers increased as we proceeded, and were augmented by numerous sellers of sun toppee, pugarees, *etc.* We were speedily provided each with a tropical headpiece with a long tail of white muslin therefrom which hung down the back.

After a substantial "tiffin" in a large shady room, under the swaying punkah (the first I had seen), it was proposed by some of our sable friends that we should visit the tea gardens, one of the lions of Galle, and I, forgetting all about the boat, was on the point of joining the movement, having taken a seat in the conveyance for the purpose, when my good angel, by some means I have now forgotten, informed me that the steamer for Bombay would start in ten minutes.

I jumped from the carriage and ran full speed with a crowd of attendant blacks in full cry at my heels, shot into the first boat I came to and reached the steamer as the screw commenced to turn.

In four days we arrived at Bombay, where, in due course, I entered State Service, and where I remained for thirty-five years, but my life and experiences there may possibly form the subject of another story.

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Printed by J.G. HAMMOND and Co., Ltd., 32-36, Fleet Lane, London, E.C.