

Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia — Complete eBook

Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia — Complete by Charles Sturt

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PRELIMINARY CHAPTER

Purpose of this Chapter—Name of Australia—Impressions of its early Visitors—Character of the Australian rivers—Author's first view of Port Jackson—Extent of the Colony of New South Wales—its rapid advances in prosperity—Erroneous impressions—Commercial importance of Sydney—Growth of fine wool—Mr. M'Arthur's meritorious exertions—Whale-fishery—Other exports—Geographical features—Causes of the large proportion of bad soil—Connection between the geology and vegetation—Geological features—Character of the soil connected with the geological formation—County of Cumberland—Country westward of the Blue Mountains—Disadvantages of the remote settlers—Character of the Eastern coast—Rich tracts in the interior—Periodical droughts—The seasons apparently affected by the interior marshes—Temperature—Fruits—Emigrants: Causes of their success or failure—Moral disadvantages—System of emigration recommended—Hints to emigrants—Progress of inland discovery—Expeditions across the Blue Mountains—Discoveries of Mr. Evans, Mr. Oxley, and others—Conjectures respecting the interior.

PURPOSE OF THIS PRELIMINARY CHAPTER.

When I first determined on committing to the press a detailed account of the two expeditions, which I conducted into the interior of the Australian continent, pursuant to the orders of Lieutenant General Darling, the late Governor of the Colony of New South Wales, it was simply with a view of laying their results before the geographical world, and of correcting the opinions that prevailed with regard to the unexplored country to the westward of the Blue Mountains. I did not feel myself equal either to the task or the responsibility of venturing any remarks on the Colony of New South Wales itself. I had had little time for inquiry, amidst the various duties that fell to my lot in the ordinary routine of the service to which I belonged, when unemployed by the Colonial Government in the prosecution of inland discoveries. My observations had been in a great measure confined to those points which curiosity, or a desire of personal information, had prompted me to investigate. I did not, therefore, venture to flatter myself that I had collected materials of sufficient importance on general topics to enable me to write for the information of others. Since my return to England, however, I have been strenuously urged to give a short description of the colony before entering upon my personal narrative; and I have conversed with so many individuals whose ideas of Australia are totally at variance with its actual state, that I am encouraged to indulge the hope that my observations, desultory as they are, may be of some interest to the public. I am strengthened in this hope by the consideration that some kind friends have enabled me to add much valuable matter to that which I had myself collected. It is not my intention,

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however, to enter at any length on the commercial or agricultural interests of New South Wales. It may be necessary for me to touch lightly on those important subjects, but it is my wish to connect this preliminary chapter, as much as possible with the subjects treated of in the body of the work, and chiefly to notice the physical structure, the soil, climate, and productions of the colony, in order to convey to the reader general information on these points, before I lead him into the remote interior.

Name of Australia.

It may be worthy of remark that the name "Australia," has of late years been affixed to that extensive tract of land which Great Britain possesses in the Southern Seas, and which, having been a discovery of the early Dutch navigators, was previously termed "New Holland." The change of name was, I believe, introduced by the celebrated French geographer, Malte Brun, who, in his division of the globe, gave the appellation of Austral Asia and Polynesia to the new discovered lands in the southern ocean; in which division he meant to include the numerous insular groups scattered over the Pacific.

Impressions of its early visitors.

Australia is properly speaking an island, but it is so much larger than every other island on the face of the globe, that it is classed as a continent in order to convey to the mind a just idea of its magnitude. Stretching from the 115th to the 153rd degree of east longitude, and from the 10th to the 37th of south latitude, it averages 2700 miles in length by 1800 in breadth; and balanced, as it were, upon the tropic of that hemisphere in which it is situated, it receives the fiery heat of the equator at one extremity, while it enjoys the refreshing coolness of the temperate zone at the other. On a first view we should be led to expect that this extensive tract of land possessed more than ordinary advantages; that its rivers would be in proportion to its size; and that it would abound in the richest productions of the inter-tropical and temperate regions. Such, indeed, was the impression of those who first touched upon its southern shores, but who remained no longer than to be dazzled by the splendour and variety of its botanical productions, and to enjoy for a few days the delightful mildness of its climate. But the very spot which had appeared to Captain Cook and Sir Joseph Banks an earthly paradise, was abandoned by the early settlers as unfit for occupation; nor has the country generally been found to realize the sanguine expectations of those distinguished individuals, so far as it has hitherto been explored.

Character of Australian rivers.

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Rivers which have the widest mouths or the most practicable entrances, are, in Europe or America, usually of impetuous current, or else contain such a body of water as to bear down all opposition to their free course; whilst on the other hand, rivers whose force is expended ere they reach the sea, have almost invariably a bar at their embouchure, or where they mingle their waters with those of the ocean. This last feature unfortunately appears to characterise all rivers of Australia, or such of them at least as are sufficiently known to us. Falling rapidly from the mountains in which they originate into a level and extremely depressed country; having weak and inconsiderable sources, and being almost wholly unaided by tributaries of any kind; they naturally fail before they reach the coast, and exhaust themselves in marshes or lakes or reach it so weakened as to be unable to preserve clear or navigable months, or to remove the sand banks that the tides throw up before them. On the other hand the productions of this singular region seem to be peculiar to it, and unlike those of any other part of the world; nor have any indigenous fruits of any value as yet been found either in its forests or on its plains.

He who has never looked on any other than the well-cultured fields of England, can have little idea of a country that Nature has covered with an interminable forest. Still less can he estimate the feelings with which the adventurer approaches a shore that has never (or perhaps only lately) been trodden by civilized man.

First view of port Jackson.

It was with feelings peculiar to the occasion, that I gazed for the first time on the bold cliffs at the entrance of Port Jackson, as our vessel neared them, and speculated on the probable character of the landscape they hid; and I am free to confess, that I did not anticipate anything equal to the scene which presented itself both to my sight and my judgment, as we sailed up the noble and extensive basin we had entered, towards the seat of government. A single glance was sufficient to tell me that the hills upon the southern shore of the port, the outlines of which were broken by houses and spires, must once have been covered with the same dense and gloomy wood which abounded every where else. The contrast was indeed very great—the improvement singularly striking. The labour and patience required, and the difficulties which the first settlers encountered effecting these improvements, must have been incalculable. But their success has been complete: it is the very triumph of human skill and industry over Nature herself. The cornfield and the orchard have supplanted the wild grass and the brush; a flourishing town stands over the ruins of the forest; the lowing of herds has succeeded the wild whoop of the savage; and the stillness of that once desert shore is now broken by the sound of the bugle and the busy hum of commerce.

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Extent of new south Wales and divisions of the colony.

The Colony of New South Wales is situated upon the eastern coast of Australia; and the districts within which land has been granted to settlers, extends from the 36th parallel of latitude to the 32nd, that is say, from the Moroyo River to the south of Sydney on the one hand, and to the Manning River on the other, including Wellington Valley within its limits to the westward. Thus it will appear that the boundaries of the located parts of the colony have been considerably enlarged, and some fine districts of country included within them. In consequence of its extent and increasing population, it has been found convenient to divide it into counties, parishes, and townships; and indeed, every measure of the Colonial Government of late years, has had for its object to assimilate its internal arrangements as nearly as possible, to those of the mother country. Whether we are to attribute the present flourishing state of the colony to the beneficial influence of that system of government which has been exercised over it for the last seven years it is not for me to say. That the prosperity of a country depends, however, in a great measure, on the wisdom of its legislature, is as undoubted, as that within the period I have mentioned the colony of N. S. Wales has risen unprecedentedly in importance and in wealth, and has advanced to a state of improvement at which it could not have arrived had its energies been cramped or its interests neglected.

Its advances in prosperity.

There is a period in the history of every country, during which it will appear to have been more prosperous than at any other. I allude not to the period of great martial achievements, should any such adorn its pages, but to that in which the enterprise of its merchants was roused into action, and when all classes of its community seem to have put forth their strength towards the attainment of wealth and power.

Erroneous impressions.

In this eventful period the colony of New South Wales is already far advanced. The conduct of its merchants is marked by the boldest speculations and the most gigantic projects. Their storehouses are built on the most magnificent scale, and with the best and most substantial materials. Few persons in England have even a remote idea of its present flourishing condition, or of the improvements that are daily taking place both in its commerce and in its agriculture. I am aware that many object to it as a place of residence, and I can easily enter into their feelings from the recollection of what my own were before I visited it. I cannot but remark, however, that I found my prejudices had arisen from a natural objection to the character of a part of its population; from the circumstance of its being a penal colony, and from my total ignorance

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of its actual state, and not from any substantial or permanent cause. On the contrary I speedily became convinced of the exaggerated nature of the reports I had heard in England, on some of the points just adverted to; nor did any thing fall under my observation during a residence in it of more than six years to justify the opinion I had been previously led to entertain of it. I embarked for New South Wales, with strong prejudices against it: I left it with strong feelings in its favour, and with a deep feeling of interest in its prosperity. It is a pleasing task to me, therefore, to write of it thus, and to have it in my power to contribute to the removal of any erroneous impressions with regard to its condition at the present moment.

Commercial importance of Sydney.

I have already remarked, that I was not prepared for the scene that met my view when I first saw Sydney. The fact was, I had not pictured to myself; nor conceived from any thing that I had ever read or heard in England, that so extensive a town could have been reared in that remote region, in so brief a period as that which had elapsed since its foundation. It is not, however, a distant or cursory glance that will give the observer a just idea of the mercantile importance of this busy capital. In order to form an accurate estimate of it, he should take a boat and proceed from Sydney Cove to Darling Harbour. He would then be satisfied, that it is not upon the first alone that Australian commerce has raised its storehouse and wharfs, but that the whole extent of the eastern shore of the last more capacious basin, is equally crowded with warehouses, stores, dockyards, mills, and wharfs, the appearance and solidity of which would do credit even to Liverpool. Where, thirty years ago, the people flocked to the beach to hail an arrival, it is not now unusual to see from thirty to forty vessels riding at anchor at one time, collected there from every quarter of the globe. In 1832, one hundred and fifty vessels entered the harbour of Port Jackson, from foreign parts, the amount of their tonnage being 31,259 tons.

The increasing importance of Sydney must in some measure be attributed to the flourishing condition of the colony itself, to the industry of its farmers, to the successful enterprise of its merchants, and to particular local causes. It is foreign to my purpose, however, to enter largely into an investigation of these important points. To do so would require more space than I can afford for the purpose, and might justly be considered as irrelevant in a work of this kind. Without attempting any lengthened detail, it may be considered sufficient if I endeavour merely to point out the principal causes of the present prosperity (and, as they may very probably prove) of the eventual progress of our great southern colony to power and independence.

Staple of the Australian colonies.

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The staple of our Australian colonies, but more particularly of New South Wales, the climate and the soil of which are peculiarly suited to its production,—is fine wool. There can be no doubt that the growth of this article has mainly contributed to the prosperity of the above mentioned colony and of Van Diemen's Land.

At the close of the last century, wool was imported into England from Spain and Germany only, and but a few years previously from Spain alone. Indeed, long after its introduction from the latter country, German wool, obtained but little consideration in the London market; and in like manner, it may be presumed that many years will not have elapsed before the increased importation of wool from our own possessions in the southern hemisphere, will render us, in respect to this commodity, independent of every other part of the world. The great improvements in modern navigation are such, that the expense of sending the fleece to market from New South Wales is less than from any part of Europe. The charges for instance on Spanish and German wool, are from fourpence to fourpence three farthings per pound; whereas the entire charge, after shipment from New South Wales, and Van Diemen's Land, does not exceed threepence three farthings,—and in this the dock and landing charges, freight, insurance, brokerage, and commission, are included.

Growth of fine wool. Mr. M'ARTHUR'S exertions.

As some particulars respecting the introduction of this source of national wealth into Australia may prove interesting to the public, I have put together the following details of it, upon the authenticity of which they may rely. The person who foresaw the advantage to be derived from the growth of fine wool in New South Wales, and who commenced the culture of it in that colony, was Mr. John M'Arthur. So far back, I believe, as the year 1793, not long after the establishment of the first settlement at Sydney, this gentleman commenced sheep-farming, and about two years afterwards he obtained a ram and two ewes from Captain Kent, of the royal navy, who had brought them, with some other stock for the supply of the settlement, from the Cape of Good Hope, to which place a flock of these sheep had been originally sent by the Dutch government. Sensible of the importance of the acquisition, Mr. M'Arthur began to cross his coarse-fleeced sheep with Merino blood; and, proceeding upon a system, he effected a considerable improvement in the course of a few years. So prolific was the mixed breed, that in ten years, a flock which originally consisted of not more than seventy Bengal sheep, had increased in number to 4,000 head, although the wethers had been killed as they became fit for slaughter. It appears, however, that as the sheep approached to greater purity of blood, their extreme fecundity diminished.

To rear Merino flocks.

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In 1803, Mr. M'Arthur revisited England; and there happening at the time to be a committee of manufacturers in London from the clothing districts, he exhibited before them samples of his wool, which were so much approved, that the committee represented to their constituents the advantages which would result from the growth of fine wool, in one of the southern dependencies of the empire. In consequence of this a memorial was transmitted to His Majesty's government, and Mr. M'Arthur's plans having been investigated by a Privy Council, at which he was present, they were recommended to the government as worthy of its protection. With such encouragement Mr. M'Arthur purchased two ewes and three rams, from the Merino flock of His Majesty King George the Third. He embarked with them on his return to New South Wales in 1806, on board a vessel named by him "the Argo," in reference to the golden treasure with which she was freighted. On reaching the colony he removed his sheep to a grant of land which the Home Government had directed he should receive in the Cow Pastures. To commemorate the transaction, and to transmit to a grateful posterity the recollection of the nobleman who then presided over the colonies, the estate, together with the district in which it is situated, was honoured by the name of Camden.

Export of wool to England.

Since that time the value of New South Wales wool has been constantly on the increase, and the colony are indebted to Mr. M'Arthur for the possession of an exportable commodity which has contributed very materially to its present wealth and importance. Such general attention is now paid to this interesting branch of rural economy, that the importation of wool into England from our Australian colonies, amounted, in 1832, to 10,633 bales, or 2,500,000 lbs. It has been sold at as high a price as 10s. per lb.; but the average price of wool of the best flocks vary from 1s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. at the present moment. The number of sheep in New South Wales alone was calculated in the last census at 536,891 head. The ordinary profits on this kind of stock may be extracted from the Table given in the Appendix to the first volume of this work.

Whale fishery.

Among the various speculations undertaken by the merchants of Sydney, there is not one into which they have entered with so much spirit as in the South Sea Fishery. The local situation of Port Jackson gives them an advantage over the English and the American merchants, since the distance of both these from the field of their gains, must necessarily impede them greatly; whereas the ships that leave Sydney on a whaling excursion, arrive without loss of time upon their ground, and return either for fresh supplies or to repair damages with equal facility. The spirit with which the colonial youth have engaged in this adventurous and hardy service, is highly to their credit. The profits arising from it may not be (indeed I have every reason to think are not) so great as might be supposed, or such as might reasonably be expected; but the extensive scale on which it is conducted, speaks equally for the energy and perseverance of the parties concerned, in the prosecution of their commercial enterprises. It has enabled them to

equip a creditable colonial marine, and given great importance to their mercantile interests in the mother country.

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In the year 1831, the quantity of sperm and black oil, the produce of the fisheries exported from New South Wales, amounted to 2,307 tons, and was estimated, together with skins and whalebone, to be worth 107,971 pounds sterling. The gross amount of all other exports during that year, did not exceed 107,697 pounds sterling. Of these exports, the following were the most considerable:

Timber 7,410 pounds
Butter and Cheese 2,376
Mimosa bark 40
Hides 7,333
Horses 7,302
Salt provisions 5,184
Wool 66,112

The above is exclusive of 61,000 pounds value of British manufactures re-exported to the various ports and islands in the Southern Seas.

Other exports.

In this scale, moreover, tobacco is not mentioned; but that plant is now raised for the supply of every private establishment, and will assuredly form an article of export, as soon as its manufacture shall be well understood. Neither can it be doubted but that the vine and the olive will, in a short time, be abundantly cultivated; and that a greater knowledge of the climate and soil of the more northern parts of the colony, will lead to the introduction of fresh sources of wealth.

Geographical features.

Having taken this hasty review of the commercial interests of the colony, we may now turn to a brief examination of its internal structure and principal natural features.

I have already given a cursory sketch of the geographical features of the whole continent. Of the vast area which its coasts embrace, the east part alone has been fully explored.

A range of hills runs along the eastern coast, from north to south, which, in different quarters, vary in their distance from the sea; at one place approaching it pretty nearly, at another, receding from it to a distance of forty miles. It is a singular fact, that there is no pass or break in these mountains, by which any of the rivers of the interior can escape in an easterly direction. Their spine is unbroken. The consequence is, that there is a complete division of the eastern and western waters, and that streams, the heads of which are close to each other, flow away in opposite directions; the one to pursue a short course to the sea; the other to fall into a level and depressed interior, the character of which will be noticed in its proper place.

Great proportion of bad soil.

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The proportion of bad soil to that which is good in New South Wales, is certainly very great: I mean the proportion of inferior soil to such as is fit for the higher purposes of agriculture. Mr. Dawson, the late superintendent of the Australian Agricultural Company's possessions, has observed, as a singular fact, that the best soil generally prevails on the summits of the hills, more especially where they are at all level. He accounts for so unusual a circumstance by the fact, that elevated positions are less subject to the effects of fire or floods than their valleys or flanks, and attributes the general want of vegetable mould over the colony chiefly to the ravages of the former element, whereby the growth of underwood, so favourable in other countries to the formation of soil, is wholly prevented. Undoubtedly this is a principal cause for the deficiency in question. There is no part of the world in which fires create such havoc as in New South Wales and indeed in Australia generally. The climate, on the one hand, which dries up vegetation, and the wandering habits of the natives on the other, which induce them to clear the country before them by conflagration, operate equally against the growth of timber and underwood.

Cause of this.

But there is another circumstance that appears to have escaped Mr. Dawson's observation; which is the actual property of the trees themselves, as to the quantity of vegetable matter they produce in decay. Being a military man, I cannot be supposed to have devoted much of my time to agricultural pursuits; but it has been obvious to me, as it must have been to many others, that in New South Wales, the fall of leaves and the decay of timber, so far from adding to the richness of its soil, actually destroy minor vegetation. This fact was brought more home to me in consequence of its having been my lot to spend some months upon Norfolk Island, a distant penal settlement attached to the Government of Sydney. There the abundance of vegetable decay was as remarkable as the want of it on the Australian Continent. I have frequently sunk up to my knees in a bed of leaves when walking through its woods; and, often when I placed my foot on what appeared externally to be the solid trunk of a tree, I have found it yield to the pressure, in consequence of its decomposition into absolute rottenness. But such is not the case in New South Wales. There, no such accumulations of vegetable matter are to be met with; but where the loftiest tree of the forest falls to the ground, its figure and length are marked out by the total want of vegetation within a certain distance of it, and a small elevation of earth, resembling more the refuse or scoria of burnt bricks than any thing else, is all that ultimately remains of the immense body which time or accident had prostrated. Thus it would appear, that it is not less to the character of its woods than to the ravages of fire that New South Wales owes its general sterility.

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Connection between the geology and vegetation.

Whilst prosecuting my researches in the interior of the colony, I could not but be struck with the apparent connection between its geology and vegetation; so strong, indeed, was this connection, that I had little difficulty, after a short experience, in judging of the rock that formed the basis of the country over which I was travelling, from the kind of tree or herbage that flourished in the soil above it. The eucalyptus pulv., a species of eucalyptus having a glaucous-coloured leaf, of dwarfish habits and growing mostly in scrub, betrayed the sandstone formation, wherever it existed, This was the case in many parts of the County of Cumberland, in some parts of Wombat Brush, at the two passes on the great south road, over a great extent of country to the N.W. of Yass Plains, and at Blackheath on the summit of the Blue Mountains. On the other hand, those open grassy and park-like tracts, of which so much has been said, characterise the secondary ranges of granite and porphyry. The trees most usual on these tracts, were the box, an unnamed species of eucalyptus, and the grass chiefly of that kind, called the oat or forest grass, which grows in tufts at considerable distances from each other, and which generally affords good pasturage. On the richer grounds the angophora lanceolata, and the eucalyptus mammifera more frequently point out the quality of the soil on which they grow. The first are abundant on the alluvial flats of the Nepean, the Hawkesbury and the Hunter; the latter on the limestone formation of Wellington Valley and in the better portions of Argyle; whilst the cupressus calytris seems to occupy sandy ridges with the casuarina. It was impossible that these broad features should have escaped observation: it was naturally inferred from this, that the trees of New South Wales are gregarious; and in fact they may, in a great measure, be considered so. The strong line that occasionally separates different species, and the sudden manner in which several species are lost at one point, to re-appear at another more distant, without any visible cause for the break that has taken place, will furnish a number of interesting facts in the botany of New South Wales.

It was observed both on the Macquarie river and the Morumbidgee, that the casuarinae ceased at a particular point. On the Macquarie particularly, these trees which had often excited our admiration from Wellington Valley downwards, ceased to occupy its banks below the cataract, nor were they again noticed until we arrived on the banks of the Castlereagh. The blue-gum trees, again, were never observed to extend beyond the secondary embankments of the rivers, occupying that ground alone which was subject to flood and covered with reeds. These trees waved over the marshes of the Macquarie, but were not observed to the westward of them for many miles; yet they re-appeared upon

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the banks of New-Year's Creek as suddenly as they had disappeared after we left the marshes, and grew along the line of the Darling to unusual size. But it is remarkable, that, even in the midst of the marshes, the blue-gum trees were strictly confined to the immediate flooded spaces on which the reeds prevailed, or to the very beds of the water-courses. Where the ground was elevated, or out of the reach of flood, the box (unnamed) alone occupied it; and, though the branches of these trees might be interwoven together, the one never left its wet and reedy bed, the other never descended from its more elevated position. The same singular distinction marked the acacia pendula, when it ceased to cover the interior plains of light earth, and was succeeded by another shrub of the same species. It continued to the banks of New-Year's Creek, a part of which it thickly lined. To the westward of the creek, another species of acacia was remarked for the first time. Both shrubs, like the blue-gum and the box, mixed their branches together, but the creek formed the line of separation between them. The acacia pendula was not afterwards seen, but that which had taken its place, as it were, was found to cover large tracts of country and to form extensive brushes. Many other peculiarities in the vegetation of the interior are noticed in the body of this work, but I have thought that these more striking ones deserved to be particularly remarked upon.

Geological features.

If we strike a line to the N.W. from Sydney to Wellington Valley, we shall find that little change takes place in the geological features of the country. The sand-stone of which the first of the barrier ranges is composed, terminates a little beyond Mount York, and at Cox's River is succeeded by grey granite. The secondary ranges to the N.W. of Bathurst, are wholly of that primitive rock; for although there are partial changes of strata between Bathurst and Moulong Plains, granite is undoubtedly the rock upon which the whole are based: but at Moulong Plains, a military station intermediate between Bathurst and Wellington Valley, limestone appears in the bed of a small clear stream, and with little interruption continues to some distance below the last-mentioned place. The accidental discovery of some caves at Moulong Plains, led to the more critical examination of the whole formation, and cavities of considerable size were subsequently found in various parts of it, but more particularly in the neighbourhood of Wellington Valley. The local interest which has of late years been taken in the prosecution of geological investigations, led many gentlemen to examine the contents of these caverns; and among the most forward, Major Mitchell, the Surveyor-General, must justly be considered, to whose indefatigable perseverance the scientific world is already so much indebted.

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The caves into which I penetrated, did not present anything particular to my observation; they differed little from caves of a similar description into which I had penetrated in Europe. Large masses of stalactites hung from their roofs, and a corresponding formation encrusted their floors. They comprised various chambers or compartments, the most remote of which terminated at a deep chasm that was full of water. A close examination of these caves has led to the discovery of some organic remains, bones of various animals embedded in a light red soil; but I am not aware that the remains of any extinct species have been found, or that any fossils have been met with in the limestone itself. There can, however, be little doubt but that the same causes operated in depositing these mouldering remains in the caves of Kirkdale and those of Wellington Valley.

About twenty miles below the junction of the Bell with the Macquarie, free-stone supersedes the limestone, but as the country falls rapidly from that point, it soon disappears, and the traveller enters upon a flat country of successive terraces. A schorl rock, of a blue colour and fine grain, composed of tourmaline and quartz, forms the bed of the Macquarie at the Cataract; and, in immediate contact with it, a mass of mica slate of alternate rose, pink, and white, was observed, which must have been covered by the waters of the river when Mr. Oxley descended it.

From the Cataract of the Macquarie, a flat extends to the marshes in which that river exhausts itself. From the midst of this flat Mount Foster and Mount Harris rise, both of which are porphyritic: but as I have been particular in describing these heights in their proper place, any minute notice of them here may be considered unnecessary. We will rather extend our enquiries to those parts of the colony upon which we shall not be called upon to remark in the succeeding pages.

Returning to the coast, we may mark the geological changes in a line to the S.W. of Sydney; and as my object is to extend the information of my readers, I shall notice any particular district on either side of the line I propose to touch upon, which may be worthy of notice. It would appear that the first decided break in the sandstone formation which penetrates into the county of Camden, is at Mittagong Range. It is there traversed by a dike of whinstone, of which that range is wholly composed. The change of soil and of vegetation are equally remarkable at this place; the one being a rich, greasy, chocolate-coloured earth, the other partaking greatly of the intertropical character. In wandering over them, I noticed the wild fig and the cherry-tree, growing to a much larger size than I had seen them in any other part of the colony. Upon their branches, the satin bird, the gangan, and various kinds of pigeons were feeding. Birds unknown to the eastward of the Blue Mountains, were numerous in the valleys; and there was an unusual appearance of freshness and moisture in the vegetation.

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These signs of improvement, however, vanish the moment Mittagong range is crossed, and sand-stone again forms the basis of the country to a considerable distance beyond Bong-bong. At a small farm called the Ploughed Ground, it is again traversed by a dike of whinstone, and a rich but isolated spot is thus passed over. With occasional and partial interruption, however, the sand-stone formation continues to an abrupt pass, from which the traveller descends to the county of Argyle. This pass is extremely abrupt, and is covered with glaucous, the low scrub I have noticed as common to the sand-stone formation. A small but lively stream, called Paddy's River, runs at the bottom of this pass, and immediately to the S.W. of it, an open forest country of granite base extends for many miles, on which the eucalyptus manifera is prevalent, and which affords the best grazing tracts in Argyle. At Goulburn Plains, however, a vein of limestone occurs, which is evidently connected with that forming the ShoalHaven Gully, which is perhaps the most remarkable geological feature in the colony of New South Wales. It is a deep chasm of about a quarter of a mile in breadth, and 1200 feet in depth. The country on either side is perfectly level, so much so that the traveller approaches almost to its very brink before he is aware of his being near so singular an abyss. A small rivulet flows through the Gully, and discharges itself into the sea at ShoalHaven; but this river is hardly perceptible, from the summit of the cliffs forming the sides of the Gully, which are of the boldest and most precipitous character. The ground on the summit is full of caves of great depth, but there has been a difficulty in examining them, in consequence of the violent wind that rushes up them, and extinguishes every torch.

The open and grassy forests of Argyle are terminated by another of those abrupt sand-stone passes I have just described, and the traveller again falls considerably from his former level, previously to his entering on Yass Plains, to which this pass is the only inlet.

From Yass Plains the view to the S. and S.W. is over a lofty and broken country: mountains with rounded summits, others with towering peaks, and others again of lengthened form but sharp spine, characterise the various rocks of which they are composed. The ranges decline rapidly from east to west, and while on the one hand the country has all the appearance of increasing height, on the other it sinks to a dead level; nor on the distant horizon to the N. W. is there a hill or an inequality to be seen.

From Yass Plains to the very commencement of the level interior, every range I crossed presented a new rock-formation; serpentine quartz in huge white masses, granite, chlorite, micaceous schist, sandstone, chalcedony, quartz, and red jasper, and conglomerate rocks.

It was however, out of my power, in so hurried a journey as that which I performed down the banks of the Morumbidgee River, to examine with the accuracy I could have wished, either the immediate connection between these rocks or their gradual change from the one to the other. I was content to ascertain their actual succession, and to note the

general outlines of the ranges; but the defect of vision under which I labour, prevents me from laying them before the public.

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Character of the soil connected with geological formation.

From what has been advanced, however, it will appear that the physical structure of the southern parts of the colony is as varied, as that of the western interior is monotonous, and we may now pursue our original observations on the soil of the colony with greater confidence.

In endeavouring to account for the poverty of the soil in New South Wales, and in attributing it in a great degree to the causes already mentioned, it appears necessary to estimate more specifically the influence which the geological formation of a country exercises on its soil, and how much the quality of the latter partakes of the character of the rock on which it reposes. And although I find it extremely difficult to explain myself as I should wish to do, in the critical discussion on which I have thus entered, yet as it is material to the elucidation of an important subject in the body of the work, I feel it incumbent on me to proceed to the best of my ability.

I have said that the soil of a country depends much upon its geological formation. This appears to be particularly the case in those parts of the colony with which I am acquainted, or those lying between the parallels of 30 degrees and 35 degrees south. Sandstone, porphyry, and granite, succeed each other from the coast to a very considerable distance into the interior, on a N. W. line. The light ferruginous dust that is distributed over the county of Cumberland, and which annoys the traveller by its extreme minuteness, to the eastward of the Blue Mountains, is as different from the coarse gravelly soil on the secondary ranges to the westward of them, as the barren scrubs and thickly-wooded tracts of the former district are to the grassy and open forests of the latter.

As soon as I began to descend to the westward it became necessary to pay strict and earnest attention to the features of the country through which I passed, in order to determine more accurately the different appearances which, as I was led to expect, the rivers would assume. In the course of my examination I found, first, that the broken country through which I travelled, was generally covered with a loose, coarse, and sandy soil; and, secondly, that the ranges were wholly deficient in that peat formation which fills the valleys, or covers the flat summits of the hills or mountains, in the northern hemisphere. The peculiar property of this formation is to retain water like a sponge; and to this property the regular and constant flow of the rivers descending from such hills, may, in a great measure, be attributed. In New South Wales on the contrary, the rains that fall upon the mountains drain rapidly through a coarse and superficial soil, and pour down their sides without a moment's interruption. The consequence is that on such occasions the rivers are subject to great and sudden rises, whereas they have scarcely water enough to support a current in ordinary seasons. At one time the traveller will find it impracticable to cross them: at another he may do so with ease; and only from the remains of debris in the branches of the trees high above, can he judge of the furious torrent they must occasionally contain.

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This seeming deviation on the part of Nature from her usual laws will no longer appear such, if we consider its results for a moment. The very floods which swell the rivers to overflowing, are followed by the most beneficent effects; and, rude and violent as the means are by which she accomplishes her purpose, they form, no doubt, a part of that process by which she preserves the balance of good and evil. Vast quantities of the best soil have been thus washed down from the mountains to accumulate in more accessible places. From frequent depositions, a great extent of country along the banks of every river and creek has risen high above the influence of the floods, and constitutes the richest tracts in the colony. The alluvial flats of the Nepean, the Hawkesbury, and the Hunter, are striking instances of the truth of these observations; to which the plains of O'Connell and Bathurst must be added. The only good soil upon the two latter, is in the immediate neighbourhood of the Macquarie River: but, even close to its banks, the depositions are of little depth, lying on a coarse gravelly soil, the decomposition of the nearer ranges. The former is found to diminish in thickness, according to the concavity of the valley through which the Macquarie flows, and at length becomes mixed with the coarser soil. This deposit is alone fit for agricultural purposes; but it does not necessarily follow that the distant country is unavailable since it is admitted, that the best grazing tracts are upon the secondary ranges of granite and porphyry. These ranges generally have the appearance of open forest, and are covered with several kinds of grasses, among which the long oat-grass is the most abundant.

County of Cumberland.

If we except the valley of the Nepean, the banks of the South Creek, the Pennant Hills near Parramatta, and a few other places, the general soil of the county of Cumberland, is of the poorest description. It is superficial in most places, resting either upon a cold clay, or upon sandstone; and is, as I have already remarked, a ferruginous compound of the finest dust. Yet there are many places upon its surface, (hollows for instance,) in which vegetable decay has accumulated, or valleys, into which it has been washed, that are well adapted for the usual purposes of agriculture, and would, if the country was more generally cleared, be found to exist to a much greater extent than is at present imagined. I have frequently observed the isolated patches of better land, when wandering through the woods, both on the Parramatta River, and at a greater distance from the coast. And I cannot but think, that it would be highly advantageous to those who possess large properties in the County of Cumberland to let Portions of them. The concentration of people round their capital, promotes more than anything else the prosperity of a colony, by creating a reciprocal demand for the produce both of the country and the town, since the one would necessarily stimulate the energy of the farmer, as the other would rouse the enterprise of the merchant. The consideration, however, of such a subject is foreign to my present purpose.

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It must not be supposed, that because I have given a somewhat particular description of the County of Cumberland, I have done so with a view to bring it forward as a specimen of the other counties, or to found upon it a general description of the colony. It is, in fact, poorer in every respect than any tract of land of similar extent in the interior, and is still covered with dense forests of heavy timber, excepting when the trees have been felled by dint of manual labour, and the ground cleared at an expense that nothing but its proximity to the seat of government could have justified. But experience has proved, that neither the labour nor the the expense have been thrown away. Many valuable farms and extensive gardens chequer the face of the country, from which the proprietors derive a very efficient income.

Country west of blue mountains.

To the westward of the Blue Mountains, the country differs in many respects from that lying between those ranges and the coast; and although, its aspect varies in different places, three principal features appear more immediately to characterise it. These are, first, plains of considerable extent wholly destitute of timber; secondly, open undulating woodlands; and, thirdly, barren unprofitable tracts. The first almost invariably occur in the immediate neighbourhood of some river, as the Plains of Bathurst, which are divided by the Macquarie; Goulburn Plains, through which the Wallandilly flows; and Yass Plains, which are watered by a river of the same name. The open forests, through which the horseman may gallop in perfect safety, seem to prevail over the whole secondary ranges of granite, and are generally considered as excellent grazing tracts. Such is the country in Argyleshire on either side of the Lachlan, where that river crosses the great southern road near Mr. Hume's station; such also are many parts of Goulburn and the whole extent of country lying between Uderaliga and the Morumbidgee River. The barren tracts, on the other hand, may be said to occupy the central spaces between all the principal streams. With regard to the proportion that these different kinds of country bear to each other, there can be no doubt of the undue preponderance of the last over the first two; but there are nevertheless many extensive available tracts in every part of the colony.

Means of inland transport.

The greatest disadvantage under which New South Wales labours, is the want of means for conveying inland produce to the market, or to the coast. The Blue Mountains are in this respect a serious bar to the internal prosperity of the colony. By this time, however, a magnificent road will have been completed across them to the westward, over parts of which I travelled in 1831. Indeed the efforts of the colonial government have been wisely directed, not only to the construction of this road, which the late Governor, General Darling commenced, but also in facilitating the communication to the southern districts, by an almost equally fine road over the Razor Back Range, near the Cow Pastures; so that as far as it is possible for human efforts to overcome natural obstacles, the wisdom and foresight of the executive have ere this been successful.

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Disadvantages of distant settlers.

The majority of the settlers in the Bathurst country, and in the more remote interior, are woolgrowers; and as they send their produce to the market only once a year, receiving supplies for home consumption, on the return of their drays or carts from thence, the inconvenience of bad roads is not so much felt by them. But to an agriculturist a residence to the westward of the Blue Mountains is decidedly objectionable, unless he possess the means with which to procure the more immediate necessities of life, otherwise than by the sale of his grain or other produce, and can be satisfied to cultivate his property for home consumption, or for the casual wants of his neighbours. Under such circumstances, a man with a small private income would enjoy every rational comfort. But of course, not only in consequence of the loss of labour, but the chance of accidents during a long journey, the more the distance is increased from Sydney, as the only place at which the absolute necessities of life can be purchased, the greater becomes the objection to a residence in such a part of the country; and on this account it is, that although some beautiful locations both as to extent and richness, are to be found to the westward of Bathurst, equally on the Bell, the Macquarie and the Lachlan, it is not probable they will be taken up for many years, or will only be occupied as distant stock stations.

Character of eastern coast.

Since, therefore, it appears from what has been advanced, that it is not to the westward the views of any settlers should be directed, excepting under particular circumstances, it remains for us to consider what other parts of the colony hold out, or appear to hold out, greater advantages. The eye naturally turns to the south on the one hand, and to Port Macquarie northerly on the other. It is to be remarked that the eastern shores of Australia partake of the same barren character that marks the other three. It is generally bounded to a certain extent by a sandy and sterile tract. There are, however, breaks in so prolonged a line, as might have been expected, where, from particular local causes, both the soil and vegetation are of a superior kind. At Illawarra for instance, the contiguity of the mountains to the coast leaves no room for the sandy belt we have noticed, but the debris from them reaches to the very shore. Whether from reflected heat, or from some other peculiarity of situation, the vegetation of Illawarra is of an intertropical character, and birds that are strangers to the county of Cumberland frequent its thickets. There is no part of Australia where the feathered race are more beautiful, or more diversified. The most splendid pigeon, perhaps, that the world produces, and the satin bird, with its lovely eye, feed there upon the berries of the ficus (wild fig,) and other trees: and a numerous tribe of the accipitrine class soar over its dense and spacious forests.

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Port Macquarie and five islands.

We again see a break in the sandy line of the coast at Broken Bay, at Newcastle, and still further north at Port Macquarie; at which places the Hawkesbury, the Hunter, and the Hastings severally debouche. Of Port Macquarie, as a place of settlement, I entertain a very high opinion, in consequence of its being situated under a most favourable parallel latitude. I am convinced it holds out many substantial advantages. One of the most important of these is the circumstance of its having been much improved when occupied as a penal settlement. And since the shores of the colony are now navigated by steam-boats, the facility of water communication would be proportionably great.

I believe the Five Islands or Illawarr district is considered peculiarly eligible for small settlers. The great drawback to this place is the heavy character of its timber and the closeness of its thickets, which vie almost with the American woods in those respects. The return, however, is adequate to the labour required in clearing the ground. Between the Five Islands and Sydney, a constant intercourse is kept up by numerous small craft; and a communication with the interior, by branch roads from the great southern line to the coast, would necessarily be thrown open, if the more distant parts of it were sufficiently peopled.

Rich tracts in the interior.

Recent surveys have discovered to us rich and extensive tracts in the remote interior between Jervis Bay and Bateman's Bay, and southwards upon the western slope of the dividing range. The account given by Messrs. Hovel and Hume is sufficient to prove that every valley they crossed was worthy of notice, and that the several rivers they forded were flanked by rich and extensive flats.

The distance of Moneroo Plains, and of the Doomot and Morumbidgee Rivers from Sydney, alarms the settler, who knows not the value of those localities; but men whose experience has taught them to set this obstacle at nought, have long depastured their herds on the banks of the last two. The fattest cattle that supply the Sydney market are fed upon the rich flats, and in the grassy valleys of the Morumbidgee; and there are several beautiful farms upon those of the Doomot. Generally speaking, the persons who reside in those distant parts, pay little attention to the comfort of their dwellings, or to the raising of more grain than their establishments may require; but there can be no doubt this part of the interior ought to be the granary of New South Wales; its climate and greater humidity being more favourable than that of Sydney for the production of wheat.

Periodical droughts; the seasons affected by the marshes.

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The most serious disadvantages under which the colony of New South Wales labours, is in the drought to which it is periodically subject. Its climate may be said to be too dry; in other respects it is one of the most delightful under heaven; and experience of the certainty of the recurrence of the trying seasons to which I allude, should teach men to provide against their effects. Those seasons, during which no rain falls, appear, from the observations of former writers, to occur every ten or twelve years; and it is somewhat singular that no cause has been assigned for such periodical visitations. Whether the state of the interior has anything to do with them, and whether the wet or dry condition of the marshes at all regulate the seasons, is a question upon which I will not venture to give my decisive opinion. But most assuredly, when the interior is dry, the seasons are dry, and *Vice versa*. Indeed, not only is this the case, but rains, from excessive duration in the first year after a drought, decrease gradually year after year, until they wholly cease for a time. It seems not improbable, therefore, that the state of the interior does, in some measure, regulate the fall of rain upon the eastern ranges, which appears to decrease in quantity yearly as the marshes become exhausted, and cease altogether, when they no longer contain any water. A drought will naturally follow until such time as the air becomes surcharged with clouds or vapour from the ocean, which being no longer able to sustain their own weight, descend upon the mountains, and being conveyed by hundreds of streams into the western lowlands, again fill the marshes, and cause the recurrence of regular seasons.

Temperature of the climate.

The thermometer ranges during the summer months, that is, from September to March, from 36 degrees to 106 degrees of Fahrenheit, but the mean of the temperature during the above period is 70 degrees. The instrument in the winter months ranges from 27 degrees to 98 degrees, with a mean of 66 degrees. However great the summer heat may appear, it is certain that the climate of New South Wales has not the relaxing and enfeebling effect upon the constitution, which renders a residence in India or other parts of the south so intolerable. Neither are any of the ordinary occupations of business or of pleasure laid aside at noon, or during the hottest part of the day. The traveller may cast himself at length under the first tree that invites him, and repose there as safely as if he were in a palace. Fearless of damps, and unmolested by noxious insects, his sleep is as sound as it is refreshing, and he rises with renewed spirits to pursue his journey. Equally so may the ploughman or the labourer seek repose beside his team, and allow them to graze quietly around him. The delicious coolness of the morning and the mild temperature of the evening air, in that luxurious climate, are beyond the power of description. It appears to have an influence on the very animals, the horses and the cattle being particularly docile; and I cannot but think it is in some degree the same happy effect upon some of the hardened human beings who are sent thither from the old world.

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Fruits.

As I have before observed, it has not yet been discovered whether there are any indigenous fruits of any value in Australia. In the colony of New South Wales there certainly are none; yet the climate is peculiarly adapted for the growth of every European and of many tropical productions. The orange, the fig, the citron, the pomegranate, the peach, the apple, the guava, the nectarine, the pear, and the loquette, grow side by side together. The plantain throws its broad leaves over the water, the vine encircles the cottages, and the market of Sydney is abundantly supplied with every culinary vegetable.

In a climate, therefore, so soft that man scarcely requires a dwelling, and so enchanting that few have left it but with regret, the spirits must necessarily be acted upon,—and the heart feel lighter. Such, indeed, I have myself found to be the case; nor have I ever been happier than when roving through the woods or wandering along one of the silent and beautiful bays for which the harbour of Port Jackson is so celebrated. I went to New South Wales as I have already remarked, highly prejudiced against it, both from the nature of the service, and the character of the great body of its inhabitants. My regiment has since quitted its shores, but I am aware there are few of them who would not gladly return. The feeling I have in its favour arises not, therefore, from the services in which I was employed, but from circumstances in the colony itself; and I yet hope to form one of its community and to join a number of valuable and warm-hearted friends whom I left in that distant part of the world.

Remarks on emigration.

On the subject of emigration, it is not my intention to dwell at any length. My object in these preliminary remarks has been to give the reader a general idea of the country, in the interior recesses of which I am about to lead him. Still, however, it may be useful to offer a few general observations on a topic which has, of late years, become so interesting to the British public.

The main consideration with those who, possessing some capital, propose to emigrate as the means of improving their condition, is, the society likely to be found in the land fixed on for their future residence. One of the first questions I have been asked, when conversing on the subject of emigration, has consequently related to this important matter. I had only then to observe in reply, that the civil and military establishments in New South Wales, form the elements of as good society as it is the lot of the majority to command in Great Britain.

The houses of the settlers are not scattered over a greater surface than the residences of country gentlemen here, and if they cannot vie with them in size, they most assuredly do in many other more important respects; and if a substantial cottage of brick or stone has any claim to the rank of a tenantable mansion, there are few of them which do not

posses all the means of exercising that hospitality for which young communities are remarkable.

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But to sever the links of kindred, and to abandon the homes of our fathers after years of happy tranquillity, is a sacrifice the magnitude of which is unquestionable. The feelings by which men are influenced under such circumstances have a claim to our respect. Indeed, no class of persons can have a stronger hold upon our sympathies than those whom unmerited adverse fortune obliges to seek a home in a distant country.

Far, therefore, be it from me to dispute a single expression of regret to which they may give utterance. It must, however, be remembered that the deepest feelings of anguish are providentially alleviated in time. Our heaviest misfortunes are frequently repaired by industry and caution. The sky clears up, as it were: new interests engage the attention, and the cares of a family or the improvement of a newly acquired property engross those moments which would otherwise be spent in vain and unprofitable regrets.

Description of immigrants; most likely to Prosper.

It cannot be doubted that persons such as I have described, whose conduct has hitherto been regulated by prudence, and whose main object is to provide for their children, are the most valuable members of every community, whether young or old. To such men few countries hold out greater prospects of success than New South Wales; for the more we extend our enquiries, the more we shall find that the success of the emigrant in that colony depends upon his prudence and foresight rather than on any collateral circumstance of climate or soil; and to him who can be satisfied with the gradual acquirement of competency, it is the land of promise. Blessed with a climate of unparalleled serenity, and of unusual freedom from disease, the settler has little external cause of anxiety, little apprehension of sickness among his family or domestics, and little else to do than to attend to his own immediate interests. I should wish to illustrate the observations by two or three instances of their practical bearing and tendency.

Cases of emigrants; causes of success or failure.

It was on my return from my second expedition, that I visited Lieut. ***** who resides in the southern parts of the colony. The day after my arrival, he took me round his property, and explained the various improvements he had made, considering the small means with which he had commenced. At this part of our conversation, we came within view of his house, a substantial weather-board cottage. "I trust," said I, turning to him, "you will excuse the question I am about to ask; for your frankness emboldens me to propose it, and on your answer much of the effect of what you have been saying will depend. In effecting these various improvements, and in the building of that house, have you been obliged to embarrass yourself, or are they free from incumbrance?"—"Your

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question," he said, "is a reasonable one, and I will answer it with the frankness you are kind enough to ascribe to me. I have ever made it a rule not to exceed my income. Mrs. ***** bore our first trials with so much cheerfulness, and contributed so much to my happiness and my prosperity, that I felt myself bound to build her a good house with the first money I had to spare." I confess this answer raised my host in my estimation, and it was a gratifying proof to me of the success that attends industry and perseverance.

But let us look at another case. Mr. *** had a property to the N.W. of Sydney, and having considerable funded means when he arrived in the colony, he soon put his property into a state of progressive improvement, and being in truth an excellent practical farmer, it assumed the appearance of regularity and order. Had Mr. *** stopped at this moment, he would have been in the enjoyment of affluence and of every rational comfort. But instead of exercising prudent rules of hospitality, he gave way to the natural generosity of his disposition, entered into expenses he could not afford, and was ultimately obliged to part with his estate. Now it is deeply to be regretted, that one whose energies and abilities particularly fitted him for the life he had chosen, should have failed through such conduct; and it is more than probable, that if he had commenced with smaller means, and had gradually improved his property, his fate would have been very different.

I shall leave these cases without any further comment, convinced as I am, that each of them furnishes matter for serious consideration, and that they are practical illustrations of the causes of success or failure of those who emigrate to the colony of New South Wales. And although I do not mean to affirm, that the majority follow Mr. ***'s example, I must venture to assert that thoughtlessness—useless expenditure in the first instance—waste of time and other circumstances, lead to equally ruinous consequences.

Moral objections to the colony.

One of the greatest objections which families have to New South Wales, is their apprehension of the moral effects that are likely to overwhelm them by bad example, and for which no success in life could compensate. In a colony constituted like that of New South Wales, the proportion of crime must of course be great. Yet it falls less under the notice of private families than one might at first sight have been led to suppose. Drunkenness, as in the mother country, is the besetting sin; but it is confined chiefly to the large towns in consequence of the difficulty of procuring spirits in the country. There are, no doubt, many incorrigible characters sent to settle in the interior, and it is an evil to have these men, even for a single day, to break the harmony of a previously well regulated establishment, or to injure its future prospects by the influence of evil example. They are men who are sent upon trial, from on board a newly arrived ship, and they generally terminate their misconduct either on the roads or at a penal

settlement, being thus happily removed from the mass of the prisoners. Frequently, however, men remain for years under the same master. They become attached to their occupations, their hearts become softened by kindness, and they atone as much as they possibly can for previous error.

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System of immigration recommended; encouragement for emigration.

Still there can be no doubt, but that the evil complained of is considerable. It is from this reason, and from my personal knowledge of the southern parts of the colony, that I should rejoice to see its flats and its valleys filled with an industrious population of a better description of farmers. A hope might then be reasonably indulged, that the Home Government would not be backward in recognising, and in acting upon a principle, the soundness of which has been felt and acknowledged in all ages, but the chief difficulty of which rests in its judicious application. I allude to a system of emigration. Sure I am that if it were well organized, and care were taken to profit by the experience of the past in similar attempts, it could not fail to be attended with ultimate success. The evils resulting from a surplus population in an old community, were never more seriously felt than in Great Britain at the present moment. Assuming that the amount of surplus population is 2,000,000, the excess of labour and competition thus occasioned by diminishing profits and wages, creates, it has been said, an indirect tax to the enormous extent of 20,000,000 pounds per annum. It has appeared to many experienced persons, that it is in emigration, we should best find the means of relief from this heavy pressure; particularly if the individuals encouraged to go out to the colonies were young persons of both sexes, from the industrious classes of the community. Even if no more than three couples were induced to emigrate from each parish in England in ten years, the relief to the springs of industry would be very great. Besides, the funds necessary for this purpose would revert to the country by a thousand indirect channels. Persons unacquainted with our Australian colonies, whether Van Dieman's Land or New South Wales, can form little idea of the increasing demand for, and consumption in them of every species of British manufacture. The liberal encouragement given by government to every practicable scheme of emigration, and the sum advanced by it towards the expenses of the voyage to the labouring classes, sufficiently indicate the light in which the subject is viewed by the legislature; and the fact that no private family taking out servants to Sydney, has in any one instance been able to retain them, on account of offers more advantageous from other quarters, shows clearly the great demand for labour in the colony. If I might judge of the feelings of the majority of respectable individuals there, from the assurances of the few, they would willingly defray any parochial expenses attendant on the voyage, provided the services of such individuals could be secured to them for a time sufficiently long to remunerate them for such pavement. The tide of emigration should be directed to Sydney, Van Dieman's Land, or Western Australia,

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upon condition of the labourer's receiving a certain sum in wages, and his daily subsistence from his employer, with an understanding, however, that he must consider himself bound for two years to such employer. Surely there are hundreds of our indigent countrymen, who would gladly seek a land of such plenty, and cast away the natural, but unavailing regret of leaving home to secure to themselves and their families, the substantial comforts of life on such easy conditions.

Committee found at Sydney.

It is not, perhaps, generally known that a committee has been formed in Sydney, to advise settlers as to the best mode of proceeding on arrival there. Such a plan is one of obvious utility; and if those who may find themselves at a loss for information would apply to this committee for advice, rather than to individuals with whom they may become casually acquainted, they would further their own interests, and in all probability ensure success. Still there are some broad rules upon which every man ought to act, which I shall endeavour to point out, and it will give me no ordinary satisfaction, if I should be the means of directing any one to the road of prosperity and comfort.

Hints to emigrants.

It is to be feared that those who emigrate to New South Wales, generally anticipate too great facility in their future operations and certainty of success in conducting them; but they should recollect that competency cannot be obtained without labour. Every trade—every profession in this respect, is subject to the same law—the lawyer, the physician, the tradesman, and the mechanic. This labour is required at our hands, even in an old community; how much more then is it called for in a new, where the ingenuity of men is put to trial to secure those means of accomplishing their ends which here are abundant. Now, it appears to me but consistent, that he who is obliged to leave his native country from want of means to hold his station there, can hardly expect to find, or rather to secure, abundance elsewhere without some exertion. Every man who emigrates should proceed with a conviction on his mind, that he is about to encounter years of labour and privation. He will not then be disappointed at partial reverses, and will be more thankful for unexpected prosperity. I feel persuaded the tone of mind has a great deal to do with success, because it influences the conduct of the individual. Supposing, however, that an emigrant has taken this rational view of his situation, he should determine on his pursuits, and allow nothing but absolute certainty of better fortune to turn him aside. Men, however, landing at Sydney, in their eagerness for information get bewildered, give up their original plans, adopt new and uncertain speculations, trifle away both their time and their money, and ultimately ruin themselves. An individual who goes to New South Wales for the purpose of settling, should not

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remain in Sydney a day longer than is necessary for the arrangement of his affairs. Every shilling spent there is thrown away. The greatest facility is given by the different departments of the Colonial Government to the settlers; and it is entirely his own fault if he trifles away his time in search of information elsewhere than at the fountainhead, or if he trusts to any other opinion than his own, supposing him experienced as to the quality of the land he may fix upon. Let him be speedy in his selection, and fix himself upon his allotment as soon as possible. Instead of overstocking his farm, or employing more labourers than he can afford to keep, let him be satisfied with a gradual increase of his stock, and wait patiently till he can better afford to employ labour; above all, let him avoid embarrassing himself by the purchase of any superfluous or unnecessary comfort. I consider that man has already failed, who runs into debt in the first instance, or who exhausts his means in the purchase of large herds, from the vain expectation that their increase will clear him. The time was when those idle speculations were occasionally attended with success, but such is not now the case. The energies of the agriculturist are directed to their proper channel, and if the few are unable to make rapid fortunes, the many have escaped inevitable ruin. No farm in a state of nature can be expected to yield any return of consequence for the first year. It is incumbent on a settler to provide for his establishment, or to retain the means of providing for it as circumstances may require.

Farming implements are as cheap in Sydney as in England. Horses and cattle are cheaper. It requires little, therefore, to stock a farm in a reasonable manner. On the other hand, the climate is so mild that the want of a house is scarcely felt, and a temporary residence easily constructed. On the whole I am convinced, that a man who regulates his conduct by prudence, and who perseveringly follows up his occupations, who behaves with kindness to those around him, and performs his social and moral duties with punctuality, will ultimately secure to himself a home that will make up for the one he has quitted in the land of his fathers, and place him in as respectable and as happy a situation as that which he there enjoyed.

PROGRESS OF INLAND DISCOVERY.

Having thrown out the foregoing remarks for the information of the general reader, and of persons who look to Australia with the more earnest views of selecting a colonial home, I now return to the immediate object of these volumes; but before entering on the narrative of my own expeditions, I think it necessary to advert cursorily to the discoveries previously accomplished.

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The journeys of Mr. Oxley, far into the western interior of Australia, gave rise to various and conflicting opinions as to the character of the more central parts of that extensive continent, of which the colony of New South Wales forms but a small portion. I feel, therefore, called upon briefly to advert to the conclusions which that able and intelligent officer drew from his personal observation of the country into which he penetrated, as an acquaintance with his opinions will not only tend to throw a clearer light on the following details, but will, also, convey much necessary information to those of my readers who may not have perused his journals. It is necessary, however, in order to divest the subject of all obscurity, to trace, in the first instance, the progress of inland discovery, in New South Wales, from the first foundation of the colony to the period when Mr. Oxley's exertions attracted the public attention.

In the year 1788, the British Government took formal possession of the eastern coast of Australia, by the establishment of a penal colony at Port Jackson. The first settlers, under Governor Phillips, had too many difficulties to contend with to submit themselves to be thwarted from pursuits essential to their immediate safety and comfort, by the prospect of remote and uncertain advantages. It was by perseverance and toil alone that they first established and ultimately spread themselves over that part of the territory, which, flanked by the ocean on the one hand, and embraced as it were by the Nepean River on the other, is now entitled the County Of Cumberland. For many years, this single district supplied the wants of the settlers. Upon it they found ample pasture for their herds, and sufficient employment for themselves. Nor was it until a succession of untoward seasons, and the rapid increase of their stock pointed out to them the necessity of seeking for more extensive pasturage, that they contemplated surmounting that dark and rugged chain of mountains, which, like the natural ramparts of Spain and Italy, rose high over the nether forest, and broke the line of the western horizon.

Mr. CALEY'S attempt.

A Mr. Caley is said to have been the first who attempted to scale the Blue Mountains: but he did not long persevere in struggling with difficulties too great for ordinary resolution to overcome. It appears that he retraced his steps, after having penetrated about sixteen miles into their dark and precipitous recesses; and a heap of stones, which the traveller passes about that distance from Erne Ford, on the road to Bathurst, marks the extreme point reached by the first expedition to the westward of the Nepean river.

Lieut. LAWSON'S expedition.

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Shortly after the failure of this expedition, the sad effects of a long protracted drought called forth a more general spirit of enterprise and exertion among the settlers; and Mr. Oxley makes honorable mention of the perseverance and resolution with which Lieut. Lawson, of the 104th regiment, accompanied by Messrs. Blaxland and Wentworth, conducted an expedition into the Blue Mountains. Their efforts were successful: and the objects of their enterprise would have been completely attained, but for the failure of their provisions at a moment when their view of the distant interior was such as to convince them that they had overcome the most formidable obstacles to their advance, and that in their further progress few impediments would have presented themselves.

Mr. Evans' discoveries.

The success of this undertaking induced Governor Macquarie to further the prosecution of inland discovery, and of attempts to ascertain the nature of the country of which Mr. Lawson only obtained a glimpse. An expedition was accordingly dispatched under Mr. Evans, the Deputy Surveyor-General, to follow the route taken by the former one, and to penetrate as far as practicable into the western interior. The result was the discovery of the Macquarie river, and of Bathurst Plains. The report of Mr. Evans was so favourable, that orders were immediately issued for the construction of a line of road across the mountains. When that was completed, the Governor went in person to fix the site of a future town on Bathurst Plains. From thence Mr. Evans, who accompanied the Governor on the occasion, was directed to proceed to the southward and westward, to ascertain the nature of the country in that direction. He discovered another considerable river, flowing, like the Macquarie, to the west, to which he gave the name of the Lachlan. The promising appearance of these two streams, and the expectation of all parties that they would be found to water rich and extensive tracts of country, led to the fitting out of a more important expedition than any which had before been contemplated.

Mr. Oxley's discoveries.

Mr. Oxley, the Surveyor-General of the Colony, was appointed chief of this expedition, and was directed to trace the Lachlan and Macquarie rivers, as far as practicable, with a view to ascertain their capabilities and the nature of the country they watered. In 1817, Mr. Oxley directed his attention to the former river, and continued to follow its windings, until it appeared that its waters were lost in successive marshes and it ceased to be a river. In the following year he turned towards the Macquarie, and traced it, in like manner, until he was checked by high reeds that covered an extensive plain before him, amidst which the channel of the river was lost.

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From what he observed of the country, on both these occasions, he was led to infer that beyond the limits of his advance the interior had a uniform level, and was, for the most part, uninhabitable and under water. Its features must have been strongly marked to have confirmed such an opinion in the mind of the late Surveyor-General. It stands recorded on the pages of his journal, that he travelled over a country of many miles in extent, after clearing the mountains, which so far from presenting any rise of ground to the eye, bore unequivocal marks of frequent and extensive inundation. He traced two rivers of considerable size, and found that, at a great distance from each other, they apparently terminated in marshes, and that the country beyond them was low and unbroken. In his progress eastward, he crossed a third stream (the Castlereagh), about forty-five miles from the Macquarie, seemingly not inferior to it in size, originating in the mountains for which he was making, and flowing nearly parallel to the other rivers into a level country like that which he had just quitted.

Discoveries of Messrs. Mechan, Hume, Hovel and Cunningham.

Mr. Evans, moreover, who accompanied Mr. Oxley on these journeys, and who had been detached by his principal from Mount Harris, to ascertain the nature of the country in the line which the expedition was next to pursue, having crossed the Castlereagh considerably below the place at which the party afterwards effected a passage, reported that the river was then running through high reeds. The inference naturally drawn by Mr. Oxley, was, that it terminated as the Lachlan and the Macquarie had done; and that their united waters formed an inland sea or basin. It is evident that Mr. Oxley had this impression on his mind, when he turned towards the coast; but the wet state of the lowlands prevented him from ascertaining its correctness or error. Doubt, consequently, still existed as to the nature of the country he had left behind him; a question in which the best interests of the colony were apparently involved. Subsequently to these discoveries, Mr. Surveyor Mechan, accompanied by Mr. Hamilton Hume, a colonist of considerable experience, explored the country more to the southward and westward of Sydney, and discovered most of the new country called Argyle, and also Lake Bathurst.

Mr. Hume was afterwards associated with a Mr. Hovel, in an excursion to the south coast, under the auspices of Sir Thomas Brisbane. After a most persevering and laborious journey, they reached the sea; but it is uncertain whether they made Port Philips, or Western Port. Mr. Hume, whose practical experience will yield to that of no man, entertains a conviction that it was to the former they descended from the neighbouring ranges; but Mr. Hovel, I believe supports a contrary opinion. In the early stage of their journey, they passed over York or Yass Plains; and, after crossing the Morumbidgee, were generally entangled among mountain ranges that increased in height to the east and south-east. They crossed three considerable rivers, falling westerly, which they named the Goulburn, the Hume, and the Ovens; and found a beautiful and well-watered country in the vicinity of the coast.

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In 1826, Mr. Allan Cunningham, Botanical Collector to his late Majesty, traversed a considerable portion of the interior to the north of Bathurst, and, with a laudable zeal, devoted his labours to the acquisition of general information, as well as to his more immediate professional pursuits. In 1827, this gentleman again bent his steps towards the northward, and succeeded in gaining the 28th parallel of latitude; and, on a subsequent occasion, having taken his departure from Moreton Bay, he connected his former journey with that settlement, and thus contributed largely to our knowledge of the mountain country between it and the capital. Mr. Cunningham, who, independently of his individual excursions, had not only circumnavigated the Australian Continent with Capt. King, but had formed also one of the party with Mr. Oxley, in the journeys before noticed, had adopted this gentleman's opinion with regard to the swampy and inhospitable character of the distant interior. Its depressed appearance from the high ground on which Mr. Cunningham subsequently moved, tended to confirm this opinion, which was moreover daily gaining strength from the reports of the natives, who became more frequent in their intercourse with the whites, and who reported that there were large waters to the westward, on which the natives had canoes, and in which there were fish of great size.

It became, therefore, a current opinion, that the western interior of New Holland comprehended an extensive basin, of which the ocean of reeds which had proved so formidable to Mr. Oxley, formed most probably the outskirts; and it was generally thought that an expedition proceeding into the interior, would encounter marshes of vast extent, which would be extremely difficult to turn, and no less dangerous to enter.

It remained to be proved, however, whether these conjectures were founded in fact. The chief difficulty lay in the character of the country, and in providing the necessary means to ensure success. Those which were resorted to will be found in the succeeding chapter. Whether they would have been found sufficient and applicable had the interior been wholly under water, is doubtful; and my impression on this point induced me to make more efficient arrangements on the second expedition.

EXPEDITION DOWN THE BANKS OF THE MACQUARIE RIVER IN 1828 AND 1829.

CHAPTER I.

State of the Colony in 1828-29—Objects of the Expedition—Departure from Sydney—Wellington Valley—Progress down the Macquarie—Arrival at Mount Harris—Stopped by the marshes—Encamp amidst reeds—Excursions down the river—Its termination—Appearance of the marshes—Opthalmic affection of the men—Mr. Hume's successful journey to the northward— Journey across the plain



—Second great marsh—Perplexities—Situation of the exploring party—
Consequent resolutions.

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The year 1826 was remarkable for the commencement of one of those fearful droughts to which we have reason to believe the climate of New South Wales is periodically subject. It continued during the two following years with unabated severity. The surface of the earth became so parched up that minor vegetation ceased upon it. Culinary herbs were raised with difficulty, and crops failed even in the most favourable situations. Settlers drove their flocks and herds to distant tracts for pasture and water, neither remaining for them in the located districts. The interior suffered equally with the coast, and men, at length, began to despond under so alarming a visitation. It almost appeared as if the Australian sky were never again to be traversed by a cloud.

Objects of the expedition.

But, however severe for the colony the seasons had proved, or were likely to prove, it was borne in mind at this critical moment, that the wet and swampy state of the interior had alone prevented Mr. Oxley from penetrating further into it, in 1818. Each successive report from Wellington Valley, the most distant settlement to the N. W., confirmed the news of the unusually dry state of the lowlands, and of the exhausted appearance of the streams falling into them. It was, consequently, hoped that an expedition, pursuing the line of the Macquarie, would have a greater chance of success than the late Surveyor General had; and that the difficulties he had to contend against would be found to be greatly diminished, if not altogether removed. The immediate fitting out of an expedition was therefore decided upon, for the express purpose of ascertaining the nature and extent of that basin into which the Macquarie was supposed to fall, and whether any connection existed between it and the streams falling westerly. As I had early taken a great interest in the geography of New South Wales, the Governor was pleased to appoint me to the command of this expedition.

Journey from Sydney to emu plains.

In the month of September, 1828, I received his Excellency's commands to prepare for my journey; and by the commencement of November, had organized my party, and completed the necessary arrangements. On the 9th of that month, I waited on the Governor, at Parramatta, to receive his definitive instructions. As the establishments at Sydney had been unable to supply me with the necessary number of horses and oxen, instructions had been forwarded to Mr. Maxwell, the superintendent of Wellington Valley, to train a certain number for my use; and I was now directed to push for that settlement without loss of time. I returned to Sydney in the afternoon of the 9th, and on the 10th took leave of my brother officers, to commence a journey of very dubious issue; and, in company with my friend, Staff-surgeon M'Leod, who had obtained permission to accompany me to the limits of the colony, followed my men along the great western road. We moved leisurely over the level country, between the coast and the Nepean River, and availed ourselves of the kind hospitality of those of our friends whose property lay along that line of road, to secure more comfortable places of rest than the inns would have afforded.

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We reached Sheane, the residence of Dr. Harris, on the 11th, and were received by him with the characteristic kindness with which friends or strangers are ever welcomed by that gentleman. He had accompanied Mr. Oxley as a volunteer in 1818, and his name was then given to the mount which formed the extreme point to which the main body of the first expedition down the banks of the Macquarie penetrated, in a westerly direction.

The general appearance of the property of Dr. Harris, showed how much perseverance and labour had effected towards its improvement. Many acres of ground bore a promising crop, over which a gloomy forest had once waved. The Doctor's farming establishment was as complete as his husbandry seemed to be prosperous; but he did not appear to be satisfied with the extent of his dwelling, to which he was making considerable additions, although I should have thought it large enough for all ordinary purposes of residence or hospitality. The rewards of successful industry were everywhere visible.

From emu plains to Wellington valley.

On the 13th, we gained Regent's Ville, the more splendid mansion of Sir John Jamieson, which overlooks the Nepean River, and commands the most beautiful and extensive views of the Blue Mountains. Crossing the ford on the 14th, we overtook the men as they were toiling up the first ascent of those rugged bulwarks, which certainly gave no favourable earnest of the road before us; and, as we could scarcely hope to reach the level country to the westward without the occurrence of some accident, I determined to keep near the drays, that I might be on hand should my presence be required. We gained O'Connell's plains on the 20th November, and arrived at Bathurst on the 22nd, with no other damage than the loss of one of the props supporting the boat which snapped in two as we descended Mount York. On examination, it was found that the boat had also received a slight contusion, but it admitted of easy repair.

I was detained at Bathurst longer than I intended, in consequence of indisposition, and during my stay there experienced many proofs of the kind hospitality of the settlers of that promising district: nor was I ever more impressed with the importance of the service upon which I was employed, or more anxious as to the issue, than while contemplating the rapid advance of agriculture upon its plains, and the formidable bar to its prosperity which I had left behind me, in the dark and gloomy ranges which I had crossed.

On the 27th, Mr. Hamilton Hume, whose experience well qualified him for the task, and who had been associated with me in the expedition, having joined me, we proceeded on our journey, and reached Wellington Valley about the end of the month.

Wellington valley.

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I wished to push into the interior without any delay, or at least, so soon as we should have completed our arrangements and organized the party; but, although Mr. Maxwell had paid every attention to the training of the cattle, he was of opinion that they could not yet be wholly relied upon, and strongly recommended that they should be kept at practice for another week. As we could not have left the settlement under the most favourable circumstances in less than four days, the further delay attendant on this measure was considered immaterial, and it was, accordingly, determined upon. Mr. Hume undertook to superintend the training of the animals, and this left me at leisure to gather such information as would be of use to us in our progress down the river.

In his description of Wellington Valley, Mr. Oxley has not done it more than justice. It is certainly a beautiful and fertile spot, and it was now abundant in pasturage, notwithstanding the unfavourable season that had passed over it.

The settlement stands upon the right bank of the Bell, about two miles above the junction of that stream with the Macquarie. Its whitewashed buildings bore outward testimony to the cleanliness and regularity of the inhabitants; and the respectful conduct of the prisoners under his charge, showed that Mr. Maxwell had maintained that discipline by which alone he could have secured respect to himself and success to his exertions, at such a distance from the seat of government.

The weather was so exceedingly hot, during our stay, that it was impossible to take exercise at noon; but in the evening, or at an early hour in the morning, we were enabled to make short excursions in the neighbourhood.

Mr. Maxwell informed me that there were three stations below the settlement, the first of which, called Gobawlin, belonging to Mr. Wylde, was not more than five miles from it; the other two, occupied by Mr. Palmer, were at a greater distance, one being nineteen, the other thirty-four miles below the junction of the Bell. He was good enough to send for the stockman (or chief herdsman), in charge of the last, to give me such information of the nature of the country below him, as he could furnish from personal knowledge or from the accounts of the natives.

Low state of the Macquarie river.

Mr. Maxwell pointed out to me the spot on which Mr. Oxley's boats had been built, close upon the bank of the Macquarie; and I could not but reflect with some degree of apprehension on the singularly diminished state of the river from what it must then have been to allow a boat to pass down it. Instead of a broad stream and a rapid current, the stream was confined to a narrow space in the centre of the channel, and it ran so feebly amidst frequent shallows that it was often scarcely perceptible. The Bell, also, which Mr. Oxley describes as dashing and rippling along its pebbly bed, had ceased to flow, and consisted merely of a chain of ponds.

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On the 3rd of Dec, the stockman from below arrived; but the only information we gathered from him was the existence of a lake to the left of the river, about three days' journey below the run of his herds, on the banks of which he assured us, the native companions, a species of stork, stood in rows like companies of soldiers.

He brought up a nest of small paroquets of the most beautiful plumage, as a present to Mr. Maxwell, and affirmed that they were common about his part of the river. The peculiarity of the seasons had also brought a parrot into the valley which had never before visited it. This delicate bird was noticed by Captain Cook upon the coast, and is called PSITTACUS *novae HOLLANDIAE*, or New Holland Parrot, by Mr. Brown. It had not, however, been subsequently seen until the summer of 1828, when it made its appearance at Wellington Valley in considerable numbers, together with a species of merops or mountain bee-eater.

Departure for the interior.

On the 5th, our preparations being wholly completed, and the loads arranged, the party was mustered, and was found to consist of myself and Mr. Hume, two soldiers and eight prisoners of the crown, two of whom were to return with dispatches. Our animals numbered two riding, and seven pack, horses, two draft, and eight pack, bullocks, exclusive of two horses of my own, and two for the men to be sent back.

Banks of the Macquarie.

The morning of the 7th December, the day upon which we were to leave the valley, was ushered in by a cloudless sky, and that heated appearance in the atmosphere which foretells an oppressively sultry day. I therefore put off the moment of our departure to the evening, and determined to proceed no further than Gobawlin. I was the more readily induced to order this short journey because the animals had not been practised to their full loads, and I thought they might have given some trouble at starting with an unusual weight. They moved off however very quietly, and as if they had been accustomed to their work by a long course of training. We took our departure from the settlement at 3 p.m. and, crossing to the right bank of the Macquarie, a little above its junction with the Bell, reached Mr Wylde's station about half-past five. Thus we commenced our journey under circumstances as favorable as could have been wished. In disengaging ourselves on the following day from the hills by which Wellington Valley is encompassed on the westward, with a view to approach Mr. Palmer's first station, we kept rather wide of the river, and only occasionally touched on its more projecting angles. The soil at a distance from the stream was by no means so good as that in its immediate vicinity, nor was the timber of the same description. On the rich and picturesque grounds near the river the angophora prevailed with the flooded gum, and the scenery upon its banks was improved by the casuarinae that overhung

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them. On the latter, inferior eucalypti and cypresses were mixed together. The country was broken and undulating, and the hills stony, notwithstanding which, they appeared to have an abundance of pasture upon them. Mr. Hume rode with me to the summit of a limestone elevation, from which I thought it probable we might have obtained such a view as would have enabled us to form some idea of the country into which we were about to descend. But in following the river line, the eye wandered over a dark and unbroken forest alone. The ranges from which we were fast receding formed an irregular and beautiful landscape to the southward; and contrasted strongly with the appearance of the country to the N. W., in which direction it was rapidly assuming a level.

We reached Mr. Palmer's at a late hour in the afternoon, in consequence of a delay we experienced in crossing a gully, and encamped upon a high bank immediately opposite to the mouth of Molle's rivulet which here joins the Macquarie from the southward. The cattle had consumed all the food, and the ground on both sides of the river looked bare and arid.

No doubt, however, the face of the country in ordinary seasons wears a very different appearance. Its general elevation continued high; nor did the Macquarie assume any change of aspect. Mountain debris and rounded pebbles of various kinds formed its bed, which was much encumbered with timber.

Dibilamble.

We had been unable to persuade any of the natives of Wellington Valley to accompany us as guides, on our leaving that settlement. Even Mr. Maxwell's influence failed; for, notwithstanding the promises of several, when they saw that we were ready to depart, they either feigned sickness or stated that they were afraid of the more distant natives. The fact is, that they were too lazy to wander far from their own district, and too fond of Maxwell's beef to leave it for a precarious bush subsistence. Fortunately we found several natives with Mr. Palmer's stockmen, who readily undertook to conduct us by the nearest route to the cataract, which we considered to be midway between Wellington Valley and Mount Harris. We started under their guidance for Dibilamble, Mr. Palmer's second station, and reached it about half-past 4 p.m. The distance between the two is sixteen miles. The country for some miles differs in no material point from that through which we had already passed. The same rich tracts of soil near the river and the same inferiority in the tracks remote from it. Near Dibilamble, however, the limestone formation terminates, and gives place to barren stony ridges, upon which the cypress callities is of close and stunted growth. The ridges themselves were formed of a coarse kind of freestone in a state of rapid decomposition. The Tabragar (the Erskine of Mr. Oxley) falls into the Macquarie at Dibilamble. It had long ceased to flow, being a small mountain torrent whose source, if we judge from the shingly nature of its bed, cannot

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be very distant. Our descent was considerable during the day; the rapids were frequent in the river, but it underwent no change in its general appearance. Its waters were hard and transparent, and its banks, in many places, extremely lofty; with a red sandy loam and gravel under the alluvial deposits. It generally happened that where the bank was high on the one side it was low and subject to flood, to a limited extent at least, on the other. Upon these low grounds the blue-gum trees were of lofty growth, but on the upper levels box prevailed.

Scenery near the river.

The views upon the river were really beautiful, and varied at every turn; nor is it possible for any tree to exceed the casuarina in the graceful manner in which it bends over the stream, or clings to some solitary rock in its centre.

It here became necessary for us to cross to the left bank of the river, not only to avoid its numerous windings, and thus to preserve as much as possible the direct line to Mount Harris; but also, because the travelling was much better on the south side. We therefore availed ourselves of a ford opposite to the ground on which the tents had stood; and then pursued our journey, in a south-westerly course, over a country of a description very inferior to that of any we had previously noticed.

Iron-bark and cypresses generally prevailed along our line of route on a poor and sandy soil, which improved after we passed Elizabeth Burn, a small creek mentioned by Mr. Oxley.

Taylor's rivulet.

We approached the river again early in the day, and pitched our tent on the summit of a sloping bank that overlooked one of its long still reaches. We were protected from the sun by the angophora trees, which formed a hanging wood around us, and, with its bright green foliage, gave a cheerfulness to the scene that was altogether unusual. The opposite side of the river was rather undulated, and the soil appeared to be of the finest description. The grass, although growing in tufts, afforded abundance of pasture for the cattle; and, on the whole, this struck me as a most eligible spot for a station, and I found it occupied as such on the return of the expedition. We had encamped about a quarter of a mile from Taylor's Rivulet, which discharges itself into the Macquarie from the N. E., and is the first stream, upon the right bank, below the Wellington Valley.

Immediately after receiving it the river sweeps away to the southward, in consequence of which it became again necessary for us to cross it. Our guides, who were intelligent lads, led the cattle to a ford, a little below the junction of Taylor's Rivulet, at which we effected a passage with some difficulty; the opposite bank being very steep, and we



were obliged to force our way up a gully for some eighty or a hundred yards before we could extricate the team. Pursuing our journey, in a N. W. direction, we soon left the rich and undulating grounds bordering the river behind us. A poor, level, and open country, succeeded them. The soil changed to a light red, sandy loam, on which eucalypti, cypresses, and casuarinae, were intermixed with minor shrubs; of which latter, the cherry tree (*exocarpus cupressiformis*) was the most prevalent.

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At about seven miles from the river we passed some barren freestone ridges, near which Mr. Hume killed the first kangaroo we had seen. At mid-day we passed a small creek, at which the cattle were watered; and afterwards continued our journey through a country similar to that over which we had already made our way.

As we neared the stream we noticed the acacia pendula for the first time,—an indication of our approach to the marshes. The weather still continued extremely hot. Our journey this day was unusually long, and our cattle suffered so much, and moved so slowly, that it was late when we struck upon the Macquarie, at a part where its banks were so high that we had some difficulty in finding a good watering place.

Surprise some natives.

Being considerably in front of the party, with one of our guides, when we neared the river, I came suddenly upon a family of natives. They were much terrified, and finding that they could not escape, called vehemently to some of their companions, who were in the distance. By the time Mr. Hume came up, they had in some measure recovered their presence of mind, but availed themselves of the first favourable moment to leave us. I was particular in not imposing any restraint on these men, in consequence of which they afterwards mustered sufficient resolution to visit us in our camp. We now judged that we were about ten miles from the cataract, and that, according to the accounts of the stockman, we could not be very distant from the lake he had mentioned.

Native burial place.

As I was unwilling to pass any important feature of the country without enquiry or examination, I requested Mr. Hume to interrogate the strangers on the subject. They stated that they belonged to the lake tribe, that the lake was a short day's journey to the eastward, and that they would guide us to it if we wished. The matter was accordingly arranged. They left us at dusk, but returned to the camp at the earliest dawn; when we once more crossed the river, and, after traversing a very level country for about nine miles, arrived at our destination. We passed over the dried beds of lagoons, and through coppices of cypresses and acacia pendula, or open forest, but did not observe any of the barren stony ridges so common to the N.E. About a mile, or a mile and a half, from the lake we examined a solitary grave that had recently been constructed. It consisted of an oblong mound, with three semicircular seats. A walk encompassed the whole, from which three others branched off for a few yards only, into the forest. Several cypresses, overhanging the grave, were fancifully carved on the inner side, and on one the shape of a heart was deeply engraved.

Buddah lake.

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We were sadly disappointed in the appearance of the lake, which the natives call the Buddah. It is a serpentine sheet of fresh water, of rather more than a mile in length, and from three to four hundred yards in breadth. Its depth was four fathoms; but it seemed as if it were now five or six feet below the ordinary level. No stream either runs into it or flows from it; yet it abounds in fish; from which circumstance I should imagine that it originally owed its supply to the river during some extensive inundation. Notwithstanding that we had crossed some rich tracts of land in our way to it, the neighbourhood of the lake was by no means fertile. The trees around it were in rapid decay, and the little vegetation to be seen appeared to derive but little advantage from its proximity to water.

Extreme heat of the weather.

We had started at early dawn; and the heat had become intolerable long ere the sun had gained the meridian. It was rendered still more oppressive from the want of air in the dense bushes through which we occasionally moved. At 2 p.m. the thermometer stood at 129 degrees of Fahrenheit, in the shade; and at 149 degrees in the sun; the difference being exactly 20 degrees. It is not to be wondered at that the cattle suffered, although the journey was so short. The sun's rays were too powerful even for the natives, who kept as much as possible in the shade. In the evening, when the atmosphere was somewhat cooler, we launched the boat upon the lake, in order to get some wild fowl and fish; but although we were tolerably successful with our guns, we did not take anything with our hooks.

The natives had, in the course of the afternoon, been joined by the rest of the tribe, and they now numbered about three and twenty. They were rather distant in their manner, and gazed with apparent astonishment at the scene that was passing before them.

If there had been other proof wanting, of the lamentably parched and exhausted state of the interior, we had on this occasion ample evidence of it, and of the fearful severity of the drought under which the country was suffering. As soon as the sun dipped under the horizon, hundreds of birds came crowding to the border of the lake, to quench the thirst they had been unable to allay in the forest. Some were gasping, others almost too weak to avoid us, and all were indifferent to the reports of our guns.

Cataract of the Macquarie.

On leaving the Buddah, eleven only of the natives accompanied us. We reached the river again about noon, on a north-half-east course, where it had a rocky bed, and continued to journey along it, until we reached the cataract at which we halted. We travelled over soil generally inferior to that which we had seen on the preceding day, but rich in many places. The same kind of timber was observed, but the acacia pendula was more prevalent than any other, although near the river the flooded gum and Australian apple-tree were of beautiful growth.

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It had appeared to me that the waters of the Macquarie had been diminishing in volume since our departure from Wellington Valley, and I had a favourable opportunity of judging as to the correctness of this conclusion at the cataract, where its channel, at all times much contracted, was particularly so on the present occasion. So little force was there in the current, that I began to entertain doubts how long it would continue, more especially when I reflected on the level character of the country we had entered, and the fact of the Macquarie not receiving any tributary between this point and the marshes. I was in consequence led to infer that result, which, though not immediately, eventually took place.

As they were treated with kindness, the natives who accompanied us soon threw off all reserve, and in the afternoon assembled at the pool below the fall to take fish. They went very systematically to work, with short spears in their hands that tapered gradually to a point, and sank at once under water without splash or noise at a given signal from an elderly man. In a short time, one or two rose with the fish they had transfixed; the others remained about a minute under water, and then made their appearance near the same rock into the crevices of which they had driven their prey. Seven fine bream were taken, the whole of which they insisted on giving to our men, although I am not aware that any of themselves had broken their fast that day. They soon, however, procured a quantity of muscles, with which they sat down very contentedly at a fire. My barometrical admeasurement gave the cataract an elevation of 680 feet above the level of the sea; and my observations placed it in east longitude 148 degrees 3 minutes and in latitude 31 degrees 50 minutes south.

It became an object with us to gain the right bank of the Macquarie as soon as possible; for it was evident that the country to the southward of it was much more swampy than it was to the north: but for some distance below the cataract, we found it impossible to effect our purpose. The rocks composing the bed of the river at the cataract, which are of trapp formation, disappeared at about eight miles below it, when the river immediately assumed another character. Its banks became of equal height, which had not before been the case, and averaged from fifteen to eighteen feet. They were composed entirely of alluvial soil, and were higher than the highest flood-marks. Its waters appeared to be turbid and deep, and its bed was a mixture of sand and clay. The casuarina, which had so often been admired by us, entirely disappeared and the channel in many places became so narrow as to be completely arched over by gum-trees.

A tribe of natives.

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On the 16th, we fell in with a numerous tribe of natives who joined our train after the very necessary ceremonies of an introduction had passed, and when added to those who still accompanied us, amounted to fifty-three. On this occasion I was riding somewhat in front of the party, when I came upon them. They were very different in appearance from those whom we had surprised at the river; and from the manner in which I was received, I was led to infer that they had been informed of our arrival, and had purposely assembled to meet us. I was saluted by an old man, who had stationed himself in front of his tribe, and who was their chief. Behind him the young men stood in a line, and behind them the warriors were seated on the ground.

Conduct of the natives.

I had a young native with me who had attached himself to our party, and who, from his extreme good nature and superior intelligence, was considered by us as a first-rate kind of fellow. He explained who and what we were, and I was glad to observe that the old chief seemed perfectly reconciled to my presence, although he cast many an anxious glance at the long train of animals that were approaching. The warriors, I remarked, never lifted their eyes from the ground. They were hideously painted with red and yellow ochre, and had their weapons at their sides, while their countenances were fixed, sullen, and determined. In order to overcome this mood, I rode up to them, and, taking a spear from the nearest, gave him my gun to examine; a mark of confidence that was not lost upon them, for they immediately relaxed from their gravity, and as soon as my party arrived, rose up and followed us. That which appeared most to excite their surprise, was the motion of the wheels of the boat carriage. The young native whom I have noticed above, acted as interpreter, and, by his facetious manner, contrived to keep the whole of us in a fit of laughter as we moved along. He had been named Botheri by some stockman.

In consequence of our wish to cross the river, we kept near it, and experienced considerable delay from the frequent marshes that opposed themselves to our progress. In one of these we saw a number of ibises and spoonbills; and the natives succeeded in killing two or three snakes. Our view to the westward was extremely limited; but to the eastward the country appeared in some places to expand into plains.

Crossing of the river.

After travelling some miles down the banks of the river, finding that they still retained their steep character, we turned back to a place which Mr. Hume had observed, and at which he thought we might, with some little trouble, cross to the opposite side. And, however objectionable the attempt was, we found ourselves obliged to make it. We descended, therefore, into the channel of the river, and unloaded the animals and boat-carriage. In order to facilitate the

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ascent of the right bank, some of the men were directed to cut steps up it. I was amused to see the natives voluntarily assist them; and was surprised when they took up bags of flour weighing 100 pounds each, and carried them across the river. We were not long in getting the whole of the stores over. The boat was then hoisted on the shoulders of the strongest, and deposited on the top of the opposite bank; and ropes being afterwards attached to the carriage, it was soon drawn up to a place of safety. The natives worked as hard as our own people, and that, too, with a cheerfulness for which I was altogether unprepared, and which is certainly foreign to their natural habits. We pitched our tents as soon as we had effected the passage of the river; after which, the men went to bathe, and blacks and whites were mingled promiscuously in the stream. I did not observe that the former differed in any respect from the natives who frequent the located districts. They were generally clean limbed and stout, and some of the young men had pleasing intelligent countenances. They lacerate their bodies, inflicting deep wounds to raise the flesh, and extract the front teeth like the Bathurst tribes; and their weapons are precisely the same. They are certainly a merry people, and sit up laughing and talking more than half the night.

Barometer broken.

During the removal of the stores my barometer was unfortunately broken, and I had often, in the subsequent stages of the journey, occasion to regret the accident. I apprehend that the corks in the instrument, placed to steady the tube, are too distant from each other in most cases; and indeed I fear that barometers as at present constructed, will seldom be carried with safety in overland expeditions.

Deserted by the natives.

Nine only of the natives accompanied us on the morning succeeding the day in which we crossed the river. Botheri was, however, at the head of them; and, as we journeyed along, he informed me that he had been promised a wife on his return from acting as our guide, by the chief of the last tribe. The excessive heat of the weather obliged us to shorten our journey, and we encamped about noon in some scrub after having traversed a level country for about eleven miles.

Several considerable plains were noticed to our right, stretching east and west, which were generally rich in point of soil; but we passed through much brushy land during the day. It was lamentable to see the state of vegetation upon the plains from want of moisture. Although the country had assumed a level character, and was more open than on the higher branches of the Macquarie, the small freestone elevations, backing the alluvial tracts near the river, still continued upon our right, though much diminished in height, and at a great distance from the banks. They seemed to be covered with cypresses and beef-wood, but dwarf-box and the acacia pendula prevailed along the



plains; while flooded-gum alone occupied the lands in the immediate neighbourhood of the stream, which was evidently fast diminishing, both in volume and rapidity; its bed, however, still continuing to be a mixture of sand and clay.

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The cattle found such poor feed around the camp that they strayed away in search of better during the night. On such an occasion Botheri and his fraternity would have been of real service; but he had decamped at an early hour, and had carried off an axe, a tomahawk, and some bacon, although I had made him several presents. I was not at all surprised at this piece of roguery, since cunning is the natural attribute of a savage; but I was provoked at their running away at a moment when I so much required their assistance.

Left to ourselves, I found Mr. Hume of the most essential service in tracking the animals, and to his perseverance we were indebted for their speedy recovery. They had managed to find tolerable feed near a serpentine sheet of water, which Mr. Hume thought it would be advisable to examine. We directed our course to it as soon as the cattle were loaded, moving through bush, and found it to be a very considerable creek that receives a part of the superfluous waters of the Macquarie, and distributes them, most probably, over the level country to the north. It was much wider than the river, being from fifty to sixty yards across, and is resorted to by the natives, who procure muscles from its bed in great abundance. We were obliged to traverse its eastern bank to its junction with the river, at which it fortunately happened to be dry. We had, however, to cut roads down both its banks before we could cross it; and, consequently, made but a short day's journey. The soil passed over was inferior to the generality of soil near the river, but we encamped on a tongue of land on which both the flooded-gum and the grass were of luxuriant height. We found a quantity of a substance like pipe-clay in the bed of the river, similar to that mentioned by Mr. Oxley.

Great heat.

The heat, which had been excessive at Wellington Valley, increased upon us as we advanced into the interior. The thermometer was seldom under 114 degrees at noon, and rose still higher at 2 p.m. We had no dews at night, and consequently the range of the instrument was trifling in the twenty-four hours. The country looked bare and scorched, and the plains over which we journeyed had large fissures traversing them, so that the earth may literally be said to have gasped for moisture. The country, which above the cataract had borne the character of open forest, excepting on the immediate banks of the river, where its undulations and openness gave it a park-like appearance, or where the barren stony ridges prevailed below that point, generally exhibited alternately plain and brush, the soil on both of which was good. On the former, crested pigeons were numerous, several of which were shot. We had likewise procured some of the rose-coloured and grey parrots, mentioned by Mr. Oxley, and a small paroquet of beautiful plumage; but there was less of variety in the feathered race than I expected to find, and most of the other birds we had seen were recognised by me as similar to specimens I had procured from Melville Island, and were, therefore, most probably birds of passage.

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Aspect of the country, and the river.

As we neared Mount Harris, the Macquarie became more sluggish in its flow, and fell off so much as scarcely to deserve the name of a river. In breadth, it averaged from thirty-five to forty-five yards, and in the height of its banks, from fifteen to eighteen. Mr. Hume had succeeded in taking some fish at one of the stock stations; but if I except those speared by the natives, we had since been altogether unsuccessful with the hook, a circumstance which I attribute to the lowness of the river itself.

About thirty miles from the cataract the country declines to the north as a medium point, and again changes somewhat in its general appearance. To the S. and S.W. it appeared level and wooded, while to the N. the plains became more frequent, but smaller, and travelling over them was extremely dangerous, in consequence of the large fissures by which they were traversed. The only trees to be observed were dwarf-box and the acacia pendula, both of stunted growth, although flooded-gum still prevailed upon the river.

On the 20th we travelled on a N.W. course, and in the early part of the day passed over tolerably good soil. It was succeeded by a barren scrub, through which we penetrated in the direction of Welcome Rock, a point we had seen from one of the Plains and had mistaken for Mount Harris.

Arrival at mount Harris.

On a nearer approach, however, we observed our error, and corrected it by turning more to the left; and we ultimately encamped about a mile to the W.S.W. of the latter eminence. On issuing from the scrub we found ourselves among reeds and coarse water-grass; and, from the appearance of the country, we were led to conclude that we had arrived at a part of the interior more than ordinarily subject to overflow.

As soon as the camp was fixed, Mr. Hume and I rode to Mount Harris, over ground subject to flood and covered for the most part by the polygonum, being too anxious to defer our examination of its neighbourhood even for a few hours.

Vestiges of Mr. Oxley's encampment.

Nearly ten years had elapsed since Mr. Oxley pitched his tents under the smallest of the two hills into which Mount Harris is broken. There was no difficulty in hitting upon his position. The trenches that had been cut round the tents were still perfect, and the marks of the fire-places distinguishable; while the trees in the neighbourhood had been felled, and round about them the staves of some casks and a few tent-pegs were scattered. Mr. Oxley had selected a place at some distance from the river, in consequence of its then swollen state. I looked upon it from the same ground, and could not discern the waters in its channel; so much had they fallen below their ordinary



level. He saw the river when it was overflowing its banks; on the present occasion it had scarcely sufficient water to support a current. On the summit of the greater eminence, which we ascended, there remained the half-burnt planks of a boat, some clenched and rusty nails, and an old trunk; but my search for the bottle Mr. Oxley had left was unsuccessful.

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A reflection naturally arose to my mind on examining these decaying vestiges of a former expedition, whether I should be more fortunate than the leader of it, and how far I should be enabled to penetrate beyond the point which had conquered his perseverance. Only a week before I left Sydney I had followed Mr. Oxley to the tomb. A man of uncommon quickness, and of great ability, the task of following up his discoveries was not less enviable than arduous; but, arrived at that point at which his journey may be said to have terminated and mine only to commence, I knew not how soon I should be obliged, like him, to retreat from the marshes and exhalations of so depressed a country. My eye instinctively turned to the North-West, and the view extended over an apparently endless forest. I could trace the river line of trees by their superior height; but saw no appearance of reeds, save the few that grew on the banks of the stream.

Mount Foster, somewhat higher than Mount Harris, on the opposite side of the river, alone broke the line of the horizon to the North N.W. at a distance of five miles. From that point all round the compass, the low lands spread, like a dark sea, before me; except where a large plain stretching from E. to W., and lying to the S.E. broke their monotony; and if there was nothing discouraging, there certainly was nothing cheering, in the prospect.

Illness of two of the men.

On our return to the camp, I was vexed to find two of the men, Henwood and Williams, with increased inflammation of the eyes, of which they had previously been complaining, and I thought it advisable to bleed the latter.

In consequence of the indisposition of these men, we remained stationary on the 21st, which enabled me to pay a second visit to Mount Harris. On ascending the smaller hill, I was surprised to find similar vestiges on its summit to those I had noticed on the larger one; in addition to which, the rollers still continued on the side of the hill, which had been used to get the boat up it. [Mr. Oxley had two boats; one of which he dragged to the top of each of these hills, and left them turned bottom upwards, burying a bottle under the head of the larger boat, which was conveyed to the more distant hill.]

Mount Harris is of basaltic formation, but I could not observe any columnar regularity in it, although large blocks are exposed above the ground. The rock is extremely hard and sonorous.

Mount Foster and its neighbourhood.

We moved leisurely towards Mount Foster, on the 22nd, and arrived opposite to it a little before sunset. The country between the two is mostly open, or covered only with the acacia pendula and dwarf-box. The soil, although an alluvial deposit, is not of the best;

nor was vegetation either fresh or close upon it. As soon as the party stopped, I crossed the river, and lost no time in ascending the hill, being

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anxious to ascertain if any fresh object was visible from its summit, I thought that from an eminence so much above the level of the surrounding objects, I might obtain a view of the marshes, or of water; but I was wholly disappointed. The view was certainly extensive, but it was otherwise unsatisfactory. Again to the N.W. the lowlands spread in darkness before me; there were some considerable plains beyond the near wood; but the country at the foot of the hill appeared open and promising. Although the river line was lost in the distance, it was as truly pointed out by the fires of the natives, which rose in upright columns into the sky, as if it had been marked by the trees upon its banks.

To the eastward, Arbuthnot's range rose high above the line of the horizon, bearing nearly due East, distant seventy miles. The following sketch of its outlines will convey a better idea of its appearance from Mount Foster than any written description.

[small sketch here—not shown in etext]

I stayed on the mount until after sunset, but I could not make out any space that at all resembled the formidable barrier I knew we were so rapidly approaching. I saw nothing to check our advance, and I therefore returned to the camp, to advise with Mr. Hume upon the subject. Not having been with me on Mount Foster, he took the opportunity to ascend it on the following morning; and on his return concurred with me in opinion, that there was no apparent obstacle to our moving onwards. As the men were considerably better, I had the less hesitation in closing with the marshes. We left our position, intending to travel slowly, and to halt early.

The first part of our journey was over rich flats, timbered sufficiently to afford a shade, on which the grass was luxuriant; but we were obliged to seek more open ground, in consequence of the frequent stumbling of the cattle.

We issued, at length, upon a plain, the view across which was as dreary as can be imagined; in many places without a tree, save a few old stumps left by the natives when they fired the timber, some of which were still smoking in different parts of it. Observing some lofty trees at the extremity of the plain, we moved towards them, under an impression that they indicated the river line. But on this exposed spot the sun's rays fell with intense power upon us, and the dust was so minute and penetrating, that I soon regretted having left the shady banks of the river.

About 2.p.m. we neared the trees for which we had been making, over ground evidently formed by alluvial deposition, and were astonished to find that reeds alone were growing under the trees as far as the eye could penetrate. It appeared that we were still some distance from the river, and it was very doubtful how far we might be from water, for which the men were anxiously calling. I therefore halted, and sent Fraser into the reeds towards some dead trees, on which a number of spoonbills were sitting.

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He found that there was a small lake in the centre of the reeds, the resort of numerous wild fowl; but although the men were enabled to quench their thirst, we found it impossible to water the animals. We were obliged, therefore, to continue our course along the edge of the reeds; which in a short time appeared in large masses in front of us, stretching into a vast plain upon our right; and it became evident that the whole neighbourhood was subject to extensive inundation.

Encamp amidst reeds.

I was fearful that the reeds would have checked us; but there was a passage between the patches, through which we managed to force our way into a deep bight, and fortunately gained the river at the bottom of it much sooner than we expected. We were obliged to clear away a space for the tents; and thus, although there had been no such appearance from Mount Foster, we found ourselves in less than seven hours after leaving it, encamped pretty far in that marsh for which we had so anxiously looked from its summit, and now trusting to circumstances for safety, upon ground on which, in any ordinary state of the river, it would have been dangerous to have ventured. Indeed, as it was, our situation was sufficiently critical, and would not admit of hesitation on my part.

Nature of the country.

After the cattle had been turned out, Mr. Hume and I again mounted our horses, and proceeded to the westward, with a view to examine the nature of the country before us, and to ascertain if it was still practicable to move along the river side. For, although it was evident that we had arrived at what might strictly be called the marshes of the Macquarie, I still thought we might be at some distance from the place where Mr. Oxley terminated his journey.

There was no indication in the river to encourage an idea that it would speedily terminate; nor, although we were on ground subject to extensive inundation, could we be said to have reached the heart of the marshes, as the reeds still continued in detached bodies only. We forced a path through various portions of them, and passed over ground wholly subject to flood, to a distance of about six miles. We then crossed a small rise of ground, sufficiently high to have afforded a retreat, had necessity obliged us to seek for one; and we shortly afterwards descended on the river, unaltered in its appearance, and rather increased than diminished in size. A vast plain extended to the N.W., the extremity of which we could not discern; though a thick forest formed its northern boundary.

It was evident that this plain had been frequently under water, but it was difficult to judge from the marks on the trees to what height the floods had risen. The soil was an alluvial deposit, superficially sandy; and many shells were scattered over its surface. To the

south, the country appeared close and low; nor do I think we could have approached the river from that side, by reason of the huge belts of reeds that appeared to extend as far as the the eye could reach.

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Men attacked with ophthalmia.

The approach of night obliged us to return to the camp. On our arrival, we found that the state of Henwood and Williams would prevent our stirring for a day or two. Not only had they a return of inflammation, but several other of the men complained of a painful irritation of the eyes, which were dreadfully blood-shot and weak. I was in some measure prepared for a relapse in Henwood, as the exposure which he necessarily underwent on the plain was sufficient to produce that effect; but I now became apprehensive that the affection would run through the party.

Considering our situation in its different bearings, it struck me that the men who were to return to Wellington Valley with an account of our proceedings for the Governor's information, had been brought as far as prudence warranted. There was no fear of their going astray, as long as they had the river to guide them; but in the open country which we were to all appearance approaching, or amidst fields of reeds, they might wander from the track, and irrecoverably lose themselves. I determined, therefore, not to risk their safety, but to prepare my dispatches for Sydney, and I hoped most anxiously, that ere they were closed, all symptoms of disease would have terminated.

In the course of the day, however, Spencer, who was to return with Riley to Wellington Valley, became seriously indisposed, and I feared that he was attacked with dysentery. Indeed, I should have attributed his illness to our situation, but I did not notice any unusual moisture in the atmosphere, nor did any fogs rise from the river. I therefore rather attributed it to exposure and change of diet, and treated him accordingly. To my satisfaction, when I visited the men late in the evening, I found a general improvement in the whole of them. Spencer was considerably relieved, and those of the party who had inflammation of the eyes no longer felt that painful irritation of which they had before complained. I determined, therefore, unless untoward circumstances should prevent it, to send Riley and his companion homewards, and to move the party without loss of time.

We had not seen any natives for many days, but a few passed the camp on the opposite side of the river on the evening of the 25th. They would not, however, come to us; but fled into the interior in great apparent alarm.

Departure of two men for Wellington.

On the morning of the 26th, the men were sufficiently recovered to pursue their journey. Riley and Spencer left us at an early hour; and about 7 a.m. we pursued a N.N.W. course along the great plain I have noticed, starting numberless quails, and many wild turkeys, by the way. Leaving that part of the river on which Mr. Hume and I had touched considerably to the left, we made for the point of a wood, projecting from the river line of trees into the plain. The ground under us was an alluvial deposit, and bore all the marks of frequent inundation.

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The soil was yielding, blistered, and uneven; and the claws of cray-fish, together with numerous small shells, were every where collected in the hollows made by the subsiding of the waters, between broad belts of reeds and scrubs of polygonum.

Consultation.

On gaining the point of the wood, we found an absolute check put to our further progress. We had been moving directly on the great body of the marsh, and from the wood it spread in boundless extent before us. It was evidently lower than the ground on which we stood; we had therefore, a complete view over the whole expanse; and there was a dreariness and desolation pervading the scene that strengthened as we gazed upon it. Under existing circumstances, it only remained for us either to skirt the reeds to the northward, or to turn in again upon the river; and as I considered it important to ascertain the direction of the Macquarie at so critical and interesting a point, I thought it better to adopt the latter measure. We, accordingly, made for the river, and pitched our tents, as at the last station, in the midst of reeds.

There were two points at this time, upon which I was extremely anxious. The first was as to the course of the river; the second, as to the extent of the marshes by which we had been checked, and the practicability of the country to the northward.

In advising with Mr. Hume, I proposed launching the boat, as the surest means of ascertaining the former, and he, on his part, most readily volunteered to examine the marshes, in any direction I should point out. It was therefore, arranged, that I should take two men, and a week's provision with me in the boat down the river; and that he should proceed with a like number of men on an excursion to the northward.

After having given directions as to the regulations of camp during our absence, we separated, on the morning of the 26th for the first time, in furtherance of the objects each had in view.

Boat excursion.

In pulling down the river, I found that its channel was at first extremely tortuous and irregular, but that it held a general N.W. course, and bore much the same appearance as it had done since our descent from Mount Foster.

We had a laborious task in lifting the boat over the trunks of trees that had fallen into the channel of the river or that had been left by the floods, and at length we stove her in upon a sunken log. The injury she received was too serious not to require immediate repair; and we, therefore, patched her up with a tin plate. This accident occasioned some delay, and the morning was consumed without our having made any considerable progress. At length, however, we got into a more open channel.



The river suddenly increased in breadth to thirty-five or forty-five yards, with a depth of from twelve to twenty feet of water. Its banks shelved perpendicularly down, and were almost on a level with the surface of the stream; and the flood mark was not more than two feet high on the reeds by which they were lined. We had hitherto passed under the shade of the flooded gum, which still continued on the immediate banks of the river; but, the farther we advanced, the more did we find these trees in a state of decay, until at length they ceased, or were only rarely met with.

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Termination of the river.

About 2 p.m. I brought up under a solitary tree, in consequence of heavy rain: this was upon the left bank. In the afternoon, however, we again pushed forward, and soon lost sight of every other object amidst reeds of great height. The channel of the river continued as broad and as deep as ever, but the flood mark did not show more than a foot above the banks, which were now almost on a level with the water; and the current was so sluggish as to be scarcely perceptible. These general appearances continued for about three miles, when our course was suddenly, and most unexpectedly, checked. The channel, which had promised so well, without any change in its breadth or depth, ceased altogether; and whilst we were yet lost in astonishment at so abrupt a termination of it, the boat grounded. It only remained for us to examine the banks, which we did with particular attention. Two creeks were then discovered, so small as scarcely to deserve the name, and which would, under ordinary circumstances, have been overlooked. The one branched off to the north—the other to the west. We were obliged to get out of the boat to push up the former, the leeches sticking in numbers to our legs. The creek continued for about thirty yards, when it was terminated; and, in order fully to satisfy myself of the fact, I walked round the head of it by pushing through the reeds. Night coming on, we returned to the tree at which we had stopped during the rain, and slept under it. The men cut away the reeds, or we should not have had room to move. At 2 a.m. it commenced raining, with a heavy storm of thunder and lightning; the boat was consequently hauled ashore, and turned over to afford us a temporary shelter. The lightning was extremely vivid, and frequently played upon the ground, near the firelocks, for more than a quarter of a minute at a time.

It is singular, that Mr. Oxley should, under similar circumstances, have experienced an equally stormy night, and most probably within a few yards of the place on which I had posted myself. Notwithstanding that the elements were raging around me, as if to warn me of the danger of my situation, my mind turned solely on the singular failure of the river. I could not but encourage hopes that this second channel that remained to be explored would lead us into an open space again; and as soon as the morning dawned we pursued our way to it. In passing some dead trees upon the right bank, I stopped to ascend one, that, from an elevation, I might survey the marsh, but I found it impossible to trace the river through it. The country to the westward was covered with reeds, apparently to the distance of seven miles; to the N.W. to a still greater distance; and to the north they bounded the horizon.

The whole expanse was level and unbroken, but here and there the reeds were higher and darker than at other places, as if they grew near constant moisture; but I could see no appearance of water in any body, or of high lands beyond the distant forest.

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As soon as we arrived at the end of the main channel, we again got out of the boat, and in pushing up the smaller one, soon found ourselves under a dark arch of reeds. It did not, however, continue more than twenty yards when it ceased, and I walked round the head of it as I had done round that of the other. We then examined the space between the creeks, where the bank receives the force of the current, which I did not doubt had formed them by the separation of its eddies. Observing water among the reeds, I pushed through them with infinite labour to a considerable distance. The soil proved to be a stiff clay; the reeds were closely embodied, and from ten to twelve feet high; the waters were in some places ankle deep, and in others scarcely covered the surface. They were flowing in different points, with greater speed than those of the river, which at once convinced me that they were not permanent, but must have lodged in the night during which so much rain had fallen. They ultimately appeared to flow to the northward, but I found it impossible to follow them, and it was not without difficulty that, after having wandered about at every point of the compass, I again reached the boat.

Causes of the failure of the river.

The care with which I had noted every change that took place in the Macquarie, from Wellington Valley downwards, enabled me, in some measure, to account for its present features. I was led to conclude that the waters of the river being so small in body, excepting in times of flood, and flowing for so many miles through a level country without receiving any tributary to support their first impulse, became too sluggish, long ere they reached the marshes, to cleave through so formidable a barrier; and consequently spread over the surrounding country—whether again to take up the character of a river, we had still to determine. Unless, however, a decline of country should favour its assuming its original shape, it was evident that the Macquarie would not be found to exist beyond this marsh, of the nature and extent of which we were still ignorant. The loss of my barometer was at this time severely felt by me, since I could only guess at our probable height above the ocean; and I found that my only course was to endeavour to force my way to the northward, to ascertain, if I could, from the bottom of the marshes; then penetrate in a westerly direction beyond them, in order to commence my survey of the S.W. interior. I was aware of Mr. Hume's perseverance, and determined, therefore, to wait the result of his report ere I again moved the camp, to which we returned late in the afternoon of the second day of our departure. We found it unsufferably hot and suffocating in the reeds, and were tormented by myriads of mosquitoes, but the waters were perfectly sweet to the taste, nor did the slightest smell, as of stagnation, proceed from them. I may add that the birds, whose sanctuary we had invaded, as the bittern and various tribes of the galinule, together with the frogs, made incessant noises around us, There were, however, but few water-fowl on the river; which was an additional proof to me that we were not near any very extensive lake.

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Mr. Hume's report.

Mr. Hume had returned before me to the camp, and had succeeded in finding a serpentine sheet of water, about twelve miles to the northward; which he did not doubt to be the channel of the river. He had pushed on after this success, in the hope of gaining a further knowledge of the country; but another still more extensive marsh checked him, and obliged him to retrace his steps. He was no less surprised at the account I gave of the termination of the river, than I was at its so speedily re-forming, and it was determined to lose no time in the further examination of so singular a region.

False channel; perplexities.

On the morning of the 28th therefore we broke up the camp, and proceeded to the northward, under Mr. Hume's guidance, moving over ground wholly subject to flood, and extensively covered with reeds; the great body of the marsh lying upon our left. After passing the angle of a wood, upon our right, from which Mount Foster was distant about fourteen miles, we got upon a small plain, on which there was a new species of tortuous box. This plain was clear of reeds, and the soil upon it was very rich. Crossing in a westerly direction we arrived at the channel found by Mr. Hume, who must naturally have concluded that it was a continuation of the river. The boat was immediately prepared, and I went up it in order to ascertain the nature of its formation. For two miles it preserved a pretty general width of from twenty to thirty yards; but at that distance began to narrow, and at length it became quite shallow and covered with weeds. We were ultimately obliged to abandon the boat, and to walk along a native path. The country to the westward was more open than I had expected. About a quarter of a mile from where we had left the boat, the channel separated into two branches; to which I perceived it owed its formation, coming, as they evidently did, direct from the heart of the marsh. The wood through which I had entered it on the first occasion bore south of me, to which one of the branches inclined; as the other did to the S.W. An almost imperceptible rise of ground was before me, which, by giving an impetus to the waters of the marsh, accounted to me for the formation of the main channel. It was too late, on my return to the camp, to prosecute any further examination of it downwards; but in the morning, Mr. Hume accompanied me in the boat, to ascertain to what point it led; and we found that at about a mile it began to diminish in breadth, until at length it was completely lost in a second expanse of reeds. We passed a singular scaffolding erected by the natives, on the side of the channel, to take fish; and also found a weir at the termination of it for the like purpose so that it was evident the natives occasionally ventured into the marshes.

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There was a small wood to our left which Mr. Hume endeavoured to gain, but he failed in the attempt. He did, however, reach a tree that was sufficiently high to give him a full view of the marsh, which appeared to extend in every direction, but more particularly to the north, for many miles. We were, however, at fault, and I really felt at a loss what step to take. I should have been led to believe from the extreme flatness of the country, that the Macquarie would never assume its natural shape, but from the direction of the marshes I could not but indulge a hope that it would meet the Castlereagh, and that their united waters might form a stream of some importance. Under this impression I determined on again sending Mr. Hume to the N.E. in order to ascertain the nature of the country in that direction.

Excursion to the north-west.

The weather was excessively hot, and as my men were but slowly recovering, I was anxious while those who were in health continued active, to give the others a few days of rest. I proposed, therefore, to cross the river, and to make an excursion into the interior, during the probable time of Mr. Hume's absence; since if, as I imagined, the Macquarie had taken a permanent northerly course, I should not have an opportunity of examining the distant western country. Mr. Hume's experience rendered it unnecessary for me to give him other than general directions.

A plain on fire.

On the last day of the year we left the camp, each accompanied by two men. I had the evening previously ordered the horses I intended taking with me across the channel, and at an early hour of the morning I followed them. Getting on a plain, immediately after I had disengaged myself from the reeds on the opposite side of the river, which was full of holes and exceedingly treacherous for the animals, I pushed on for a part of the wood Mr. Hume had endeavoured to gain from the boat, with the intention of keeping near the marsh. On entering it, I found myself in a thick brush of eucalypti, casuarinae and minor trees; the soil under them being mixed with sand. I kept a N.N.W. course through it, and at the distance of three miles from its commencement, ascended a tree, to ascertain if I was near the marshes; when I found that I was fast receding from them. I concluded, therefore, that my conjecture as to their direction was right, and altered my course to N.W., a direction in which I had observed a dense smoke arising, which I supposed had been made by some natives near water. At the termination of the brush I crossed a barren sandy plain, and from it saw the smoke ascending at a few miles' distance from me. Passing through a wood, at the extremity of the plain, I found myself at the outskirts of an open space of great extent, almost wholly enveloped in flames. The fire was running with incredible rapidity through the rhagodia shrubs with which it was covered. Passing

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quickly over it, I continued my journey to the N.W. over barren plains of red sandy loam of even surface, and bushes of cypresses skirted by acacia pendula. It was not until after sunset that we struck upon a creek, in which the water was excellent; and we halted on its banks for the night, calculating our distance at twenty-nine miles from the camp. The creek was of considerable size, leading northerly. Several huts were observed by us, and from the heaps of muscle-shells that were scattered about, there could be no doubt of its being much frequented by the natives. The grass being fairly burnt up, our animals found but little to eat, but they had a tolerable journey and did not attempt to wander in search of better food. I shot a snipe near the creek, much resembling the painted snipe of India; but I had not the means with me of preserving it.

A tribe of natives.

Continuing our journey on the following morning, we at first kept on the banks of the creek, and at about a quarter of a mile from where we had slept, came upon a numerous tribe of natives. A young girl sitting by the fire was the first to observe us as we were slowly approaching her. She was so excessively alarmed, that she had not the power to run away; but threw herself on the ground and screamed violently. We now observed a number of huts, out of which the natives issued, little dreaming of the spectacle they were to behold. But the moment they saw us, they started back; their huts were in a moment in flames, and each with a fire-brand ran to and fro with hideous yells, thrusting them into every bush they passed. I walked my horse quietly towards an old man who stood more forward than the rest, as if he intended to devote himself for the preservation of his tribe. I had intended speaking to him, but on a nearer approach I remarked that he trembled so violently that it was impossible to expect that I could obtain any information from him, and as I had not time for explanations, I left him to form his own conjectures as to what we were, and continued to move towards a thick brush, into which they did not venture to follow us.

Continue our journey.

After a ride of about eighteen miles, through a country of alternate plain and brush, we struck upon a second creek leading like the first to the northward. The water in it was very bitter and muddy, and it was much inferior in appearance to that at which we had slept. After stopping for half-an-hour upon its banks, to rest our animals, we again pushed forward. We had not as yet risen any perceptible height above the level of the marshes, but had left the country subject to overflow for a considerable space behind us. The brushes through which we had passed were too sandy to retain water long, but the plains were of such an even surface, that they could not but continue wet for a considerable period after any fall of rain. They were covered with salsolaceous plants, without a blade of grass; and their soil was generally a red sandy loam. There were

occasional patches that appeared moist, in which the calystemma was abundant, and these patches must, I should imagine, form quagmires in the wet season.

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On leaving the last-mentioned creek, we found a gently rising country before us; and about three or four miles from it we crossed some stony ridges, covered with a new species of acacia so thickly as to prevent our obtaining any view from them. As the sun declined, we got into open forest ground; and travelled forwards in momentary expectation, from appearances, of coming in sight of water; but we were obliged to pull up at sunset on the outskirts of a larger plain without having our expectation realized. The day had been extremely warm, and our animals were as thirsty as ourselves. Hope never forsakes the human breast; and thence it was that, after we had secured the horses, we began to wander round our lonely bivouac. It was almost dark, when one of my men came to inform me that he had found a small puddle of water, to which he had been led by a pigeon.

It was, indeed, small enough, probably the remains of a passing shower; it was, however, sufficient for our necessities, and I thanked Providence for its bounty to us. We were now about sixty miles from the Macquarie, in a N.W. by W. direction, and the country had proved so extremely discouraging, that I intimated to my men my intention of retracing my steps, should I not discover any change in it before noon on the morrow. A dense brush of acacia succeeded to the plain on which we had slept, which we entered, and shortly afterwards found ourselves in an open space, of oblong shape, at the extremity of which there was a shallow lake. The brush completely encircled it, and a few huts were upon its banks. About 10 p.m. we got into an open forest track of better appearance than any over which we had recently travelled.

Isolated hill.

There was a visible change in the country, and the soil, although red, was extremely rich and free from sand. A short time afterwards we rose to the summit of a round hill, from which we obtained an extensive view on most points of the compass. We had imperceptibly risen considerably above the general level of the interior.

View from the summit.

Beneath us, to the westward, I observed a broad and thinly wooded valley; and W. by S., distant apparently about twenty miles, an isolated mountain, whose sides seemed almost perpendicular, broke the otherwise even line of the horizon; but the country in every other direction looked as if it was darkly wooded. Anticipating that I should find a stream in the valley, I did not for a moment hesitate in striking down into it. Disappointed, however, in this expectation, I continued onwards to the mountain, which I reached just before the sun set. Indeed, he was barely visible when I gained its summit; but my eyes, from exposure to his glare, became so weak, my face was so blistered, and my lips cracked in so many places, that I was unable to look towards the west, and was actually obliged to sit down behind a rock until he had set.

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Perhaps no time is so favourable for a view along the horizon as the sunset hour; and here, at an elevation of from five to six hundred feet above the plain, the visible line of it could not have been less than from thirty-five to forty-five miles. The hill upon which I stood was broken into two points; the one was a bold rocky elevation; the other had its rear face also perpendicular, but gradually declined to the north, and at a distance of from four to five miles was lost in an extensive and open plain in that direction. In the S.E. quarter, two wooded hills were visible, which before had appeared to be nothing more than swells in the general level of the country. A small hill, similar to the above, bore N.E. by compass; and again, to the west, a more considerable mountain than that I had ascended, and evidently much higher, reflected the last beams of the sun as he sunk behind them. I looked, however, in vain for water. I could not trace either the windings of a stream, or the course of a mountain torrent; and, as we had passed a swamp about a mile from the hill, we descended to it for the night, during which we were grievously tormented by the mosquitoes.

Results of the excursion.

I had no inducement to proceed further into the interior. I had been sufficiently disappointed in the termination of this excursion, and the track before me was still less inviting. Nothing but a dense forest, and a level country, existed between me and the distant hill. I had learnt, by experience, that it was impossible to form any opinion of the probable features of so singular a region as that in which I was wandering, from previous appearances, or to expect the same result, as in other countries, from similar causes. In a geographical point of view, my journey had been more successful, and had enabled me to put to rest for ever a question of much previous doubt. Of whatever extent the marshes of the Macquarie might be, it was evident they were not connected with those of the Lachlan. I had gained knowledge of more than 100 miles of the western interior, and had ascertained that no sea, indeed that little water, existed on its surface; and that, although it is generally flat, it still has elevations of considerable magnitude upon it.

Although I had passed over much barren ground, I had likewise noticed soil that was far from poor, and the vegetation upon which in ordinary seasons would, I am convinced, have borne a very different aspect.

Yet, upon the whole, the space I traversed is unlikely to become the haunt of civilized man, or will only become so in isolated spots, as a chain of connection to a more fertile country; if such a country exist to the westward.

The hill which thus became the extreme of my journey, is of sandstone formation, and is bold and precipitous. Its summit is level and lightly timbered. As a tribute of respect to the late Surveyor-General, I called it Oxley's Table Land, and I named the distant hills D'Urban's Group, after Sir Benjamin D'Urban, in compliance with a previous request of

my friend Lieut. De la Condamine, that I would so name any prominent feature of the interior that I might happen to come upon.

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Return to the camp.

In returning to the camp, I made a circuit to the N.E., and reached the Macquarie late on the evening of the 5th of January; having been absent six days, during which we could not have ridden less than 200 miles. Yet the horses were not so fatigued as it was natural to expect they would have been.

My servant informed me that a party of natives had visited the camp on the 3rd, but that they retired precipitately on seeing the animals. I regretted to find the men but little better than when I left them. Several still complained of a painful irritation of the eyes, and of great weakness of sight. Attributing their continued indisposition in some measure to our situation, I was anxious to have moved from it; but as Mr. Hume was still absent, I could not decide upon the measure. He made his appearance, however, on the 6th, having ridden the greater part of the day through rain, which commenced to fall in the morning. Soon after his arrival, Dawber, my overseer of animals, who had accompanied him, was taken suddenly ill. During the night he became much worse, with shivering and spasms, and on the following morning he was extremely weak and feverish. To add to my anxiety, Mr. Hume also complained of indisposition. His state of health made me the more anxious to quit a position which I fancied unwholesome, and in which, if there was no apparent, there was certainly some secret, exciting cause; and as Mr. Hume reported having crossed a chain of ponds about four miles to the eastward, and out of the immediate precincts of the marshes, I ordered the tents to be struck, and placing Dawber on my horse, we all moved quietly over to them.

Mr. Hume's excursion.

The result of Mr. Hume's journey perplexed me exceedingly. He stated, that on setting out from the Macquarie his intention was to have proceeded to the N.E., to ascertain how far the reeds existed in that direction, and, if at all practicable, to reach the Castlereagh; but in case of failure, to regain the Macquarie by a westerly course. At first he travelled nearly four miles east, to clear the marshes, when he came on the chain of ponds to which we had removed.

He travelled over good soil for two miles after crossing this chain of ponds, but afterwards got on a red sandy loam, and found it difficult to proceed, by reason of the thickness of the brush, and the swampy state of the ground in consequence of the late rain.

The timber in the brushes was of various kinds, and he saw numerous kangaroos and emus. On issuing from this brush, he crossed a creek, leading northerly, the banks of which were from ten to twelve feet high. Whatever the body of water usually in it is, it now only afforded a few shallow puddles. Mr. Hume travelled through brushes until he came upon a third creek, similar to the one he had left behind him, at which he halted for the night. The water in it was bad, and the feed for the animals extremely poor. The

brush lined the creek thickly, and consisted chiefly of acacia pendula and box. The country preserved an uniform level, nor did Mr. Hume, from the highest trees, observe any break on the horizon.

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On the 2nd of January, Mr. Hume kept more northerly, being unable to penetrate the brushes he encountered. At two miles he crossed a creek leading to the N.W., between which and the place at which he had slept, he passed a native burial ground, containing eight graves. The earth was piled up in a conical shape, but the trees were not carved over as he had seen them in most other places.

The country became more open after he had passed the last mentioned creek, which he again struck upon at the distance of eight miles, and as it was then leading to the N.N.E. he followed it down for eighteen or twenty miles, and crossed it frequently during the day. The creek was dry in most places, and where he stopped for the night the water was bad, and the cattle feed indifferent.

Mr. Hume saw many huts, but none of them had been recently occupied, although large quantities of muscle-shells were scattered about. He computed that he had travelled about thirty miles, in a N.N.W. direction, and the whole of the land he passed over was, generally speaking, bad, nor did it appear to be subject to overflow.

On the 3rd, Mr. Hume proceeded down the creek on which he had slept, on a northern course, under an impression that it would have joined the Castlereagh, but it took a N.W. direction after he had ridden about four miles, and then turned again to the eastward of north. In consequence of this, he left it, and proceeded to the westward, being of opinion that the river just mentioned must have taken a more northerly course than Mr. Oxley supposed it to have done.

A short time after Mr. Hume turned towards the Macquarie, the country assumed a more pleasing appearance. He soon cleared the brushes, and at two miles came upon a chain of ponds, again running northerly in times of flood. Shortly after crossing these, he found himself on an extensive plain, apparently subject to overflow. The timber on it was chiefly of the blue-gum kind, and the ground was covered with shells. He then thought he was approaching the Macquarie, and proceeded due west across the flat for about two miles. At the extremity of it there was a hollow, which he searched in vain for water. Ascending about thirty feet, he entered a thick brush of box and acacia pendula, which continued for fourteen miles, when it terminated abruptly, and extensive plains of good soil commenced, stretching from N. to S. as far as the eye could reach, on which there were many kangaroos. Continuing to journey over them, he reached a creek at 5 p.m. on which the wild fowl were numerous, running nearly north and south, and he rested on its banks for the night. The timber consisted both of blue and rough gum, and the soil was a light earth.

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Mr. Hume expected in the course of the day to have reached the Macquarie, but on arriving at the creek, he began to doubt whether it any longer existed, or whether it had not taken a more westerly direction. On the following morning, therefore, he crossed the creek, and travelled W.S.W., for about two miles over good plains; then through light brushes of swamp-oak, cypress, box, and acacia pendula, for about twelve miles, to another creek leading northerly. He shortly afterwards ascended a range of hills stretching W.N.W. to which he gave the name of New Year's Range. From these hills, he had an extensive view, although not upon the highest part, but the only break he could see in the horizon was caused by some hills bearing by compass W. by S. distant about twenty-five miles. There was, however, an appearance as of high land to the northward, although Mr. Hume thought it might have been an atmospheric deception. From the range he looked in vain for the Macquarie, or other waters, and, as his provisions were nearly consumed, he was obliged to give up all further pursuit, and to retrace his steps. He fell in with two parties of natives, which, taken collectively, amounted to thirty-five in number, but had no communication with them.

It was evident, from the above account, that supposing a line to have been drawn from the camp northerly, Mr. Hume must have travelled considerably to the westward of it, and as I had run on a N.W. course from the marshes, it necessarily followed that our lines of route must have intersected each other, or that want of extension could alone have prevented them from having done so; but that, under any circumstances, they could not have been very far apart. This was too important a point to be left undecided, as upon it the question of the Macquarie's termination seemed to depend.

Both Mr. Hume and myself were of opinion, that a medium course would be the most satisfactory for us to pursue, to decide this point; and it appeared that we could not do better than, by availing ourselves of the creek on which we were, and skirting the reeds, to take the first opportunity of dashing through them in a westerly direction.

Doubts of the further extension of the river.

I entertained great doubts as to the longer existence of the river, and as I foresaw that, in the event of its having terminated we should strike at once into the heart of the interior, I became anxious for the arrival of supplies at Mount Harris; and although I could hardly expect that they had yet reached it, I determined to proceed thither. Mr. Hume was too unwell for me to think of imposing additional fatigue upon him; I left him, therefore, to conduct the party, by easy stages, to the northward, until such time as I should overtake them. Even in one day there was a visible improvement in the men, and Dawber's attack seemed to be rather the effects of cold than of any thing else. A death, however, under our circumstances, would have been so truly deplorable an event, that the least illness was sufficient to create alarm.

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I can hardly say that I was disappointed on my arrival at Mount Harris, to find its neighbourhood silent and deserted. I remained, however, under it for the greater part of the next day, and, prior to leaving it, placed a sheet of paper with written instructions against a tree, though almost without a hope that it would remain untouched.

Perplexing situation.

A little after sun-set we reached the first small marsh, at which we slept; and on the following morning I crossed the plains of the Macquarie, and joined the party at about fifteen miles from the creek at which I had left it. I found it in a condition that was as unlooked for by Mr. Hume as it was unexpected by me, and really in a most perplexing situation.

On the day I left him, Mr. Hume only advanced about two miles, in consequence of some derangement in the loads. Having crossed the creek, he, the next morning, proceeded down its right bank, until it entered the marshes and was lost. He then continued to move on the outskirts of the latter, and having performed a journey of about eight miles, was anxious to have stopped, but there was no water at hand. The men, however, were so fatigued, in consequence of previous illness, that he felt it necessary to halt after travelling about eleven miles.

No water could be procured even here, notwithstanding that Mr. Hume, who was quite unfit for great exertion, underwent considerable bodily fatigue in his anxiety to find some. He was, therefore, obliged to move early on the following morning, but neither men nor animals were in a condition to travel; and he had scarcely made three miles' progress, when he stopped and endeavoured to obtain a supply of water by digging pits among the reeds. From these he had drawn sufficient for the wants of the people when I arrived. Some rain had fallen on the 6th and 7th of the month, or it is more than probable the expedient to which he resorted would have failed of success. Mr. Hume, I was sorry to observe, looked very unwell; but nothing could prevent him from further endeavours to extricate the party from its present embarrassment.

Journey continued.

As soon as I had taken a little refreshment, therefore, I mounted a fresh horse; and he accompanied me across a small plain, immediately in front of the camp, which was subject to overflow and covered with polygonum, having a considerable extent of reeds to its right.

From the plain we entered a wood of blue-gum, in which reeds, grass, and brush formed a thick coppice. We at length passed into an open space, surrounded on every side by weeds in dense bodies. The great marsh bore south of us, and was clear and open, but behind us the blue-gum trees formed a thick wood above the weeds.

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About two hundred yards from the outskirts of the marsh there was a line of saplings that had perished, and round about them a number of the tern tribe (sea swallow) were flying, one of which Mr. Hume had followed a considerable way into the reeds the evening before, in the hope that it would have led him to water. The circumstance of their being in such numbers led us to penetrate towards them, when we found a serpentine sheet of water of some length, over which they were playing. We had scarcely time to examine it before night closed in upon us, and it was after nine when we returned to the tents.

From the general appearance of the country to the northward, and from the circumstance of our having got to the bottom of the great marsh, which but a few days before had threatened to be so formidable, I thought it probable that the reeds would not again prove so extensive as they had been, and I determined, if I could do so, to push through them in a westerly direction from our position.

Second great marsh.

The pits yielded us so abundant a supply during the night, that in the morning we found it unnecessary to take the animals to water at the channel we had succeeded in finding the evening before; but pursuing a westerly course we passed it, and struck deep into the reeds. At mid-day we were hemmed in by them on every side, and had crossed over numerous channels, by means of which the waters of the marshes are equally and generally distributed over the space subject to their influence. Coming to a second sheet of water, narrower, but longer, as well as we could judge, than the first, we stopped to dine at it; and, while the men were resting themselves, Mr. Hume rode with me in a westerly direction, to ascertain what obstacles we still had to contend with. Forcing our way through bodies of reeds, we at length got on a plain, stretching from S.E. to N.W., bounded on the right by a wood of blue-gum, under which the reeds still extended, and on the left by a wood in which they did not appear to exist. Certain that there was no serious obstacle in our way, we returned to the men; and as soon as they had finished their meal, led them over the plain in a N.W. by W. direction. It was covered with shells, and was full of holes from the effects of flood.

Conclusions in regard to the Macquarie.

As we were journeying over it, I requested Mr. Hume to ride into the wood upon our left, to ascertain if it concealed any channel. On his return he informed me that he descended from the plain into a hollow, the bottom of which was covered with small shells and bulrushes. He observed a new species of eucalypti, on the trunks of which the water-mark was three feet high. After crossing this hollow, which was about a quarter of a mile in breadth, he gained an open forest of box, having good grass under it; and, judging from the appearance of the country that no other channel could exist beyond him, and that he had ascertained sufficient for the object I had in view, he turned back to the plain. We stopped for the night under a wood of box, where the grass,

which had been burnt down, was then springing up most beautifully green, and was relished exceedingly by the animals.

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It was in consequence of our not having crossed any channel, while penetrating through the reeds, that could by any possible exaggeration have been laid down as the bed of the river, that I detached Mr. Hume; and the account he brought me at once confirmed my opinion in regard to the Macquarie, and I thenceforth gave up every hope of ever seeing it in its characteristic shape again.

Independently however of all circumstantial evidence, it was clear that the river had not re-formed at a distance of twenty-five miles to the north of us, since Mr. Hume had gone to the westward of that point, at about the same distance on his late journey, without having observed the least appearance of reeds or of a river. He had, indeed, noticed a hollow, which occasionally contained water, but he saw nothing like the bed of a permanent stream. I became convinced, also, from observation of the country through which we had passed, that the sources of the Macquarie could not be of such magnitude as to give a constant flow to it as a river, and at the same time to supply with water the vast concavity into which it falls. In very heavy rains only could the marshes and adjacent lands be laid wholly under water, since the evaporation alone would be equal to the supply.

The great plains stretching for so many miles to the westward of Mount Harris, even where they were clear of reeds, were covered with shells and the claws of cray-fish and their soil, although an alluvial deposit, was superficially sandy. They bore the appearance not only of frequent inundation, but of the floods having eventually subsided upon them. This was particularly observable at the bottom of the marshes. We did not find any accumulation of rubbish to indicate a rush of water to any one point; but numerous minor channels existed to distribute the floods equally and generally over every part of the area subject to them, and the marks of inundation and subsidence were everywhere the same. The plain we had last crossed, was, in like manner, covered with shells, so that we could not yet be said to be out of the influence of the marshes; besides which we had not crossed the hollow noticed by Mr. Hume, which it was clear we should do, sooner or later.

Situation of the party.

To have remained in our position would have been impossible, as there was no water either for ourselves or the animals; to have descended into the reeds again, for the purpose of carrying on a minute survey, would, under existing circumstances, have been imprudent. Our provisions were running short, and if a knowledge of the distant interior was to be gained, we had no time to lose. It was determined, therefore, to defer our further examination of the marshes to the period of our return; and to pursue such a course as would soonest and most effectually enable us to determine the character of the western interior.

CHAPTER II.

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Prosecution of our course into the interior—Mosquito Brush—Aspect and productions of the country—Hunting party of natives—Courageous conduct of one of them—Mosquitoes—A man missing—Group of hills called New-Year's Range—Journey down New-Year's Creek—Tormenting attack of the kangaroo fly—Dreariness and desolation of the country—Oxley's Table Land—D'Urban's Group—Continue our journey down New-Year's Creek—Extreme Disappointment on finding it salt—Fall in with a tribe of natives—Our course arrested by the want of fresh water—Extraordinary sound—Retreat towards the Macquarie.

We left our position at the head of the plain early on the 13th of January, and, ere the sun dipped, had entered a very different country from that in which we had been labouring for the last three weeks. We had, as yet, passed over little other than an alluvial soil, but found that it changed to a red loam in the brushes immediately backing the camp. An open forest track succeeded this, over which the vegetation had an unusual freshness, indicating that the waters had not long subsided from its surface. We shortly afterwards crossed a hollow, similar to that Mr. Hume had described, in which bulrushes had taken the place of reeds. Flooded-gum trees, of large size, were also growing in it, but on either side box alone prevailed, under which the forest grass grew to a considerable height. We crossed the hollow two or three times, and as often remarked the line of separation between those trees. The last time we crossed it the country rose a few feet, and we journeyed for the remainder of the day, at one time over good plains, at another through brushes, until we found water and feed, at which we stopped for the night, after having travelling about thirteen miles on a W. by N. course. The mosquitoes were so extremely troublesome at this place that we called it Mosquito Brush. At this time my men were improving rapidly, and Mr. Hume complained less, and looked better. I hoped, therefore, that our progress would be rapid into the interior.

Creek leading northerly; productions of the country.

On the 14th we took up a westerly course, and in the first instance traversed a plain of great extent; the soil of which was for the most part a red sandy loam, but having patches of light earth upon it. The former was covered with plants of the chenopodia kind; the latter had evidently been quagmires, and bore even then the appearance of moisture. At about seven miles from Mosquito Brush we struck upon a creek of excellent water, upon which the wild fowl were numerous. Some natives was seen, but they were only women, and seemed so alarmed that I purposely avoided them. As the creek was leading northerly, we traced it down on that course for about seven miles, and then halted upon its banks, which were composed of a light tenacious earth. Brushes of casuarina existed near it, but a tortuous box was the prevailing

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tree, which, excepting for the knees of small vessels, could not have been applied to any use, while the flooded-gum had entirely disappeared. Some ducks were shot in the afternoon, which proved a great treat, as we had been living for some time on salt provisions. Our animals fared worse than ourselves, as the bed of the creek was occupied by coarse rushes, and but little vegetation was elsewhere to be seen. I here killed a beautiful snake, of about four feet in length, and of a bright yellow colour: I had not, however, the means of preserving it. Fraser collected numerous botanical specimens, and among them two kinds of caparis. Indeed a great alteration had taken place in the minor shrubs, and few of those now prevalent had been observed to the eastward of the marshes.

From the creek, which both I and Mr. Hume must have crossed on our respective journeys, we held a westerly course for about fifteen miles, through a country of alternate plain and brush, the latter predominating, and in its general character differing but little from that we had traversed the day previous.

The acacia pendula still continued to exist on the plains backed by dark rows of cypresses (*Cupressus callitris*). In the brushes, box and casuarina (*Casuarina tortuosa*), with several other kinds of eucalypti, prevailed; but none of them were sufficiently large to be of use. The plains were so extremely level that a meridian altitude could have been taken without any material error; and I doubt much whether it would have been possible to have traversed them had the season been wet.

Hunting party of natives.

As we were travelling through a forest we surprised a hunting party of natives. Mr. Hume and I were considerably in front of our party at the time, and he only had his gun with him. We had been moving along so quietly that we were not for some time observed by them. Three were seated on the ground, under a tree, and two others were busily employed on one of the lower branches cutting out honey. As soon as they saw us, four of them ran away; but the fifth, who wore a cap of emu feathers, stood for a moment looking at us, and then very deliberately dropped out of the tree to the ground. I then advanced towards him, but before I got round a bush that intervened, he had darted away. I was fearful that he was gone to collect his tribe, and, under this impression, rode quickly back for my gun to support Mr. Hume. On my arrival I found the native was before me. He stood about twenty paces from Mr. Hume, who was endeavouring to explain what he was; but seeing me approach he immediately poised his spear at him, as being the nearest. Mr. Hume then unslung his carbine, and presented it; but, as it was evident my re-appearance had startled the savage, I pulled up; and he immediately lowered his weapon. His coolness and courage surprised me, and increased my desire to communicate with him. He had evidently taken both man and

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horse for one animal, and as long as Mr. Hume kept his seat, the native remained upon his guard; but when he saw him dismount, after the first astonishment had subsided, he stuck his spear into the ground, and walked fearlessly up to him. We easily made him comprehend that we were in search of water; when he pointed to the west, as indicating that we should supply our wants there. He gave his information in a frank and manly way, without the least embarrassment, and when the party passed, he stepped back to avoid the animals, without the smallest confusion. I am sure he was a very brave man; and I left him with the most favourable impressions, and not without hope that he would follow us.

From a more open forest, we entered a dense scrub, the soil in which was of a bright-red colour and extremely sandy, and the timber of various kinds. A leafless species of *stenochylus aphylla*, which, from the resemblance, I at first thought one of the *polygonum* tribe, was very abundant in the open spaces, and the young cypresses were occasionally so close as to turn us from the direction in which we had been moving. In the scrub we crossed Mr. Hume's tract, and, from the appearance of the ground, I was led to believe mine could not be very distant.

Fate of the Macquarie.

We struck upon a creek late in the afternoon, at which we stopped; New Year's Range bearing nearly due west at about four miles' distance. Had we struck upon my track, the question about which we were so anxious would still have been undecided; but the circumstance of our having crossed Mr. Hume's, which, from its direction, could not be mistaken, convinced me of the fate of the Macquarie, and I felt assured that, whatever channels it might have for the distribution of its waters, to the north of our line of route, the equality of surface of the interior would never permit it again to form a river; and that it only required an examination of the lower parts of the marshes to confirm the theory of the ultimate evaporation and absorption of its waters, instead of their contributing to the permanence of an inland sea, as Mr. Oxley had supposed.

New year's range.

On the 17th of January we encamped under New Year's Range, which is the first elevation in the interior of Eastern Australia to the westward of Mount Harris. Yet when at its base, I do not think that we had ascended above forty feet higher than the plains in the neighbourhood of that last mentioned eminence. There certainly is a partial rise of country, where the change of soil takes place from the alluvial deposits of the marshes, to the sandy loam so prevalent on the plains we had lately traversed; but I had to regret that I was unable to decide so interesting a question by other than bare conjecture.

Notwithstanding that Mr. Hume had already been on them, I encouraged hopes that a second survey of the country from the highest point of New Year's Range would enable us to form some opinion of it, by which to direct our future movements; but I was disappointed.

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The two wooded hills I had seen from Oxley's Table Land were visible from the range, bearing south; and other eminences bore by compass S.W. and W. by S.; but in every other direction the horizon was unbroken. To the westward, there appeared to be a valley of considerable extent, stretching N. and S., in which latter direction there was a long strip of cleared ground, that looked very like the sandy bed of a broad and rapid river. The bare possibility of the reality determined me to ascertain by inspection, whether my conjecture was right, and Mr. Hume accompanied me on this excursion. After we left the camp we crossed a part of the range, and travelled for some time through open forest land that would afford excellent grazing in most seasons. We passed some hollows, and noticed many huts that had been occupied near them; but the hollows were now quite dry, and the huts had been long deserted. After about ten miles' ride we reached a plain of white sand, from which New Year's Range was distinctly visible; and this no doubt was the spot that had attracted my attention. Pools of water continued on it, from which circumstance it would appear that the sand had a substratum of clay or marl. From this plain we proceeded southerly through acacia scrub, bounding gently undulating forest land, and at length ascended some small elevations that scarcely deserved the name of hills. They had fragments of quartz profusely scattered over them; and the soil, which was sandy, contained particles of mica.

Mosquitoes.

The view from them was confused, nor did any fresh object meet our observation. We had, however, considerably neared the two wooded hills, and the elevations that from the range were to the S.W., now bore N.W. of us. We had wandered too far from the camp to admit of our returning to it to sleep; we therefore commenced a search for water, and having found some, we tethered our horses near it for the night, and should have been tolerably comfortable, had not the mosquitoes been so extremely troublesome. They defied the power of smoke, and annoyed me so much, that, hot as it was, I rolled myself in my boat cloak, and perspired in consequence to such a degree, that my clothes were wet through, and I had to stand at the fire in the morning to dry them. Mr. Hume, who could not bear such confinement, suffered the penalty, and was most unmercifully bitten.

A man missing.

We reached the camp about noon the following day, and learnt, to our vexation, that one of the men, Norman, had lost himself shortly after we started, and had not since been heard of. Dawber, my overseer, was out in search of him. I awaited his return, therefore, before I took any measures for the man's recovery; nor was I without hopes that Dawber would have found him, as it appeared he had taken one of the horses with him, and Dawber, by keeping his tracks, might eventually have overtaken him. He returned, however, about 3 p.m. unsuccessful, when Mr. Hume and I mounted our

horses, and proceeded in different directions in quest of him, but were equally disappointed.

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We met at the creek in the dark, and returned to the camp together, when I ordered the cypresses on the range to be set on fire, and thus illuminated the country round for many miles. In the morning, however, as Norman had not made his appearance, we again started in search of the poor fellow, on whose account I was now most uneasy; for his horse, it appeared, had escaped him, and was found with the others at watering time.

I did not return to the camp until after sunset, more fatigued than I recollect ever having been before. I was, however, rejoiced on being informed that the object of my anxiety was safe in his tent; that he had caught sight of the hill the evening before, and that he had reached the camp shortly after I left it. He had been absent three nights and two days, and had not tasted water or food of any kind during that time.

To my enquiries he replied, that, being on horseback, he thought he could have overtaken a kangaroo, which passed him whilst waiting at the creek for the cattle, and that in the attempt, he lost himself. It would appear that he crossed the creek in the dark, and his horse escaped from him on the first night. He complained more of thirst than of hunger, although he had drunk at the watering-place to such an excess, on his return, as to make him vomit; but, though not a little exhausted, he had escaped better than I should have expected.

Country around new year's range.

New Year's Range consists of a principal group of five hills, the loftiest of which does not measure 300 feet in height. It has lateral ridges, extending to the N.N.W. on the one hand, and bending in to the creek on the other. The former have a few cypresses, sterculia, and iron bark upon them; the latter are generally covered with brush, under box; the brush for the most part consisting of two distinct species of stenochylus, and a new acacia. The whole range is of quartz formation, small fragments of which are profusely scattered over the ridges, and are abundantly incrustated with oxide of iron. The soil in the neighbourhood of New Year's Range is a red loam, with a slight mixture of sand. An open forest country lies between it and the creek, and it is not at all deficient in pasture.

New year's creek.

That a change of soil takes place to the westward of the creek, is obvious, from the change of vegetation, the most remarkable feature of which is the sudden check given to the further extension of the acacia pendula, which is not to be found beyond it, it being succeeded by another acacia of the same species and habits; neither do the plants of the chenopodia class exist in the immediate vicinity of the range.

I place these hills, as far as my observations will allow, in east lon. 146 degrees 32 minutes 15 seconds, and in lat. 30 degrees 21 minutes south; the variation of the compass being 6 degrees 40 minutes easterly.

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As New Year's Creek was leading northerly, it had been determined to trace it down as long as it should keep that course, or one to the westward of it. We broke up the camp, therefore, under the range, on the evening of the 18th, and moved to the creek, about two miles north of the place at which we had before crossed it, with the intention of prosecuting our journey on the morrow. But both Mr. Hume and I were so fatigued that we were glad of an opportunity to rest, even for a single day. We remained stationary, therefore, on the 19th; nor was I without hope that the natives whom we had surprised in the woods, would have paid us a visit, since Mr. Hume had met them in his search for Norman, and they had promised not only to come to us, but to do all in their power to find the man, whose footsteps some of them had crossed. They did not, however, venture near us; and I rather attribute their having kept aloof, to the circumstance of Mr. Hume's having fired a shot, shortly after he left them, as a signal to Norman, in the event of his being within hearing of the report. They must have been alarmed at so unusual a sound; but I am sure nothing was further from Mr. Hume's intention than to intimidate them; his knowledge of their manners and customs, as well as his partiality to the natives, being equally remarkable. The circumstance is, however, a proof of the great caution that is necessary in communicating with them.

Annoyed by kangaroo flies.

I have said that we remained stationary the day after we left the range, with a view to enjoy a little rest; it would, however, have been infinitely better if we had moved forward. Our camp was infested by the kangaroo fly, which settled upon us in thousands. They appeared to rise from the ground, and as fast as they were swept off were succeeded by fresh numbers. It was utterly impossible to avoid their persecution, penetrating as they did into the very tents.

The men were obliged to put handkerchiefs over their faces, and stockings upon their hands; but they bit through every thing. It was to no purpose that I myself shifted from place to place; they still followed, or were equally numerous everywhere. To add to our discomfort, the animals were driven almost to madness, and galloped to and fro in so furious a manner that I was apprehensive some of them would have been lost. I never experienced such a day of torment; and only when the sun set, did these little creatures cease from their attacks.

Suddenly relieved.

It will be supposed that we did not stay to subject ourselves to another trial; indeed it was with some degree of horror that the men saw the first light of morning streak the horizon. They got up immediately, and we moved down the creek, on a northerly course, without breakfasting as usual. We found that dense brushes of casuarina lined the creek on both sides, beyond which, to our left, there was open rising ground, on which eucalypti, cypresses, and the acacia longifolia, prevailed; whilst to the east, plains seemed to predominate.

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Although we had left the immediate spot at which the kangaroo flies (cabarus) seemed to be collected, I did not expect that we should have got rid of them so completely as we did. None of them were seen during the day; a proof that they were entirely local. They were about half the size of a common house fly, had flat brown bodies, and their bite, although sharp and piercing, left no irritation after it.

About noon we stopped at the creek side to take some refreshment. The country bore an improved appearance around us, and the cattle found abundance of pasture. It was evident that the creek had been numerously frequented by the natives, although no recent traces of them could be found. It had a bed of coarse red granite, of the fragments of which the natives had constructed a weir for the purpose of taking fish. The appearance of this rock in so isolated a situation, is worthy of the consideration of geologists.

Desolation of the country.

The promise of improvement I have noticed, gradually disappeared as we proceeded on our day's journey, and we at length found ourselves once more among brushes, and on the edge of plains, over which the rhagodia prevailed. Nothing could exceed in dreariness the appearance of the tracks through which we journeyed, on this and the two following days. The creek on which we depended for a supply of water, gave such alarming indications of a total failure, that I at one time, had serious thoughts of abandoning my pursuit of it. We passed hollow after hollow that had successively dried up, although originally of considerable depth; and, when we at length found water, it was doubtful how far we could make use of it. Sometimes in boiling it left a sediment nearly equal to half its body; at other times it was so bitter as to be quite unpalatable. That on which we subsisted was scraped up from small puddles, heated by the sun's rays; and so uncertain were we of finding water at the end of the day's journey, that we were obliged to carry a supply on one of the bullocks. There was scarcely a living creature, even of the feathered race, to be seen to break the stillness of the forest. The native dogs alone wandered about, though they had scarcely strength to avoid us; and their melancholy howl, breaking in upon the ear at the dead of the night, only served to impress more fully on the mind the absolute loneliness of the desert.

It appeared, from their traces that the natives had lingered on this ground, on which they had perhaps been born, as long as it continued to afford them a scanty though precarious subsistence; but that they had at length been forced from it. Neither fish nor muscles remained in the creek, nor emus nor kangaroos on the plains. How then could an European expect to find food in deserts through which the savage wandered in vain? There is no doubt of the fate that would have overtaken any one of the party who might have strayed away, and I was happy to find that Norman's narrow escape had made a due impression on the minds of his comrades.

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Sandy plains; leave the creek.

We passed some considerable plains, lying to the eastward of the creek, on parts of which the grass, though growing in tufts, was of luxuriant growth. They were, however, more generally covered with salsola and rhagodia, and totally destitute of other vegetation, the soil upon them being a red sandy loam. The paths across the plains, which varied in breadth from three to eight miles, were numerous; but they had not been recently trodden. The creek continued to have a thick brush of casuarina and acacia near it, to the westward of which there was a rising open forest track; the timber upon it being chiefly box, cypress, and the acacia longifolia. It was most probably connected with New Year's Range, those elevations being about thirty miles distant. It terminated in some gentle hills which, though covered in places with acacia shrub, were sufficiently open to afford an extensive view. From their summit Oxley's Table Land, towards which we had been gradually working our way, was distinctly visible, distant about twenty miles, and bearing by compass W. by S. On descending from these hills (called the Pink Hills, from the colour of a flower upon them) which were scattered over with fragments of slaty quartz, we traversed a box flat, apparently subject to overflow, having a barren sandy scrub to its left. I had desired the men to preserve a W.N.W. direction, on leaving them, supposing that that course would have kept them near the creek; but, on overtaking the party, I found that they had wandered completely away from it. The fact was, that the creek had taken a sudden bend to the eastward of N. and had thus thrown them out. It was with some difficulty that we regained it before sunset; and we were at length obliged to stop for the night at a small plain, about a quarter of a mile short of it, but we had the satisfaction of having excellent feed for the animals.

Oxley's table land.

Fearful that New Year's Creek would take us too far to the eastward, and being anxious to keep westward as much as possible, it struck me that we could not, under existing circumstances, do better than make for Oxley's Table Land. Water, I knew, we should find in a swamp at it's base, and we might discover some more encouraging feature than I had observed on my hasty visit to it. We left the creek, therefore on the 23rd, and once more took up a westerly course. Passing through a generally open country, we stopped at noon to rest the animals; and afterwards got on an excellent grazing forest track, which continued to the brush, through another part of which I had penetrated to the marsh more to the south. While making our way through it, we came upon a small pond of water, and must have alarmed some natives, as there was a fresh made fire close to it. Our journey had been unusually long, and the cattle had felt the heat so much, that the moment they saw water they rushed into it; and, as this created some confusion, I thought it best to stop where we were for the night.

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In the morning, Mr. Hume walked with me to the hill, a distance of about a mile. It is not high enough to deserve the name of a mountain, although a beautiful feature in the country, and showing well from any point of view. We ascended it with an anxiety that may well be imagined, but were wholly disappointed in our most sanguine expectations. Our chief object, in this second visit to Oxley's Table Land, had been to examine, more at leisure, the face of the country around it, and to discover, if possible, some fixed point on which to move.

If the rivers of the interior had already exhausted themselves, what had we to expect from a creek whose diminished appearance where we left it made us apprehend its speedy termination, and whose banks we traversed under constant apprehension? In any other country I should have followed such a water course, in hopes of its ultimately leading to some reservoir; but here I could encourage no such favourable anticipation.

The only new object that struck our sight was a remarkable and distant hill of conical shape, bearing by compass S. 10 E. To the southward and westward, in the direction of D'Urban's Group, a dense and apparently low brush extended; but to the N. and N.W., there was a regular alternation of wood and plain. I left Mr. Hume upon the hill, that he might the more readily notice any smoke made by the natives; and returned myself to the camp about one o'clock, to move the party to the swamp. Mr. Hume's perseverance was of little avail. The region he had been overlooking was, to all appearance, uninhabited, nor did a single fire indicate that there was even a solitary wanderer upon its surface.

Excursion to D'URBAN'S group.

Our situation, at this time, was extremely embarrassing, and the only circumstance on which we had to congratulate ourselves was, the improved condition of our men; for several of the cattle and horses were in a sad plight. The weather had been so extremely oppressive, that we had found it impossible to keep them free from eruptions. I proposed to Mr. Hume, therefore, to give them a few days' rest, and to make an excursion, with such of them as were serviceable, to D'Urban's Group. We were both of us unwilling to return to the creek, but we foresaw that a blind reliance upon fortune, in our next movements, might involve us in inextricable difficulty.

On the other hand, there was a very great risk in delay. It was more than probable, from the continued drought, that our retreat would be cut off from the want of water, or that we should only be enabled to effect our retreat with loss of most of the animals. The hope, however, of our intersecting some stream, or of falling upon a better country, prevailed over other considerations; and the excursion was, consequently, determined upon.

Distress from want of water.

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We left the camp on the 25th, accompanied by Hopkinson and the tinker; and, almost immediately after, entered an acacia scrub of the most sterile description, and one, through which it would have been impossible to have found a passage for the boat carriage. The soil was almost a pure sand, and the lower branches of the trees were decayed so generally as to give the whole an indescribable appearance of desolation. About mid-day, we crossed a light sandy plain, on which there were some dirty puddles of water. They were so shallow as to leave the backs of the frogs in them exposed, and they had, in consequence, been destroyed by solar heat, and were in a state of putrefaction. Our horses refused to drink, but it was evident that some natives must have partaken of this sickening beverage only a few hours before our arrival. Indeed, it was clear that a wandering family must have slept near this spot, as we observed a fresh made gunneah (or native hut), and their foot-prints were so fresh along the line we were pursuing, that we momentarily expected to have overtaken them. It was late in the evening when we got out of this brush into better and more open ground, where, in ordinary seasons we should, no doubt, have found abundance of water. But we now searched in vain for it, and were contented to be enabled to give our wearied animals better food than they had tasted for many days, the forest grass, though in tufts, being abundant.

We brought up for the night at the edge of a scrub, having travelled from thirty-two to thirty-five miles, judging the distance from the mountains still to be about twelve.

Bearings from Oxley's table land.

In the morning we started at an early hour, and immediately entered the brush, beneath which we had slept; pursuing a westerly course through it. After a short ride, we found ourselves upon a plain, that was crowded with flocks of cockatoos. Here we got a supply of water, such as it was—so mixed with slime as to hang in strings between the fingers; and, after a hasty breakfast, we proceeded on our journey, mostly through a barren sandy scrub that was a perfect burrow from the number of wombats in it, to within a mile of the hill group, where the country appeared like one continuous meadow to the very base of them. I never saw anything like the luxuriance of the grass on this tract of country, waving as it did higher than our horses' middles as we rode through it. We ascended the S.W. face of the mountain to an elevation of at least 800 feet above the level of the plain, and had some difficulty in scaling the masses of rock that opposed themselves to our progress. But on gaining the summit, we were amply repaid for our trouble. The view extended far and wide, but we were again disappointed in the main object that had induced us to undertake the journey. I took the following bearings by compass. Oxley's Table Land bore N. 40 E. distant forty-five miles; small and distant hill due E.; conical peak seen from Oxley's Table Land S. 60 E., very distant; long ridge of high land, S.E., distant thirty-five miles; high land, S. 30 E., distant thirty miles; long range, S. 25 W.

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To the westward, as a medium point, the horizon was unbroken, and the eye wandered over an apparently endless succession of wood and plain. A brighter green than usual marked the course of the mountain torrents in several places, but there was no glittering light among the trees, no smoke to betray a water hole, or to tell that a single inhabitant was traversing the extensive region we were overlooking. We were obliged to return to the plain on which we had breakfasted, and to sleep upon it.

D'URBAN'S group.

D'Urban's Group is of compact sandstone formation. Its extreme length is from E.S.E. to W.N.W., and cannot be more than from seven to nine miles, whilst its breadth is from two to four. The central space forms a large basin, in which there are stunted pines and eucalyptus scrub, amid huge fragments of rocks. It rises like an island from the midst of the ocean, and as I looked upon it from the plains below, I could without any great stretch of the imagination, picture to myself that it really was such. Bold and precipitous, it only wanted the sea to lave its base; and I cannot but think that such must at no very remote period have been the case, and that the immense flat we had been traversing, is of comparatively recent formation.

We reached the camp on the 28th of the month, by nearly the same route; and were happy to find that, after the few days' rest they had enjoyed, there was a considerable improvement in the animals.

Our experience of the nature of the country to the southward, and the westward, was such as to deter us from risking anything, by taking such a direction as was most agreeable to our views. Nothing remained to us but to follow the creek, or to retreat; and as we could only be induced to adopt the last measure when every other expedient should have failed, we determined on pursuing our original plan, of tracing New Year's Creek as far as practicable.

Description of Oxley's table land.

Oxley's Table Land is situated in lat. 29 degrees 57 minutes 30 seconds, and in E. long. 145 degrees 43 minutes 30 seconds, the mean variation being 6.32 easterly. It consists of two hills that appear to have been rent asunder by some convulsion of nature, since the passage between them is narrow and their inner faces are equally perpendicular. The hill which I have named after the late Surveyor-general, is steep on all sides; but the other gradually declines from the south, and at length loses itself in a large plain that extends to the north. It is from four to five miles in length, and is picturesque in appearance, and lightly wooded. A few cypresses were growing on Oxley's Table Land; but it had, otherwise, very little timber upon its summit. Both hills are of sandstone formation, and there are some hollows upon the last that deserve particular notice. They have the appearance of having been formed by eddies of water, being deeper in the centre than at

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any other part, and contain fragments and slabs of sandstone of various size and breadth, without a particle of soil or of sand between them. It is to be observed that the edges of these slabs, which were perfect parallelograms, were unbroken, and that they were as clean as if they had only just been turned out of the hand of the mason. We counted thirteen of these hollows in one spot about twenty-five feet in diameter, but they are without doubt of periodical formation, since a single hollow was observed lower than the summit of the hill upon its south extremity, that had evidently long been exposed to the action of the atmosphere, and had a general coating of moss over it.

Continue the journey; down new year's creek.

We left Oxley's Table Land on the morning of the 31st of January, pursuing a northern course through the brush and across a large plain, moving parallel to the smaller hill, and keeping it upon our left. The soil upon this plain differed in character from that on the plains to the eastward, and was much freer from sand. We stopped to dine at a spot, whence Oxley's Table Land bore by compass, S. by W., distant about twelve miles. Continuing our journey, at 2 p.m. we cleared the plain, and entered a tract covered with the polygonum junceum, on a soil evidently the deposit of floods. Box-trees were thinly scattered over it, and among the polygonum, the crested pigeons were numerous. These general appearances, together with a dip of country to the N.N.W., made us conclude that we were approaching the creek, and we accordingly intersected it on a N.N.E. course, at about three miles' distance from where we had dined. It had, however, undergone so complete a change, and had increased so much in size and in the height of its banks, that we were at a loss to recognise it. Still, with all these favourable symptoms, there was not a drop of water in it. But small shells lay in heaps in its bed, or were abundantly scattered over it; and we remarked that they differed from those on the plains of the Macquarie. A circumstance that surprised us much, was the re-appearance of the flooded-gum upon its banks, and that too of a large size. We had not seen any to the westward of the marshes, and we were, consequently, led to indulge in more sanguine expectation as to our ultimate success than we had ever ventured to do before.

The party crossed to the right bank of the creek, and then moved in a westerly direction along it in search of water. A brush extended to our right, and some broken stony ground, rather elevated, was visible, to which Mr. Hume rode; nor did he join me again until after I had halted the party for the night.

Distressed for water.

My search for water had been unsuccessful, and the sun had set, when I came upon a broad part of the creek that appeared very favourable for an encampment, as it was

encompassed by high banks, and would afford the men a greater facility of watching the cattle, that I knew would stray away if they could.

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My anxiety for them led me to wander down the bed of the creek, when, to my joy, I found a pond of water within a hundred yards of the tents. It is impossible for me to describe the relief I felt at this success, or the gladness it spread among the men. Mr. Hume joined me at dusk, and informed me that he had made a circuit, and had struck upon the creek about three miles below us but that, in tracing it up, he had not found a drop of water until he came to the pond near which we had so providentially encamped. On the following morning, we held a westerly course over an open country for about eight miles and a half. The prevailing timber appeared to be a species of eucalypti, with rough bark, of small size, and evidently languishing from the want of moisture. The soil over which we travelled was far from bad, but there was a total absence of water upon it. At 6 p.m. Oxley's Table Land was distant from us about fifteen miles, bearing S. 20 E. by compass.

We had not touched upon the creek from the time we left it in the morning, having wandered from it in a northerly direction, along a native path that we intersected, and that seemed to have been recently trodden, since footsteps were fresh upon it. At sunset, we crossed a broad dry creek that puzzled us extremely, and were shortly afterwards obliged to stop for the night upon a plain beyond it. We had, during the afternoon, bent down to the S.W. in hopes that we should again have struck upon New Year's Creek; and, under an impression that we could not be far from it, Mr. Hume and I walked across the plain, to ascertain if it was sufficiently near to be of any service to us. We came upon a creek, but could not decide whether it was the one for which we had been searching, or another.

Its bed was so perfectly even that it was impossible to say to what point it flowed, more especially as all remains of debris had mouldered away. It was, however, extremely broad, and evidently, at times, held a furious torrent. In the centre of it, at one of the angles, we discovered a pole erected, and at first thought, from the manner in which it was propped up, that some unfortunate European must have placed it there as a mark to tell of his wanderings, but we afterwards concluded that it might be some superstitious rite of the natives, in consequence of the untowardness of the season, as it seemed almost inconceivable that an European could have wandered to such a distance from the located districts in safety.

Reach A large river.

The creek had flooded-gum growing upon its banks, and, on places apparently subject to flood, a number of tall straight saplings were observed by us. We returned to the camp, after a vain search for water, and were really at a loss what direction next to pursue. The men kept the cattle pretty well together, and, as we were not delayed by any preparations for breakfast, they were saddled and loaded at an early hour.

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The circumstance of there having been natives in the neighbourhood, of whom we had seen so few traces of late, assured me that water was at hand, but in what direction it was impossible to guess. As the path we had observed was leading northerly, we took up that course, and had not proceeded more than a mile upon it, when we suddenly found ourselves on the banks of a noble river. Such it might in truth be called, where water was scarcely to be found. The party drew up upon a bank that was from forty to forty-five feet above the level of the stream. The channel of the river was from seventy to eighty yards broad, and enclosed an unbroken sheet of water, evidently very deep, and literally covered with pelicans and other wild fowl. Our surprise and delight may better be imagined than described. Our difficulties seemed to be at an end, for here was a river that promised to reward all our exertions, and which appeared every moment to increase in importance to our imagination. Coming from the N.E., and flowing to the S.W., it had a capacity of channel that proved that we were as far from its source as from its termination. The paths of the natives on either side of it were like well trodden roads; and the trees that overhung it were of beautiful and gigantic growth.

Disappointment on finding the river salt.

Its banks were too precipitous to allow of our watering the cattle, but the men eagerly descended to quench their thirst, which a powerful sun had contributed to increase; nor shall I ever forget the cry of amazement that followed their doing so, or the looks of terror and disappointment with which they called out to inform me that the water was so salt as to be unfit to drink! This was, indeed, too true: on tasting it, I found it extremely nauseous, and strongly impregnated with salt, being apparently a mixture of sea and fresh water. Whence this arose, whether from local causes, or from a communication with some inland sea, I knew not, but the discovery was certainly a blow for which I was not prepared. Our hopes were annihilated at the moment of their apparent realization. The cup of joy was dashed out of our hands before we had time to raise it to our lips. Notwithstanding this disappointment, we proceeded down the river, and halted at about five miles, being influenced by the goodness of the feed to provide for the cattle as well as circumstances would permit. They would not drink of the river water, but stood covered in it for many hours, having their noses alone exposed above the stream. Their condition gave me great uneasiness. It was evident they could not long hold out under their excessive thirst, and unless we should procure some fresh water, it would be impossible for us to continue our journey. On a closer examination, the river appeared to me much below its ordinary level, and its current was scarcely perceptible. We placed sticks to ascertain if there was a rise or

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fall of tide, but could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion, although there was undoubtedly a current in it. Yet, as I stood upon its banks at sunset, when not a breath of air existed to break the stillness of the waters below me, and saw their surface kept in constant agitation by the leaping of fish, I doubted whether the river could supply itself so abundantly, and the rather imagined, that it owed such abundance, which the pelicans seemed to indicate was constant, to some mediterranean sea or other. Where, however, were the human inhabitants of this distant and singular region? The signs of a numerous population were around us, but we had not seen even a solitary wanderer. The water of the river was not, by any means, so salt as that of the ocean, but its taste was precisely similar. Could it be that its unnatural state had driven its inhabitants from its banks?

One would have imagined that our perplexities would have been sufficient for one day, but ere night closed, they increased upon us, although our anxiety, with regard to the cattle, was happily removed. Mr. Hume with his usual perseverance, walked out when the camp was formed; and, at a little distance from it, ascended a ridge of pure sand, crowned with cypresses. From this, he descended to the westward, and, at length, struck upon the river, where a reef of rocks creased its channel, and formed a dry passage from one side to the other; but the bend, which the river must have taken, appeared to him so singular, that he doubted whether it was the same beside which we had been travelling during the day. Curiosity led him to cross it, when he found a small pond of fresh water on a tongue of land, and, immediately afterwards, returned to acquaint me with the welcome tidings. It was too late to move, but we had, at least, the prospect of a comfortable breakfast in the morning.

Junction of new year's creek.

In consequence of the doubts that hung upon Mr. Hume's mind, as to the course of the river, we arranged that the animals should precede us to the fresh water; and that we should keep close in upon the stream, to ascertain that point. After traversing a deep bight, we arrived nearly as soon as the party, at the appointed rendezvous. The rocks composing the channel of the river at the crossing place, were of indurated clay. In the course of an hour, the animals appearing quite refreshed, we proceeded on our journey, and at about four miles crossed New Year's Creek, at its junction with the salt river. We passed several parts of the main channel that were perfectly dry, and were altogether at a loss to account for the current we undoubtedly had observed in the river when we first came upon it. At midday D'Urban's Group bore S. 65 E. distant about 32 miles. We made a little westing in the afternoon. The river continued to maintain its character and appearance, its lofty banks, and its long still reaches: while, however, the blue-gum trees upon its banks were of magnificent size, the soil had but little vegetation upon it, although an alluvial deposit.

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We passed over vast spaces covered with the polygonum junceum, that bore all the appearance of the flooded tracks in the neighbourhood of the marshes, and on which the travelling was equally distressing to the animals. Indeed, it had been sufficiently evident to us that the waters of this river were not always confined to its channel, capacious as it was, but that they inundated a belt of barren land, that varied in width from a quarter of a mile to a mile, when they were checked by an outer embankment that prevented them from spreading generally over the country, and upon the neighbouring plains. At our halting place, the cattle drank sparingly of the water, but it acted as a violent purgative both on them and the men who partook of it.

Native village.

On the 5th, the river led us to the southward and westward. Early in the day, we passed a group of seventy huts, capable of holding from twelve to fifteen men each. They appeared to be permanent habitations, and all of them fronted the same point of the compass. In searching amongst them we observed two beautifully made nets, of about ninety yards in length. The one had much larger meshes than the other, and was, most probably, intended to take kangaroos; but the other was evidently a fishing net.

In one hut, the floor of which was swept with particular care, a number of white balls, as of pulverised shells or lime, had been deposited—the use of which we could not divine. A trench was formed round the hut to prevent the rain from running under it, and the whole was arranged with more than ordinary attention.

Terror of the natives.

We had not proceeded very far when we came suddenly upon the tribe to which this village, as it might be called, belonged.

In breaking through some brush to an open space that was bounded on one side by the river, we observed three or four natives, seated on a bank at a considerable distance from us; and directly in the line on which we were moving. The nature of the ground so completely favoured our approach, that they did not become aware of it until we were within a few yards of them, and had ascended a little ridge, which, as we afterwards discovered, ended in an abrupt precipice upon the river, not more than thirty yards to our right. The crack of the drayman's whip was the first thing that aroused their attention. They gazed upon us for a moment, and then started up and assumed an attitude of horror and amazement; their terror apparently increasing upon them. We stood perfectly immovable, until at length they gave a fearful yell, and darted out of sight.

They fire the bush.

Their cry brought about a dozen more natives from the river, whom we had not before observed, but who now ran after their comrades with surprising activity, and without once venturing to look behind them. As our position was a good one, we determined to remain upon it, until we should ascertain the number and disposition of the natives. We had not been long stationary, when we heard a crackling noise in the distance, and it soon became evident that the bush had been fired. It was, however, impossible that we could receive any injury on the narrow ridge upon which we stood, so that we waited very patiently to see the end of this affair.

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Remarks on the natives; disease among them.

In a short time the fire approached pretty near to us, and dense columns of smoke rose into the air over our heads. One of the natives, who had been on the bank, now came out of the bush, exactly from the spot into which he had retreated. He advanced a few paces towards us, and bending his body so that his hands rested on his knees, he fixed his gaze upon us for some time; but, seeing that we remained immovable, he began to throw himself into the most extravagant attitudes, shaking his foot from time to time. When he found that all his violence had no effect, he turned his rear to us in a most laughable manner, and absolutely groaned in spirit when he found that this last insult failed of success.

He stood perplexed and not knowing what next to do, which gave Mr. Hume an opportunity to call out to him, and with considerable address he at length got the savage to approach close up to him; Mr. Hume himself having advanced a short distance from the animals in the first instance. As soon as I thought the savage had sufficiently recovered from his alarm, I went up to him with a tomahawk, the use of which he immediately guessed. We now observed that the natives who had fled from the river, had been employed in setting a net. They had placed it in a semicircle, with either end to the shore, and rude pieces of wood were attached to it to keep the upper part perpendicular. It was in fact a sein, only that the materials, with the exception of the net-work, were simpler and rougher than cork or lead—for which last, we afterwards discovered stones had been substituted.

We had on this occasion a remarkable instance of the docility of the natives of the interior, or of the power they have of subduing their apprehensions; manifesting the opposite extremes of fear and confidence. These men whom we had thus surprised, and who, no doubt, imagined that we were about to destroy them, having apparently never seen nor heard of white men before, must have taken us for something preternatural; yet from the extremity of fear that had prompted them to set their woods in flames, they in a brief space so completely subdued those fears as to approach the very beings who had so strongly excited their alarm. The savage who had been the principal actor in the scene, was an elderly man, rather descending to the vale of years than what might be strictly called aged. I know not how it was, but I regarded him with peculiar interest. Mr. Hume's manners had in a great measure contributed to allay his evident agitation; but, from the moment I approached him, I thought there was a shade of anxiety upon his brow, and an expression of sorrow over his features, the cause of which did not originate with us. I could see in a moment, that his bosom was full even to bursting, and he seemed to claim at once our sympathy and our protection, although we were ignorant of that which oppressed

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him. We had not long been seated together, when some of his tribe mustered sufficient courage to join him. Both Mr. Hume and I were desirous of seeing the net drawn, but the old man raised some objection, by pointing to the heavens and towards the sun. After a little more solicitation, however, he gave a whistle, and, four or five natives having obeyed the summons, he directed them to draw the net, but they were unfortunate, and our wish to ascertain the kind of fish contained in the river was disappointed. As his tribe gathered round him, the old chief threw a melancholy glance upon them, and endeavoured, as much as he could, to explain the cause of that affliction which, as I had rightly judged, weighed heavily upon him. It appeared, then, that a violent cutaneous disease raged throughout the tribe, that was sweeping them off in great numbers. He called several young men to Mr. Hume and myself, who had been attacked by this singular malady. Nothing could exceed the anxiety of his explanations, or the mild and soothing tone in which he addressed his people, and it really pained me that I could not assist him in his distress. We now discovered the use to which the conical substance that had been deposited with such unusual care in one of the huts, was applied. There were few of the natives present who were not more or less marked with it, and it was no doubt, indicative of mourning.

Departure of the natives.

Some of the men, however, were painted with red and yellow ochre, with which it was evident to me they had besmeared themselves since our appearance, most likely in preparing for the combat in which they fancied they would be engaged. We distributed such presents as we had to those around us, and when we pursued our journey, the majority accompanied us, nor did they wholly leave us until we had passed the place to which their women had retired. They might have left us when they pleased, for we intended them no harm; as it was, however, they struck into the brushes to join their families, and we pushed on to make up for lost time.

The travelling near the river had been so bad, not only in consequence of the nature of the soil and brush, but from the numerous gullies that had been formed by torrents, as they poured into its channel after heavy rains and floods, that it was thought advisable to keep at a greater distance from it. We turned away, therefore, to the plains, and found them of much firmer surface. They partook, however, of the same general character as the plains we had traversed more to the eastward. Their soil was a light sandy loam, and the same succulent plants still continued to prevail upon them, which we have already noticed as existing upon the other plains. Both emus and kangaroos were seen, though not in any considerable numbers, but our dogs were not in a condition to run, and were all but killed by the extreme heat of the weather. We had fallen on a small pool

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of water shortly after we started in the morning, but we could do no more than refresh ourselves and the animals at it. In the afternoon, we again turned towards the river, and found it unaltered. Its water was still salt, and from the increased number of wild fowl and pelicans upon it, as well as from the general flatness of the country, I certainly thought we were rapidly approaching some inland sea. It was, however, uncertain how long we should be enabled to continue on the river. The animals were all of them extremely weak, and every day increased the probable difficulty of our return. There was not the least appearance of a break-up of the drought, the heavens were without a cloud, and the atmosphere was so clear that the outline of the moon could be distinctly seen, although she was far in her wane.

Brine springs in the river.

On the 6th, we journeyed again through a barren scrub, although on firmer ground, and passed numerous groups of huts. At about eight miles from our last encampment, we came upon the river, where its banks were of considerable height. In riding along them, Mr. Hume thought he observed a current running, and he called to inform me of the circumstance. On a closer examination, we discovered some springs in the very bed of the river, from which a considerable stream was gushing, and from the incrustation around them, we had no difficulty in guessing at their nature: in fact, they were brine springs, and I collected a quantity of salt from the brink of them.

Distress for want of fresh water.

After such a discovery, we could not hope to keep our position. No doubt the current we had observed on first reaching the river, was caused by springs that had either escaped our notice or were under water. Here was at length a local cause for its saltiness that destroyed at once the anticipation and hope of our being near its termination, and, consequently, the ardour with which we should have pressed on to decide so interesting a point.

Our retreat would have been a measure of absolute necessity ere this, had we not found occasional supplies of fresh water, the last pond of which was now about eighteen miles behind us.

Our course arrested.

Whether we should again find any, was a doubtful question, and I hesitated to run the risk. The animals were already, from bad food, and from the effects of the river water, so weak, that they could scarcely carry their loads, and I was aware, if any of the bullocks once fell, he would never rise again. Under such circumstances, I thought it better to halt the party at the edge of the scrub, though the feed was poor, and the water

not drinkable. Our situation required most serious consideration. It was necessary that we should move either backward or forward in the morning. Yet we could not adopt either measure

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with satisfaction to ourselves, under such unfavorable circumstances. I determined to relieve my own mind by getting the animals into a place of safety, as soon as possible; and, as the only effectual way of doing this was to retire upon the nearest fresh water, I resolved at once to do so. The party turned back on the morning of the 6th; nor do I think the cattle would ever have reached their destination had we not found a few buckets of rain water in the cleft of a rock, to refresh them. Thus it will appear that under our most trying circumstances, we received aid from Providence, and that the bounty of Heaven was extended towards us, when we had least reason to expect it.

Notwithstanding we had been thus forced to a partial retreat, both Mr. Hume and myself were unwilling to quit the pursuit of the river, in so unsatisfactory a manner. There was no difference in the appearance of the country to the westward of it; but a seeming interminable flat stretched away in that direction. A journey across it was not likely, therefore, to be attended with any favorable results, since it was improbable that any other leading feature was within our reach. I proposed, therefore, to take the most serviceable of the horses with me down the river, that, in the event of our finding fresh water, we might again push forward. Mr. Hume requesting to be permitted to accompany me, it was arranged that we should start on the 8th, thereby giving the animals a day's rest. We had not seen any natives since our parting with the chief horde; and as we were stationed at some little distance from the river, I hoped that they would not visit the camp during my absence. This was the only circumstance that gave me uneasiness, but the men had generally been behaving so well that I relied a great deal upon them.

Extraordinary sound.

About 3 p.m. on the 7th, Mr. Hume and I were occupied tracing the chart upon the ground. The day had been remarkably fine, not a cloud was there in the heavens, nor a breath of air to be felt. On a sudden we heard what seemed to be the report of a gun fired at the distance of between five and six miles. It was not the hollow sound of an earthly explosion, or the sharp cracking noise of falling timber, but in every way resembled a discharge of a heavy piece of ordnance. On this all were agreed, but no one was certain whence the sound proceeded. Both Mr. Hume and myself had been too attentive to our occupation to form a satisfactory opinion; but we both thought it came from the N.W. I sent one of the men immediately up a tree, but he could observe nothing unusual. The country around him appeared to be equally flat on all sides, and to be thickly wooded: whatever occasioned the report, it made a strong impression on all of us; and to this day, the singularity of such a sound, in such a situation, is a matter of mystery to me.

Further attempt to explore the river.

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On the 8th, we commenced our journey down the river, accompanied by two men, and a pack-horse, carrying our provisions on one side and a bucket of water on the other. Keeping in general near the stream, but making occasional turns into the plains, we got to the brush from which the party had turned back, about 3 p.m. Passing through, we crossed a small plain, of better soil and vegetation than usual; but it soon gave place to the sandy loam of the interior; nor did we observe any material alteration, either in the country or the river, as we rode along. The flooded-gum trees on the banks of the latter, were of beautiful growth, but in the brushes dividing the plains, box and other eucalypti, with cypresses and many minor shrubs, prevailed. We slept on the river side, and calculated our distance from the camp at about twenty-six or twenty-eight miles.

The horses would not drink the river water, so that we were obliged to give them a pint each from our own supply. On the following morning we continued our journey. The country was generally open to the eastward, and we had fine views of D'Urban's Group, distant from twenty to twenty-five miles. About noon, turning towards the river to rest, both ourselves and the horses, we passed through brush land for about a mile and a half. When we came upon its banks, we found them composed of a red loam with sandy superficies. We had, in the course of the day, crossed several creeks, but in none of them could we find water, although their channels were of great depth.

The day had been extremely warm, and from shaking in the barrel our supply of water had diminished to a little more than a pint; it consequently became a matter of serious consideration, how far it would be prudent to proceed farther; for, however capable we were of bearing additional fatigue, it was evident our animals would soon fail, since they trembled exceedingly, and had the look of total exhaustion. We calculated that we were forty miles from the camp, in a S.W. direction, a fearful distance under our circumstances, since we could not hope to obtain relief for two days. Independently however, of the state of the animals, our spirits were damped by the nature of the country, and the change which had taken place on the soil, upon which it was impossible that water could rest; while the general appearance of the interior showed how much it had suffered from drought. On the other hand, although the waters of the river had become worse to the taste, the river itself had increased in size, and stretched away to the westward, with all the uniformity of a magnificent canal, and gave every promise of increasing importance; while the pelicans were in such numbers upon it as to be quite dazzling to the eye. Considering, however, that perseverance would only involve us in inextricable difficulties, and that it would also be useless to risk the horses, since we had gained a distance to which the bullocks could not have been brought, I intimated my intention of giving up the further pursuit of the river, though it was with extreme reluctance that I did so.

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Called it the "Darling".

As soon as we had bathed and finished our scanty meal, I took the bearings of D'Urban's Group, and found them to be S. 58 E. about thirty-three miles distant; and as we mounted our horses, I named the river the "Darling," as a lasting memorial of the respect I bear the governor.

Abandon the attempt.

I should be doing injustice to Mr. Hume and my men, if I did not express my conviction that they were extremely unwilling to yield to circumstances, and that, had I determined on continuing the journey, they would have followed me with cheerfulness, whatever the consequences might have been.

CHAPTER III.

Intercourse with the natives—Their appearance and condition—Remarks on the Salt or Darling River—Appearance of the marshes on our return—Alarm for safety of the provision party—Return to Mount Harris—Miserable condition of the natives—Circumstances attending the slaughter of two Irish runaways—Bend our course towards the Castlereagh—Wallis's Ponds—Find the famished natives feeding on gum—Channel of the Castlereagh—Character of the country in its vicinity—Another tribe of natives—Amicable intercourse with them—Morrisset's chain of Ponds—Again reach the Darling River ninety miles higher up than where we first struck upon it.

We kept near the river as we journeyed homewards, and in striking across a plain, found an isolated rock of quartz and jasper, just showing itself partially above the surface of the ground.

We were anxious to get to the small plain I have mentioned, if possible, for the sake of the animals, and pushed on rapidly for it. About 4 p.m. we had reached our sleeping place of the previous evening, and being overpowered by thirst, we stopped in hopes that by making our tea strong we might destroy, in some measure, the nauseous taste of the water. The horses were spangled and a fire lit. Whilst we were sitting patiently for the boiling of the tins, Mr. Hume observed at a considerable distance above us, a large body of natives under some gum trees. They were not near enough for us to observe them distinctly, but it was evident that they were watching our motions. We did not take any notice of them for some time, but at last I thought it better to call out to them, and accordingly requested Mr. Hume to do so. In a moment the whole of them ran forward and dashed into the river, having been on the opposite side, with an uproar I had never witnessed on any former occasion.

Intercourse with natives.

Mr. Hume thought they intended an attack, and the horses had taken fright and galloped away. I determined, therefore, to fire at once upon them if they pressed up the bank on which we were posted. Mr. Hume went with me to the crest of it, and we rather angrily beckoned to the foremost of the natives to stop. They mistook our meaning, but laid all their spears in a heap as they came up. We then sat down on the bank and they immediately did the same; nor did they stir until we beckoned to them after the horses had been secured.

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As they conducted themselves so inoffensively, we gave them everything we had to spare. My gun seemed to excite their curiosity, as they had seen Mr. Hume shoot a cockatoo with it; they must consequently have been close to us for the greater part of the day, as the bird was killed in the morning. It was of a species new to me, being smaller than the common white cockatoo, and having a large scarlet-and-yellow instead of a pine-yellow top-knot.

Having stayed about half an hour with them, we remounted our horses, and struck away from the river into the plains, while the natives went up its banks to join their hordes. Those whom we saw were about twenty-seven in number and the most of them were strangers.

Distress from thirst.

It was some time after sunset before we reached the little plain on which we had arranged to sleep, and when we dismounted we were in a truly pitiable state. I had been unable to refrain from drinking copiously at the river, and now became extremely sick. Mr. Hume had been scarcely more prudent than myself, but on him the water had a contrary effect, as well as upon Hopkinson. The tinker was the only man fit for duty, and it was well for us that such was the case, as the horses made frequent attempts to stray, and would have left us in a pretty plight had they succeeded. We reached the camp on the following day a little before sunset, nor was I more rejoiced to dismount from my wearied horse than to learn that everything in the camp had been regular during our absence and that the men had kept on the best terms with the natives who had paid them frequent visits.

The bullocks had improved, but were still extremely weak, and as the horses we had employed on the last journey required a day or two's rest, it was arranged that we should not break up our camp until the 12th, beyond which period we could not stop, in consequence of the low state of our salt provisions, we having barely sufficient to last to Mount Harris, at the rate of two pounds per week.

Remarks on the natives.

The morning after we returned from our excursion, a large party of natives, about seventy in number, visited the camp. On this occasion, the women and children passed behind the tents, but did not venture to stop. Most of the men had spears, and were unusually inquisitive and forward. Several of them carried fire-sticks under the influence of the disease I have already noticed, whilst others were remarked to have violent cutaneous eruptions all over the body. We were pretty well on the alert; notwithstanding which, every minor article was seized with a quickness that would have done credit to a most finished juggler. One of the natives thus picked up my comb and toothbrush, but as he did not attempt to conceal them, they were fortunately recovered. After staying

with us a short time the men followed the women. They appeared to be strangers who had come from a distance.

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Customs of the natives.

The natives of the Darling are a clean-limbed, well-conditioned race, generally speaking. They seemingly occupy permanent huts, but their tribe did not bear any proportion to the size or number of their habitations. It was evident their population had been thinned. The customs of these distant tribes, as far as we could judge, were similar to those of the mountain blacks, and they are essentially the same people, although their language differs. They lacerate their bodies, but do not extract the front teeth. We saw but few cloaks among them, since the opossum does not inhabit the interior. Those that were noticed, were made of the red kangaroo skin. In appearance, these men are stouter in the bust than at the lower extremities; they have broad noses, sunken eyes, overhanging eyebrows, and thick lips. The men are much better looking than the women. Both go perfectly naked, if I except the former, who wear nets over the loins and across the forehead, and bones through the cartilages of the nose. Their chief food is fish, of which they have great supplies in the river; still they have their seasons for hunting their emus and kangaroos. The nets they use for this purpose, as well as for fishing, are of great length, and are made upon large frames. These people do not appear to have warlike habits nor do they take any pride in their arms, which differ little from those used by the inland tribes, and are assimilated to them as far as the materials will allow. One powerful man, however, had a regular trident, for which Mr. Hume offered many things without success. He plainly intimated to us that he had a use for it, but whether against an enemy or to secure prey, we could not understand. I was most anxious to have ascertained if any religious ceremonies obtained among them, but the difficulty of making them comprehend our meaning was insurmountable; and to the same cause may be attributed the circumstance of my being unable to collect any satisfactory vocabulary of their language. They evinced a strange perversity, or obstinacy rather, in repeating words, although it was evident that they knew they were meant as questions. The pole we observed in the creek, on the evening previously to our making the Darling, was not the only one that fell under our notice; our impression therefore, that they were fixed by the natives to propitiate some deity, was confirmed. It would appear that the white pigment was an indication of mourning. Whether these people have an idea of a superintending Providence I doubt, but they evidently dread evil agency. On the whole I should say they are a people, at present, at the very bottom of the scale of humanity.

Remarks on the Darling river.

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We struck the Darling River in lat. 29 degrees 37 minutes S. and in E. long. 145 degrees 33 minutes, and traced it down for about sixty-six miles in a direct line to the S.W. If I might hazard an opinion from appearance, to whatever part of the interior it leads, its source must be far to the N.E. or N. The capacity of its channel, and the terrific floods that must sometimes rage in it, would argue that it is influenced by tropical rains, which alone would cause such floods. It is likely that it seldom arrives at so reduced a state as that in which we found it, and that, generally speaking, it has a sufficient depth of water for the purposes of inland navigation: in such case its future importance cannot be questioned, since it most probably receives the chief streams falling westerly from the coast ranges. But, with every anticipation of the benefit that may at some time or other be derived from this remarkable and central stream, it is incumbent on me to state that the country, through which it flows, holds out but little prospect of advantage. Certainly the portion we know of it, is far from encouraging. The extent of alluvial soil, between the inner and outer banks of the river, is extremely limited, and, instead of being covered with sward, is in most places over-run by the polygonum. Beyond this the plains of the interior stretch away, whose character and soil must change, ere they can be available to any good purpose. But there is a singular want of vegetable decay in the interior of New Holland, and that powerfully argues its recent origin.

Remarks on the country.

There is no life upon its surface, if I may so express myself; but the stillness of death reigns in its brushes, and over its plains. It cannot, however, be doubted that we visited the interior during a most unfavorable season. Probably in ordinary ones it wears a different appearance, but its deserts are of great extent, and its productions are of little value.

Agreeably to our arrangements, we broke up our camp at an early hour on the morning of the 12th, and proceeded up the river to the junction of New Year's Creek. We then struck away in an easterly direction from it, detaching a man to trace the creek up, lest we should pass any water; and we should certainly have been without it had we not taken this precaution.

On the following day, we again passed to the eastward, through an open country, having picturesque views of Oxley's Table Land. We crossed our track about noon, and struck on the creek at about five miles beyond it, and we were fortunate enough to procure both water and grass. The timber upon the plains, between us and the Darling, we found to be a rough gum, but box prevailed in the neighbourhood of the creek at this part of it.

On the 14th, we changed our direction more to the southward, but made a short journey, in consequence of being obliged to make some slight repairs on the boat carriage.

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Regain our old route.

On the 15th, we kept an E.S.E. course, and, crossing the creek at an early hour, got upon our old track, which we kept. We had the lateral ridge of the Pink Hills upon our right, and travelled through a good deal of brush. Four or five natives joined us, and two followed us to the end of our day's journey. In the course of the evening, they endeavoured to pilfer whatever was in their reach, but were detected putting a tin into a bush, and soon took to their heels. This was the first instance we had of open theft among the natives of the interior.

We passed Mosquito Brush on the 18th, but found the ponds quite dry, we were, therefore, under the necessity of pushing on, to shorten the next day's journey, as we could not expect to get water nearer than the marshes. At noon, on the 19th, we entered the plain, and once more saw them spreading in dreariness before us. While the party was crossing to the first channel, I rode to the left, in order to examine the appearance of the country in the direction of the wood, and as far as I skirted the reeds had my impressions confirmed as to their partial extension. I was obliged, however, to join the men without completing the circuit of the marshes. They had found the first channel dry, and had passed on to the other, in which, fortunately, a small quantity of water still remained. It was, however, so shallow as to expose the backs of the fish in it, and a number of crows had congregated, and were pecking at them. Wishing to satisfy my mind as to the distance to which the river extended to the northward, Mr. Hume rode with me on the following day, to examine the country in that direction, leaving the men stationary. We found that the reeds gradually decreased in body, until, at length, they ceased, or gave place to bulrushes. There were general appearances of inundation, and of the subsidence of waters, but none that led us to suppose that any channel existed beyond the flooded lands.

Alarm for the safety of the provision party.

On our return to the camp, we observed dense masses of smoke rising at the head of the marshes, and immediately under Mount Foster. This excited our alarm for the safety of the party we hoped to find at Mount Harris, and obliged us to make forced marches, to relieve it if threatened by the natives.

On the 22nd, we crossed the plains of the Macquarie, and surprised a numerous tribe on the banks of the river; and the difficulty we found in getting any of them to approach us, their evident timidity, and the circumstance of one of them having on a jacket, tended to increase our apprehensions. When two or three came to us, they intimated that white men either had been or were under Mount Harris, but we were left in uncertainty and passed a most anxious night.

The body of reeds was still on fire; and the light embers were carried to an amazing distance by the wind, falling like a black-shower around us. As we knew that the natives

never made such extensive conflagration, unless they had some mischievous object in view, our apprehension for the safety of Riley, with his supplies, was increased.

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At the earliest dawn, we pushed for the hill. In passing that part of the meadows under Mount Foster, we observed that the grass had also been consumed, and we scarcely recognised the ground from its altered appearance. As we approached Mount Harris, we saw recent traces of cattle, but none were visible on the plains. Under the hill, however, we could distinctly see that a hut of some kind had been erected, and it is impossible for me to describe the relief we felt when a soldier came forward to reconnoitre us. I could no longer doubt the safety of the party, and this was confirmed by the rest of the men turning out to welcome us. It appeared that our suspicions with regard to the natives had not been without foundation, since they attempted to surprise the camp, and it was supposed the firing of the marshes was done with a view to collect the distant tribes, to make a second attack; so that our arrival was most opportune.

The party I found awaiting our arrival at Mount Harris consisted of one soldier, Riley, who had the charge of the supplies, and a drayman. They had found the paper I had fixed against the tree, and also the letters I had hid, and had forwarded them to Sydney, by another soldier and a prisoner; which had weakened their party a good deal. Riley informed me, that he had been between a month and three weeks at the station, and that knowing our provisions must have run short he had expected us much earlier than we had made our appearance.

My dispatches stated, that additional supplies had been forwarded for my use, together with horses and bullocks, in the event of my requiring them. On examination, the former were found to be in excellent order; and, as it would take some time to carry any changes I might contemplate, or find it necessary to make, into effect, I determined to give the men who had been with me a week's rest.

Encamp at mount Harris.

The camp was made snug; and as the weather had become much cooler I thought it a good opportunity to slaughter one of the bullocks, in order to guard against any bad effects of our having been living for some weeks exclusively on salt provisions. I was also induced to this measure, from a wish to preserve my supplies as much as possible.

These matters having been arranged, I had a temporary awning erected near the river, and was for three or four days busily employed writing an account of our journey for the Governor's information.

Having closed my despatches, and answered the numerous friendly letters I had received, my attention was next turned to the changes that had taken place at Mount Harris during our absence. The Macquarie, I found, had wholly ceased to flow, and now consisted of a chain of ponds. Such of the minor vegetation as had escaped the fires of the natives, had perished under the extreme heat of the season. The acacia pendula stood leafless upon the plains, and the polygonum

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juncum appeared to be the only plant that had withstood the effects of the drought. Yet, notwithstanding this general depression of the vegetable kingdom, the animals that had been brought from Wellington Valley were in the best condition, and were, indeed, too fat for effective labour; it might, therefore, be reasonably presumed, that herbage affording such nourishment in so unfavourable a season, would be of the richest quality, if fresh and vigorous under the influence of seasonable, and not excessive, rains.

Firing of the great marshes.

The appearance of the country was, however, truly melancholy; there was not a flower in bloom, nor a green object to be seen. Whether our arrival had increased their alarm, is uncertain, but the natives continued to fire the great marshes, and as the element raged amongst them, large bodies of smoke rose over the horizon like storm clouds, and had the effect of giving additional dreariness to the scene. I am inclined to think that they made these conflagrations to procure food, by seizing whatsoever might issue from the flames, as snakes, birds, or other animals; for they had taken every fish in the river, and the low state of its waters had enabled them to procure an abundance of muscles from its bed, which they had consumed with their characteristic improvidence. They were, consequently, in a starving condition, and so pitiable were their indications of it, that I was induced to feed such of them as visited the camp, notwithstanding their late misconduct; being likewise anxious to bring about a good understanding, as the best means of ensuring the safety of the smaller party when we should separate, of which I had reason to be doubtful. These people had killed two white men not long before my arrival among them, and as the circumstances attending the slaughter are singular, I shall relate them.

Slaughter of two Irish runaways.

The parties were two Irish runaways, who thought they could make their way to Timor. They escaped from Wellington Valley with a fortnight's provision each, and a couple of dogs, and proceeded down the Macquarie. About the cataract, they fell in with the Mount Harris tribe, and remained with them for some days, when they determined on pursuing their journey. The blacks, however, wanted to get possession of their dogs, and a resistance on the part of the Europeans brought on a quarrel. It appears, that before the blacks proceeded to extremities, they furnished the Irishmen, who were unarmed, with weapons, and then told them to defend themselves, but whether against equal or inferior numbers, I am uninformed. One of them soon fell, which the other observing, he took his knife out, and cut the throats of both the dogs before the blacks had time to put him to death. He was, however, sacrificed; and both the men were eaten by the tribe generally. I questioned several on the subject, but they preserved the most sullen silence, neither acknowledging nor denying the fact.

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Arbuthnot's range.

Mr. Hume had been one day on Mount Harris, and while there, had laid his compass on a large rock, near to which Mr. Oxley's boat had been burnt. To his surprise, he found the needle affected; and his bearings were all wrong. I subsequently went up to ascertain the extent of the error produced, and found it precisely the same as Mr. Hume noticed. When I placed the compass on the rock, Mount Foster bore from me N. by W., the true bearing of the one hill from the other being N.N.W. My placing my notebook under the compass did not alter the effect, nor did the card move until I raised the instrument a couple of feet above the stone, when it first became violently agitated, and then settled correctly; and my bearings of the highest parts of Arbuthnot's Range, and of its centre, were as follows:

Mount Exmouth to the N N. 86 E.
Centre..... N. 85 E.
Vernon's Peak..... N. 89 E.
Distance 70 miles.

Having finished my reports and letters, it became necessary to consider the best point on which to move, and to fix a day for our departure from Mount Harris. It struck me that having found so important a feature as the Darling River, the Governor would approve my endeavouring to regain it more to the southward, in order to trace it down. I, therefore, detached Mr. Hume to survey the country in that direction, and to ascertain if a descent upon the Bogen district would be practicable, through which I had been informed a considerable river forced itself. The report he made on his return was such as to deter me from that attempt, but he stated that the country for 30 miles from the Macquarie was well watered, and superior to any he had passed over during the journey; beyond that distance, it took up the character of the remote interior, and alternated with plains and brush, the soil being too sandy to retain water on its surface. He saw some hills from the extremity of his journey, bearing by compass W.S.W. We consequently determined to make for the Castlereagh, agreeably to our instructions. Preparations were made for breaking up the camp, all the various arrangements in the change of animals were completed, the boat carriage was exchanged for a dray, and I took Boyle in the place of Norman, whose timidity in the bush rendered him unfit for service.

Circuit of the great marshes.

There is a small hill on the opposite side of the river, and immediately facing Mount Harris, and to the S.E. of it there is a small lagoon, the head of a creek, by means of which its superfluous waters are carried off. This creek runs parallel to the river for about ten miles, and enters the marshes at the S.E. angle. This I ascertained one day



in riding to carry on my survey of the southern extremity of the marshes, and to join my line of route by making the circuit of that part of them. I found that the river was turned to its northerly course by a

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rising ground of forest land, which checks its further progress westerly. I proceeded round the S.W. angle, and then, taking a northerly course, got down to the bottom of the first great marsh, thus completing the circuit of them. I did not return to the camp until after 10 p.m., having crossed the river at day-light, nor did we procure any water from the time we left the stream to the moment of our recrossing it.

Wallis's ponds.

Having completed our various arrangements, and closed our letters, we struck our tents on the morning of the 7th March; we remained, however, to witness the departure of Riley's party for Wellington Valley, and then left the Macquarie on an E.N.E. course for Wallis's Ponds, and made them at about 14 miles. They undoubtedly empty themselves into the marshes, and are a continuation of that chain of ponds on which I left the party in Mr. Hume's charge. About a mile from Mount Harris, we passed a small dry creek, that evidently lays the country under water in the wet seasons. There was a blue-gum flat to the eastward of it, which we crossed, and then entered a brush of acacia pendula and box. The soil upon the plain was an alluvial deposit; that in the brushes was sandy. From the extremity of the plain, Mount Harris bore, by compass, S.W. by W.; Mount Foster due west. The scrub through which we were penetrating, at length became so dense, that we found it impossible to travel in a direct line through it, and frequent ridges of cypresses growing closely together, turned us repeatedly from our course. The country at length became clearer, and we travelled over open forest of box, casuarina, and cypresses, on a sandy soil; the first predominating. For about two miles before we made the creek, the country was not heavily timbered, the acacia pendula succeeding the larger trees. The ground had a good covering of grass upon it, and there were few of the salsolaceous plants, so abundant on the western plains, to be found. The rough-gum abounded near the creek, with a small tree bearing a hard round nut, and we had the luxury of plenty of water.

We remained stationary on the 8th, in hopes that Riley would have met the soldier who had been sent back to Wellington Valley, and that he would have forwarded any letters to us, of which he might have been the bearer. The day, however, passed over without realizing our expectations; and we started once more for the interior, and cut ourselves off from all communication with society.

Morrisset's ponds.

We made for Morrisset's chain of ponds, and travelled over rich and extensive plains, divided by plantations of cypress, box, and casuarina, in the early and latter period of the day. About noon we entered a dense forest of cypresses, which continued for three miles, when the cypresses became mixed with casuarina, box, and mountain-gum, a tree we had not remarked before in so low a situation.

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We struck upon the creek after a journey of about 15 miles. It had a sandy bed, and was extremely tortuous in its course, nor was it until after a considerable search, that we at length succeeded in finding water, at which a party of natives were encamped. The moment they saw us, they fled, and left all their utensils, &c. behind them. Among other things, we found a number of bark troughs, filled with the gum of the mimosa, and vast quantities of gum made into cakes upon the ground. From this it would appear these unfortunate creatures were reduced to the last extremity, and, being unable to procure any other nourishment, had been obliged to collect this mucilaginous food.

The plains we traversed, were of uniform equality of surface. Water evidently lodges and continues on them long after a fall of rain, and in wet seasons they must, I should imagine, be full of quagmires, and almost impassable.

On the 10th, we passed through a country that differed in no material point from that already described. We stopped at 10 a.m. under some brush, in the centre of a large plain, from which Arbuthnot's range bore S. 84 E. distant from 50 to 55 miles, and afterwards traversed or rather crossed, those extensive tracts described by Mr. Evans as being under water and covered with reeds, in 1817. They now bore a very different appearance, being firm and dry. The soil was in general good, and covered with forest grass and a species of oxalia. We did not observe any reeds, or the signs of inundation, but, as is invariably the case with plains in the interior, they were of too even surface, as I have so lately remarked, to admit of the waters running quickly off them; and no doubt, when they became saturated, many quagmires are formed, that would very much impede the movements of an expedition.

Reach the Castlereagh river.

We reached the Castlereagh about 4 p.m., and although its channel could not have been less than 130 yards in breadth, there was apparently not a drop of water in it. Its bed consisted of pure sand and reeds; amid the latter, we found a small pond of 15 yards circumference, after a long search. There is a considerable dip in the country towards the river, at about two miles from it; and the intervening brush was full of kangaroo, which, I fancy, had congregated to a spot where there was abundance of food for them. The soil covering the space was of the richest quality, and the timber upon it consisted of box, mountain gum, and the angophora lanceolata, a tree that is never found except on rich ground.

Want of water; character of the country.

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It appeared that our troubles were to recommence, and that in order to continue on the Castlereagh, it would be necessary for Mr. Hume and myself to undertake those fatiguing journeys in search of water that had so exhausted us already: and after all, it was doubtful how soon we might be forced back. I had certainly expected that, on our gaining the banks of the river, we should have had a constant supply of water, but the circumstance of the Castlereagh having not only ceased to flow, but being absolutely dry, while it afforded the best and clearest proof of the severity and continuance of the drought in the interior, at the same time damped the spirits and ardour of the men. We kept the left bank of the river as we proceeded down it, and passed two or three larger ponds about a mile below where we had slept, but there they ceased. The bed of the river became one of pure sand, nor did there appear to be any chance of our finding any water in it. I stopped the party at about eight miles, and desired the men to get their dinners, to give Mr. Hume and myself time to search for a supply upon the plains. Disappointed to the left, we crossed the channel of the Castlereagh, and struck over a small plain upon the right bank, and at the extremity of it, came upon a swamp, from which we immediately returned for the cattle, and got them unloaded by seven o'clock. As there was sufficient pasture around us, I proposed to Mr. Hume on the following day, to leave the party stationary, and to ride down the river to see how far its present appearances continued. Like the generality of rivers of the interior, it had, where we struck upon it, outer banks to confine its waters during floods, and to prevent them from spreading generally over the country; the space between the two banks being of the richest soil, and the timber chiefly of the angophora kind. Flooded-gum overhung the inner banks of the river, or grew upon the many islands, with casuarina. It became evident, however, that the outer banks declined in height as we proceeded down the river, nor was it long before they ceased altogether. As we rode along, we found that the inner ones were fast decreasing in height also. Riding under a hanging wood of the angophora, which had ceased for a time, we were induced to break off to our right, to examine some large flooded-gum trees about a couple of miles to the N.W. of us. On arriving near them, we were astonished to find that they concealed a serpentine lagoon that had a belt of reeds round it. Keeping this lagoon upon our right, we at length came to the head of it, past which the river sweeps. Crossing the channel of the river, we continued to ride in an easterly direction to examine the country. In doing this, we struck on a second branch of the Castlereagh, leading W. by N. into a plain, which it of course inundates at times, and running up it, we found its bed at the point of separation, to be considerably higher than that of the main channel, which still continued of pure sand—and was stamped all over with the prints of the feet of natives, kangaroos, emus, and wild dogs, We then turned again to the head of the lagoon, and took the following bearings of Arbuthnot's range:

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Mount Exmouth E. 90 S.
Centre Range E. 35 E.
Vernon's Peak E. 20 S.

From the head of the lagoon, the river appeared to enter a reedy hollow, shaded by a long line of flooded gum trees, and on proceeding to it, we found the banks ceased here altogether; and that a very considerable plain extended both to the right and the left, which cannot fail of being frequently laid under water.

Lagoons and creeks of the Castlereagh.

On the following morning we moved the party to the lagoon, and, passing its head, encamped to the north of it; after which we again rode down the river in search of water. It continued to hold a straight and northerly course for about five miles, having a plain on either side. The reeds that had previously covered the channel then suddenly ceased, and the channel, contracting in breadth, gained in depth: it became extremely serpentine, and at length lost all the character and appearance of a river. It had many back channels, as large as the main one, serving to overflow the neighbouring country. We succeeded in finding a small pond of water in one of the former, hardly large enough to supply our necessities, but as it enabled us to push so much further on, we turned towards the lagoon, making a circuitous journey to the right, across a large plain, bounded to the north by low acacia brush and box. We struck upon a creek at the further extremity of the plain, in which there was a tolerably sized pond. It appeared from the traces of men, that some natives had been there the day before; but we did not see any of them. The water was extremely muddy and unfit for use. The lagoon at which we had encamped, was of less importance than we had imagined.

Journey down the river.

Whilst Mr. Hume led the party down the river, I rode up its northward bank, to examine it more closely. I found it to be a serpentine sheet of about three miles in length, gradually decreasing in depth until it separated into two small creeks. In following one of them up, I observed that they re-united at the distance of about two miles, and that the lagoon was filled from the eastward, and not by the river as I had at first supposed. The waters at the head of the lagoon were putrid, nor was there a fish in, or a wild fowl upon it. The only bird we saw was a beautiful eagle, of the osprey kind, with plumage like a sea gull, which had a nest in the tree over the tents.

In turning to overtake the party I rode through a great deal of acacia scrub, and on arriving at the place at which I expected to have overtaken them, I found they had pushed on.

The Castlereagh, as I rode down it, diminished in size considerably, and became quite choked up with rushes and brambles. Rough-gum again made its appearance, with swamp-oak and a miserable acacia scrub outside. The country on both sides of the river seemed to be an interminable flat, and the soil of an inferior description.

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Wretched appearance of the country.

I came up with Mr. Hume about 1 o'clock and we again pushed forward at 3, and halted for the night without water, the want of which the cattle did not feel. The river held a general westerly course, and the country in its neighbourhood became extremely depressed and low. On the following day we moved forward a distance of not more than nine miles, through a country on which, at first, the acacia pendula alone was growing on a light alluvial soil. The river had many back drains, by means of which, in wet seasons, it inundates the adjacent plains. It was evident, however, that they had not been flooded for many years; and, notwithstanding that the country was low, the line of inundation did not appear to be very extensive, nor were there any reeds growing beyond the immediate banks of the river. Swamp-oak and rough-gum again prevailed near the stream at our halting place, and the improvement that had taken place, both in the country and in the Castlereagh, had induced us to make so short a journey; for not only was there abundance of the grass for the animals, but large ponds of water in the river. Some natives had only just preceded us down it: we came upon their fires that were still smoking; and upon them were the remains of some fish they had taken, near which they had left a cumbrous spear. The circumstances cheered us with hopes that an improvement would take place in the country, and that some new feature would soon open upon us. In the course of the following day, however, every favorable change, both in the river and in the country, disappeared. The latter continued extremely depressed, and in general open, or lightly covered with acacia pendula; the former dwindled into a mere ditch, choked up with brambles and reeds, and having only here and there a stagnant pool of water. We travelled on a N.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. course for about ten miles, and again stopped for the night without water. In the course of the afternoon, we traversed several flats, on which the rough-gum alone was growing. These flats were evidently subject to flood; and contained an alluvial soil.

They became more frequent as we travelled down the river, and the work was so heavy for the animals, that I was obliged to keep wide of them, in doing which we struck upon a creek of large size, coming from the N.E. and, having crossed, we traversed its right bank to its junction with the Castlereagh, and stopped close to it at a pond of water, though the feed for the animals was bad. The country to the left of the river, though somewhat high, was the same, in essential points, as that to the right.

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The Castlereagh seemed to have increased in size below the creek, but still it had no resemblance to a river. We had not proceeded very far down its banks, on the 18th, when we crossed a broad footpath leading to it from the interior. I turned my horse to the left, and struck upon a long sheet of water, from which I startled a number of pelicans. It was evident that the natives had recently been in the neighbourhood, but we thought it probable they might have been a hunting party, who had returned again to the plains. The whole track we passed over during the day was miserably poor and bare of vegetation, nor did the appearance of the country to the N.E. indicate any improvement. We lost the traces of the natives immediately after crossing their path or beat, and again found the bed of the river dry, after we had passed the sheet of water to which it led. The soil was so rotten and yielding, that the team knocked up early; indeed, it was a matter of surprise to me that they should not have failed before. The river made somewhat to the westward with little promise of improvement. The wretched appearance of the country as we penetrated into it, damped our spirits; we pressed on, however, with difficulty, over ground that was totally destitute of vegetation. Instead of lofty timber and a living stream, we wandered along the banks of an insignificant watercourse, and under trees of stunted size and scanty foliage. We stopped on the 20th at the angle of a creek, in which there was some dry grass, in consequence of the animals being almost in a starving state, but even here they had but little to eat.

A violent thunder-storm passed over us in the afternoon, but it made no change in the temperature of the air. The weather, although it had been hot and sultry, had fallen far short of the intense heat we experienced in crossing the marshes of the Macquarie, when it was such as to melt the sugar in the canisters, and to destroy all our dogs; and our nights were now become agreeably cool.

A party of natives.

We still, however, continued to travel over a dead level, nor was a height or break visible from the loftiest trees we ascended. A little before we stopped at the creek, we surprised a party of natives; old men, women, and children. They were preparing dinners of fish in much larger quantities than they could have devoured—probably for a part of the tribe that were absent; but the moment they saw us they fled, and left every thing at our mercy. On examining the fish, we found them totally different from any in the Macquarie, and took two of the most perfect to preserve. In the afternoon one of the men came to inform me that the tribe was coming down upon us.

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Mr. Hume and I, therefore, went to meet them. They were at this time about 150 yards from the tent, but seeing us advance, they stopped, and forming two deep, they marched to and fro, to a war song I suppose, crouching with their spears. We had not, however, any difficulty in communicating with them, and I shall detail the manner in which this was brought about, in hopes that it may help to guide others. When the natives saw us advance, they stopped, and we did the same. Mr. Hume then walked to a tree, and broke off a short branch. It is singular that this should, even with these rude people, be a token of peace. As soon as they saw the branch, the natives laid aside their spears, and two of them advanced about twenty paces in front of the rest, who sat down. Mr. Hume then went forward and sat down, when the two natives again advanced and seated themselves close to him.

Now it is evident that a little insight into the customs of every people is necessary to insure a kindly communication; this, joined with patience and kindness, will seldom fail with the natives of the interior. It is not to avoid alarming their natural timidity that a gradual approach is so necessary. They preserve the same ceremony among themselves. These men, who were eighteen in number, came with us to the tents, and received such presents as we had for them. They conducted themselves very quietly, and, after a short time, left us with every token of friendship.

Large creek.

On the 21st we proceeded down the river on a N.N.W. course, and at about five miles struck upon a very large creek, apparently coming from the E.N.E.

Although the Castlereagh had increased in size, this creek was infinitely larger; it was, however, perfectly dry. Lofty flooded-gum trees were upon its banks, and it appeared so much superior to the river that I was induced to halt the party at the junction, in order to examine it more closely. Mr. Hume, therefore, rode with me up the right bank. We had not proceeded very far, when some natives called out to us from the opposite scrub. Thinking that they belonged to the tribe we had left behind us, we pointed to the junction, and motioned them to go there, but one of the party continued to follow and call to us for some time. On our return to the men, we found that the natives had joined them, and they now gave us to understand that we were going away from water. This had indeed been apparent to us. The creek was perfectly dry, as far as we traced it up; and seemed to have been totally deserted by the natives.

We were about to proceed on our journey, when from twenty to thirty natives approached us from down the river. We sent two of those who had been with us to them, and the whole accompanied us for some miles, talking incessantly to the men, but keeping at a very respectful distance from the animals. We at length got opposite to their camp, near which there was a very fine pool of water, and they were earnest in persuading us to stop at it. We were, however, too anxious to get forward to comply;

under the improved appearance of the river since it had received the creeks from the eastward, little anticipating what was before us.

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Native armoury.

The natives did not follow us beyond their own encampment. Within sight of it, we came upon their armoury, if I may so term it. Numerous spears were reared against the trees, and heaps of boomerangs were lying on the ground. The spears were very heavy, and half barbed; and it is singular that three of them were marked with a broad arrow. We saw the natives watching us, fearful, I imagine, that we should help ourselves; but I would not permit any of their weapons to be touched.

Examination of creeks near the Castlereagh.

Pursuing our journey, we reached another creek, at about five miles, similar to the last in appearance and size, and we crossed it repeatedly during the afternoon. We had been induced to keep along a native path in the hope that it would have led us to the river by a short cut; but it eventually led us to this creek, and away from the Castlereagh; for, notwithstanding that we subsequently changed our course to the S.W., we failed, as we supposed, again to strike upon the latter, and were obliged to stop for the night on the banks of what appeared to be a third large dry creek, which we intersected nearly at right angles.

We travelled through a good deal of brush during the day, nor did the country change from the miserable and barren character it had assumed for the last thirty or forty miles. The Castlereagh had so frequently changed, that both Mr. Hume and myself were puzzled as to the identity of the creek upon which we had halted. We searched its bed in vain for water, although it was most capacious. Under an impression that the river was still to the south, and that we were at a point to which many watercourses from the high lands tended, I crossed the creek early in the morning, and held a S.W. course, over an open forest country. At about eight miles, we came upon a large space overrun by the polygonum junceum, a certain indication of flooded ground, and of our consequent proximity to some stream. Accordingly, after pushing through it, we struck upon a small creek with abundance of water in it. Whether this creek was the Castlereagh, which it resembled much more than the one we had left in the morning, was doubtful; but it was a great source of comfort to us to have so unexpected a supply of water as that which was now at our disposal. Whatever channel this was, whether a river or a creek, our tracing it down would lead us in the direction we wished to go, and probably to some junction.

The neighbourhood of the creek was well clothed with vegetation, and the cattle found good feed; but the only trees near it were rough-gum and casuarinae; the flooded-gum had again disappeared. The soil of the forest land over which we journeyed was a light sandy loam; and its timber consisted chiefly of eucalypti, acacia pendula, and the angophora.

Some natives visited us in the afternoon, and among them, both Mr. Hume and I recognised one of those we had seen on the Darling. He also knew us again, but we could not make out from him how far we were from that river. They stayed with us till sunset, and then went down the creek, leaving their spears against a tree, for which they said they would return.

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On the 23rd we took up a W.N.W. course, and when we again touched on the creek it was dry. This was at a distance of about five miles from where we had slept. As the animals had not recovered from their late privations, I deemed it better to halt the party and to examine the creek for a few miles below us, that in case it should prove destitute of water, we might return to that we had left. Mr. Hume accordingly rode down it for about three miles, without success; and on his rejoining the men, we returned with them to our last camp, or to within a short distance of it. Wishing to examine the creek above our position, I requested Mr. Hume to take two men with him, and to trace it down in search of water, while I should proceed in the opposite direction. I went from the camp at an early hour, and as I wandered along the creek, I passed a regular chain of ponds. The country on both sides of the creek was evidently subject to flood, but more extensively to the south than to the north. From the creek, I struck away to my left, and after penetrating through a belt of swamp-oak and minor shrubs, got on a small plain, which I crossed N.E. and, to my annoyance, found it covered with rhagodia and salsolae. As I had not started with the intention of sleeping, I turned to the S.W. a little before sunset, and reached the tents between ten and eleven. I found Mr. Hume awaiting me. He informed me that at about nine miles from where we had turned back with the party, he had struck upon a junction; and that as the junction was much larger than the channel he had been tracing, he thought it better to follow it up for a few miles. He found that it narrowed in width, and that its banks became steep, with a fine avenue of flooded-gum trees overhanging them. At four miles, he came upon another junction, and at four miles more, found himself opposite to the ground on which we had slept on the previous Saturday. From this point he retraced the channel, but not finding any water for three miles below the lower junction, he returned to the camp, with a view of prosecuting a longer journey on the morrow. Mr. Hume had become impressed with an opinion, that the junction up which we had slept was no other than the Castlereagh itself; and that our position was on a creek, probably Morrisset's chain of ponds, flowing into it. As the cattle wanted a few days' rest, Mr. Hume and I determined to ride, unattended, along our track to our camp of the 21st, and then to follow the channel upwards, until we should arrive at the station of the natives, or until we should have ridden to such a distance as would set our conjectures at rest. In the morning, however, instead of running upon our old track, we followed that of Mr. Hume to the junction, giving up our first intention, with a view to ascertain if there existed any water which we could, by an effort, gain, below where Mr. Hume had been. The channel was very broad, with a considerable fall in its bed, and, in appearance, more resembled the slope of a

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lawn than the bed of a river. It had two gum-trees in the centre of its channel, in one of which the floods had left the trunk of a large tree. We could discover where it narrowed and its banks rose, but, as we intended to make a closer examination before we left the neighbourhood, we continued our journey down the principal channel. The ground exhibited an abundance of pasture in its immediate neighbourhood, but the distant country was miserably poor and bare. At about three miles, we came upon the fresh traces of some natives, which led us to the channel again, from which we had wandered unintentionally. In it we found there had been water very lately, and it appeared that the natives had dug holes at the bottom to insure a longer supply. These were now exhausted, but still retained the appearance of moisture. At a mile and a half beyond these, we were led to some similar holes, by observing a number of birds flying about them. The water was too muddy for us to drink, but the horses emptied them successively. We now kept sufficiently near the channel to insure our seeing any pool that might still remain in it, but rode for about seven miles before we again saw water, and even here, although it was a spring, we were obliged to dig holes, and await their filling, before we could get sufficient for our use. Having dined, we again pursued our journey, and almost immediately came upon a long narrow ditch, full of water, and lined by bulrushes. The creek or river had for some time kept the centre of a deep alluvial valley, in which there was plenty of food for the cattle, and which, at this place, was apparently broader than anywhere else. The situation being favourable, we returned to the camp, and reached it late.

Depression of the men.

I do not know whether I was wrong in my conjecture, but I fancied, about this time, that the men generally were desponding. Whether it was that the constant fatigue entailed on myself and Mr. Hume, and that our constant absence, or the consequent exhaustion it produced, had any effect on their minds, or that they feared the result of our perseverance, is difficult to say; but certainly, they all had a depression of spirits, and looked, I thought, altered in appearance; nor did they evince any satisfaction at our success—at least, not the satisfaction they would have shown at an earlier period of our journey.

Before moving forward, it remained for us to ascertain if the channel from the junction was the Castlereagh, or only a creek. The intersection of so many channels in this neighbourhood, most of them so much alike, made it essentially necessary that we should satisfy ourselves on this point. Mr. Hume, therefore, accompanied me, as had at first been intended the morning of our return to the place at which we had slept. We took fresh horses, but dispensed with any other attendants, and indeed went wholly unarmed.

Camp of natives.

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After following our old track to its termination, we kept up the right bank of the channel, and at length arrived at the camp of the natives; thus satisfying ourselves that we had been journeying on the Castlereagh, and that we were still following it down. By this ride we ascertained that there was a distance of five-and-forty miles in its bed without a drop of water. Few of the natives were in the camp. The women avoided us, but not as if they were under any apprehension. Crossing at the head of the pool, we again got on our old track, but seeing two or three men coming towards us we alighted, and, tying our horses to a tree, went to meet them. One poor fellow had two ducks in his hand, which he had just taken off the fire; these he offered to us, and on our declining to accept of them, he called to a boy, who soon appeared with a large trough of honey, of which we partook. One of the men had an ulcer in the arm, and asked me what he should do to heal it; indeed, I believe Fraser had promised him some ointment, but not having any with me, I signified to him that he should wash it often, and stooping down, made as if I was taking up water in my hand. The poor fellow mistook me, and, also stooping down, took up a handful of dust which he threw over the sore. This gave me the trouble of explaining matters again, and by pointing to the water, I believe I at length made him understand me.

Dry channel of the river.

These good natured people asked us where we had slept the day we passed, and when informed of the direction, shook their heads, motioning at the same time, that we must have been without water. We informed them where the party was, and asked them to come and see us, but I fancy the distance was too great, or else we were in the beat of another tribe. On mentioning these facts to the men, they said that two of the natives had followed us for some miles, calling out loudly to us, but Mr. Hume and I both being in front, we did not hear them, although, evidently, they wished to save us distress.

Since the result of our excursion proved that the channel, about which I had been so doubtful, was the Castlereagh, it necessarily followed, that the creek at which we were encamped was one of those (most probably Morrisset's chain of ponds,) which we had already crossed nearer its source, and which Mr. Hume must have struck upon when endeavouring to gain the Castlereagh from the marshes of the Macquarie.

A perusal of these sheets will ere this have impressed on the reader's mind, the peculiarity of that fortune which led us from the Castlereagh to the creek, at which alone our wants could have been supplied. Had we wandered down the river, as we undoubtedly should have done had we recognised it as such, the loss of many of our animals would have been the inevitable consequence, and very probably a final issue would have been put to our journey. It is only to those who are placed in situations that baffle their own exertions or foresight, that the singular guidance of Providence becomes fully apparent.

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Natives perishing from famine.

It would appear that the natives were dying fast, not from any disease, but from the scarcity of food; and, should the drought continue, it seemed probable they may become extinct.

The men found the body of a woman covered with leaves near the tents, and very properly buried it. We made Friday a day of rest for ourselves, as indeed was necessary; and on the following morning proceeded down the river, and encamped on a high bank above it, at the base of which, our cattle both fed and watered.

At this spot one of the largest gum-trees I had ever seen had fallen, having died for want of moisture; indeed, the state of the vegetable kingdom was such as to threaten its total extinction, unless a change of seasons should take place.

It may be worthy of remark that, from our first arrival on the banks of the Castlereagh, to our arrival at the present camp, we never picked up a stone, or a pebble, in its bed.

Junction of the Castlereagh with the Darling.

In the hope that we should fall on some detached pond, we pursued our journey on the 29th. The Castlereagh gave singular proofs of its violence, as if its waters, confined in the valley, had a difficulty in escaping from it. We had not travelled two miles, when in crossing, as we imagined, one of its bights, we found ourselves checked by a broad river. A single glimpse of it was sufficient to tell us it was the Darling. At a distance of more than ninety miles nearer its source, this singular river still preserved its character, so strikingly, that it was impossible not to have recognised it in a moment. The same steep banks and lofty timber, the same deep reaches, alive with fish, were here visible as when we left it. A hope naturally arose to our minds, that if it was unchanged in other respects, it might have lost the saltiness that rendered its waters unfit for use; but in this we were disappointed—even its waters continued the same. As it was impossible for us to cross the Darling, I determined on falling back upon our last encampment, which was at a most Convenient distance, and of concerting measures there for our future movements. Prior to doing so, however, I rode to the junction of the Castlereagh with the Darling, accompanied by Mr. Hume, a distance of about half a mile. Upon the point formed by the two streams, there were a number of huts, and on the opposite bank of the Darling, about twenty natives had collected. We called out to them, but they would not join us.

At the junction, the Castlereagh, with whatever impetuosity it rushes from its confinement, makes not apparently the least impression on the Darling River. The latter seemed to loll on, totally heedless of such a tributary.

CHAPTER IV.

Perplexity—Trait of honesty in the natives—Excursion on horseback across the Darling—Forced to return—Desolating effects of the drought—Retreat towards the colony—Connection between the Macquarie and the Darling— Return up the banks of the Macquarie—Starving condition of the natives.

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On our return to the party, we found them surrounded by the natives, who were looking with an eye of wonder on the cattle and horses. We pointed out to them the direction in which we were going, and invited them to visit us; and nothing appeared to astonish them so much as the management of the team by a single man. We got back to our position early, and again fixed ourselves upon it.

It now only remained for us to consider what we should do under circumstances of certainly more than ordinary perplexity. We had nothing to hope for from travelling in a southerly direction, while to the E. and N.E., the state of the country was worse than that by which we had penetrated to the Darling. It was evident, that the large creeks joining the Castlereagh in that direction were dry, since the natives not only intimated this to us, but it was unquestionable that they themselves had deserted them, and had crowded to such places as still contained a supply of water. Even in retreating, we could not hope to retrace our steps. Experience had proved to us, that the dry state of the interior was as injurious to the movements of an expedition as a too wet season would have been. Taking everything, therefore, into consideration, I determined on leaving the party stationary, and on crossing the Darling to the N.W., and, if any encouraging feature presented itself, to return for the party, and persevere in an examination of the distant interior. Such, at least, appeared to me the most judicious plan: indeed, an attempt to have moved in any other direction would have been fruitless. And, as the result of this journey would be decisive, and would either fix or determine our advance or retreat, I was anxious for Mr. Hume's attendance.

The natives followed to the camp, and in the course of the afternoon, were joined by their women. The latter however, would not approach nearer than the top of a little hillock on which they sat. The men did not come round the tents, but stood in a row at a short distance. At sunset, they gained a little courage, and wandered about a little more; at length they went off to the Darling.

Honesty of A native.

It was quite dark, when I heard a native call from the hill on which the women had been, and I desired Hopkinson to take his firelock and ascertain what the man wanted. He soon after returned, and brought a blanket, which he said the man had returned to him. The native was alone, and when he offered the blanket, kept his spear poised in his right hand; but, seeing that no violence was intended him, he lowered his weapon, and walked away.

Reward the man for his conduct.

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I was extremely pleased at this trait of honesty, and determined to reward it. On inquiry, I found that the men had availed themselves of the day to wash their blankets and that one of them had been flung over a bush hanging over the bank of the river, and it was supposed that one of the natives must have pulled it down with him. In the morning, the tribe went away from their encampment before day-light as we judged from the cry of their dogs, than which nothing could be more melancholy; but about eight, the men made their appearance on the hill occupied by the women the evening previously, and seemed to be doubtful whether to approach nearer. I went out to them, and, with a downward motion of my hand, beckoned for them to come to me: they mistook the signal, but laid all their spears on the ground, and it was not until after the sign had been reversed that they stirred or moved towards me. I then got them in a row, and desired Hopkinson to single out the man who had given him the blanket. It was, however, with great difficulty that he recognised him, as the man stood firm and motionless. At length, after walking two or three times along the line, he stopped before one man, and put his hand on his shoulder, upon which the manner of the native testified as to the correctness of his guess.

The blanket being produced, I explained to the savage, with Mr. Hume's assistance, that I was highly pleased with him, and forthwith presented him with a tomahawk and a clasp-knife. The tribe were perfectly aware of the reason of my conduct, and all of them seemed highly delighted.

I was happy in having such an opportunity of showing the natives of the interior that I came among them with a determination to maintain justice in my communication with them, and to impress them, at the same time, with a sense of our love of it in them. That they appreciated my apparent lenity in not calling for the defaulter, I am sure, and I feel perfectly conscious that I should have failed in my duty had I acted otherwise than I did.

Effect of firing A gun.

Although the natives had shown so good a disposition, as they were numerous, I thought it as well, since I was about to leave the camp, to show them that I had a power they little dreamt of about me. I therefore called for my gun and fired a ball into a tree. The effect of the report upon the natives, was truly ridiculous. Some stood and stared at me, others fell down, and others ran away; and it was with some difficulty we collected them again. At last, however, we did so, and, leaving them to pick out the ball, mounted our horses and struck away for the Darling. We crossed the river a little above where we struck it, and then proceeded N.W. into the interior.

Excursion across the Darling.

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It is impossible for me to describe the nature of the country over which we passed, for the first eight miles. We rode through brushes of polygonum, under rough-gum, without a blade of vegetation, the whole space being subject to inundation. We then got on small plains of firmer surface, and red soil, but these soon changed again for the former; and at 4 p.m. we found ourselves advanced about two miles on a plain that stretched away before us, and bounded the horizon. It was dismally brown; a few trees only served to mark the distance. Up one of the highest I sent Hopkinson, who reported that he could not see the end of it, and that all around looked blank and desolate. It is a singular fact, that during the whole day, we had not seen a drop of water or a blade of grass.

Desolating effects of the drought.

To have stopped where we were, would, therefore, have been impossible; to have advanced, would probably have been ruin. Had there been one favorable circumstance to have encouraged me with the hope of success, I would have proceeded. Had we picked up a stone as indicating our approach to high land, I would have gone on; or had there been a break in the level of the country, or even a change in the vegetation. But we had left all traces of the natives far behind us; and this seemed a desert they never entered—that not even a bird inhabited. I could not encourage a hope of success, and, therefore, gave up the point; not from want of means, but a conviction of the inutility of any further efforts. If there is any blame to be attached to the measure, it is I who am in fault, but none who had not like me traversed the interior at such a season, would believe the state of the country over which I had wandered. During the short interval I had been out, I had seen rivers cease to flow before me, and sheets of water disappear; and had it not been for a merciful Providence, should, ere reaching the Darling, have been overwhelmed by misfortune.

I am giving no false picture of the reality. So long had the drought continued, that the vegetable kingdom was almost annihilated, and minor vegetation had disappeared. In the creeks, weeds had grown and withered, and grown again; and young saplings were now rising in their beds, nourished by the moisture that still remained; but the largest forest trees were drooping, and many were dead. The emus, with outstretched necks, gasping for breath, searched the channels of the rivers for water, in vain; and the native dog, so thin that it could hardly walk, seemed to implore some merciful hand to despatch it. How the natives subsisted it was difficult to say, but there was no doubt of the scarcity of food among them.

We arrived in camp at a late hour, and having nothing to detain us longer, prepared for our retreat in the morning. The natives had remained with the party during the greater part of the day, and had only left them a short time prior to our arrival.

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When examining the creek on which we had been encamped for some days, Mr. Hume observed a small junction; and as we knew we were almost due N. of the marshes of the Macquarie, both of us were anxious to ascertain whence it originated. To return to Mount Harris, by retracing our steps up the Castlereagh, would have entailed the severest distress upon us; we the rather preferred proceeding up this creek, and taking our chance for a supply of water. We therefore crossed Morrisset's chain of ponds, and encamped in the angle formed by the junction of the two creeks.

Before we left this position, we were visited by a party of natives, twelve in number, but not of the Darling tribe. They accompanied us a short way, and then struck off to the right. At about a mile and a half, we crossed Mr. Hume's track, leading westerly, which still remained observable. The creek was, no doubt, the hollow he stated that he crossed on that excursion, and its appearance certainly justified his opinion of it. Its bed was choked up with bulrushes or the polygonum, and its banks were level with the country on either side, or nearly so. We passed over extremely rich soil the whole day, on a S.W. and by W. course, though the timber upon it was dwarfish, and principally of the rough-gum kind.

On the 2nd of April, we stopped in order to make some repairs upon the dray; the wheels of which had failed us. Clayton put in four new spokes, and we heated the tyres over again, by which means we got it once more serviceable.

Wild melon.

The soil in the creek was of the richest quality, and was found to produce a dwarf melon, having all the habits and character of the cucumber. The fruit was not larger than a pigeon's egg, but was extremely sweet. There were not, however, many ripe, although the runners were covered with flowers, and had an abundance of fruit upon them. In the morning, we sent the tinker on horseback up the creek, to ascertain how far the next water was from us, desiring him to keep the creek upon his right, and to follow his own track back again. He thought fit, however, considering himself a good bushman, to wander away to his left, and the consequence was, that he soon lost himself. It would appear that he doubled and passed through some thick brush at the back of the camp, and at length found himself at dark on the banks of a considerable creek. In wandering along it, he luckily struck upon the natives we had last seen, who, good-naturedly, led him to the track of the dray, which his horse would not afterwards desert, and the tinker sneaked into the tent about 3 o'clock in the morning, having failed in his errand, and made himself the butt of the whole party.

Return up the creek.

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The day succeeding this adventure, we moved up the creek, which was, for the most part, even with the plain. The country continued the same as that we had passed over from the junction, being subject to flood, and having patches of bulrushes and reeds upon it. No change took place in the timber, but the line of acacia pendula, which forms the line of inundation, approached neater to us; nor was the mark of flood so high on the trunks of trees as below. We halted, with abominable water, but excellent food for the animals in the plains behind us. In continuing our journey, we found several changes take place in the appearance of the creek and its neighbourhood. The former diminished in size, and at length separated into two distinct channels, choked up, for the most part, with dead bulrushes, but having a few green reeds in patches along it. The flats on either side became slightly timbered, and blue gum was the prevailing tree. Crossing one of the channels, we observed every appearance of our near approach to the marshes, the flats being intersected by many little water-runs, such as we had noticed at the bottom of them. About noon we struck upon a body of reeds under the wood of eucalypti, below the second great morass, and keeping a little to our right to avoid them, fell shortly afterwards into our old track on the plain, upon which we continued to move, making the best of our way to the channel which had supplied our wants on our first return from the Darling. It was now, however, quite dry, and we were obliged to push on further, to shorten the journey of the morrow.

Connection of Macquarie and Darling.

The result of our journey up the creek was particularly satisfactory, both to myself and Mr. Hume; since it cleared up every doubt that might have existed regarding the actual termination of the Macquarie, and enabled us to connect the flow of waters at so interesting and particular a point. It will be seen by a reference to the chart, that the waters of the marshes, after trickling through the reeds, form a small creek, which carries off the superfluous part of them into Morrisset's chain of ponds, which latter again falls into the Castlereagh, at about eight miles to the W.N.W. and all three join the Darling in a W. by N. direction, in lat. 30 degrees 52 minutes south and E. lon. 147 degrees 8 minutes at about 90 miles to the N.N.W. of Mount Harris, and about an equal distance to the E.S.E. of where we struck upon the last-mentioned river. Thus it is evident that the Darling had considerably neared the eastern ranges, although it was still more than 150 miles from their base. It was apparently coming from the N.E., and whether it has its sources in the mountains behind our distant settlements, or still farther to the northwards, is a question of curious speculation, although, as I have already stated, I am of opinion that none but tropical rains could supply the furious torrent that must sometimes rage in it.

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It would be presumptuous to hazard any opinion as to the nature of the interior to the westward of that remarkable river. Its course is involved in equal mystery, and it is a matter of equal doubt whether it makes its way to the south coast, or ultimately exhausts itself in feeding a succession of swamps, or falls into a large reservoir in the centre of the island.

Return to mount Harris.

We reached Mount Harris on the 7th of the month, and moving leisurely up the banks of the Macquarie, gained Mr. Palmer's first station on the 14th, and Wellington Valley on the 21st, having been absent from that settlement four months and two weeks. The waters of the Macquarie had diminished so much, that its bed was dry for more than half a mile at a stretch, nor did we observe the least appearance of a current in it, until after we had ascended the ranges. The lower tribes were actually starving, and brought their children to us to implore something to eat. The men attempted to surprise the camp, but I believe they were urged from absolute necessity to procure subsistence for themselves, and that they intended robbery rather than personal violence.

Deplorable state of the country.

We left the interior in a still more deplorable state than that in which we found it; but it is more than probable that under other circumstances, we should have found it impossible to traverse its distant plains, as it is certain that unless rain fell in less than three weeks, all communication with the Darling would have been cut off:

CHAPTER V.

General remarks—Result of the expedition—Previous anticipations— Mr. Oxley's remarks—Character of the Rivers flowing westerly— Mr. Cunningham's remarks —Fall of the Macquarie—Mr. Oxley's erroneous conclusions respecting the character of the interior, naturally inferred from the state in which he found the country—The marsh of the Macquarie merely a marsh of the ordinary character— Captain King's observations— Course of the Darling—Character of the low interior plain—The convict Barber's report of rivers traversing the interior— Surveyor-General Mitchell's Report of his recent expedition.

Result of the expedition.

Whether the discoveries that have been made during this expedition, will ultimately prove of advantage to the colony of New South Wales, is a question that time alone can answer. We have in the meanwhile to regret that no beneficial consequences will immediately follow them. The further knowledge that has been gained of the interior is but as a gleam of sunshine over an extensive landscape. A stronger light has fallen



upon the nearer ground, but the distant horizon is still enveloped in clouds. The veil has only as it were been withdrawn from the marshes of the Macquarie to be spread over the channel of

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the Darling. Unsatisfactory, however, as the discoveries may as yet be considered in a commercial point of view, the objects for which the expedition had been fitted out were happily attained. The marsh it had been directed to examine, was traversed on every side, and the rivers it had been ordered to trace, were followed down to their terminations to a distance far beyond where they had ceased to exist as living streams. To many who may cast their eyes over the accompanying chart, the extent of newly discovered country may appear trifling; but when they are told, that there is not a mile of that ground that was not traversed over and over again, either by Mr. Hume or by myself, that we wandered over upwards of 600 miles more than the main body of the expedition, on different occasions, in our constant and anxious search for water, and that we seldom dismounted from our horses, until long after sunset, they will acknowledge the difficulties with which we had to contend, and will make a generous allowance for them; for, however unsuccessful in some respects the expedition may have been, it accomplished as much, it is to be hoped, as under such trying circumstances could have been accomplished. It now only remains for me to sum up the result of my own observations, and to point out to the reader, how far the actual state of the interior, has been found to correspond with the opinions that were entertained of it.

Mr. Oxley's remarks.

I have already stated, in the introduction to this work, that the general impression on the minds of those best qualified to judge was, that the western streams discharged themselves into a central shoal sea. Mr. Oxley thus expresses himself on the subject:

“July 3rd. Towards morning the storm abated, and at day-light, we proceeded on our voyage. The main bed of the river was much contracted, but very deep; the waters spreading to the depth of a foot or eighteen inches over the banks, but all running on the same point of bearing. We met with considerable interruptions from fallen timber, which in places nearly choked up the channel. After going about twenty miles, we lost the land and trees; the channel of the river, which lay through reeds, and was from one to three feet deep, ran northerly.—This continued for three or four miles farther, when, although there had been no previous change in the breadth, depth, or rapidity of the stream for several miles, and I was sanguine in my expectations of soon entering the long-sought-for Australian sea, it all at once eluded our farther pursuit, by spreading on every point from N.W. to N.E. among the ocean of reeds which surrounded us, still running with the same rapidity as before. There was no channel whatever among those reeds, and the depth varied from three to five feet. This astonishing change (for I cannot call it a termination of the river) of course left me no alternative but to endeavour to return to some spot

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on which we could effect a landing before dark. I estimated, that during the day, we had gone about twenty-four miles, on nearly the same point of bearing as yesterday. To assert, positively, that we were on the margin of the lake, or sea, into which this great body of water is discharged, might reasonably be deemed a conclusion, which has nothing but conjecture for its basis. But if an opinion may be permitted to be hazarded from actual appearances, mine is decidedly in favour of our being in the immediate vicinity of an inland sea, or lake, most probably a shoal one, and gradually filling up by numerous depositions from the high lands, left by the waters which flow into it. It is most singular, that the high lands on this continent seem to be confined to the sea-coast, and not to extend to any distance from it."

Mr. Cunningham's remarks.

In a work published at Sydney, containing an account of Mr. Allan Cunningham's journey towards Moreton Bay, in 1828, the following remarks occur, from which it is evident Mr. Cunningham entertained Mr. Oxley's views of the character and nature of the Western interior. Towards the conclusion of the narrative, the author thus observes:—

"Of the probable character of the distant unexplored interior, into which it has been ascertained *all* the rivers falling westerly from the dividing ranges flow, some inference may be drawn from the following data.

"Viewing, between the parallels of 34 degrees and 27 degrees, a vast area of depressed interior, subjected in seasons of prolonged rains to partial inundation, by a dispersion of the several waters that flow upon it from the eastern mountains whence they originate; and bearing in mind at the same time, that the declension of the country within the above parallels, as most decidedly shown by the dip of its several rivers, is uniformly to the N.N.W. and N.W., it would appear very conclusive, that either a portion of our distant interior is occupied by a lake of considerable magnitude, or that the confluence of those large streams, the Macquarie, Castlereagh, Gwydir, and the Dumaresq, with the many minor interfluent waters, which doubtless takes place upon those low levels, forms one or more noble rivers, which may flow across the continent by an almost imperceptible declivity of country to the north of north-west coasts, on certain parts of which, recent surveys have discovered to us extensive openings, by which the largest accumulations of waters might escape to the sea."

Character of the rivers.

It is the characteristic of the streams falling westerly from the eastern, or coast ranges, to maintain a breadth of channel and a rapidity of current more immediately near their sources, that ill accords with their diminished size, and the sluggish flow of their waters in the more depressed interior. In truth, neither the Macquarie nor the Castlereagh can

strictly be considered as permanent rivers. The last particularly is nothing more than a mountain torrent. The Macquarie, although it at length ceased to run, kept up the appearance of a river to the very marshes; but the bed of the Castlereagh might have been crossed in many places without being noticed, nor did its channel contain so much water as was to be found on the neighbouring plains.

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There are two circumstances upon which the magnitude, and velocity of a river, more immediately depend. The first is the abundance of its sources, the other the dip of its bed. If a stream has constant fountains at its head, and numerous tributaries joining it in its course, and flows withal through a country of gradual descent, such a stream will never fail; but if the supplies do not exceed the evaporation and absorption, to which every river is subject, if a river dependant on its head alone, falls rapidly into a level country, without receiving a single addition to its waters to assist the first impulse acquired in their descent, it must necessarily cease to flow at one point or other. Such is the case with the Lachlan, the Macquarie, the Castlereagh, and the Darling. Whence the latter originates, still remains to be ascertained; but most undoubtedly its sources have been influenced by the same drought that has exhausted the fountains of the three first mentioned streams.

In supporting his opinion of the probable discharge of the interior waters of Australia upon its north-west coast, Mr. Cunningham thus remarks in the publication from which I have already made an extract.

“To those remarkable parts of the north-west coast above referred to in the parallel of 16 degrees south, the Macquarie river, which rises in lat. 33 degrees, and under the meridian of 150 degrees east, would have a course of 2045 statute miles throughout, while the elevation of its source, being 3500 feet above the level of the sea as shown by the barometer, would give its waters an average descent of twenty inches to the mile, supposing the bed of the river to be an inclined plane.

“The Gwydir originating in elevated land, lying in 31 degrees south, and long. 151 degrees east, at a mean height of 3000 feet, would have to flow 2020 miles, its elevated sources giving to each a mean fall of seventeen inches.

“Dumaresq’s river falling 2970 feet from granite mountains, in 28 1/4 degrees under the meridian of 152 degrees, would have to pursue its course for 2969 miles, its average fall being eighteen inches to a mile.”

As I have never been upon the banks either of the Gwydir or the Dumaresq, I cannot speak of those two rivers; but in estimating the sources of the Macquarie at 3500 feet above the level of the sea, Mr. Cunningham has lost sight of, or overlooked the fact, that the fall of its bed in the first two hundred miles, is more than 2800 feet, since the cataract, which is midway between Wellington Valley and the marshes, was ascertained by barometrical admeasurement, to be 680 feet only above the ocean. The country, therefore, through which the Macquarie would have to flow during the remainder of its course of 1700 miles, in order to gain the N.W. coast, would not be a gradually inclined plain, but for the most part a dead level, and the fact of its failure is a sufficient proof in itself how short the course of a river so circumstanced must necessarily be.

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Mr. Oxley's opinions.

Having conversed frequently with Mr. Oxley on the subject of his expeditions, I went into the interior prepossessed in favour of his opinions, nor do I think he could have drawn any other conclusion than that which he did, from his experience of the terminations of the rivers whose courses he explored. Had Mr. Oxley advanced forty, or even thirty miles, farther than he did, to the westward of Mount Harris; nay, had he proceeded eight miles in the above direction beyond the actual spot from which he turned back, he would have formed other and very different opinions of the probable character of the distant interior. But I am aware that Mr. Oxley performed all that enterprise, and perseverance, and talent could have performed, and that it would have been impracticable in him to have attempted to force its marshes in the state in which he found them. It was from his want of knowledge of their nature and extent, that he inferred the swampy and inhospitable character of the more remote country, a state in which subsequent investigation has found it not to be. The marsh of the Macquarie is nothing more than an ordinary marsh or swamp in another country. However large a space it covers, it is no more than a concavity or basin for the reception of the waters of the river itself, nor has it any influence whatever on the country to the westward of it, in respect to inundation; the general features of the latter being a regular alternation of plain and brush. These facts are in themselves sufficient to give a fresh interest to the interior of the Australian continent, and to increase its importance.

Capt. King's opinions.

With respect to that part of its coast at which the rivers falling from the eastern mountains, discharge themselves, it is a question of very great doubt. It seems that Capt. King, in consequence of some peculiarities in the currents at its N.W. angle, supports Mr. Cunningham's opinion as to their probable discharge in that quarter. But I fear the internal structure of the continent is so low, as to preclude the hopes of any river reaching from one extremity of it to the other. A variety of local circumstances, as the contraction of a channel, a shoal sea, or numerous islands, influence currents generally, but more especially round so extensive a continent as that of which we are treating; nor does it strike me that any observations made by Capt. King during his survey, can be held to bear any connection with the eastern ranges, or their western waters. It may, however, be said, that as the course of the Darling is still involved in uncertainty, the question remains undecided; but it appears to me, the discovery of that river has set aside every conjecture (founded on previous observation) respecting the main features of the interior lying to the westward of the Blue Mountains. Both Mr. Oxley and Mr. Cunningham drew their conclusions from

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the appearances of the country they severally explored. The ground on which those theories were built, has been travelled over, and has not been found to realise them, but subsequent investigation has discovered to us a river, the dip of whose bed is to the S.W. We have every reason to believe that the sources of this river must be far to the northward of the most distant northerly point to which any survey has been made, as we are certain that it is far beyond the stretch of vision from the loftiest and most westerly of the barrier ranges; from which circumstance, it is evident that whatever disposition the streams descending from those ranges to the westward may show to hold a N.W. course more immediately at the base, the whole of the interior streams, from the Macquarie to the Dumaresq, are tributaries to the principal channel which conveys their united waters at right angles, if not still more opposite to the direction they were supposed to take, as far as is yet known.

Course of the Darling.

The Darling River must be considered as the boundary line to all inland discoveries from the eastward. Any judgment or opinion of the interior to the westward of that stream, would be extremely premature and uncertain. There is not a single feature over it to guide or to strengthen either the one or the other.

Character of the western interior.

My impression, when travelling the country to the west and N.W. of the marshes of the Macquarie, was, that I was traversing a country of comparatively recent formation. The sandy nature of its soil, the great want of vegetable decay, the salsolaceous character of its plants, the appearance of its isolated hills and flooded tracts, and its trifling elevations above the sea, severally contributed to strengthen these impressions on my mind. My knowledge of the interior is, however, too limited to justify me in any conclusion with regard to the central parts of Australia. An ample field is open to enterprise and to ambition, and it is to be hoped that some more decisive measures will be carried into effect, both for the sake of the colony and of geography, to fill up the blank upon the face of the chart of Australia, and remove from us the reproach of indifference and inaction.

Barber's statement.

Since the above pages were written, an expedition was undertaken by Major Mitchell, the Surveyor-General, to ascertain the truth of a report brought in by a runaway convict of the name of Barber, or Clarke, who had been at large for five years, at different times, among the natives to the northward of Port Macquarie. This man stated that a large river, originating in the high lands near Liverpool Plains, and the mountains to the north

of them, pursued a N.W. course to the sea. His story ran thus: Having learnt from the natives the existence of this river, he determined

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to follow it down, in hopes that he might ultimately be enabled to make his escape from the colony. He accordingly started from Liverpool Plains, and kept on a river called the Gnamoi, for some time, which took him N.W. After a few days' journey, he left this river, traversed the country northwards, and crossed some lofty ranges. Descending to the N.E. he came to another large river, the Keindur, which again took him N.W. He travelled 400 miles down it, when he observed a large stream joining it upon its left bank, which he supposed to be the Gnamoi. The river he was upon was broad and navigable. It flowed through a level country with a dead current and muddy water, and spread into frequent lakes. He found that it ultimately discharged itself into the sea, but was uncertain at what distance from its sources. He was positive he never travelled to the *southward of west*. He ascended a hill near the sea, and observed an island in the distance, from which, the natives informed him, a race of light-coloured men came in large canoes for a scented wood; but having failed in the immediate object of his journey, he was eventually obliged to return.

Major Mitchell's report.

The following official report of Major Mitchell will sufficiently point out the incorrectness of the preceding statement. It is most probable that Barber merely told that which he had heard from the natives, and that having a more than ordinary share of cunning, he made up a story upon their vague and uncertain accounts, in hopes that it would benefit him, as in truth it did.

* * * * *

Bullabalakit, on the River Nammoy, in lat. 30 degrees 38 minutes 21 seconds S., long. 149 degrees 30 minutes 20 seconds E. 23d December, 1831.

Sir,

I have the honour to state, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, the progress I have made in exploring the course of the interior waters to the northward of the Colony, with reference to the letter which I had the honour to address to Col. Lindesay, on this subject, on the 19th ult.

On crossing Liverpool Range my object was to proceed northward, so as to avoid the plains and head the streams which water them, and avoiding also the mountain ranges on the east.

I arrived accordingly, by a tolerably straight and level line, at Walamoul, on Peel's River; this place (a cattle station of Mr. Brown) being nearly due north from the common pass

across Liverpool Range, and about a mile-and-a-half above the spot where Mr. Oxley crossed this river.

Peel's river.

I found the general course of the Peel below Walamoul to be nearly west; and after tracing this river downwards twenty-two miles (in direct distance), I crossed it at an excellent ford, named Wallamburra. I then traversed the extensive plain of Mulluba; and leaving that of Coonil on the right, extending far to the north-east, we passed through a favourable interval of what I considered Hardwicke's Range, the general direction of this range being two points west of north.

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On passing through this gorge, which, from the name of a hill on the south side, may be named Ydire, I crossed a very extensive tract of flat country, on which the wood consisted of iron-bark and acacia pendula; this tract being part of a valley evidently declining to the north-west, which is bounded on the south by the Liverpool Range, and on the south-west by the extremities from the same. On the west, at a distance of twenty-two miles from Hardwicke's Range, there stands a remarkable isolated hill named Bounalla; and towards the lowest part of the country, and in the direction in which all the waters tend, there is a rocky peak named Tangudda. On the north, a low range (named Wowa), branching westerly from Hardwicke's Range, bounds on that side this extensive basin, which includes Liverpool Plains. Peel's River is the principal stream, and receives, in its course, all the waters of these plains below the junction of Connadilly,—which I take to be York's River, of Oxley.

The river Nammoy.

The stream is well known to the natives by the name Nammoy; and six miles below Tangudda, the low extremities from the surrounding ranges close on the river, and separate this extensive vale from the unexplored country which extends beyond to an horizon which is unbroken between W.N.W. and N.N.W.

The impracticable appearance of the mountains to the northward, induced me to proceed thus far to the west; and on examining the country thirty miles N.E. by N. from Tangudda, I ascended a lofty range extending westward from the coast chain, and on which the perpendicular sides of masses of trachyte (a volcanic rock) were opposed to my further progress even with horses: it was therefore evident that the river supposed to rise about the latitude of 28 degrees would not be accessible, or at least available to the Colony, in that direction, and that in the event of the discovery of a river beyond that range flowing to the northern or north-western shores, it would become of importance to ascertain whether it was joined by the Nammoy, the head of this river being so accessible that I have brought my heavily laden drays to where it is navigable for boats, my present encampment being on its banks six miles below Tangudda. From this station I can perceive the western termination of the Trachytic range, and I am now about to explore the country between it and the Nammoy, and the further course of this river; and in the event of its continuance in a favourable direction, I shall fix my depot on its right bank, whence I now write, and descend the stream in the portable boats.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
T. L. Mitchell,
Surveyor-general

The Hon. The Colonial Secretary.

* * * * *

Peel's River, 29th February, 1832.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, that I have reached the left bank of this River with my whole party on my return from the northern interior, having explored the course of the river referred to in my letter of 22nd December last, and others within the 29th parallel of latitude.

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There was so much fallen timber in the Nammoy, and its waters were so low, that the portable boats could not be used on that river with advantage, and I proceeded by land in a north-west direction, until convinced by its course turning more to the westward that this river joined the river Darling. I therefore quitted its banks with the intention of exploring the country further northward, by moving round the western extremities of the mountains mentioned in my former letter, and which I have since distinguished in my map by the name of the Lindesay Range. These mountains terminate abruptly on the west, and I entered a fine open country at their base, from whence plains (or rather open ground of gentle undulation) extended westward as far as could be seen. On turning these mountains I directed my course northward, and to the eastward of north, into the country beyond them, in search of the river KINDUR; and I reached a river flowing westward, the bed of which was deep, broad, and permanent, but in which there was not then much water.

The river Karaula.

The marks of inundation on trees, and on the adjoining high ground, proved that its floods rose to an extraordinary height; and from the latitude, and also from the general direction of its course, I considered this to be the river which Mr. Cunningham named the Gwydir, on crossing it sixty miles higher, on his route to Moreton Bay. I descended this river, and explored the country on its left bank for about eighty miles to the westward, when I found that its general course was somewhat to the southward of west. This river received no addition from the mountains over that part of its left bank traversed by me; and the heat being intense, the stream was at length so reduced that I could step across it. The banks had become low, and the bed much contracted, being no longer gravelly, but muddy. I therefore crossed this river and travelled northward, on a meridian line, until, in the latitude of 29 degrees 2 minutes, I came upon the largest river I had yet seen. The banks were earthy and broken, the soil being loose, and the water of a white muddy colour. Trees, washed out by the roots from the soft soil, filled the bed of this river in many places. There was abundance of cod-fish of a small size, as well as of the two other kinds of fish which we had caught in the Peel, the Nammoy, and the Gwydir. The name of this river, as well as we could make it out from the natives, was Karaula. Having made fast one tree to top of another tall tree, I obtained a view of the horizon, which appeared perfectly level, and I was in hopes that we had at length found a river which would flow to the northward and avoid the Darling. I accordingly ordered the boat to be put together, and sent Mr. White with a party some miles down to clear away any trees in the way. Mr. White came upon a rocky fall, and found besides the channel so much obstructed by trees, and the course so tortuous,

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that I determined to ascertain before embarking upon it, whether the general course was in the desired direction. Leaving Mr. White with half the party, I accordingly traced the Karaula downwards, and found that its course changed to south, a few miles below where I had made it, and that it was joined by the Gwydir only eight miles below where I had crossed that river. Immediately below the junction of the Gwydir (which is in latitude 29 degrees 30 minutes 27 seconds, longitude 148 degrees 13 minutes 20 seconds) the course of the river continues southward of west, directly towards where Captain Sturt discovered the River Darling; and I could no longer doubt that this was the same river. I therefore returned to the party, determined to explore the country further northward.

The results of my progress thus far were sufficient, I considered, to prove that the division of the waters falling towards the northern and southern shores of Australia is not, as has been supposed, in the direction of the Liverpool and Warrabangle range, but extends between Cape Byron on the eastern shore, towards Dick Hartog's Island on the west; the greater elongation of this country being between these points, and intermediate between the lines of its northern and southern coasts. The basin of the streams I have been upon must be bounded on the north by this dividing ground or water-shed, and although no rise was perceptible in the northern horizon, the river was traversed by several rocky dykes, over which it fell southward; their direction being oblique to the course, and nearly parallel to this division of the waters. I beg leave to state, that I should not feel certain on this point without having seen more, were it not evident from Mr. Cunningham's observations, made on crossing this division on his way to Moreton Bay. Mr. Cunningham, on crossing the head of this river, nearly in the same latitude, but much nearer its sources, found the height of its bed above the sea to be 840 feet; at about forty-five miles further northward the ground rose to upwards of 1700 feet, but immediately beyond, he reached a river flowing north-west, the height of which was only 1400 feet above the sea. He had thus crossed this dividing higher ground, between the parallels of 29 degrees and 28 degrees. It appears, therefore, that all the interior rivers we know of to the northward of the Morumbidgee, belong to the basin of the Karaula; this stream flowing southward, and hence the disappearance of the Macquarie and other lower rivers may be understood, for all along the banks of the Karaula, the Gwydir, and the Nammoy, the country, though not swampy, bears marks of frequent inundation; thus the floods occasioned by these rivers united, cover the low country, and receive the Macquarie so that no channel marks its further course.

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That a basin may be found to the northward receiving the waters of the northern part of the coast range in a similar manner is extremely probable, and that they form a better river, because the angle is more acute between the high ground, which must bound it on the N.E. and the watershed on the south. I therefore prepared to cross the Karaula, in hopes of seeing the head at least of such a river, and to explore the country two degrees further northward, but moving in a N.W. direction. My tent was struck, and I had just launched my portable boat for the purpose of crossing the river, when Mr. Surveyor Finch, whom I had instructed to bring up a supply of flour, arrived with the distressing intelligence, that two of his men had been killed by the natives, who had taken the flour, and were in possession of everything he had brought—all the cattle, including his horse, being also dispersed or lost. I therefore determined not to extend my excursion further, as the party were already on reduced rations, and on the 8th instant I retired from the Karaula, returning by the marked line, which being cut through thick scrubs in various places, is now open, forming a tolerably direct line of communication in a N.W. direction from Sydney, to a river, beyond which the survey may be extended whenever His Excellency the Governor thinks fit.

The natives had never troubled my party on our advance; indeed I only saw them when I came upon them by surprise, and then they always ran off. Their first visit was received at my camp on the Karaula, during my absence down that river, when they were very friendly, but much disposed to steal. Various tribes followed us on coming back, but never with any show of hostility, although moving in tribes of a hundred or more parallel to our marked line, or in our rear; it was necessary to be ever on our guard, and to encamp in strong positions only, arranging the drays for defence during the night: three men were always under arms, and I have much pleasure in stating, that throughout the whole excursion, and under circumstances of hardship and privation, the conduct of the men was very good. I took an armed party to the scene of pillage, and buried the bodies of the two men, who appeared to have been treacherously murdered while asleep by the blacks during the absence of Mr. Finch: no natives were to be found when I visited the spot, although it appeared from columns of smoke on hills which overlooked it, that they were watching our movements.

The party has now arrived within a day's journey of Brown's station, and I have instructed Assistant-Surveyor White (from whom I have received great assistance during the whole journey) to conduct it homewards, being desirous to proceed without delay to Sydney, and to receive the instructions of His Excellency the Governor.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
Your most obedient Servant,
T. L. *Mitchell*,
Surveyor-general.

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*The Hon. The colonial Secretary,
“&c. &c. &c.”*

Chapter VI.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Obstacles that attend travelling into the interior of Australia— Difficulty of carrying supplies—Importance of steady intelligent subordinates—Danger from the natives—Number of men requisite,—and of cattle and carriages—Provisions—Other arrangements—Treatment of the natives—Dimensions of the boat used in the second expedition.

Having now had considerable experience in the fitting out and management of expeditions in New South Wales, I cannot refrain from making some few observations on the subject. And without presuming to lay down any fixed rules, I shall only refer to those by which I have best succeeded, in hopes that some of my remarks may prove of use to future travellers who may venture to penetrate into the trackless deserts over so small a portion of which I wandered.

Difficulties of exploring Australia.

The great difficulty of examining the interior of Australia, is that of carrying supplies; for increasing the number of individuals composing an expedition is of no avail, since an additional number of men must necessarily increase the consumption of food. In order to meet this difficulty it has been proposed to establish depots upon which an expedition could fall back to recruit its supplies, and in ordinary cases this plan might answer; but I am decidedly of opinion that no party could long remain stationary in the distant interior without some fatal collision with the natives, which would be attended with the most deplorable consequences; and I do think, considering all things, that the experiment is too dangerous to be tried; for when I reached Mount Harris, on my first retreat from the Darling, I found the party who were awaiting me, with a supply of provisions, under very great alarm, in consequence of the hostile proceedings of the Mount Harris tribe. The men had been obliged to put the camp into a state of defence. The blacks had attempted to surprise them, and would, had I not returned, have combined in some general attack. It appears to me that the most judicious plan would be to send a supply of provisions, with an expedition, to a distant point, under the charge of a minor party. These provisions could replace those already expended, and the animals that carried them could be taken back.

Selection of subordinates.

The number of individuals of which the expedition down the banks of the Macquarie was composed, was fourteen: that is to say, myself, Mr. Hume, two soldiers, one free man, and seven prisoners of the crown. The latter behaved, on all occasions, as steadily as it was possible for men to do. Yet the circumstance of the two soldiers being with me increased my confidence in the whole, for I was

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aware that their example would influence the rest. However well disposed the prisoners of the crown may be, (as in this instance they certainly were,) the beneficial example of steady discipline cannot be denied. I should not have considered myself justified in leaving the camp as I did for a week, and in detaching Mr. Hume at the same time when at the bottom of the marshes, or in making the last effort to maintain our position on the banks of the Darling, if I had not reposed every confidence in the man to whom I entrusted the safety of the camp during my absence.

Experience, therefore, of the value of the two soldiers, whom General Darling was good enough to permit me to take on the strength of the party, fully bears me out in recommending that one man, at least, of general responsibility shall be attached to all future expeditions. The success of an expedition depends so much on the conduct of the persons of whom it is composed, that too much attention cannot be given to the selection even of the most subordinate. Men of active intelligent minds, of persevering habits, and of even temper, should be preferred to mechanics who do not possess these most requisite qualities. On the other hand, it is impossible to do without a good carpenter, however defective he may be in other respects. I was indebted to Mr. Maxwell, the superintendent of Wellington Valley, for some excellent men, both on my first and on my second journey, because he understood the nature of the service for which they were required, and the characters of those whom he recommended. But however well selected the party, or the men rather, might be, I still consider a man of general responsibility necessary for its complete organisation. I would have him somewhat superior to the rest in his station in life. Him I would hold answerable for the immediate discipline of the camp, whilst I was present, and for its safety when absent. The assistant to the leader I would put entirely out of the question. He has other and most important duties to perform. I would rate this man wholly independent of him.

Danger of collision with the natives.

In reference to what I have already said with regard to the natives, it was supposed that they were so little to be apprehended, that when I went on the first occasion into the interior, I applied for a limited number of men only, under an impression that with a few men I could carry provisions equal to a consumption of a greater number, and by this means be enabled to keep the field for a greater length of time. But I do not think it would be safe to penetrate into the distant country with fewer than fifteen men, for although, happily, no rupture has as yet taken place with the natives, yet, there is no security against their treachery, and it is very certain that a slight cause might involve an expedition in inextricable difficulty, and oblige the leader to throw himself

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on the defensive, when far away from other resources than those with which he should have provided himself, and that, perhaps, when navigating a close and intricate river, with all the dangers and perplexities attendant on such a situation. It is absolutely necessary to establish nightly guards, not only for the security of the camp, but of the cattle, and at the same time to have a force strong enough to maintain an obstinate resistance against any number of savages, where no mercy is to be expected. It will be borne in mind, that there is a wide difference between penetrating into a country in the midst of its population, and landing from ships for the purpose of communication or traffic. Yet, how few voyages of discovery have terminated without bloodshed! Boats while landing are covered by their ships, and have succour within view; but not so parties that go into unknown tracts. They must depend on their immediate resources and individual courage alone.

Pack-oxen, horses, Wheel-carriages.

With regard to the animals, I should recommend an equal number of horses as of bullocks; since it has been found that the latter, though slow, travel better over swampy ground than horses, which, on the other hand, are preferable for expeditious journeys, to which bullocks would never be equal. One of the colonial pack-saddles weighs fifty pounds complete, and is preferable to those sent out from England. This, with a load of 250 lbs. is sufficient for any animal, since it enables the men to place a part of their provisions with the general loads. The difficulty of keeping the backs of the animals free from injury, more especially where any blemish has before existed, is exceedingly great. They should undergo an examination twice a-day, that is, in the morning prior to moving off, and in the afternoon before they are turned out to feed; and measures should then be taken to ease them as circumstances require. I never suffered the saddles to be removed from the backs of the animals under my charge for twenty minutes after the termination of the journey for the day, in order to guard against the effects of the sun; and where the least swelling appeared the saddle was altered and the place dressed. Yet, notwithstanding all this care and attention, several both of the horses and bullocks were at one time in a sad condition, during the first journey,—so much so as almost to paralyse our efforts. It would be advisable that such animals as are entirely free from blemish should be chosen for the service of expeditions, for, with proper management they might be kept in order. The anxiety of mind attendant on a bad state of the animals is really quite embarrassing, for it not only causes a delay in the movements, but a derangement in the loads. Other animals are overburdened, and there is no knowing where the evil will stop.

In addition to the pack-animals, I would recommend the employment of a dray or cart under any practicable circumstances. It serves to carry necessary comforts, gives an expedition greater facility for securing its collections, and is of inconceivable advantage in many other respects.

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Issue of provisions.

Constant and most earnest attention should be paid to the issue of provisions, on the discreet management of which so much depends, and the charge of them should be committed to the second in command. The most important articles are flour, tea, sugar, and tobacco. All should be husbanded with extreme care, and weighed from time to time. The flour is best carried in canvass bags, containing 100 pounds each, and should at the termination of each day's journey, be regularly piled up and covered with a tarpaulin. Tea, sugar and tobacco lose considerably in weight, so that it is necessary to estimate for somewhat more than the bare supply. With regard to the salt meat, the best mode of conveying it appears to be in small barrels of equal weight with the bags of flour. Salt pork is better than beef. It should be deprived of all bones and be of the very best quality. I have heard spirits recommended, but I do not approve their use. Tea is much more relished by the men; indeed they could not do well without it. A small quantity of spirits would, however, of course be necessary in the event of its being required.

Live stock.

Mr. Cornelius O'Brien, an enterprising and long-established settler, who has pushed his flocks and herds to the banks of the Morumbidgee, was good enough to present me with eight wethers as I passed his station. It may be some gratification to Mr. O'Brien to know, that they contributed very materially to our comforts, and he will, perhaps, accept my acknowledgements in this place, not only for so liberal a present to myself, but for his attention and kindness to my men as long as they remained in his neighbourhood. It was found that the sheep gave but little additional trouble, requiring only to be penned at night, as much to secure them from the native dogs as to prevent them from straying away. They followed the other animals very quietly, and soon became accustomed to daily movements. They proved a most available stock; no waste attended their slaughter, and they admitted of a necessary and wholesome change of fresh food from the general salt diet, on which the men would otherwise have had to subsist.

The provisions should, if possible, be issued weekly, and their diminution should be so regulated as to give an equal relief to the animals.

For general information I have annexed a list of the supplies I took with me on my first expedition. It may appear long, but the articles were packed in a small compass, and their value immaterial.

As a precautionary measure I should advise, that one of the pack animals be kept apart for the purpose of carrying water. Two casks of equal weight are the best for such a purpose. In long and hot marches, the men experience great relief from having water at hand.

Intercourse with the natives.

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In reference to the natives, I hope sufficient has been said of the manner of communicating with them to prevent the necessity of a repetition here. The great point is not to alarm their natural timidity: to exercise patience in your intercourse with them; to treat them kindly; and to watch them with suspicion, especially at night. Never permit the men to steal away from the camp, but keep them as compact as possible; and at every station so arrange your drays and provisions that they may serve as a defence in case of your being attacked.

The natives appeared to me to be indifferent to our presents, in most cases. Tomahawks, knives, pieces of iron, and different coloured ribbons for the forehead, were most esteemed by them. They will barter and exchange their fish for articles, and readily acquire confidence.

I believe I have now touched on all the more important points: on minor ones no observation I can make will be of use; men must, in many things, be guided by circumstances.

* * * * *

Whale boat employed on the second expedition.

I may here notice that, in my second expedition, as it was anticipated that I should require adequate provision for water conveyance, at one stage or other of my journey down the Morumbidgee, I was furnished with a whale-boat, the dimensions of which are given below. She was built by Mr. Egan, the master builder of the dock-yard and a native of the colony, and did great credit to his judgment. She carried two tons and a half of provisions, independently of a locker, which I appropriated for the security of the arms, occupying the space between the after-seat and the stern. She was in the first instance put together loosely, her planks and timbers marked, and her ring bolts, &c. fitted. She was then taken to pieces, carefully packed up, and thus conveyed in plank into the interior, to a distance of four hundred and forty miles, without injury. She was admirably adapted for the service, and rose as well as could have been expected over the seas in the lake. It was evident, however, that she would have been much safer if she had had another plank, for she was undoubtedly too low. The following were her dimensions:—

Breadth across 7th timber aft, 5 ft. 1/2 an inch outside.

Across 12th timber, 5 ft. 11 1/4 in.

Across 17th timber forward, 5 ft.

25 ft. 8 in. in length inside.

Curve of the keel No. 1, from the after side of each apron, 3 ft. 3 3/4 in.

No. 2, from head to head of the dead wood, 13 1/2 in.

No. 3, from one end of keel to the other inner side, 3 in.

No. 4, round of keel from the toe of each dead wood, 7/8 1/16th.



The timbers were marked, beginning from the stern to the bow on the starboard side, and from bow to stern on the larboard.

APPENDIX No. I.

LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS.

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By His Excellency Lieutenant General Ralph Darling, Commanding His Majesty's Forces, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of the Territory of New South Wales, and its dependencies, and Vice Admiral of the same, &c. &c. &c.

To Charles sturt, Esq. Captain in the 39th regiment of foot.

Whereas it has been judged expedient to fit out an expedition for the purpose of exploring the interior of New Holland, and the present dry season affords a reasonable prospect of an opportunity of ascertaining the nature and extent of the large marsh or marshes which stopped the progress of the late John Oxley Esq, Surveyor General, in following the courses of the rivers Lachlan and Macquarie in the years 1817 and 1818. And whereas I repose full confidence in your abilities and zeal for conducting such an expedition, I do hereby constitute and appoint you to command and take charge of the expedition now preparing for the purpose of exploring the interior of the country, and for ascertaining, if practicable, the nature and extent of the marsh or marshes above mentioned.

In the prosecution of this service, you will be guided generally by the following instructions.

1. You will be accompanied on this expedition by Mr. Hamilton Hume, whose great experience in travelling through the remote parts of the Colony, cannot fail to be highly useful to you. You will also be attended by two soldiers and six convicts, of whom one is to understand the shoeing of horses, one to be a carpenter, one a harness-maker and three stock-men, and you will be provided with six horses and twelve bullocks.
2. A small boat has been built here for the use of the expedition, and for its conveyance, there is provided a light four-wheeled carriage to be drawn by two bullocks.

The deputy Commissary General has received orders for supplying the expedition with provisions of the best quality sufficient for six months' consumption, together with tents, blankets, clothing, pack-saddles, utensils, instruments, tools, and necessaries of all kinds of which you are likely to stand in need. Orders are also given for providing you with arms and ammunition, with rockets for signals, and an ample supply of simple medicines—You are to consider it an important duty to attend to the providing of all these supplies, and to take care that not only every article is of the best quality that can be procured, but also that no article be wanting with which you may desire to be provided.

3. Orders are given for forwarding without delay all your provisions, stores and supplies of every kind to Wellington Valley, at which place, you, Mr. Hume, and all your men are to rendezvous as soon as possible. Mr Maxwell, the superintendent, will furnish you

with well-trained bullocks, and afford you all the assistance you may require in arranging every thing for your departure from that station.

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4. After you shall have completed all your arrangements, you are to lose no time in finally departing from Wellington Valley in prosecution of the immediate objects of the expedition.

5. You are first to proceed to Mount Harris, where you are to form a temporary depot, by means of which you will have an opportunity of more readily communicating with Mr. Maxwell.

6. You are then to endeavour to determine the fate of the Macquarie River, by tracing it as far as possible beyond the point to which Mr. Oxley went, and by pushing westward, you are to ascertain if there be any high lands in that direction, or if the country be, as it is supposed, an unbroken level and under water. If you should fail in these objects, you will traverse the plains lying behind our north-west boundaries, with a view to skirt any waters by which you may have been checked to the westward; and if you should succeed in skirting them, you are to explore the country westward and southward as far as possible, endeavouring to discover the Macquarie beyond the marsh of Mr. Oxley, and following it to its mouth if at all practicable.

7. There is some reason to believe that the over-flowing of the Macquarie when visited by Mr. Oxley, was occasioned by heavy rains falling in the mountains to the eastward, and that as you are to visit the same spot at a different season of the year, you may escape such embarrassment; but although you should get beyond the point at which Mr. Oxley stopped, it would not be prudent to risk your own health or that of your men, by continuing long in a swampy country. Therefore it may be advisable for you in the first instance to leave the greater part of your men, bullocks, and baggage, at Mount Harris, and if you should see a probability of your being able to cross into the interior, you will then return to Mount Harris for such additional supplies as you may judge necessary. You can there communicate with Mr. Maxwell respecting any ulterior arrangements which you may be desirous of making.

8. The success of the expedition is so desirable an object, that I cannot too strongly impress upon you the importance of perseverance in endeavouring to skirt any waters or marshes which may check your course as long as you have provisions sufficient for your return; but you must be cautious not to proceed a single day's journey further than where you find that your provisions will be barely sufficient to enable you to reach the nearest place at which you can depend upon getting supplies.

9. If after every endeavour you should find it totally impracticable to get to the westward, you are still to proceed northward, keeping as westerly a direction as possible; and when the state of your provisions will oblige you to retreat, you will be guided by your latitude, as to the place to which you are to make the best of your way, but you are not to make for any place on the coast, if Wellington valley should still be nearer.

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10. You must be aware that the success of the expedition will greatly depend upon the time for which your provisions will hold out, and therefore you will see the great importance of observing every possible economy in the expenditure of provisions, and preventing waste of every kind.

11. You are to keep a detailed account of your proceedings in a journal, in which all observations and occurrences of every kind, with all their circumstances, however minute, are to be carefully noted down. You are to be particular in describing the general face of all the country through which you pass, the direction and shape of the mountains, whether detached or in ranges, together with the bearings and estimated distances of the several mountains, hills, or eminences from each other. You are likewise to note the nature of the climate, as to heat, cold, moisture, winds, rains, &c, and to keep a register of the temperature from Fahrenheit's thermometer, as observed at two or three periods of each day. The rivers, with their several branches, their direction, velocity, breadth, and depth, are carefully to be noted. It is further expected that you will, as far as may be in your power, attend to the animal, vegetable, and mineral productions of the country, noting down every thing that may occur to you, and preserving specimens as far as your means will admit, especially some of all the ripe seeds which you may discover; when the preservation of specimens is impossible, drawings or detailed accounts of them, are very desirable.

12. You will note the description of the several people whom you may meet, the extent of the population, their means of subsistence, their genius and disposition, the nature of their amusements, their diseases and remedies, their objects of worship, religious ceremonies, and a vocabulary of their language.

Lastly. On your return from your journey, you are to cause all the journals or other written documents belonging to, and curiosities collected by the several individuals composing the expedition, to be carefully sealed up with your own seal and kept in that state until you shall have made your report to me in writing of the result of the expedition.

Given at Sydney, this eighteenth day of November, 1828.
By Command of His Excellency the Governor,
Alexander M'LEAY.

APPENDIX No. II.

LIST OF STORES SUPPLIED FOR THE EXPEDITION.

List of Articles delivered from His Majesty's Stores, in charge of D. A. C. Goodsir, to Captain Sturt, viz.—

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1 Hack saddle. 9 Harness casks. 1 Bridle. 23 Canvas bags. 2 Tents. 4 Tin cases. 14 Pack saddles. 16 Padlocks. 14 Pair hobbles. 6 Tarpaulens. 24 Sets horse shoes. 10 Haversacks. 2000 Horse nails. 113 Fathom one-inch rope. 113 Fathoms 1 1/2 inch rope. 1 Boat compass. 1 Hammer, (Blacksmith's) 1 Telescope. 1 Paring knife. 1 Spare glass for ditto. 2 Chipping do. 1 Tin case (for charts.) 2 Rasps. 100 Fish-hooks, (large.) 1 Pair pincers. 12 Fishing-lines. 1 Cutter. 10 Knives. 2lb. Pack thread. 10 Forks. 24 Needles. 10 Spoons. 1/4lb. Bristles. 2 Frying-pans. 7lbs. Leather. 2 Tinder-boxes. 1/2lb. Thread. 1 Tea-kettle, (tin.) 1 Pair of steelyards. 10 Tin dishes. 10 Tin pots. 8 Jackets. 1 Flour seive. 8 Duck frocks. 2 Felling-axes. 8 Shirts. 4 Tomahawks. 16 Trousers. 2 Hammers. 24 Pair shoes. 1 Hand-saw. 16 Blankets. 3 Bill-hooks. 16 Pair stockings. 3 Awls. 2 Bullock collars. 3 Broad hoes. 2 Do. back-bands and pipes. 4 Razors. 2 Leading cruppers. 4 Brushes. 1 Boat with sail and oars. 4 Combs. 1 Do. carriage. 3 Iron pots, (camp kettles.) 1 Canvass boat-cover. 1 Pair scissors. 3 Water breaker.

Commissariat office, Sydney, Nov. 10Th, 1828.

P.S.—I Tarpaulin.

Large Fish-hook.

1 Tin tea-kettle.

1 Camp kettle.

Pitch and oil.

Hemp or twine.

APPENDIX No. III.

Sheep-farming returns, showing the increase in four years,
from two Breeding Flocks, consisting of 670 Ewes in Lamb.

(A.)—1st *June*, 1828.

Flocks.	Breeding Ewes.			Lambs.		Total.	Remarks.		
2 yrs. old.	3 yrs. old.	Male.-Female.							

Lambs.									
No. 1	330		148	149	627	Deaths 6.	Incr.	297	
No. 2		330	154	154	638	4	308		

*	1265	10	605						

* The increase throughout these returns is calculated at from 270 to 290 Lambs, to 300 Ewes, which is the usual average in N.S.W.

ABSTRACT.

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Purchased two Flocks of Ewes, at 84s.....670 Ewes.
 Increase of Lambs..... 605
 Casual Deaths..... 10
 595

 Total as per Return..... 1265

(B.)—1st *June*, 1829.

Flocks.	Breeding	Maiden	Wethers.	Rams.	Lambs.	Total.	Remarks.
Ewes.	Ewes.		Male.	Female.			

No.					Lambs.		
1	3-yr.	327		154	154	635	Deaths 3 Incr.308
2	4-yr.	326		155	155	636	4 310
3	1-yr.	302			302	1	—
4	1-yr.		302 18		320	—	618
-----		8					
1893							

ABSTRACT.

Return (A) Total.....1265
 Increase by Lambing.....618
 Ditto Rams purchased.....18

 636
 Casual Deaths..... 8 628

 Total as per return.....1893

 (C.)—1st *June*, 1830.

 Flocks.|Breeding|Maiden|Wethers.|Rams.| Lambs. |Total.| Remarks.
 | Ewes. | Ewes. | |Male. Female.|

No.					Lambs.		
1	2-yr.	296		133	154	562	Deaths 6 Incr.266
2	4-yr.	325		150	155	625	2 300
3	5-yr.	326		160		646	320
4	2-yr.		302 27			329	—
5	1-yr.		309			309	886
6	1-yr.	309				309	—

— 3 Rams died
 2780 12 ditto purchased

ABSTRACT.

Return (B) Total.....	1893
Increase by Lambing.....	886
Ditto Rams purchased.....	12
—	
898	
Deaths.....	11 887
—	
Total as per return.....	2780

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(D.)—1st *June*, 1831.

Flocks.	Breeding	Maiden	Wethers.	Rams.	Lambs.	Total.	Remarks.
Ewes.	Ewes.		Male.	Female.			

No.					Lambs.		
1	2-yr.	304	136	136	576	Deaths 5	Incr.272
2	3-yr.	293	135	136	564	3	271
3	5-yr.	324	156	156	636	1	312
4	6-yr.	320	156	156	632	2	312
Killed 4 —							
5	3-yr.	300			300	Deaths 2	1167
6	2-yr.	308			308	1	
7	1-yr	443			443		
8	1-yr	442			442	1	
9		40			40	5	

3941 20
Purchased 12

ABSTRACT.

Return (C) Total..... 2780
Increase by Lambing.....1167
Ditto Rams purchased.....18

1185
Casual deaths 20 ...Killed for use 4 24 1161

Total as per return..... 3941

(E.)—1st *June*, 1832.

Flocks.	Breeding	Maiden	Wethers.	Rams.	Lambs.	Total.	Remarks.
Ewes.	Ewes.		Male.	Female.			

No.		Lambs.				
1	2-yr. 344	154	154	652	Deaths 6	Incr.308
2	3-yr. 344	162	161	667	4	323
4	3-yr. 342	164	165	671	3	329
5	6-yr. 320	155	155	630	2	310
6	7-yr. 300	145	145	590	2	290
7	4-yr. 300		300		—	
1560						
8	3-yr 302		302	2		
9	2-yr 440		440	1		
10	1-yr 583		583			
11	1-yr 584		584			
12		45	45	5 Purch. 10		

1650	584	1625	45	780	780	5464

ABSTRACT.

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Return (D) Total..... 3941
 Increase by Lambing.....1560
 Ditto Rams purchased.....10

—
 1570

Decrease by casual death 25
 Decrease by slaughter for use 22

—
 1523

Grand Total 5464 as above

Memorandum,—The deaths have been calculated at the lowest rate under the best management. It may be safer to assume a rate of four or five per cent. per annum.

Account of Expenditure and Income upon Sheep Stock in Australia, appended to Returns A. B. C. D. and E.

1st year, (return A.) June, 1829.

Income.

By 11265 fleeces, average weight 2 1/4 lbs. 284 lbs
 wool at 1s. 6d. per lb. 213 9 0

Expenditure.

To 2 Shepherds at 30 pounds 60 0 0

To 1 Watchman at 20 20 0 0 *profit.*

To Hurdles, &c. 10 0 0

----- 90 0 0

----- 123 9 0

2nd year, (B.) June, 1830.

Income.

By 1893 fleeces, at 2 1/4 lbs. 4259lbs. wool at
 1s. 6d. 319 8 6

Expenditure.

To 2 Shepherds at 30 pounds 60 0 0

To 2 Ditto 20 40 0 0

To 1 Watchman 20 0 0

To Hurdles &c. 5 0 0



125 0 0
To 18 Rams at 10 pounds* 180 0 0

305 0 0

14 8 6
The price of rams will probably fall to 5 pounds

3rd year, (C.) June, 1831.

Income.
By 2780 fleeces, at 2 1/4 lbs. 6255lbs. wool at
1s. 6d. 469 2 6
Expenditure.
To 2 Shepherds at 30 pounds 60 0 0
To 2 Ditto 25 25 0 0
To 3 Ditto 20 60 0 0
To 2 Watchman 20 40 0 0
To Hurdles &c. 10 0 0

195 0 0
To 12 Rams at 10 pounds 120 0 0

315 0 0

154 2 6

4th year, (D.) June, 1832.

Income.
By 3941 fleeces, at 2 1/4 lbs. 8867lbs. wool at
1s. 6d. 665 0 0
Expenditure.
To 2 Shepherds at 30 pounds 60 0 0
To 2 Ditto 25 50 0 0
To 4 Ditto 20 80 0 0
To 3 Watchman &c. 60 0 0



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(one to take charge of rams)

To Hurdles &c. 10 0 0

260 0 0

To 18 Rams at 10 pounds 180 0 0

440 0 0

225 0 0

5th year, (E.) June, 1833.*

Income.

By 5864 fleeces, at 2 lbs. 12,294lbs. wool at

1s. 6d. 922 0 0

Expenditure.

To 2 Shepherds at 30 pounds 60 0 0

To 3 Ditto 25 75 0 0

To 5 Ditto 20 100 0 0

To 3 Watchman 20 60 0 0

To Hurdles &c. 20 0 0

315 0 0

To 10 Rams at 10 pounds 100 0 0

415 0 0

507 0 0

Net profit by sales of wool in 5 years 1024 0 0

1024 0 0 divided by 5 gives 204 8 0 for annual interest on the original capital of 2814 0 0, (about 7 1/4 percent per annum) in addition to the accumulation of capital itself, shown by the valuation of stock.

These accounts are a year in advance of the sheep returns, in order to bring them to the time at which the wool would be sold.

Valuation of sheep, June, 1832——(return E.)



1614 Ewes from 1 to 4 years old at 3 pounds each 4842 0 0 620 Do. 4 to 7 years old 2
1240 0 0 780 Female Lambs 2 1560 0 0
2405 Wethers and Male Lambs 15s. 1803 0 0
45 Rams (original cost, 450l.) 400 0 0

9845 0 0

Note.—About 500 pounds would be added to the Income on the fifth year, by the sale of wethers of 3 and 4 years old.

The cost of rams ought, strictly speaking, to be added to capital, and not deducted from Income; but these returns were made out in their present form at the request of a gentleman proceeding to the Colony with a limited capital, and who wished to know how much he might safely invest in sheep.

APPENDIX No. IV.

List of geological specimens, collected in the distant interior during *the first expedition, with their localities and their relative distances from each other.*

It may be necessary to observe that the height of the Cataract of the Macquarie River above the sea, was ascertained by barometrical admeasurement to be 650 feet. The country subsequently traversed is considerably lower. The specimens refer only to the geological formation of the distant interior.



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Schorl Rock.—Colour blueish grey, fine grained, extremely hard. Composed of Tourmaline and Quartz. Forms the bed of the Macquarie at the Cataract, 75 miles to the N.W. of Wellington Valley.

Decomposed Mica Slate.—Colour white; yields to the knife; adheres strongly to the tongue.

Decomposed Feldspar.—Colour pale rose-pink; very fine grained; easily scratched with the knife; adheres strongly to the tongue.

Both specimens immediately succeed the Schorl rock at the Cataract, in large smooth-sided masses.

This formation may be said to terminate the rocks connected with the dividing ranges, since it is the last that occurs at their western base.

A little below the Cataract, the country undergoes a remarkable change, and becomes extremely depressed.

Porphyry with Feldspar.—Colour dull red, with white spots, or grey with red spots; very hard, compact, sonorous, magnetic. [See pp. 27 and 115.] Composition of Mount Harris, a hill called by Mr. Oxley, elevated about 170 feet above the level of the plains. It lies 65 miles to the N.N.W. of the Cataract, and is about 16 miles distant from the first of the marshes of the Macquarie.

Porphyry with Feldspar.—Colour grey with red spots, similar to the last. Was not observed to affect the needle. Formation of Mount Foster. Mount Foster is more than 200 feet in height, and lies about 5 miles to the N.N.W. of Mount Harris. From the summit of both, Arbutnot's range is visible, bearing nearly due east, distant 70 miles. [See page 28.]

Quartz Rock varieties—Slaty Quartz varieties.—Composition of the first elevations to the Westward of the marshes of the Macquarie, called New Year's Range, a group of five hills. The loftiest about 200 feet in elevation; distant about 80 miles to the N.W. of Mount Harris.

Granite.—Colour red, coarse-grained. Composed of Quartz, Feldspar, and Mica.

Granite, Porphyritic.—Colour light red. Both occurring in the bed of New Year's Creek, traversing it obliquely, and are visible for a few hundred yards only. This granite occurs about 16 miles from the Range in a N. by E. direction.

Old Red Sandstone.—Composition of Oxley's Table Land, 500 feet above the level of the plains. It is broken into two hills, that appear to have been separated by some

convulsion. [See page 81.] It bears N.W. by W. from New Year's Range, distant 50 miles.

Old Red Sandstone.—Composition of D'Urban's group. The highest elevation ascended during the expedition, being nearly 600 feet above the level of the plain in which it rises. It lies to the S.S.W. of Oxley's Table Land, distant 40 miles, and the rock of which it is composed is much harder and closer.

Breccia.—Colour pale yellow, silicious cement. Composition of some trifling elevations to the North of New-Year's range, with which it is doubtful whether they are connected.

Crystallized Sulphate of Lime.—Found imbedded in the alluvial soil forming the banks of the Darling river. Occurring in a regular vein. Soft, yielding to the nail; not acted on by acids.—See Plate.



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Breccia.—Pale ochre colour, silicious cement, extremely hard. Cellular, and sharp edges to the fractured pebbles. Has apparently undergone fusion. Occurs in the bed of the Darling in one place only.

Sandstone Varieties.—Colour dull red and muddy white; appears like burnt bricks; light, easily frangible; adheres to the tongue; occurs in large masses in the bed of the Darling; probably in connection with the rock-salt of the neighbourhood, which, from the number of brine springs discovered feeding the river, must necessarily exist.

Variety of the same description of rock.

Jasper and Quartz.—Showing itself above the surface of a plain, from which D'Urban's group bore S. 40 E. distant 33 miles.

It is a remarkable fact, that not a pebble or a stone was picked up during the progress of the expedition, on any one of the plains; and that after it again left Mount Harris for the Castlereagh, the only rock-formation discovered was a small Freestone tract near the Darling river. There was not a pebble of any kind either in the bed of the Castlereagh, or in the creeks falling into it.

APPENDIX No. V.

OFFICIAL REPORTS TO THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT.

* * * * *

GOVERNMENT ORDER

Colonial secretary's office, 23rd January, 1829.

His Excellency the Governor has been pleased to order, that the following communication, dated the 25th of December last, from Captain Sturt, of the 39th Regiment, who is employed in an exploring expedition into the interior of the country, be published for general information.

By his Excellency's Command,
Alexander M'LEAY.

* * * * *

WESTERN MARSHES, 25TH DECEMBER, 1828.

Sir,—I do myself the honor to forward, for the Governor's perusal, a copy of my journal up to the date of my arrival at Mount Harris. I should not have directed the messenger to return so soon, had I not subsequently advanced to Mount Foster, and surveyed the country from that eminence. I could distinctly see Arbuthnot's Range to the eastward. From that point the horizon appeared to me unbroken, but the country to the northward and westward seemed to favour an attempt to penetrate into it. I did not observe any sheet of water, and the course of the Macquarie was lost in the woodlands below.

Mr. Hume ascended the hill at sun-rise, and thought he could see mountains to the north east, but at such a distance as to make it quite a matter of uncertainty. Agreeing, however, in the prudence of an immediate descent, we left our encampment on the morning of the 23rd, under Mount Foster, to which we had removed from Mount Harris, and pursued a north-north-west course to the spot on which we rest at present.

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We passed some fine meadow land near the river, and were obliged to keep wide of it in consequence of fissures in the ground. Traversing a large and blasted plain, on which the sun's rays fell with intense heat, and on which there was but little vegetation, we skirted the first great morass, and made the river immediately beyond it. It is of very considerable extent, the channel of the river passing through it. We are encompassed on every side by high reeds, which exist in the woods as well as in the plains. Mr. Hume and myself rode forward yesterday through the second morass, and made the river on slightly elevated ground, at a distance of about five miles; the country beyond appeared to favour our object, and we, to-morrow, proceed with the party to the north-west. The river seems to bend to the north-east; but in this level country it is impossible to speak with certainty, or to give any decided opinion of the nature of it, beyond the flats on which we are travelling. The reeds to the north-east and northward extend over a circumference of fifty miles; but if Mr. Hume really saw mountains or rising ground in the former point, the apparent course of the Macquarie is at once accounted for. The country, however, seems to dip to the north, though generally speaking it is level, and I am inclined to think that the state of the atmosphere caused a deception in this appearance.

I regret to add, that the effects of the sun on the plain over which we passed on the 23rd produced a return of inflammation in the eyes of the men, I have named in my journals, and caused the same in the eyes of several others of my party. I halted, therefore, to expedite their recovery. They are doing well now, and we can proceed in the cool of the morning without any fear of their receiving injury by it. One of the men, who were to return to Wellington Valley, was attacked slightly with dysentery, but the medicines I gave him carried it off in the course of a day or two. I have taken every precaution with regard to the health of the men, in preparing them for the country into which they are going; and I have to request that you will inform the governor that the conduct of the whole party merits my approbation, and that I have no fault to find. The men from Sydney are not so sharp as those from Wellington Valley, but are equally well disposed. The animals, both horses and bullocks, are in good order, and I find the two soldiers of infinite service to me. The boat has received some damage from exposure to intense heat, but is otherwise uninjured. We still retain the carriage and have every prospect of dragging it on with us.

His Excellency, having been good enough to order a fresh supply of provisions to Wellington Valley, I have to beg they may be forwarded to Mount Harris, and that the person in charge thereof be instructed to remain at that station for one month. We shall, during the interval, have examined the country to the north-west; and, in case we are forced back, shall require a supply to enable us to proceed to the northward, in furtherance of the views I have already had the honor to submit for the Governor's approval.



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I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your most obedient and humble Servant,
Charles sturt,
Captain, 39th Regt.

THE HONOURABLE THE COLONIAL SECRETARY

* * * * *

GOVERNMENT ORDER.

Colonial secretary's office, 6th April, 1829.

His Excellency the Governor is pleased to direct that the following interesting Report which has been received from Captain Sturt, 39th Regiment, who has been employed for some months past, (as will be seen on reference to the Government Order, No. 4, published with Captain Sturt's First Report in the Sydney Gazette, of the 24th of January last) in exploring the interior, be communicated for the information of the public.

It appears that the river Macquarie ceases to exist near the spot where the expedition under the late Mr. Oxley terminated, which, from the state of country at the time, being then flooded, could not be ascertained; and that another river of no inconsiderable magnitude, fed by salt springs, was discovered by Captain Sturt on the 2nd February last, about 100 miles to the westward of the Macquarie, running to the southward and westward.

By His Excellency's Command,
Alexander M'LEAY.

* * * * *

MOUNT HARRIS, 4TH MARCH, 1829.

Sir,—I do myself the honor to acquaint you, for the information of His Excellency the Governor, that I returned to this eminence on Monday, the 23rd ult. having been driven from the interior, in consequence of the extreme drought which prevails there.

I am to state, in reference to my former communication, that agreeably to what I then reported, I moved, on the 26th December last, lower down the plains of the Macquarie, but encountered a barrier of reeds, formed by the marshes of that river, through which we in vain endeavoured to force our way. I was in consequence obliged to make the nearest part of the river to my left, and to take such measures as the nature of my



situation required. Here, for the first time, I set the boat afloat, deeming it essential to trace the river, as I could not move upon its banks, and wishing also to ascertain where it again issued from the marshes, I requested Mr. Hume to proceed northerly, with a view to skirt them, and to descend westerly, wherever he saw an open space. He was fortunate enough to strike upon the channel about twelve miles north of our position, but was obstructed in his further progress by another marsh, in consequence of which he returned to the camp the next day; in the mean time, I had taken the boat, and proceeded down the Macquarie, my way being at first considerably obstructed by fallen timber: clearing this obstacle, however, I got into a deeper channel, with fine broad reaches, and a depth of from twelve to fifteen feet water.

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I had a short time previously cleared all woods and trees, and was now in the midst of reeds of great height. After proceeding onwards for about eight miles from the place whence I started, my course was suddenly and unexpectedly checked; I saw reeds before me, and expected I was about to turn an angle of the river, but I found that I had got to the end of the channel, and that the river itself had ceased to exist. Confounded at such a termination to a stream, whose appearance justified the expectation that it would have led me through the heart of the marsh to join Mr. Hume, I commenced a most minute examination of the place, and discovered two creeks, if they deserve the name, branching, the one to the north-west, and the other to the north-east; after tracing the former a short distance, I reached its termination, and in order to assure myself that such was the case, I walked round the head of it by pushing through the reeds; it being then too dark to continue where I was, I returned to a place on the river, at which I had rested during a shower, and slept there. In the morning I again went to the spot to examine the north-eastern branch, when I was equally disappointed. I then examined the space between the two creeks, opposite to the main channel of the river, and where the bank receives the force of the current. Here I saw water in the reeds, but it was scarcely ankle deep, and was running off to the north-west quicker than the waters of the river, which had almost an imperceptible motion, I was therefore at once convinced that it was not permanent, but had lodged there in the night, during which much rain had fallen. I next pushed my way through the reeds into the marsh, and at length clearly perceived that the waters which were perfectly sweet, after running several courses, flowed off to the north, towards which point there was an apparent declination or dip. Finding it impossible to proceed further, I regained the boat, and thence returned to the camp, under a conviction that I had reached the very spot, at which Mr. Oxley lost the channel of the river in 1818.

The next day I moved to the place where Mr. Hume had struck upon the channel of the river, but was again doubtful in what direction to proceed.

The marsh, at the commencement of which we now found ourselves, being the third from Mount Foster, but the second great one, seemed to extend beyond us to the north for many miles, but varying in breadth. In the evening I went in the boat up the channel, and found it at first, deep and sullen, as that of the river above. It soon however, narrowed, and the weeds formed over its surface, so that I abandoned the boat and walked along a path up it. I had not gone far when the channel divided; two smaller channels came, the one from the southern, and the other from the western parts of the marsh into it. There was an evident declination where they were, and it was at their junction the river again rallied and formed. On my return to the camp, Mr. Hume and I went down the river, but found that about a mile it lost itself, and spread its waters over the extensive marsh before it.

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In this extremity, I knew not what movement to make, as Mr. Hume had been checked in his progress north. I therefore determined to ascertain the nature of the country to the eastward and to the westward, that I might move accordingly; I proposed to Mr. Hume, to take a week's provisions, with two attendants, and go to the north-east, in order again to turn the marsh, but with the expectation that the angle formed by the junction of the Castlereagh with the Macquarie would arrest its progress, as the last was fast approaching the former.

I myself determined to cross the river, and to skirt the marshes on the left, and in case they turned off to the north east, as they appeared to do, it was my intention to pursue a N.W. course into the interior, to learn the nature of it. With these views I left the camp on the 31st of December, and did not return until the 5th of January. Having found early in my journey, from the change of soil and of timber, that I was leaving the neighbourhood of the Macquarie, I followed a N.W. course, from a more northerly one, and struck at once across the country, under an impression that Mr. Hume would have made the river again long before my return. I found, after travelling between twenty and thirty miles, the country began to rise; and at the end of my journey, I made a hill of considerable elevation, from the summit of which I had a view of other high lands; one to the S.W. being a very fine mountain. As I had not found any water excepting in two creeks, which I had left far behind me, and as I had got on a soil which appeared incapable of holding it, I made this the termination of my journey, having exceeded 100 miles in distance from the camp, on my return to which I found Mr. Hume still absent. When he joined, he stated to me, that not making the Castlereagh as soon as he expected, he had bent down westerly for the Macquarie, and that he ended his journey at some gentle hills he had made; so that it appeared we must either have crossed each other's line of route, or that they were very near, and that want of length must alone have prevented them from crossing; but as such all assumption led to the conclusion that the Macquarie no longer existed, I determined to pursue a middle course round the swamps, to ascertain the point; as in case the river had ended, a westerly course was the one which my instructions directed me to pursue.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the marshes we were obliged to sink wells for water, and it was thus early that we began to feel the want of a regular supply.

Having made a creek about four miles from our position by cutting through the reeds where there was a narrow space, we pursued a westerly course over a plain, having every appearance of frequent inundation, and for four or five days held nearly the same direction; in the course of which we crossed both our tracks on the excursions we had made, which had intersected each other in a dense oak brush; thus renewing the

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few doubts, or rather the doubt we had as to the fate of the Macquarie, whose course we had been sent to trace. Indeed, had I not felt convinced that that river had ceased, I should not have moved westward without further examination, but we had passed through a very narrow part of the marshes, and round the greater part of them, and had not seen any hollow that could by any possible exaggeration be construed into or mistaken for the channel of a river.

It appears, then, that the Macquarie, flowing as it does for so many miles, through a bed, and not a declining country, and having little water in it, except in times of flood, loses its impetus long ere it reaches the formidable barrier that opposes its progress northwards; the soil in which the reeds grow being a stiff clay. Its waters consequently spread, until a slight declivity giving them fresh impulse, they form a channel again, but soon gaining a level, they lose their force and their motion together, and spread not only over the second great marsh, but over a vast extent of the surrounding country, the breadth of ground thus subject to inundation being more than twenty miles, and its length considerably greater; around this space there is a gentle rise which confines the waters, while small hollows in various directions lead them out of the marshes over the adjacent plains, on which they eventually subside. On my return from the interior, I examined those parts round which I had not been, with particular attention, partly in company with Mr. Hume, and this statement was confirmed by what we saw. Thus, at a distance of about twenty-five miles from Mount Foster to the N.N.W. the river Macquarie ceases to exist, in any shape as a river, and at a distance of between fifty and sixty, the marshes terminate, though the country subject to inundation from the river is of a very considerable extent, as shown by the withered bulrushes, wet reeds, and shells, that are scattered over its surface.

Having executed the first part of the instructions with which I had been honoured, I determined on pursuing a west, or north-west course into the interior, to ascertain the nature of it, in fulfilment of the second, but in doing this I was obliged to follow creeks, and even on their banks had to carry a supply of water, so uncertain was it that we should meet with any at the termination of our day's journey, and that what we did find would be fit to drink. Our course led us over plains immediately bordering the lower lands of the Macquarie, alternating with swamp oak, acacia pendula, pine, box, eucalyptus, and many other trees of minor growth, the soil being inclined to a red loam, while the plains were generally covered with a black scrub, though in some places they had good grass upon them. We crossed two creeks before we made the hills Mr. Hume had ascended, and which he called New Year's Range. Around these hills the country appeared better—they are gentle, picturesque elevations, and are for the

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most part, covered with verdure, and have, I fancy, a whinstone base, the rock of which they are composed being of various substances. I place New Year's Range in lat. 30 degrees 21 minutes, long. 146 degrees 3 minutes 30 seconds. Our course next lying north-west along a creek, led us to within twenty miles of the hill that had terminated my excursion, and as I hoped that a more leisurely survey of the country from its summit would open something favourable to our view, I struck over for it, though eventually obliged to return. From it Mr. Hume and I rode to the S.W. mountain, a distance of about forty miles, without crossing a brook or a creek, our way leading through dense acacia brushes, and for the most part over a desert. We saw high lands from this mountain, which exceeds 1,300 feet in elevation, and is of sandstone formation, and thickly covered with stunted pine, in eight different points—the bearings of which are as follows:—

Oxley's Table Land, N. 40 E., distant 40 miles.

Kengall Hill, due E. very distant.

Conical Hill, S. 60 E.

Highland, S.E. distance 30 miles.

Highland, S. 30 E. distance 25 miles.

Long Range, S. 16 E. distance 60 miles.

Long Range, S. 72 W. distance 60 miles.

Distant Range, S. 25 W. supposed.

It was in vain, however, that we looked for water. The country to the north-west, was low and unbroken, and alternated with wood and plain.

The country from New Year's Range to the hill I had made, and which I called Oxley's Table Land, had been very fair, with good soil in many places, but with a total want of water, except in the creeks, wherein the supply was both bad and uncertain; on our second day's journey from the former, we came to the creek on which we were moving, where it had a coarse granite bottom. The country around it improved very much in appearance, and there was abundance of good grass on the surface of it, in spite of the drought. On the right of this creek, a large plain stretches parallel to it for many miles, varying in quality of soil. Near Oxley's Table Land, we passed over open forest, the prevailing timber of which was box. I have placed Oxley's Table Land in latitude 29 degrees 57 minutes 30 seconds, longitude 145 degrees 43 minutes 30 seconds.

Finding it impracticable to move westward from the hill I again descended on the creek, whose general course was to the north-west, in which direction we at length struck upon a river whose appearance raised our most sanguine expectations. It flowed round an angle from the north-east to the north-west, and extended in longitude five reaches as far as we could see. At that place it was about sixty yards broad, with banks of from thirty to forty feet high, and it had numerous wild fowl and many pelicans on its bosom,

and seemed to be full of fish, while the paths of the natives on both sides, like well-trodden roads, showed how numerous they were about it. On tasting its waters, however, we found them perfectly salt,

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and useless to us, and as our animals had been without water the night before, this circumstance distressed us much; our first day's journey led us past between sixty and seventy huts in one place, and on our second we fell in with a numerous tribe of natives, having previously seen some between two creeks before we made New-Year's Range. At some places the water proved less salt than at others; our animals drank of it sparingly: we found two small fresh-water holes, which served us as we passed. After tracing the river for a considerable distance, we came on brine springs in the bed of it, the banks having been encrusted with salt from the first; and as the difficulty of getting fresh water was so great, I here foresaw an end to our wanderings. And as I was resolved not to involve my party in greater distress, I halted it, on overtaking the animals, and the next morning turned back to the nearest fresh-water, at a distance of eighteen miles from us. Unwilling, however, to give up our pursuit, Mr. Hume and I started with two men on horseback, to trace the river as far as we could, and to ascertain what course it took; in the hopes also that we should fall on some creek, or get a more certain supply of drinkable water. We went a distance to which the bullocks could not have been brought, and then got on a red sandy soil, which at once destroyed our hopes; and on tasting the river water we found it salter than ever, our supply being diminished to two pints. Our animals being weak and purged, and having proceeded at least forty miles from the camp, I thought it best to yield to circumstances, and to return, though I trust I shall be believed when I add, it was with extreme reluctance I did so; and had I followed the wishes of my party, should still have continued onwards. Making a part of the river where we had slept, we stayed to refresh, and in consequence of the heat of the weather were obliged to drink the water in it, which made us sick. While here, a tribe of blacks came to us and behaved remarkably well. At night we slept on a plain without water, and the next day we regained the camp, which had been visited by the natives during our absence.

We found the river held a south-west course, and appeared to be making for the central space between a high land, which I called Dunlop's Range, at Mr. Hume's request, and a lofty range to the westward. It still continued its important appearance, having gained in breadth and in the height of its banks, while there were hundreds of pelicans and wild-fowl on it. Flowing through a level country with such a channel, it may be presumed that this river ultimately assumes either a greater character, or that it adds considerably to the importance of some other stream. It had a clay bottom, generally speaking, in many places semi-indurated and fast forming into sandstone, while there was crystallized sulphate of lime running in veins through the soil which composed the bank.

This river differs from most in the colony, in having a belt of barren land of from a quarter of a mile to two miles in breadth in its immediate neighbourhood, and which is subject to overflow. This belt runs to the inland plains, where a small elevation checks the further progress of the flood. There is magnificent blue gum on both sides the river,

but the right bank is evidently the most fertile, and I am mistaken greatly if there is not a beautiful country north of it.



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Of the country over which we have passed, it is impossible for me to have formed a correct opinion under its present melancholy circumstances. It has borne the appearance of barrenness, where in even moderate rain, it might have shown very differently, though no doubt we passed over much of both good and bad land; our animals on the whole, have thrived on the food they have had, which would argue favourably for the herbage. Generally speaking, I fear the timber is bad—the rough-gum may be used for knees, and such purposes, and we may have seen wood for the wheelwright and cabinet-maker, specimens of which I have procured, but none for general or household purposes.

The creeks we have traced are different in character from those in the settled districts, inasmuch as that, like the river, they have a belt of barren land near then and but little grass—they have all of them been numerously frequented by the natives, as appeared from the number of muscle-shells on their banks, but now having scarcely any water in them, the fish having either been taken, or are dead, and the tribes gone elsewhere for food, while the badness of the river water has introduced a cutaneous disease among the natives of that district, which is fast carrying them off. Our intercourse with these people was incessant from the time we first met them, and on all occasions they behaved remarkably well, nor could we have seen less than two hundred and fifty of them.

Our return is to be attributable to the want of water alone, and it is impossible for me to describe the effects of the drought on animal as well as vegetable nature. The natives are wandering in the desert, and it is melancholy to reflect on the necessity which obliges them to drink the stinking and loathsome water they do—birds sit gasping in the trees and are quite thin—the wild dog prowls about in the day-time unable to avoid us, and is as lean as he can be in a living state, while minor vegetation is dead, and the very trees are drooping. I have noticed all these things in my Journal I shall have the honour of submitting through you, for the Governor's perusal and information, on my return. Finally, I fear our expedition will not pave the way to any ultimate benefit; although it has been the means by which two very doubtful questions,—the course of the Macquarie, and the nature of the interior, have been solved; for it is beyond doubt, that the interior for 250 miles beyond its former known limits to the W.N.W., so far from being a shoal sea, has been ascertained not only to have considerable elevations upon it, but is in itself a table land to all intents and purposes, and has scarcely water on its surface to support its inhabitants.

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I beg you will inform His Excellency the Governor, that I have on all occasions received the most ready and valuable assistance from Mr, Hume. His intimate acquaintance with the manners and customs of the natives, enabled him to enter into intercourse with them, and chiefly contributed to the peaceable manner in which we have journeyed, while his previous experience put it in his power to be of real use to me. I cannot but say he has done an essential service to future travellers, and to the colony at large, by his conduct on all occasions since he has been with me; nor should I be doing him justice, if I did not avail myself of the first opportunity of laying my sentiments before the Governor, through you. I am happy to add that every individual of the party deserves my warmest approbation, and that they have, one and all, borne their distresses, trifling certainly, but still unusual, with cheerfulness, and that they have at all times been attentive to their duty, and obedient to their orders. The whole are in good health, and are eager again to start.

I have the honor to be,
Sir
Your most obedient and most humble servant,
Charles sturt,
Capt. 39th Regt.

The honorable the colonial Secretary.

* * * * *

MOUNT HARRIS, 5TH MARCH, 1829.

Sir,—It having appeared to me, that after discovering such a river as the one I have described in my letter of yesterday, His Excellency the Governor would approve of my endeavouring to regain it. There being a probability that it ultimately joins the Southern Waters, I thought of turning my steps to the southward and westward; and with a view to learn the nature of the country, I despatched Mr. Hume in that direction on Saturday last. He returned in three days, after having gone above forty miles from the river, and states, that he crossed two creeks, the one about twenty-five miles, the other about thirty-two distance, evidently the heads of the creeks we passed westward of the marshes of the Macquarie. He adds, that, to the second creek the land was excellent, but that on crossing it, he got onto red soil, on which he travelled some miles further, until he saw a range of high land, bearing from him S.W.. by W., when, knowing from the nature of the country around him, and from the experience of our late journey, that he could not hope to find a regular supply of water in advance, and that in the present dry state of the low lands, a movement such as I had contemplated would be impracticable, he returned home. I do myself the honour, therefore, to report to you, for His Excellency's information, that I shall proceed on Saturday next in a N.E. direction towards the Castlereagh, intending to trace that river down, and afterwards to penetrate

as far to the northward and westward as possible; it being my wish to get into the country north of the more distant river, where I have expectations that there is an extensive and valuable track of country, but that in failure of the above, I shall examine the low country behind our N.W. boundaries, if I can find a sufficiency of water to enable me to do so.

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I am to inform you that in this neighbourhood the Macquarie has ceased to flow, and that it is now a chain of shallow ponds. The water is fast diminishing in it, and unless rain descends in a few weeks it will be perfectly dry.

I am also to report, that the natives attempted the camp with the supplies before my arrival at Mount Harris, but that on the soldier with the party firing a shot, after they had thrown a stone and other of the weapons, they fled. It was in consequence of their fires, which I saw at a distance of forty miles, and which they never make on so extensive a scale, except as signals when they want to collect, and are inclined to be mischievous, that I made forced marches up, and I am led to believe my arrival was very opportune. The natives have visited us since, and I do not think they will now attempt to molest either party when we separate.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your most obedient and most humble servant,
Charles sturt,
Capt. 39th Regt.

The Hon. The colonial Secretary.

END OF VOLUME I

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VOLUME II.

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EXPEDITION DOWN THE MORUMBIDGEE AND MURRAY RIVERS, IN 1829, 1830 AND 1831.

CHAPTER I.

Introductory

Remarks on the results of the former Expedition—The fitting out of another determined on—Its objects—Provisions, accoutrements, and retinue—Paper furnished by Mr. Kent—Causes that have prevented the earlier appearance of the present work.

Objects of the expedition.

The expedition of which we have just detailed the proceedings was so far satisfactory in its results, that it not only set at rest the hypothesis of the existence of an internal shoal sea in southern Australia, and ascertained the actual termination of the rivers it had been directed to trace, but also added very largely to our knowledge of the country considerably to the westward of former discoveries. And although no land had been traversed of a fertile description of sufficient extent to invite the settler, the fact of a large river such as the Darling lying at the back of our almost intertropical settlements, gave a fresh importance to the distant interior. It was evident that this river was the chief drain



for carrying off the waters falling westerly from the eastern coast, and as its course indicated a decline of country diametrically opposite to that which had been calculated upon, it became an object of great importance to ascertain its further direction. Had not the saline quality of its waters been accounted for, by the known existence of brine springs in its bed, it would have been natural to have supposed that it communicated with some mediterranean sea; but, under existing circumstances, it remained to be proved whether this river held on a due south course, or whether it ultimately turned westerly, and ran into the heart of the interior. In order fully to determine this point, it would be necessary to regain its banks, so far below the parallel to which it had been traced as to leave no doubt of its identity; but it was difficult to fix upon a plan for approaching that central stream without suffering from the want of water, since it could hardly be expected that the

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Lachlan would afford such means, as it was reasonable to presume that its termination was very similar to that of the Macquarie. The attention of the government was, consequently, fixed upon the Morumbidgee, a river stated to be of considerable size and of impetuous current. Receiving its supplies from the lofty ranges behind Mount Dromedary, it promised to hold a longer course than those rivers which, depending on periodical rains alone for existence, had been found so soon to exhaust themselves.

Preparations.

The fitting out of another expedition was accordingly determined upon; and about the end of September 1829, I received the Governor's instructions to make the necessary preparations for a second descent into the interior, for the purpose of tracing the Morumbidgee, or such rivers as it might prove to be connected with, as far as practicable. In the event of failure in this object, it was hoped that an attempt to regain the banks of the Darling on a N.W. course from the point at which the expedition might be thwarted in its primary views, would not be unattended with success. Under any circumstances, however, by pursuing these measures, an important part of the colony would necessarily be traversed, of which the features were as yet altogether unknown.

It became my interest and my object to make the expedition as complete as possible, and, as far as in me lay, to provide for every contingency: and as it appeared to me that, in all likelihood, we should in one stage or other of our journey have to trust entirely to water conveyance, I determined on taking a whale-boat, whose dimensions and strength should in some measure be proportioned to the service required. I likewise constructed a small still for the distillation of water, in the event of our finding the water of the Darling salt, when we should reach its banks. The whale-boat, after being fitted, was taken to pieces for more convenient carriage, as has been more particularly detailed in the last chapter of the preceding volume.

So little danger had been apprehended from the natives in the former journey, that three firelocks had been considered sufficient for our defence. On the present occasion, however, I thought it advisable to provide arms for each individual.

Mr. Hume declined accompanying me, as the harvest was at hand. Mr. George M'Leay therefore supplied his place, rather as a companion than as an assistant; and of those who accompanied me down the banks of the Macquarie, I again selected Harris (my body servant), Hopkinson, and Fraser.

Mr. KENT'S report.

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The concluding chapter of this volume, relative to the promontory of St. Vincent, or Cape Jervis, has been furnished me by the kindness of Mr. Kent, who accompanied the lamented officer to whom the further exploration of that part of coast unhappily proved fatal. There is a melancholy coincidence between Captain Barker's death and that of Captain Cook, which cannot fail to interest the public, as the information that has been furnished will call for their serious consideration. I shall leave for their proper place, the remarks I have to offer upon it, since my motive in these prefatory observations has been, to carry the reader forward to that point at which he will have to view the proceedings of the expedition alone, in order the more satisfactorily to arrive at their results. And, although he must expect a considerable portion of dry reading in the following pages, I have endeavoured to make the narrative of events, some of which are remarkably striking, as interesting as possible.

Remarks on the present work; deliverance from dangers.

It only remains for me to refer the reader to the concluding chapter of the preceding volume, for such general information as I have been enabled to furnish upon the nature of the services on which I was employed, and on the manner of conducting similar expeditions. Indeed, I trust that this book (whatever be its defects) will be found to contain much valuable information of a practical character, and I may venture to affirm, that it will give a true description of the country, and of the various other subjects of which it treats.

Notwithstanding that I have in my dedication alluded to the causes that prevented the earlier appearance of this work, I feel it due both to myself and the public here to state, that during these expeditions my health had suffered so much, that I was unable to bear up against the effects of exposure, bodily labour, poverty of diet, and the anxiety of mind to which I was subjected. A residence on Norfolk Island, under peculiarly harassing circumstances, completed that which the above causes had commenced; and, after a succession of attacks, I became totally blind, and am still unable either to read what I pen, or to venture abroad without an attendant. When it is recollected, that I have been unassisted in this work in any one particular, I hope some excuse will be found for its imperfections. A wish to contribute to the public good led me to undertake those journeys which have cost me so much. The same feeling actuates me in recording their results; and I have the satisfaction to know, that my path among a large and savage population was a bloodless one; and that my intercourse with them was such as to lessen the danger to future adventurers upon such hazardous enterprises, and to give them hope where I had so often despaired. Something more powerful, than human foresight or human prudence, appeared to avert the calamities and dangers with which I and my companions were so frequently threatened; and had it not been for the guidance and protection we received from the Providence of that good and all-wise Being to whose care we committed ourselves, we should, ere this, have ceased to rank among the number of His earthly creatures.

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CHAPTER II.

Commencement of the expedition in November, 1829.—Joined by Mr. George M'Leay—Appearance of the party—Breadalbane Plains—Hospitality of Mr. O'Brien—Yass Plains—Hill of Pouni—Path of a hurricane—Character of the country between Underaliga and the Morumbidgee—Appearance of that river—Junction of the Dumot with it—Crossing and recrossing—Geological character and general aspect of the country—Plain of Pondebadgery—Few natives seen.

The expedition which traversed the marshes of the Macquarie, left Sydney on the 10th day of Nov. 1828. That destined to follow the waters of the Morumbidgee, took its departure from the same capital on the 3rd of the same month in the ensuing year. Rain had fallen in the interval, but not in such quantities as to lead to the apprehension that it had either influenced or swollen the western streams. It was rather expected that the winter falls would facilitate the progress of the expedition, and it was hoped that, as the field of its operations would in all probability be considerably to the south of the parallel of Port Jackson, the extreme heat to which the party and the animals had been exposed on the former journey, would be less felt on the present occasion.

As there was no Government establishment to the S.W. at which I could effect any repairs, or recruit my supplies, as I had done at Wellington Valley, the expedition, when it left Sydney, was completed in every branch, and was so fully provided with every necessary implement and comfort, as to render any further aid, even had such been attainable, in a great measure unnecessary. The Governor had watched over my preparations with a degree of anxiety that evidenced the interest he felt in the expedition, and his arrangements to ensure, as far as practicable, our being met on our return, in the event of our being in distress, were equally provident and satisfactory. It was not, however, to the providing for our wants in the interior alone that His Excellency's views were directed, but orders were given to hold a vessel in readiness, to be dispatched at a given time to St. Vincent's Gulf, in case we should ultimately succeed in making the south coast in its neighbourhood.

Leave Sydney.

The morning on which I left Sydney a second time, under such doubtful circumstances, was perfectly serene and clear. I found myself at 5 a.m. of that delightful morning leading my horses through the gates of those barracks whose precincts I might never again enter, and whose inmates I might never again behold assembled in military array. Yet, although the chance of misfortune flashed across my mind, I was never lighter at heart, or more joyous in spirit. It appeared to me that the stillness and harmony of nature influenced my feelings on the occasion, and my mind forgot the storms of life, as nature at that moment seemed to have forgotten the tempests that sometimes agitate her.

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Appearance of the party.

I proceeded direct to the house of my friend Mr. J. Deas Thomson, who had agreed to accompany me to Brownlow Hill, a property belonging to Mr. M'Leay, the Colonial Secretary, where his son, Mr. George M'Leay, was to join the expedition. As soon as we had taken a hasty breakfast, I went to the carters' barracks to superintend the first loading of the animals. Mr. Murray, the superintendent, had arranged every article so well, and had loaded the drays so compactly that I had no trouble, and little time was lost in saddling the pack animals. At a quarter before 7 the party filed through the turnpike-gate, and thus commenced its journey with the greatest regularity. I have the scene, even at this distance of time, vividly impressed upon my mind, and I have no doubt the kind friend who was near me on the occasion, bears it as strongly on his recollection. My servant Harris, who had shared my wanderings and had continued in my service for eighteen years, led the advance, with his companion Hopkinson. Nearly abreast of them the eccentric Fraser stalked along wholly lost in thought. The two former had laid aside their military habits, and had substituted the broad brimmed hat and the bushman's dress in their place, but it was impossible to guess how Fraser intended to protect himself from the heat or the damp, so little were his habiliments suited for the occasion. He had his gun over his shoulder, and his double shot belt as full as it could be of shot, although there was not a chance of his expending a grain during the day. Some dogs Mr. Maxwell had kindly sent me followed close at his heels, as if they knew his interest in them, and they really seemed as if they were aware that they were about to exchange their late confinement for the freedom of the woods. The whole of these formed a kind of advanced guard. At some distance in the rear the drays moved slowly along, on one of which rode the black boy mentioned in my former volume, and behind them followed the pack animals. Robert Harris, whom I had appointed to superintend the animals generally, kept his place near the horses, and the heavy Clayton, my carpenter, brought up the rear. I shall not forget the interest Thomson appeared to take in a scene that must certainly have been new to him. Our progress was not checked by the occurrence of a single accident, nor did I think it necessary to remain with the men after we had gained that turn which, at about four miles from Sydney, branches off to the left, and leads direct to Liverpool. From this Point my companion and I pushed forward, in order to terminate a fifty miles' ride a little sooner than we should have done at the leisurely pace we had kept during the early part of our journey. We remained in Liverpool for a short time, to prepare the commissariat office for the reception, and to ensure the accommodation, of the party; and reached Brownlow Hill a little after sunset.

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Liverpool-Goulburn plains.

As I have already described the country on this line of road as far as Goulburn Plains, it will not be considered necessary that I should again notice its features with minuteness.

Wallandilly-Tyranna.

The party arrived at Glendarewel, the farm attached to Brownlow Hill, on the 5th. I resumed my journey alone on the 8th. M'Leay had still some few arrangements to make, so that I dispensed with his immediate attendance. He overtook me, however, sooner than I expected, on the banks of the Wallandilly. I had encamped under the bluff end of Cookbundoon, and, having been disappointed in getting bearings when crossing the Razor Back, I hoped that I should be enabled to connect a triangle from the summit of Cookbundoon, or to secure bearings of some prominent hill to the south. I found the brush, however, so thick on the top of the mountain, that I could obtain no satisfactory view, and M'Leay, who accompanied me, agreed with me in considering that we were but ill repaid for the hot scramble we had had. Crossing the western extremity of Goulburn Plains on the 15th, we encamped on a chain of ponds behind Doctor Gibson's residence at Tyranna, and as I had some arrangements to make with that gentleman, I determined to give both the men and animals a day's rest. I availed myself of Doctor Gibson's magazines to replace such of my provisions as I had expended, as I found that I could do so without putting him to any inconvenience; and I added two of his men to the party, intending to send them back, in case of necessity, or, when we should have arrived at that point from which it might appear expedient to forward an account of my progress and ultimate views, for the governor's information.

On the 17th we struck the tents, and, crossing the chain of ponds near which they had been pitched, entered a forest track, that gave place to barren stony ridges of quartz formation. These continued for six or seven miles, in the direction of Breadalbane Plains, upon which we were obliged to stop, as we should have had some difficulty in procuring either water or food, within any moderate distance beyond them. The water, indeed, that we were obliged to content ourselves with was by no means good. Breadalbane Plains are of inconsiderable extent, and are surrounded by ridges, the appearance of which is not very promising. Large white masses of quartz rock lie scattered over them, amongst trees of stunted growth. Mr. Redall's farm was visible at the further extremity of the plains from that by which we had entered them. It would appear that these plains are connected with Goulburn Plains by a narrow valley, that was too wet for the drays to have traversed.

Breadalbane plains.

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Doctor Gibson had kindly accompanied us to Breadalbane Plains. On the morning of the 18th he returned to Tyranna, and we pursued our journey, keeping mostly on a W.S.W. course. From the barren hills over which we passed, on leaving the plains, we descended upon an undulating country, and found a change of rock, as well as of vegetation, upon it. Granite and porphyry constituted its base. An open forest, on which the eucalyptus mannifera alone prevailed, lay on either side of us, and although the soil was coarse, and partook in a great measure of the decomposition of the rock it covered, there was no deficiency of grass. On the contrary, this part of the interior is decidedly well adapted for pasturing cattle.

The lorn.

About 1 p.m. we passed Mr. Hume's station, with whom I remained for a short time. He had fixed his establishment on the banks of the Lorn, a small river, issuing from the broken country near Lake George, and now ascertained to be one of the largest branches of the Lachlan River. We had descended a barren pass of stringy bark scrub, on sandstone rock, a little before we reached Mr. Hume's station, but around it the same, open forest tract again prevailed. We crossed the Lorn, at 2 o'clock, leaving Mr. Broughton's farm upon our left, and passed through a broken country, which was very far from being deficient in pasture. We encamped on the side of a water-course, about 4 o'clock, having travelled about fifteen miles.

On the 19th, we observed no change in the soil or aspect of the country, for the first five miles. The eucalyptus mannifera was the most prevalent of the forest trees, and certainly its presence indicated a more flourishing state in the minor vegetation. At about five miles, however, from where we had slept, sandstone reappeared, and with it the barren scrub that usually grows upon a sandy and inhospitable soil. One of the drays was upset in its progress down a broken pass, where the road had been altogether neglected, and it was difficult to avoid accidents. Fortunately we suffered no further than in the delay that the necessity of unloading the dray, and reloading it, occasioned. Mr. O'Brien, an enterprising settler, who had pushed his flocks to the banks of the Morumbidgee, and who was proceeding to visit his several stations, overtook us in the midst of our troubles. We had already passed each other frequently on the road, but he now preceded me to his establishment at Yass; at which I proposed remaining for a day. We stopped about three miles short of the plains for the night, at the gorge of the pass through which we had latterly been advancing, and had gradually descended to a more open country. From the place at which we were temporarily delayed, and which is not inappropriately called the Devil's Pass, the road winds about between ranges, differing in every respect from any we had as yet noticed. The sides of the hills were steeper, and their summits sharper, than any we had crossed. They were thickly covered with eucalypti and brush, and, though based upon sandstone, were themselves of a schistose formation.

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Yass plains.

Yharr or Yass Plains were discovered by Mr. Hovel, and Mr. Hume, the companion of my journey down the Macquarie, in 1828. They take their name from the little river that flows along their north and north-west boundaries. They are surrounded on every side by forests, and excepting to the W.N.W., as a central point, by hill. Undulating, but naked themselves, they have the appearance of open downs, and are most admirably adapted for sheep-walks, not only in point of vegetation, but also, because their inequalities prevent their becoming swampy during the rainy season. They are from nine to twelve miles in length, and from five to seven in breadth, and although large masses of sandstone are scattered over them, a blue secondary limestone composes the general bed of the river, that was darker in colour and more compact than I had remarked the same kind of rock, either at Wellington Valley, or in the Shoal Haven Gully. I have no doubt that Yass Plains will ere long be wholly taken up as sheep-walks, and that their value to the grazier will in a great measure counterbalance its distance from the coast, or, more properly speaking, from the capital. Sheep I should imagine would thrive uncommonly well upon these plains, and would suffer less from distempers incidental to locality and to climate, than in many parts of the colony over which they are now wandering in thousands. And if the plains themselves do not afford extensive arable tracts, there is, at least, sufficient good land near the river to supply the wants of a numerous body of settlers.

Hospitality of Mr. O'BRIEN.

We left Mr. O'Brien's station on the morning of the 21st, and, agreeably to his advice, determined on gaining the Morumbidgee, by a circuit to the N.W., rather than endanger the safety of the drays by entering the mountain passes to the westward. Mr. O'Brien, however, would not permit us to depart from his dwelling without taking away with us some further proofs of his hospitality. The party had pushed forward before I, or Mr. M'Leay, had mounted our horses; but on overtaking it, we found that eight fine wethers had been added to our stock of animals.

Hill of Pouni; aspect of the country.

To the W.N.W. of Yass Plains there is a remarkable hill, called Pouni, remarkable not so much on account of its height, as of its commanding position. It had, I believe, already been ascended by one of the Surveyor-general's assistants. The impracticability of the country to the south of it, obliged us to pass under its opposite base, from which an open forest country extended to the northward. We had already recrossed the Yass River, and passed Mr. Barber's station, to that of Mr. Hume's father, at which we stopped for a short time. Both farms are well situated, the latter I should say, romantically so, it being immediately under Pouni, the hill we have noticed. The country around both was open, and both pasture and water were abundant.

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Mr. O'Brien had been kind enough to send one of the natives who frequented his station to escort us to his more advanced station upon the Morumbidgee. Had it not been for the assistance we received from this man, I should have had but little leisure for other duties: as it was however, there was no fear of the party going astray. This gave M'Leay and myself an opportunity of ascending Pouni, for the purpose of taking bearings; and how ever warm the exertion of the ascent made us, the view from the summit of the hill sufficiently repaid us, and the cool breeze that struck it, although imperceptible in the forest below, soon dried the perspiration from our brows. The scenery around us was certainly varied, yet many parts of it put me forcibly in mind of the dark and gloomy tracks over which my eye had wandered from similar elevations on the former journey. This was especially the case in looking to the north, towards which point the hills forming the right of the valley by which we had entered the plains, decreased so rapidly in height that they were lost in the general equality of the more remote country, almost ere they had reached abreast of my position. From E.S.E. to W.S.W. the face of the country was hilly, broken and irregular; forming deep ravines and precipitous glens, amid which I was well aware the Morumbidgee was still struggling for freedom; while mountains succeeded mountains in the back-ground, and were themselves overtopped by lofty and very distant peaks. To the eastward, however, the hills wore a more regular form, and were lightly covered with wood. The plains occupied the space between them and Pouni; and a smaller plain bore N.N.E. which, being embosomed in the forest, had hitherto escaped our notice.

We overtook the party just as it cleared the open ground through which it had previously been moving. A barren scrub succeeded it for about eight miles. The soil in this scrub was light and sandy.

We stopped for the night at the head of a valley that seemed to have been well trodden by cattle. The feed, therefore, was not abundant, nor was the water good. We had, however, made a very fair journey, and I was unwilling to press the animals. But in consequence, I fancy, of the scarcity of food, they managed to creep away during the night, with the exception of three or four of the bullocks, nor should we have collected them again so soon as we did, or without infinite trouble, had it not been for our guide and my black boy. We unavoidably lost a day, but left our position on the 23rd, for Underaliga, a station occupied by Doctor Harris, the gentleman I have already had occasion to mention. We reached the banks of the creek near the stock hut, about 4 p.m., having journeyed during the greater part of the day through a poor country, partly of scrub and partly of open forest-land, in neither of which was the soil or vegetation fresh or abundant. At about three miles from Underaliga, the country entirely changed its character, and its flatness was succeeded by a broken and undulating surface. The soil upon the hills was coarse and sandy, from the decomposition of the granite rock that constituted their base. Nevertheless, the grass was abundant on the hills, though the roots or tufts were far apart; and the hills were lightly studded with trees.

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Course of A hurricane.

In the course of the day we crossed the line of a hurricane that had just swept with resistless force over the country, preserving a due north course, and which we had heard from a distance, fortunately too great to admit of its injuring us. It had opened a fearful gap in the forest through which it had passed, of about a quarter of a mile in breadth. Within that space, no tree had been able to withstand its fury, for it had wrenched every bough from such as it had failed to prostrate, and they stood naked in the midst of the surrounding wreck. I am inclined to think that the rudeness of nature itself in these wild and uninhabited regions, gives birth to these terrific phenomena. They have never occurred, so far as I know, in the located districts. Our guide deserted us in the early part of the day without assigning any reason for doing so. He went off without being noticed, and thus lost the reward that would have been bestowed on him had he mentioned his wish to return to Yass. I the more regretted his having sneaked off, because he had had the kindness to put us on a track we could not well lose.

Country from Underaliga to Morumbidgee.

Underaliga, is said to be thirty miles from the Morumbidgee. The country between the two has a sameness of character throughout. It is broken and irregular, yet no one hill rises conspicuously over the rest. We found ourselves at one time on their summits beside huge masses of granite, at others crossing valleys of rich soil and green appearance. A country under cultivation is so widely different from one the sod of which has never been broken by the plough, that it is difficult and hazardous to form a decided opinion on the latter. If you ask a stockman what kind of a country lies, either to his right, or to his left, he is sure to condemn it, unless it will afford the most abundant pasture. Accustomed to roam about from one place to another, these men despise any but the richest tracts, and include the rest of the neighbourhood in one sweeping clause of condemnation. Thus I was led to expect, that we should pass over a country of the very worst description, between Underaliga and the Morumbidgee. Had it been similar to that midway between Yass and Underaliga, we should, in truth, have found it so; but it struck me, that there were many rich tracts of ground among the valleys of the former, and that the very hills had a fair covering of grass upon them. What though the soil was coarse, if the vegetation was good and sufficient? Perhaps the greatest drawback to this part of the interior is the want of water; yet we crossed several creeks, and remarked some deep water holes, that can never be exhausted, even in the driest season. Wherever the situation favoured our obtaining a view of the country on either side of us, while among these hills, we found that to the eastward lofty and mountainous; whilst that to the westward, had the appearance of fast sinking into a level.

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Juggiong.

A short time before we reached the Morumbidgee, we forded a creek, which we crossed a second time where it falls into the river. After crossing it the first time we opened a flat, on which the marks of sheep were abundant. In the distance there was a small hill, and on its top a bark hut. We were not until then aware of our being so near the river, but as Mr. O'Brien had informed me that he had a station for sheep, at a place called Juggiong, by the natives, on the immediate banks of the river, I did not doubt that we had, at length, arrived at it. And so it proved. I went to the hut, to ascertain where I could conveniently stop for the night, but the residents were absent. I could not but admire the position they had taken up. The hill upon which their hut was erected was not more than fifty feet high, but it immediately overlooked the river, and commanded not only the flat we had traversed in approaching it, but also a second flat on the opposite side. The Morumbidgee came down to the foot of this little hill from the south, and, of course, running to the north, which latter direction it suddenly takes up from a previous S.W. one, on meeting some hills that check its direct course. From the hill on which the hut stands, it runs away westward, almost in a direct line, for three miles, so that the position commands a view of both the reaches, which are overhung by the casuarina and flooded-gum. Rich alluvial flats lie to the right of the stream, backed by moderate hills, that were lightly studded with trees, and clothed with verdure to their summits. Some moderate elevations also backed a flat, on the left bank of the river, but the colour of the soil upon the latter, as well as its depressed situation, showed clearly that it was subject to flood, and had received the worst of the depositions from the mountains. The hills behind it were also bare, and of a light red colour, betraying, as I imagined, a distinct formation from, and poorer character than, the hills behind us. At about three miles the river again suddenly changes its direction from west to south, for about a mile, when it inclines to the S.E. until it nearly encircles the opposite hills, when it assumes its proper direction, and flows away to the S.W.

Cross the Underaliga; reach the Morumbidgee.

We crossed the Underaliga creek a little below the stock hut, and encamped about a mile beyond it, in the centre of a long plain. We were surrounded on every side by hills, from which there was no visible outlet, as they appeared to follow the bend of the river, with an even and unbroken outline. The scenery around us was wild, romantic, and beautiful; as beautiful as a rich and glowing sunset in the most delightful climate under the heavens could make it. I had been more anxious to gain the banks of the Morumbidgee on this occasion, than I had been on a former one to gain those of the Macquarie, for although I could not

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hope to see the Morumbidgee all that it had been described to me, yet I felt that on its first appearance I should in some measure ground my anticipations of ultimate success. When I arrived on the banks of the Macquarie, it had almost ceased to flow, and its current was so gentle as to be scarcely perceptible. Instead, however, of a river in such a state of exhaustion, I now looked down upon a stream, whose current it would have been difficult to breast, and whose waters, foaming among rocks, or circling in eddies, gave early promise of a reckless course. It must have been somewhat below its ordinary level, and averaged a breadth of about 80 feet. Its waters were hard and transparent, and its bed was composed of mountain debris, and large fragments of rock. As soon as the morning dawned, the tents were struck and we pursued our journey. We followed the line of the river, until we found ourselves in a deep bight to the S.E. The hills that had been gradually closing in upon the river, now approached it so nearly, that there was no room for the passage of the drays. We were consequently obliged to turn back, and, moving along the base of the ranges, by which we were thus apparently enclosed, we at length found a steep pass, the extreme narrowness of which had hidden it from our observation. By this pass we were now enabled to effect our escape. On gaining the summit of the hills, we travelled south for three or four miles, through open forests, and on level ground. But we ultimately descended into a valley in which we halted for the night. On a closer examination of the neighbourhood, it appeared that our position was at the immediate junction of two valleys, where, uniting the waters of their respective creeks, the main branch declines rapidly towards the river. One of these valleys extended to the S.W., the other to the W.N.W. It was evident to us that our route lay up the former; and I made no doubt we should easily reach Whaby's station on the morrow.

Adjacent country.

We were now far beyond the acknowledged limits of the located parts of the colony, and Mr. Whaby's station was the last at which we could expect even the casual supply of milk or other trifling relief. Yet, although the prospect of so soon leaving even the outskirts of civilization, and being wholly thrown on our own resources, was so near, it never for a moment weighed upon the minds of the men. The novelty of the scenery, and the beauty of the river on which they were journeying, excited in them the liveliest anticipations of success. The facility with which we had hitherto pushed forward blinded them to future difficulties, nor could there be a more cheerful spectacle than that which the camp daily afforded. The animals browsing in the distance, and the men talking over their pipes of the probable adventures they might encounter. The loads had by this time settled properly, and our provisions proved of the very best quality, so that no possible improvement could have been made for the better.

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Whaby's station.

On the morrow we pushed up the southernmost of the valleys, at the junction of which we had encamped, having moderate hills on either side of us. At the head of the valley we crossed a small dividing range into another valley, and halted for the night, on the banks of a creek from the westward, as we found it impossible to reach Whaby's station, as we had intended, before sunset. Nothing could exceed the luxuriance of the vegetation in this valley, but the water of the creek was so impregnated with iron, as to be almost useless. Being anxious to obtain a view of the surrounding country, I ascended a hill behind the camp, just as the sun was sinking, a time the most favourable for the object I had in view. The country, broken into hill and dale, seemed richer than any tract I had as yet surveyed; and the beauty of the near landscape was greatly heightened by the mountainous scenery to the S. and S.E. Both the laxmania, and zanthorea were growing around me; but neither appeared to be in congenial soil. The face of the hill was very stony, and I found, on examination, that a great change had taken place in the rock-formation, the granite ranges having given place to chlorite schist.

We reached Whaby's about 9 a.m. of the morning of the 27th, and received every attention and civility from him. The valley in which we had slept opened upon an extensive plain, to the eastward of which the Morumbidgee formed the extreme boundary; and it was in a bight, and on ground rather elevated above the plain, that he had fixed his residence. He informed me that we should have to cross the river, as its banks were too precipitous, and the ranges too abrupt, to admit of our keeping the right side; and recommended me to examine and fix upon a spot at which to cross, before I again moved forward, expressing his readiness to accompany me as a guide. We accordingly rode down the river, to a place at which some stockman had effected a passage,—after a week's labour in hewing out a canoe. I by no means intended that a similar delay should occur in our case, but I saw no objection to our crossing at the same place; since its depth, and consequent tranquillity, rendered it eligible enough for that purpose.

The river Dumot.

The Dumot river, another mountain stream, joins the Morumbidgee opposite to Mr. Whaby's residence. It is little inferior to the latter either in size or in the rapidity of its current, and, if I may rely on the information I received, waters a finer country, the principal rock-formation upon it being of limestone and whinstone. It rises amidst the snowy ranges to the S.E., and its banks are better peopled than those of the stream into which it discharges itself. Of course, such a tributary enlarges the Morumbidgee considerably: indeed, the fact is sufficiently evident from the appearance of the latter below the junction.

During our ride with Whaby down its banks, we saw nothing but the richest flats, almost entirely clear of timber and containing from 400 to 700 acres, backed by ranges that were but partially wooded, and were clothed with verdure to their very summits. The herds that were scattered over the first were almost lost in the height of the vegetation, and the ranges served as natural barriers to prevent them from straying away.

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Cross and re-cross the Morumbidgee.

On the following morning, we started for the place at which it had been arranged that we should cross the Morumbidgee, but, though no more than five miles in a direct line from Whaby's house, in consequence of the irregularity of the ground, the drays did not reach it before noon. The weight and quantity of our stores being taken into consideration, the task we had before us was not a light one. Such, however, was the industry of the men, that before it became dark the whole of them, including the drays and sheep, were safely deposited on the opposite bank. We were enabled to be thus expeditious, by means of a punt that we made with the tarpaulins on an oblong frame. As soon as it was finished, a rope was conveyed across the river, and secured to a tree, and a running cord being then fastened to the punt, a temporary ferry was established, and the removal of our stores rendered comparatively easy. M'Leay undertook to drive the horses and cattle over a ford below us, but he did not calculate on the stubborn disposition of the latter, and, consequently, experienced some difficulty, and was well nigh swept away by the current. So great was his difficulty, that he was obliged to land, to his great discomfiture, amidst a grove of lofty nettles. Mulholland, who accompanied him, and who happened to be naked, was severely stung by them. The labour of the day was, however, satisfactorily concluded, and we lay down to rest with feelings of entire satisfaction.

A great part of the following day was consumed in reloading, nor did we pursue our journey until after two o'clock. We then passed over tracks on the left of the river of the same rich description that existed on its right; they were much intersected by creeks, but were clear of timber, and entirely out of the reach of floods. At about seven miles from where we started, we found ourselves checked by precipitous rocks jutting into the stream, and were obliged once more to make preparations for crossing it. Instead of a deep and quiet reach, however, the Morumbidgee here expanded into a fretful rapid; but it was sufficiently shallow to admit of our taking the drays over, without the trouble of unloading them. There was still, however, some labour required in cutting down the banks, and the men were fully occupied until after sunset; and so well did they work, that an hour's exertion in the morning enabled us to make the passage with safety. On ascending the right bank, we found that we had to force through a dense body of reeds, covering some flooded land, at the base of a range terminating upon the river; and we were obliged, in order to extricate ourselves from our embarrassments, to pass to the N.W. of the point, and to cross a low part of the range. This done, we met with no further interruptions during the day, but travelled along rich and clear flats to a deep bight below an angle of the river called Nangaar by the natives; where we pitched our camp, and our animals revelled amid the most luxuriant pasture. Only in one place did the sandy superficies upon the plain indicate that it was there subject to flood.

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The Morumbidgee from Juggiong to our present encampment had held a general S.S.W. course, but from the summit of a hill behind the tents it now appeared to be gradually sweeping round to the westward; and I could trace the line of trees upon its banks, through a rich and extensive valley in that direction, as far as my sight could reach. The country to the S.E. maintained its lofty character, but to the westward the hills and ranges were evidently decreasing in height, and the distant interior seemed fast sinking to a level. The general direction of the ranges had been from N. to S., and as we had been travelling parallel to them, their valleys were shut from our view. Now, however, several rich and extensive ones became visible, opening from the southward into the valley of the Morumbidgee, and, as a further evidence of a change of country from a confused to a more open one, a plain of considerable size stretched from immediately beneath the hill on which I was to the N.W.

Geology of the neighbourhood.

The Morumbidgee itself, from the length and regularity of its reaches, as well as from its increased size, seemed to intimate that it had successfully struggled through the broken country in which it rises, and that it would henceforward meet with fewer interruptions to its course. It still, however, preserved all the characters of a mountain stream; having alternate rapids and deep pools, being in many places encumbered with fallen timber, and generally running over a shingly bed, composed of rounded fragments of every rock of which the neighbouring ranges were formed, and many others that had been swept by the torrents down it. The rock formation of the hills upon its right continued of that chlorite schist which prevailed near Mr. Whaby's, which I have already noticed, and quartz still appeared in large masses, on the loftier ranges opposite, so that the geology of the neighbourhood could not be said to have undergone any material change. It might, however, be considered an extraordinary feature in it, that a small hill of blue limestone existed upon the left bank of the river. The last place at which we had seen limestone was at Yass, but I had learned from Mr. Whaby, that, together with whinstone, it was abundant near a Mr. Rose's station on the Dumot, that was not at any great distance. The irregularity, however, of the intervening country, made the appearance of this solitary rock more singular.

Although the fires of the natives had been frequent upon the river, none had, as yet, ventured to approach us, in consequence of some misunderstanding that had taken place between them and Mr. Stuckey's stockmen. Mr. Roberts' stockmen [these men had lately fixed themselves on the river a little below Mr. Whaby's], however, brought a man and a boy to us at this place in the afternoon, but I could not persuade them to accompany us on our journey—neither could I, although my native boy understood them perfectly, gain any particular information from them.



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In consequence of rain, we did not strike the tents so early as usual. At 7 a.m. a heavy thunder storm occurred from the N.W. after which the sky cleared, and we were enabled to push forward at 11 a.m., moving on a general W.N.W. course, over rich flats, which, having been moistened by the morning's showers, showed the dark colour of the rich earth of which they were composed. Some sand-hills were, however, observed near the river, of about fifteen feet in elevation, crowned by banksias; and the soil of the flats had a very partial mixture of sand in it. How these sand-hills could have been formed it is difficult to say; but they produced little minor vegetation, and were as pure as the sand of the sea-shore. Some considerable plains were noticed to our right, in appearance not inferior to the ground on which we were journeying. At noon we rose gradually from the level of these plains, and travelled along the side of a hill, until we got to a small creek, at which we stopped, though more than a mile and a half from the river. The clouds had been gathering again in the N.W. quarter, and we had scarcely time to secure our flour, when a second storm burst upon us, and it continued to rain violently for the remainder of the day.

Beautiful prospect.

From a small hill that lay to our left Mr. M'Leay and I enjoyed a most beautiful view. Beneath us to the S. E. the rich and lightly timbered valley through which the Morumbidgee flows, extended, and parts of the river were visible through the dark masses of swamp-oak by which it was lined, or glittering among the flooded-gum trees, that grew in its vicinity. In the distance was an extensive valley that wound between successive mountain ranges. More to the eastward, both mountain and woodland bore a dark and gloomy shade, probably in consequence of the light upon them at the time. Those lofty peaks that had borne nearly south of us from Pouni, near Yass, now rose over the last-mentioned ranges, and by their appearance seemed evidently to belong to a high and rugged chain. To the westward, the decline of country was more observable than ever; and the hills on both sides of the river, were lower and more distant from it. Those upon which we found ourselves were composed of iron-stone, were precipitous towards the river in many places, of sandy soil, and were crowned with beef-wood as well as box. The change in the rock-formation and in the soil, produced a corresponding change in the vegetation. The timber was not so large as it had been, neither did the hills any longer bear the green appearance which had distinguished those we had passed to their very summits. The grass here grew in tufts amidst the sand, and was of a burnt appearance as if it had suffered from drought.

Natives—their suffering from cold.

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Some natives had joined us in the morning, and acted as our guides; or it is more than probable that we should have continued our course along the river, and got embarrassed among impediments that were visible from our elevated position; for it was evident that the range we had ascended terminated in an abrupt precipice on the river, that we could not have passed. The blacks suffered beyond what I could have imagined, from cold, and seemed as incapable of enduring it as if they had experienced the rigour of a northern snow storm.

The morning of the 2nd December was cloudy and lowering, and the wind still hung in the N.W. There was truly every appearance of bad weather, but our anxiety to proceed on our journey overcame our apprehensions, and the animals were loaded and moved off at 7 a.m. The rain which had fallen the evening previous, rendered travelling heavy; so that we got on but slowly. At 11, the clouds burst, and continued to pour down for the rest of the day. On leaving the creek we crossed the spine of the range, and descending from it into a valley, that continued to the river on the one hand, and stretched away to the N.W. on the other, we ascended some hills opposite to us, and moved generally through open, undulating forest ground, affording good pasturage.

Smoking an opossum.

One of the blacks being anxious to get an opossum out of a dead tree, every branch of which was hollow, asked for a tomahawk, with which he cut a hole in the trunk above where he thought the animal lay concealed. He found however, that he had cut too low, and that it had run higher up. This made it necessary to smoke it out; he accordingly got some dry grass, and having kindled a fire, stuffed it into the hole he had cut. A raging fire soon kindled in the tree, where the draft was great, and dense columns of smoke issued from the end of each branch as thick as that from the chimney of a steam engine. The shell of the tree was so thin that I thought it would soon be burnt through, and that the tree would fall; but the black had no such fears, and, ascending to the highest branch, he watched anxiously for the poor little wretch he had thus surrounded with dangers and devoted to destruction; and no sooner did it appear, half singed and half roasted, than he seized upon it and threw it down to us with an air of triumph. The effect of the scene in so lonely a forest, was very fine. The roaring of the fire in the tree, the fearless attitude of the savage, and the associations which his colour and appearance, enveloped as he was in smoke, called up, were singular, and still dwell on my recollection. We had not long left the tree, when it fell with a tremendous crash, and was, when we next passed that way, a mere heap of ashes.

Accidents.

Shortly before it commenced raining, the dogs started an emu, and took after it, followed by M'Leay and myself. We failed in killing it, and I was unfortunate enough to lose a most excellent watch upon the occasion, which in regularity was superior to the chronometer I had with me.

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As there was no hope of the weather clearing up, I sent M'Leay and one of the blacks with the flour to the river, with directions to pile it up and cover it with tarpaulins, as soon as possible, remaining myself to bring up the drays. It was not, however, until after 4 p.m. that we gained the river-side, or that we were enabled to get into shelter. Fraser met with a sad accident while assisting the driver of the teams, who, accidentally, struck him with the end of the lash of his whip in the eye, and cut the lower lid in two. The poor fellow fell to the ground as if he had been shot, and really, from the report of the whip, I was at first uncertain of the nature of the accident.

Pondebadgery.

We had gradually ascended some hills; and as the sweep of the valley led southerly, we continued along it until we got to its very head; then, crossing the ridge we descended the opposite side, towards a beautiful plain, on the further extremity of which the river line was marked by the dark-leaved casuarina. In spite of the badness of the weather and the misfortunes of the day, I could not but admire the beauty of the scene. We were obliged to remain stationary the following day, in consequence of one of the drays being out of repair, and requiring a new axle-tree. I could hardly regret the necessity that kept us in so delightful a spot. This plain, which the natives called Pondebadgery, and in which a station has since been formed, is about two miles in breadth, by about three and a-half in length. It is surrounded apparently on every side by hills. The river running E. and W. forms its southern boundary. The hills by which we had entered it, terminating abruptly on the river to the north-east, form a semi-circle round it to the N.N.W. where a valley, the end of which cannot be seen, runs to the north-west, of about half a mile in breadth. On the opposite side of the river moderate hills rise over each other, and leave little space between them and its banks. The Morumbidgee itself, with an increased breadth, averaging from seventy to eighty yards, presents a still, deep sheet of water to the view, over which the casuarina bends with all the grace of the willow, or the birch, but with more sombre foliage. To the west, a high line of flooded-gum trees extending from the river to the base of the hills which form the west side of the valley before noticed, hides the near elevations, and thus shuts in the whole space. The soil of the plain is of the richest description, and the hills backing it, together with the valley, are capable of depasturing the most extensive flocks.

Such is the general landscape from the centre of Pondebadgery Plain. Behind the line of gum-trees, the river suddenly sweeps away to the south, and forms a deep bight of seven miles, when, bearing up again to the N.W. it meets some hills about 10 miles to the W.N.W. of the plain, thus encircling a still more extensive space, that for richness of soil, and for abundance of pasture, can nowhere be excelled; such, though on a smaller scale, are all the flats that adorn the banks of the Morumbidgee, first on one side and then on the other, as the hills close in upon them, from Juggiong to Pondebadgery.

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Travelling down the river.

It is deeply to be regretted that this noble river should exist at such a distance from the capital as to be unavailable. During our stay on the Pondebadergy Plain, the men caught a number of codfish, as they are generally termed, but which are, in reality, a species of perch. The largest weighed 40lb. but the majority of the others were small, not exceeding from six to eight. M'Leay and I walked to the N.W. extremity of the plain, in order to ascertain how we should debouche from it, and to get, if possible, a view of the western interior. We took with us two blacks who had attached themselves to the party, and had made themselves generally useful. On ascending the most westerly of the hills, we found it composed of micaceous schist, the upper coat of which was extremely soft, and broke with a slaty fracture, or crumbled into a sparkling dust beneath our feet. The summit of the hill was barren, and beef-wood alone grew on it. The valley, of which it was the western boundary, ran up northerly for two or three miles, with all the appearance of richness and verdure. To the south extended the flat I have noticed, more heavily timbered than we had usually found them, bounded, or backed rather, by a hilly country, although one fast losing in its general height. To the W.N.W. there was a moderate range of hills on the opposite side of an extensive valley, running up northerly, from which a lateral branch swept round to the W.N.W. with a gradual ascent into the hills, which bore the same appearance of open forest, grazing land, as prevailed in similar tracts to the eastward. The blacks pointed out to us our route up the valley, and stated that we should get on the banks of the river again in a direction W. by N. from the place on which we stood. We accordingly crossed the principal valley on the following morning, and gradually ascended the opposite line of hills. They terminate to the S.E. in lofty precipices, overlooking the river flats, and having a deep chain of ponds under them. The descent towards the river was abrupt, and we encamped upon its banks, with a more confined view than any we had ever had before. There was an evident change in the river; the banks were reedy, the channel deep and muddy, and the neighbourhood bore more the appearance of being subject to overflow than it had done in any one place we had passed over. The hills were much lower, and as we gained the southern brow of that under which we encamped, we could see a level and wooded country to the westward. The line of the horizon was unbroken by any hills in the distance, and the nearer ones seemed gradually to lose themselves in the darkness of the landscape.

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The two natives, whom the stockmen had named Peter and Jemmie, were of infinite service to us, from their knowledge of all the passes, and the general features of the country. Having, however, seen us thus far on the journey from their usual haunts, they became anxious to return, and it was with some difficulty we persuaded them to accompany us for a few days longer, in hopes of reward. The weather had been cool and pleasant; the thermometer averaging 78 of Fahrenheit at noon, in consequences of which the animals kept in good condition, the men healthy and zealous. The sheep Mr. O'Brien had presented to us, gave no additional trouble; they followed in the rear of the party without attempting to wander, and were secured at night in a small pen or fold. No waste attended their slaughter, nor did they lose in condition, from being driven from ten to fifteen miles daily, so much as I had been led to suppose they would have done.

CHAPTER III.

Character of the Morumbidgee where it issues from the hilly country— Appearance of approach to swamps—Hamilton Plains—Intercourse with the natives—Their appearance, customs, &c.—Change in the character of the river—Mirage—Dreariness of the country—Ride towards the Lachlan river —Two boats built and launched on the Morumbidgee; and the drays, with part of the men sent back to Goulburn Plains.

Natives—wild game,&c.; Character of the river and the adjoining country.

From our camp, the Morumbidgee held a direct westerly course for about three miles. The hills under which we had encamped, rose so close upon our right as to leave little space between them and the river. At the distance of three miles, however, they suddenly terminated, and the river changed its direction to the S.W., while a chain of ponds extended to the westward, and separated the alluvial flats from a somewhat more elevated plain before us. We kept these ponds upon our left for some time, but, as they ultimately followed the bend of the river, we left them. The blacks led us on a W. by S. course to the base of a small range two or three miles distant, near which there was a deep lagoon. It was evident they here expected to have found some other natives. Being disappointed, however, they turned in towards the river again, but we stopped short of it on the side of a serpentine sheet of water, an apparent continuation of the chain of ponds we had left behind us, forming a kind of ditch round the S.W. extremity of the range, parallel to which we had continued to travel. This range, which had been gradually decreasing in height from the lagoon, above which it rose perpendicularly, might almost be said to terminate here. We fell in with two or three natives before we halted, but the evident want of population in so fine a country, and on so noble a river, surprised me extremely.

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We saw several red kangaroos in the course of the day, and succeeded in killing one. It certainly is a beautiful animal, ranging the wilds in native freedom. The female and the kid are of a light mouse-colour. Wild turkeys abound on this part of the Morumbidgee, but with the exception of a few terns, which are found hovering over the lagoons, no new birds had as yet been procured; and the only plant that enriched our collection, was an unknown *metrosideros*. In crossing the extremity of the range, the wheels of the dray sunk deep into a yielding and coarse sandy soil, of decomposed granite, on which forest-grass prevailed in tufts, which, being far apart, made the ground uneven, and caused the animals to trip. We rose at one time sufficiently high to obtain an extensive view, and had our opinions confirmed as to the level nature of the country we were so rapidly approaching. From the N. to the W.S.W. the eye wandered over a wooded and unbroken interior, if I except a solitary double hill that rose in the midst of it, bearing S. 82 degrees W. distant 12 miles, and another singular elevation that bore S. 32 degrees W. called by the natives, Kengal. The appearance to the E.S.E. was still that of a mountainous country, while from the N.E., the hills gradually decrease in height, until lost in the darkness of surrounding objects to the northward. We did not travel this day more than 13 miles on a W. by N. course. The Morumbidgee, where we struck it, by its increased size, kept alive our anticipations of its ultimately leading us to some important point. The partial rains that had fallen while we were on its upper branch, had swollen it considerably, and it now rolled along a vast body of water at the rate of three miles an hour, preserving a medium width of 150 feet; its banks retaining a height far above the usual level of the stream. A traveller who had never before descended into the interior of New Holland, would have spurned the idea of such a river terminating in marshes; but with the experience of the former journey, strong as hope was within my breast, I still feared it might lose itself in the vast flat upon which we could scarcely be said to have yet entered. The country was indeed taking up more and more every day the features of the N.W. interior. Cypressess were observed upon the minor ridges, and the soil near the river, although still rich, and certainly more extensive than above, was occasionally mixed with sand, and scattered over with the claws of crayfish and shells, indicating its greater liability to be flooded; nor indeed could I entertain a doubt that the river had laid a great part of the levels around us under water long after it found that channel in which nature intended ultimately to confine it. We killed another fine red kangaroo in the early part of the day, in galloping after which I got a heavy fall.



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The two blacks who had been with us so long, and who had not only exerted themselves to assist us, but had contributed in no small degree to our amusement, though they had from M'Leay's liberality, tasted all the dainties with which we had provided ourselves, from sugar to concentrated cayenne, intimated that they could no longer accompany the party. They had probably got to the extremity of their beat, and dared not venture any further. They left us with evident regret, receiving, on their departure, several valuable presents, in the shape of tomahawks &c. The last thing they did was to point out the way to us, and to promise to join us on our return, although they evidently little anticipated ever seeing us again.

In pursuing our journey, we entered a forest, consisting of box-trees, casuarinae, and cypresses, on a light sandy soil, in which both horses and bullocks sunk so deep that their labour was greatly increased, more especially as the weather had become much warmer. At noon I altered my course from N.W. by W. to W.N.W., and reached the Morumbidgee at 3 in the afternoon. The flats bordering it were extensive and rich, and, being partially mixed with sand, were more fitted for agricultural purposes than the stiffer and purer soil amidst the mountains; but the interior beyond them was far from being of corresponding quality. We crossed several plains on which vegetation was scanty, probably owing to the hardness of the soil, which was a stiff loamy clay, and which must check the growth of plants, by preventing the roots from striking freely into it. The river where we stopped for the night appeared to have risen considerably, and the fish were rolling about on the surface of the water with a noise like porpoises. No elevations were visible, so that I had not an opportunity of continuing the chain of survey with the points I had previously taken.

Travelling down the river.

As we proceeded down the river on the 8th, the flats became still more extensive than they had ever been, and might almost be denominated plains. Vegetation was scanty upon them, although the soil was of the first quality. About nine miles from our camp, we struck on a small isolated hill, that could scarcely have been of 200 feet elevation; yet, depressed as it was, the view from its summit was very extensive, and I was surprised to find that we were still in some measure surrounded by high lands, of which I took the following bearings, connected with the present ones.

A High Peak.....N. 66 E. distance 40 miles.
Kengal N. 110 E. distant.
Double Hill ... S. 10 W. distant.

To the north, there were several fires burning, which appeared rather the fires of natives, than conflagrations, and as the river had made a bend to the N.N.W., I doubted

not that they were upon its banks. From this hill, which was of compact granite, we struck away to the W.N.W., and shortly afterwards crossed

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some remarkable sand-hills. Figuratively speaking, they appeared like islands amidst the alluvial deposits, and were as pure in their composition as the sand on the sea-shore. They were generally covered with forest grass, in tufts, and a coarse kind of rushes, under banksias and cypresses. We found a small fire on the banks of the river, and close to it the couch and hut of a solitary native, who had probably seen us approach, and had fled. There cannot be many inhabitants hereabouts, since there are no paths to indicate that they frequent this part of the Morumbidgee more at one season than another.

On the 9th, the river fell off again to the westward, and we lost a good deal of the northing we had made the day before. We journeyed pretty nearly equidistant from the stream, and kept altogether on the alluvial flats. As we were wandering along the banks of the river, a black started up before us, and swam across to the opposite side, where he immediately hid himself. We could by no means induce him to show himself; he was probably the lonely being whom we had scared away from the fire the day before. In the afternoon, however we surprised a family of six natives, and persuaded them to follow us to our halting place. My boy understood them well; but the young savage had the cunning to hide the information they gave him, or, for aught I know, to ask questions that best suited his own purposes, and therefore we gained little intelligence from them.

Every day now produced some change in the face of the country, by which it became more and more assimilated to that I had traversed during the first expedition. *Acacia pendula* now made its appearance on several plains beyond the river deposits, as well as that salsolaceous class of plants, among which the *schlerolina* and *rhagodia* are so remarkable. The natives left us at sunset, but returned early in the morning with an extremely facetious and good-humoured old man, who volunteered to act as our guide without the least hesitation. There was a cheerfulness in his manner, that gained our confidence at once, and rendered him a general favourite. He went in front with the dogs, and led us a little away from the river to kill kangaroos, as he said. At about two miles we struck on an inconsiderable elevation, which the party crossed at the S.W. extremity. I ascended it at the opposite end, but although the view was extensive, I could not make out the little hill of granite from which I had taken my former bearings, and the only elevation I could recognise as connected with them, was one about ten miles distant, bearing S. 168 W. I could observe very distant ranges to the E.N.E. and immediately below me in that direction, there was a large clear plain, skirted by *acacia pendula*, stretching from S.S.E. to N.N.W. The crown and ridges of the hill on which I stood, were barren, stony, and covered with beef-wood, the rock-formation being a coarse granite. The drays had got so far ahead of me that I did not overtake them before they had halted on the river at a distance of ten miles.

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Information from A native.

The Morumbidgee appeared, on examination, to have increased in breadth, and continued to rise gradually. It is certainly a noble stream, very different from those I had already traced to their termination. The old black informed me that there was another large river flowing to the southward of west, to which the Morumbidgee was as a creek, and that we could gain it in four days. He stated that its waters were good, but that its banks were not peopled. That such a feature existed where he laid it down, I thought extremely probable, because it was only natural to expect that other streams descended from the mountains in the S.E. of the island, as well as that on which we were travelling. The question was, whether either of them held on an uninterrupted course to some reservoir, or whether they fell short of the coast and exhausted themselves in marshes. Considering the concave direction of the mountains to the S.E., I even at this time hoped that the rivers falling into the interior would unite sooner or later, and contribute to the formation of an important and navigable stream. Of the fate of the Morumbidgee, the old black could give no account. It seemed probable, therefore, that we were far from its termination.

I had hitherto been rather severe upon the animals, for although our journey had not exceeded from twelve to fifteen miles a day, it had been without intermission. I determined, therefore, to give both men and animals a day of rest, as soon as I should find a convenient place. We started on the 11th with this intention, but we managed to creep over eight or ten miles of ground before we halted. The country was slightly undulated, and much intersected by creeks, few of which had water in them. The whole tract was, however, well adapted either for agriculture, or for grazing, and, in spite of the drought that had evidently long hung over it, was well covered with vegetation. We had passed all high lands, and the interior to the westward presented an unbroken level to the eye. The Morumbidgee appeared to hold a more northerly course than I had anticipated. Still low ranges continued upon our right, and the cypress ridges became more frequent and denser; but the timber on the more open grounds generally consisted of box and flooded-gum. Of minor trees, the acacia pendula was the most prevalent, with a shrub bearing a round nut, enclosed in a scarlet capsule, and an interesting species of stenochylus. I had observed as yet, few of the plants of the more northern interior.

Natives—their ugliness.

In this neighbourhood, the dogs killed an emu and a kangaroo, which came in very conveniently for some natives whom we fell in with on one of the river flats. They were, without exception, the worst featured of any I had ever seen. It is scarcely possible to conceive that human beings could be so hideous and loathsome. The old black, who was rather good-looking, told me they were the last we should see for some time, and I felt that if these were samples of the natives on the lowlands, I cared very little how few of them we should meet.



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Extensive plains.

The country on the opposite side of the river had all the features of that to the north of it, but a plain of such extent suddenly opened upon us to the southward, that I halted at once in order to examine it, and by availing myself of a day of rest, to fix our position more truly than we could otherwise have done. We accordingly pitched our tents under some lofty gum-trees, opposite to the plain, and close upon the edge of the sandy beach of the river. Before they were turned out, the animals were carefully examined, and the pack-saddles overhauled, that they might undergo any necessary repairs. The river fell considerably during the night, but it poured along a vast body of water, possessing a strong current. The only change I remarked in it was that it now had a bed of sand, and was generally deeper on one side than on the other. It kept a very uniform breadth of from 150 to 170 feet—and a depth of from 4 to 20. Its channel, though occasionally much encumbered with fallen timber, was large enough to contain twice the volume of water then in it, but it had outer and more distant banks, the boundaries of the alluvial flats, to confine it within certain limits, during the most violent floods, and to prevent its inundating the country.

Hamilton's plains.

With a view to examine the plain opposite to us, I directed our horses to be taken across the river early in the morning, and after breakfast, M'Leay and I swam across after them. We found the current strong, and could not keep a direct line over the channel, but were carried below the place at which we plunged in. We proceeded afterwards in a direction W.S.W. across the plain for five or six miles, before we saw trees on the opposite extremity, at a still greater distance. We thus found ourselves in the centre of an area of from 26 to 30 miles. It appeared to be perfectly level, though not really so. The soil upon it was good, excepting in isolated spots, where it was sandy. Vegetation was scanty upon it, but, on the whole, I should conclude that it was fitter for agriculture than for grazing. For I think it very probable, that those lands which lie hardening and bare in a state of nature, would produce abundantly if broken up by the plough. I called this Hamilton's plains, in remembrance of the surgeon of my regiment. The Morumbidgee forms its N.E. boundary, and a creek rising on it, cuts off a third part on the western side, and runs away from the river in a southerly direction. This creek, even before it gets to the outskirts of the plains, assumes a considerable size. Such a fact would argue that heavy rains fall in this part of the interior, to cut out such a watercourse, or that the soil is extremely loose; but I should think the former the most probable, since the soil of this plain had a substratum of clay. I place our encampment on the river in latitude 34 degrees 41 minutes 45 seconds S., and in East longitude 146 degrees 50 minutes, the variation of the compass being 6 degrees 10 minutes E.

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Intercourse with the natives; scantiness of the population.

On our return to the camp we found several natives with our people, and among them one of the tallest I had ever seen. Their women were with them, and they appeared to have lost all apprehension of any danger occurring from us. The animals were benefited greatly by this day of rest. We left the plain, therefore, on the 13th with renewed spirits, and passed over a country very similar to that by which we had approached it, one well adapted for grazing, but intersected by numerous creeks, at two of which we found natives, some of whom joined our party. Our old friend left us in quest of some blacks, who, as he informed Hopkinson, had seen the tracks of our horses on the Darling. I was truly puzzled at such a statement, which was, however, further corroborated by the circumstance of one of the natives having a tire-nail affixed to a spear, which he said was picked up, by the man who gave it to him, on one of our encampments. I could not think it likely that this story was true, and rather imagined they must have picked up the nail near the located districts, and I was anxious to have the point cleared up. When we halted we had a large assemblage of natives with us, amounting in all to twenty-seven, but I awaited in vain the return of the old man. The night passed away without our seeing him, nor did he again join us.

We started in the morning with our new acquaintances, and kept on a south-westerly course during the day, over an excellent grazing, and, in many places, an agricultural country, still intersected by creeks, that were too deep for the water to have dried in them. The country more remote from the river, however, began to assume more and more the character and appearance of the northern interior. I rode into several plains, the soil of which was either a red sandy loam, bare of vegetation, or a rotten and blistered earth, producing nothing but rhagodiae, salsolae, and misembrianthemum.

We fell in with another tribe of blacks during the journey, to whom we were literally consigned by those who had been previously with us, and who now turned back, while our new friends took the lead of the drays. They were two fine young men, but had very ugly wives, and were for a long time extremely diffident. I found that I could obtain but little information through my black boy,—whether from his not understanding me, or because he was too cunning, is uncertain. One of these young men, however, clearly stated that he had seen the tracks of bullocks and horses, a long time ago, to the N.N.W. in the direction of some detached hills, that were visible from 20 to 25 miles distant. He remembered them, he said, as a boy, and added that the white men were without water. It was, therefore, clear that he alluded to Mr. Oxley's excursion, northerly from the Lachlan, and I had no doubt on my mind, that he had

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been on one of that officer's encampments, and that the hills to the north of us were those to the opposite base of which he had penetrated. I was determined, therefore, if practicable, to reach these hills, deeming it a matter of great importance to connect the surveys, but I deferred my journey for a day or two, in hopes, from the continued northerly course of the river, that we should have approached them nearer.

In the evening we fell in with some more blacks, among whom were two brothers, of those who were acting as our guides. One had a very pretty girl as a wife, and all the four brothers were very good-looking young men. There cannot, I should think, be a numerous population on the banks of the Morumbidgee, from the fact of our having seen not more than fifty in an extent of more than 180 miles. They are apparently scattered along it in families. I was rather surprised that my boy understood their language well, since it certainly differed from that of the Macquarie tribes, but nevertheless as these people do not wander far, our information as to what was before us was very gradually arrived at, and only as we fell in with the successive families. Moreover, as my boy was very young, it may be that he was more eager in communicating to those who had no idea of them, the wonders he had seen, than in making inquiries on points that were indifferent to him.

Character of the country.

We passed a very large plain in the course of the day, which was bounded by forests of box, cypress, and the acacia pendula, of red sandy soil and parched appearance. The Morumbidgee evidently overflows a part of the lands we crossed, to a greater extent than heretofore, though the alluvial deposits beyond its influence were still both rich and extensive. The crested pigeon made its appearance on the acacias, which I took to be a sure sign of our approach to a country more than ordinarily subject to overflow; since on the Macquarie and the Darling, those birds were found only to inhabit the regions of marshes, or spaces covered by the acacia pendula, or the polygonum. We had not, however, yet seen any of the latter plant, although we were shortly destined to be almost lost amidst fields of it.

Change in the country.

We were now approaching that parallel of longitude in which the other known rivers of New Holland had been found to exhaust themselves; the least change therefore, for the worse was sufficient to raise my apprehensions; yet, although the Morumbidgee had received no tributary from the Dumot downwards, and was leading us into an apparently endless level, I saw no indication of its decreasing in size, or in the rapidity of its current. Certainly, however, I had, from the character of the country around us, an anticipation that a change was about to take place in it, and this anticipation was verified in the course of the following day.

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The alluvial flats gradually decreased in breadth, and we journeyed mostly over extensive and barren plains, which in many places approached so near the river as to form a part of its bank. They were covered with the salsolaceous class of plants, so common in the interior, in a red sandy soil, and were as even as a bowling green. The alluvial spaces near the river became covered with reeds, and, though subject to overflow at every partial rise of it, were so extremely small as scarcely to afford food for our cattle. Flooded-gum trees of lofty size grew on these reedy spaces, and marked the line of the river, but the timber of the interior appeared stunted and useless.

Description of the natives; manners and customs of the natives.

We found this part of the Morumbidgee much more populous than its upper branches. When we halted, we had no fewer than forty-one natives with us, of whom the young men were the least numerous. They allowed us to choose a place for ourselves before they formed their own camp, and studiously avoided encroaching on our ground so as to appear troublesome. Their manners were those of a quiet and inoffensive people, and their appearance in some measure prepossessing. The old men had lofty foreheads, and stood exceedingly erect. The young men were cleaner in their persons and were better featured than any we had seen, some of them having smooth hair and an almost Asiatic cast of countenance. On the other hand, the women and children were disgusting objects. The latter were much subject to diseases, and were dreadfully emaciated. It is evident that numbers of them die in their infancy for want of care and nourishment. We remarked none at the age of incipient puberty, but the most of them under six. In stating that the men were more prepossessing than any we had seen, I would not be understood to mean that they differed in any material point either from the natives of the coast, or of the most distant interior to which I had been, for they were decidedly the same race, and had the same leading features and customs, as far as the latter could be observed. The sunken eye and overhanging eyebrow, the high cheek-bone and thick lip, distended nostrils, the nose either short or aquiline, together with a stout bust and slender extremities, and both curled and smooth hair, marked the natives of the Morumbidgee as well as those of the Darling. They were evidently sprung from one common stock, the savage and scattered inhabitants of a rude and inhospitable land. In customs they differed in no material point from the coast natives, and still less from the tribes on the Darling and the Castlereagh. They extract the front tooth, lacerate their bodies, to raise the flesh, cicatrices being their chief ornament; procure food by the same means, paint in the same manner, and use the same weapons, as far as the productions of the country will allow them. But as the grass-tree

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is not found westward of the mountains, they make a light spear of a reed, similar to that of which the natives of the southern islands form their arrows. These they use for distant combat, and not only carry in numbers, but throw with the boomerang to a great distance and with unerring precision, making them to all intents and purposes as efficient as the bow and arrow. They have a ponderous spear for close fight, and others of different sizes for the chase. With regard to their laws, I believe they are universally the same all over the known parts of New South Wales. The old men have alone the privilege of eating the emu; and so submissive are the young men to this regulation, that if, from absolute hunger or under other pressing circumstances, one of them breaks through it, either during a hunting excursion, or whilst absent from his tribe, he returns under a feeling of conscious guilt, and by his manner betrays his guilt, sitting apart from the men, and confessing his misdemeanour to the chief at the first interrogation, upon which he is obliged to undergo a slight punishment. This evidently is a law of policy and necessity, for if the emus were allowed to be indiscriminately slaughtered, they would soon become extinct. Civilised nations may learn a wholesome lesson even from savages, as in this instance of their forbearance. For somewhat similar reasons, perhaps, married people alone are here permitted to eat ducks. They hold their corrobories, (midnight ceremonies), and sing the same melancholy ditty that breaks the stillness of night on the shores of Jervis' Bay, or on the banks of the Macquarie; and during the ceremony imitate the several birds and beasts with which they are acquainted. If these inland tribes differ in anything from those on the coast, it is in the mode of burying their dead, and, partially, in their language. Like all savages, they consider their women as secondary objects, oblige them to procure their own food, or throw to them over their shoulders the bones they have already picked, with a nonchalance that is extremely amusing; and, on the march, make them beasts of burden to carry their very weapons. The population of the Morumbidgee, as far as we had descended it at this time, did not exceed from ninety to a hundred souls. I am persuaded that disease and accidents consign many of them to a premature grave.

Mirage.

From this camp, one family only accompanied us. We journeyed due west over plains of great extent. The soil upon them was soft and yielding, in some places being a kind of light earth covered with rhagodiae, in others a red tenacious clay, overrun by the misembrianthemum and salsolae. Nothing could exceed the apparent barrenness of these plains, or the cheerlessness of the landscape. We had left all high lands behind us, and were now on an extensive plain, bounded in the distance by low trees or by dark lines of cypresses. The lofty gum-trees on the river followed its windings,

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and, as we opened the points, they appeared, from the peculiar effect of a mirage, as bold promontories jutting into the ocean, having literally the blue tint of distance. This mirage floated in a light tremulous vapour on the ground, and not only deceived us with regard to the extent of the plains, and the appearance of objects, but hid the trees, in fact, from our view altogether; so that, in moving, as we imagined, upon the very point or angle of the river, we found as we neared it, that the trees stretched much further into the plain, and were obliged to alter our course to round them. The heated state of the atmosphere, and the sandy nature of the country could alone have caused a mirage so striking in its effects, as this,—exceeding considerably similar appearances noticed during the first expedition. The travelling was so heavy, that I was obliged to make a short day's journey, and when we struck the river for the purpose of halting, it had fallen off very much in appearance, and was evidently much contracted, with low banks and a sandy bed. It was difficult to account for this sudden change, but when I gazed on the extent of level country before me, I began to dread that this hitherto beautiful stream would ultimately disappoint us.

Excursion towards A ridge of hills.

I had deferred my intended excursion to the hills under which I imagined Mr. Oxley had encamped, until we were out of sight of them, and I now feared that it was almost too late to undertake it, but I was still anxious to determine a point in which I felt considerable interest. I was the more desirous of surveying the country to the northward, because of the apparent eagerness with which the natives had caught at the word Colare, which I recollected having heard a black on the Macquarie make use of in speaking of the Lachlan. They pointed to the N.N.W., and making a sweep with the arm raised towards the sky, seemed to intimate that a large sheet of water existed in that direction; and added that it communicated with the Morumbidgee more to the westward. This information confirmed still more my impressions with regard to Mr. Oxley's line of route; and, as I found a ready volunteer in M'Leay, I gave the party in charge to Harris until I should rejoin him, and turned back towards the hills, with the intention of reaching them if possible. No doubt we should have done so had it not been for the nature of the ground over which we travelled, and the impossibility of our exceeding a walk. We rode to a distance of 18 miles, but still found ourselves far short of the hills, and therefore gave up the point. I considered, however, that we were about the same distance to the south, as Mr. Oxley had been to the north of them, and in taking bearings of the highest points, I afterwards found that they exactly tallied with his bearings, supposing him to have taken them from his camp.

Quiet demeanour of the natives.

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On our way to the river, we passed through some dense bushes of casuarinae and cypresses, to the outskirts of the plains through which the Morumbidgee winds. We reached the camp two or three hours after sunset, and found it crowded with natives to the number of 60. They were extremely quiet and inoffensive in their demeanour, and asked us to point out where they might sleep, before they ventured to kindle their fires. One old man, we remarked, had a club foot, and another was blind, but, as far as we could judge from the glare of the fires, the generality of them were fine young men, and supported themselves in a very erect posture when standing or walking. There were many children with the women, among whom colds seemed to prevail. It blew heavily from the N.W. during the night, and a little rain fell in the early part of the morning. Our route during the day, was over as melancholy a tract as ever was travelled. The plains to the N. and N.W. bounded the horizon; not a tree of any kind was visible upon them. It was equally open to the S., and it appeared as if the river was decoying us into a desert, there to leave us in difficulty and in distress. The very mirage had the effect of boundlessness in it, by blending objects in one general hue; or, playing on the ground, it cheated us with an appearance of water, and on arriving at the spot, we found a continuation of the same scorching plain, over which we were moving, instead of the stream we had hoped for.

The cattle about this time began to suffer, and, anxious as I was to push on, I was obliged to shorten my journeys, according to circumstances. Amidst the desolation around us, the river kept alive our hopes. If it traversed deserts, it might reach fertile lands, and it was to the issue of the journey that we had to look for success. It here, however, evidently overflowed its banks more extensively than heretofore, and broad belts of reeds were visible on either side of it, on which the animals exclusively subsisted. Most of the natives had followed us, and their patience and abstinence surprised me exceedingly. Some of them had been more than twenty-four hours without food, and yet seemed as little disposed to seek it as ever. I really thought they expected me to supply their wants, but as I could not act so liberal a scale, George M'Leay undeceived them; after which they betook themselves to the river, and got a supply of muscles. I rather think their going so frequently into the water engenders a catarrh, or renders them more liable to it than they otherwise would be. In the afternoon the wind shifted to the S.W. It blew a hurricane; and the temperature of the air was extremely low. The natives felt the cold beyond belief and kindled large fires. In the morning, when we moved away, the most of them started with fire-sticks to keep themselves warm; but they dropped off one by one, and at noon we found ourselves totally deserted.

Dreariness of the landscape.

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It is impossible for me to describe the kind of country we were now traversing, or the dreariness of the view it presented. The plains were still open to the horizon, but here and there a stunted gum-tree, or a gloomy cypress, seemed placed by nature as mourners over the surrounding desolation. Neither beast nor bird inhabited these lonely and inhospitable regions, over which the silence of the grave seemed to reign. We had not, for days past, seen a blade of grass, so that the animals could not have been in very good condition. We pushed on, however, sixteen miles, in consequence of the coolness of the weather. We observed little change in the river in that distance, excepting that it had taken up a muddy bottom, and lost all the sand that used to fill it. The soil and productions on the plains continued unchanged in every respect. From this time to the 22nd, the country presented the same aspect. Occasional groups of cypress showed themselves on narrow sandy ridges, or partial brushes extended from the river, consisting chiefly of the acacia pendula, the stenochylus, and the nut I have already noticed. The soil on which they grew was, if possible, worse than that of the barren plain which we were traversing; and their colour and drooping state rendered the desolate landscape still more dreary.

On the 21st, we found the same singular substance(gypsum) embedded in the bank of the river that had been collected, during the former expedition, on the banks of the Darling; and hope, which is always uppermost in the human breast, induced me to think that we were fast approaching that stream. My observations placed me in 34 degrees 17 minutes 15 seconds S. and 145 degrees of E. longitude.

Black boy deserts.

On the 22nd, my black boy deserted me. I was not surprised at his doing so, neither did I regret his loss, for he had been of little use under any circumstances. He was far too cunning for our purpose. I know not that the term ingratitude can be applied to one in his situation, and in whose bosom nature had implanted a love of freedom. We learnt from four blacks, with whom he had spoken, and who came to us in the afternoon, that he had gone up the river,—as I conjectured, to the last large tribe we had left, with whom he appeared to become very intimate.

A creek coming from the N.N.W. here fell into the Morumbidgee; a proof that the general decline of country was really to the south, although a person looking over it would have supposed the contrary.

Country subject to inundation.

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We started on the 23rd, with the same boundlessness of plain on either side of us; but in the course of the morning a change took place, both in soil and productions; and from the red sandy loam, and salsolaceous plants, amidst which we had been toiling, we got upon a light tenacious and blistered soil, evidently subject to frequent overflow, and fields of polygonum junceum, amidst which, both the crested pigeon and the black quail were numerous. The drays and animals sank so deep in this, that we were obliged to make for the river, and keep upon its immediate banks. Still, with all the appearance of far-spread inundation, it continued undiminished in size, and apparently in the strength of its current. Its channel was deeper than near the mountains, but its breadth was about the same.

On the 24th, we were again entangled amidst fields of polygonum, through which we laboured until after eleven, when we gained a firmer soil. Some cypresses appeared upon our right, in a dark line, and I indulged hopes that a change was about to take place in the nature of the country. We soon, however, got on a light rotten earth, and were again obliged to make for the river, with the teams completely exhausted. We had not travelled many miles from our last camp, yet it struck me, that the river had fallen off in appearance. I examined it with feelings of intense anxiety, certain, as I was, that the flooded spaces, over which we had been travelling would, sooner or later, be succeeded by a country overgrown with reeds. The river evidently overflowed its banks, on both sides, for many miles, nor had I a doubt that, at some periods, the space northward, between it and the Lachlan, presented the appearance of one vast sea. The flats of polygonum stretched away to the N.W. to an amazing distance, as well as in a southerly direction, and the very nature of the soil bore testimony to its flooded origin. But the most unaccountable circumstance to me was, that it should be entirely destitute of vegetation, with the exception of the gloomy and leafless bramble I have noticed.

M'Leay, who was always indefatigable in his pursuit after subjects of natural history, shot a cockatoo, of a new species, hereabouts, having a singularly shaped upper mandible. It was white, with scarlet down under the neck feathers, smaller than the common cockatoo, and remarkable for other peculiarities.

Intercourse with natives; the Colare or lachlan.

Two or three natives made their appearance at some distance from the party, but would not approach it until after we had halted. They then came to the tents, seven in number, and it was evident from their manner, that their chief or only object was to pilfer anything they could. We did not, therefore, treat them with much ceremony. They were an ill-featured race, and it was only by strict watching during the night that they were prevented from committing theft.

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Probably from seeing that we were aware of their intentions, they left us early, and pointing somewhat to the eastward of north, said they were going to the Colare, and on being asked how far it was, they signified that they should sleep there. I had on a former occasion recollected the term having been made use of by a black, on the Macquarie, when speaking to me of the Lachlan, and had questioned one of the young men who was with us at the time, and who seemed more intelligent than his companions, respecting it. Immediately catching at the word, he had pointed to the N.N.W., and, making a sweep with his arms raised towards the sky had intimated, evidently, that a large sheet of water existed in that direction, in the same manner that another black had done on a former occasion: on being further questioned, he stated that this communicated with the Morumbidgee more to the westward, and on my expressing a desire to go to it, he said we could not do so under four days. We had, it appeared, by the account of the seven natives, approached within one day's journey of it, and, as I thought it would be advisable to gain a little knowledge of the country to the north, I suggested to M'Leay to ride in that direction, while the party should be at rest, with some good feed for the cattle that fortune had pointed out to us.

Excursion towards the lachlan.

Our horses literally sank up to their knees on parts of the great plain over which we had in the first instance to pass, and we rode from three to four miles before we caught sight of a distant wood at its northern extremity; the view from the river having been for the last two or three days, as boundless as the ocean. As we approached the wood, two columns of smoke rose from it, considerably apart, evidently the fires of natives near water. We made for the central space between them, having a dead acacia scrub upon our right. On entering the wood, we found that it contained for the most part, flooded-gum, under which bulrushes and reeds were mixed together. The whole space seemed liable to overflow, and we crossed numerous little drains, that intersected each other in every direction. From the resemblance of the ground to that at the bottom of the marshes of the Macquarie, I prognosticated to my companion that we should shortly come upon a creek, and we had not ridden a quarter of a mile further, when we found ourselves on the banks of one of considerable size. Crossing it, we proceeded northerly, until we got on the outskirts of a plain of red sandy soil, covered with rhagodia alone, and without a tree upon the visible horizon. The country appeared to be rising before us, but was extremely depressed to the eastward. After continuing along this plain for some time, I became convinced from appearances, that we were receding from water, and that the fires of the natives, which were no longer visible, must have been on the creek we had crossed, that I judged to be leading W.S.W. from the opposite

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quarter. We had undoubtedly struck below to the westward of the Colare or Lachlan, and the creek was the channel of communication between it and the Morumbidgee, at least such was the natural conclusion at which I arrived. Having no further object in continuing a northerly course, we turned to the S.E., and, after again passing the creek, struck away for the camp on a S. by W. course, and passed through a dense brush of cypress and casuarina in our way to it.

Connection of lachlan with Morumbidgee.

Considering our situation as connected with the marshes of the Lachlan, I cannot but infer that the creek we struck upon during this excursion serves as a drain to the latter, to conduct its superfluous waters into the Morumbidgee in times of flood, as those of the Macquarie are conducted by the creek at the termination of its marshes into Morrisset's Chain of Ponds. It will be understood that I only surmise this. I argue from analogy, not from proof. Whether I am correct or not, my knowledge of the facts I have stated, tended very much to satisfy my mind as to the *lay* of the interior; and to revive my hopes that the Morumbidgee would not fail us, although there was no appearance of the country improving.

Country covered with reeds.

We started on the 26th, on a course somewhat to the N.W., and traversed plains of the same wearisome description as those I have already described. The wheels of the drays sank up to their axle-trees, and the horses above their fetlocks at every step. The fields of polygonum spread on every side of us like a dark sea, and the only green object within range of our vision was the river line of trees. In several instances, the force of both teams was put to one dray, to extricate it from the bed into which it had sunk, and the labour was considerably increased from the nature of the weather. The wind was blowing as if through a furnace, from the N.N.E., and the dust was flying in clouds, so as to render it almost suffocating to remain exposed to it. This was the only occasion upon which we felt the hot winds in the interior. We were, about noon, endeavouring to gain a point of a wood at which I expected to come upon the river again, but it was impossible for the teams to reach it without assistance. I therefore sent M'Leay forward, with orders to unload the pack animals as soon as he should make the river, and send them back to help the teams. He had scarcely been separated from me 20 minutes, when one of the men came galloping back to inform me that no river was to be found—that the country beyond the wood was covered with reeds as far as the eye could reach, and that Mr. M'Leay had sent him back for instructions. This intelligence stunned me for a moment or two, and I am sure its effect upon the men was very great. They had unexpectedly arrived at a part of the interior similar to one they had held in dread, and conjured up a thousand difficulties

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and privations. I desired the man to recall Mr. M'Leay; and, after gaining the wood, moved outside of it at right angles to my former course, and reached the river, after a day of severe toil and exposure, at half-past five. The country, indeed, bore every resemblance to that around the marshes of the Macquarie, but I was too weary to make any further effort: indeed it was too late for me undertake anything until the morning.

Anxious COGITATIONS; survey of river and environs.

The circumstances in which we were so unexpectedly placed, occupied my mind so fully that I could not sleep; and I awaited the return of light with the utmost anxiety. If we were indeed on the outskirts of marshes similar to those I had on a former occasion found so much difficulty in examining, I foresaw that in endeavouring to move round then I should recede from water, and place the expedition in jeopardy, probably, without gaining any determinate point, as it would be necessary for me to advance slowly and with caution. Our provisions, however, being calculated to last only to a certain period, I was equally reluctant to delay our operations. My course was, therefore, to be regulated by the appearance of the country and of the river, which I purposed examining with the earliest dawn. If the latter should be found to run into a region of reeds, a boat would be necessary to enable me to ascertain its direction; but, if ultimately it should be discovered to exhaust itself, we should have to strike into the interior on a N.W. course, in search of the Darling. I could not think of putting the whale-boat together in our then state of uncertainty, and it struck me that a smaller one could sooner be prepared for the purposes for which I should require it. These considerations, together with the view I had taken of the measures I might at last be forced into, determined me, on rising, to order Clayton to fell a suitable tree, and to prepare a saw-pit. The labour was of no consideration, and even if eventually the boat should not be wanted, no injury would arise, and it was better to take time by the forelock. Having marked a tree preparatory to leaving the camp, M'Leay and I started at an early hour on an excursion of deeper interest than any we had as yet undertaken; to examine the reeds, not only for the purpose of ascertaining their extent, if possible, but also to guide us in our future measures. We rode for some miles along the river side, but observed in it no signs, either of increase or of exhaustion. Its waters, though turbid, were deep, and its current still rapid. Its banks, too, were lofty, and showed no evidence of decreasing in height, so as to occasion an overflow of them, as had been the case with the Macquarie. We got among vast bodies of reeds, but the plains of the interior were visible beyond them. We were evidently in a hollow, and the decline of country was plainly to the southward

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of west. Every thing tended to strengthen my conviction that we were still far from the termination of the river. The character it had borne throughout, and its appearance now so far to the westward, gave me the most lively hopes that it would make good its way through the vast level into which it fell, and that its termination would accord with its promise. Besides, I daily anticipated its junction with some stream of equal, if not of greater magnitude from the S.E. I was aware that my resolves must be instant, decisive, and immediately acted upon, as on firmness and promptitude at this crisis the success of the expedition depended. About noon I checked my horse, and rather to the surprise of my companion, intimated to him my intention of returning to the camp, He naturally asked what I purposed doing. I told him it appeared to me more than probable that the Morumbidgee would hold good its course to some fixed point, now that it had reached a meridian beyond the known rivers of the interior. It was certain, from the denseness of the reeds, and the breadth of the belts, that the teams could not be brought any farther, and that, taking every thing into consideration, I had resolved on a bold and desperate measure, that of building the whale-boat, and sending home the drays. Our appearance in camp so suddenly, surprised the men not more than the orders I gave. They all thought I had struck on some remarkable change of country, and were anxious to know my ultimate views. It was not my intention however, immediately to satisfy their curiosity. I had to study their characters as long as I could, in order to select those best qualified to accompany me on the desperate adventure for which I was preparing.

Boat building.

The attention both of M'Leay, and myself, was turned to the hasty building of the whale-boat. A shed was erected, and every necessary preparation made, and although Clayton had the keel of the small boat already laid down, and some planks prepared, she was abandoned for the present, and, after four days more of arduous labour, the whale-boat was painted and in the water. From her dimensions, it appeared to me impossible that she would hold all our provisions and stores, for her after-part had been fitted up as an armoury, which took away considerably from her capacity of stowage. The small boat would still, therefore, be necessary, and she was accordingly re-laid, for half the dimensions of the large boat, and in three days was alongside her consort in the river. Thus, in seven days we had put together a boat, twenty-seven feet in length, had felled a tree from the forest, with which we had built a second of half the size, had painted both, and had them at a temporary wharf ready for loading. Such would not have been the case had not our hearts been in the work, as the weather was close and sultry, and we found it a task of extreme labour. In the intervals between the hours of work, I prepared my despatches for the Governor, and when they were closed, it only remained for me to select six hands, the number I intended should accompany me down the river, and to load the boats, ere we should once more proceed in the further obedience of our instructions.

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Completion of arrangements for embarkation.

It was impossible that I could do without Clayton, whose perseverance and industry had mainly contributed to the building of the boats; of the other prisoners, I chose Mulholland and Macnamee; leaving the rest in charge of Robert Harris, whose steady conduct had merited my approbation. My servant, Harris, Hopkinson, and Fraser, of course, made up the crews. The boats were loaded in the evening of Jan. 6th, as it had been necessary to give the paint a little time to dry. On the 4th, I had sent Clayton and Mulholland to the nearest cypress range for a mast and spar, and on the evening of that day some blacks had visited us; but they sat on the bank of the river, preserving a most determined silence; and, at length, left us abruptly, and apparently in great ill humour. In the disposition of the loads, I placed all the flour, the tea, and tobacco, in the whaleboat. The meat-casks, still, and carpenters' tools, were put into the small boat.

As soon as the different arrangements were completed, I collected the men, and told off those who were to accompany me. I then gave the rest over in charge to Harris, and, in adverting to their regular conduct hitherto, trusted they would be equally careful while under his orders. I then directed the last remaining sheep to be equally divided among us; and it was determined that, for fear of accidents, Harris should remain stationary for a week, at the expiration of which time, he would be at liberty to proceed to Goulburn Plains, there to receive his instructions from Sydney; while the boats were to proceed at an early hour of the morning down the river,—whether ever to return again being a point of the greatest uncertainty.

CHAPTER IV.

Embarkation of the party in the boats, and voyage down the Morumbidgee— The skiff swamped by striking on a sunken tree—Recovery of boat and its loading—Region of reeds—Dangers of the navigation—Contraction of the channel—Reach the junction of a large river—Intercourse with the natives on its banks—Character of the country below the junction of the rivers— Descent of a dangerous rapid—Warlike demonstrations of a tribe of natives—Unexpected deliverance from a conflict with them—Junction of another river—Give the name of the “Murray” to the principal stream.

The camp was a scene of bustle and confusion long before day-light. The men whom I had selected to accompany me were in high spirits, and so eager to commence their labours that they had been unable to sleep, but busied themselves from the earliest dawn in packing up their various articles of clothing, &c. We were prevented from taking our departure so early as I had intended, by rain that fell about six. At a little after seven, however, the weather cleared up, the morning mists blew over our heads, and the sun struck upon us with his usual fervour. As soon as the minor things were stowed away, we bade adieu to Harris and his party; and shortly after, embarked on the bosom of that stream along the banks of which we had journeyed for so many miles

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Notwithstanding that we only used two oars, our progress down the river was rapid. Hopkinson had arranged the loads so well, that all the party could sit at their ease, and Fraser was posted in the bow of the boat, with gun in hand, to fire at any new bird or beast that we might surprise in our silent progress. The little boat, which I shall henceforward call the skiff, was fastened by a painter to our stern.

Supposed junction of lachlan.

As the reader will have collected from what has already fallen under his notice, the country near the depot was extensively covered with reeds, beyond which vast plains of polygonum stretched away. From the bed of the river we could not observe the change that took place in it as we passed along, so that we found it necessary to land, from time to time, for the purpose of noting down its general appearance. At about fifteen miles from the depot, we came upon a large creek-junction from the N.E., which I did not doubt to be the one M'Leay and I had crossed on the 25th of December. It was much larger than the creek of the Macquarie, and was capable of holding a very great body of water, although evidently too small to contain all that occasionally rushed from its source. I laid it down as the supposed junction of the Lachlan, since I could not, against the corroborating facts in my possession, doubt its originating in the marshes of that river. Should this, eventually, prove to be the case, the similar termination of the two streams traced by Mr. Oxley will be a singular feature in the geography of the interior.

EMUS—native tomb.

We were just about to land, to prepare our dinner, when two emus swam across the river ahead of us. This was an additional inducement for us to land, but we were unfortunately too slow, and the birds escaped us. We had rushed in to the right bank, and found on ascending it, that the reeds with which it had hitherto been lined, had partially ceased. A large plain, similar to those over which we had wandered prior to our gaining the flooded region, stretched away to a considerable distance behind us, and was backed by cypresses and brush. The soil of the plain was a red sandy loam, covered sparingly with salsolae and shrubs; thus indicating that the country still preserved its barren character, and that it is the same from north to south. Among the shrubs we found a tomb that appeared to have been recently constructed. No mound had been raised over the body, but an oval hollow shed occupied the centre of the burial place, that was lined with reeds and bound together with strong net-work. Round this, the usual walks were cut, and the recent traces of women's feet were visible upon them, but we saw no natives, although, from the number and size of the paths that led from the river, in various directions across the plain, I was led to conclude, that, at certain seasons, it is hereabouts numerously frequented. Fraser gathered some rushes similar to those used by the natives of the Darling in the fabrication of their nets, and as they had not before been observed, we judged them, of course, to be a sign of our near approach to that river.

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Aspect of country and river.

As soon as we had taken a hasty dinner, we again embarked, and pursued our journey. I had hoped, from the appearance of the country to the north of us, although that to the south gave little indication of any change, that we should soon clear the reeds; but at somewhat less than a mile they closed in upon the river, and our frequent examination of the neighbourhood on either side of it only tended to confirm the fact, that we were passing through a country subject to great and extensive inundation. We pulled up at half-past five, and could scarcely find space enough to pitch our tents.

The Morumbidgee kept a decidedly westerly course during the day. Its channel was not so tortuous as we expected to have found it, nor did it offer any obstruction to the passage of the boats. Its banks kept a general height of eight feet, five of which were of alluvial soil, and both its depth and its current were considerable. We calculated having proceeded from 28 to 30 miles, though, perhaps, not more than half that distance in a direct line. No rain fell during the day, but we experienced some heavy squalls from the E.S.E.

The skiff strikes and sinks—labour in recovering articles lost.

The second day of our journey from the depot was marked by an accident that had well nigh obliged us to abandon the further pursuit of the river, by depriving us of part of our means of carrying it into effect. We had proceeded, as usual, at an early hour in the morning, and not long after we started, fell in with the blacks who had visited us last, and who were now in much better humour than upon that occasion. As they had their women with them, we pushed in to the bank, and distributed some presents, after which we dropped quietly down the river. Its general depth had been such as to offer few obstructions to our progress, but about an hour after we left the natives, the skiff struck upon a sunken log, and immediately filling, went down in about twelve feet of water. The length of the painter prevented any strain upon the whale-boat, but the consequence of so serious an accident at once flashed upon our minds. That we should suffer considerably, we could not doubt, but our object was to get the skiff up with the least possible delay, to prevent the fresh water from mixing with the brine, in the casks of meat. Some short time, however, necessarily elapsed before we could effect this, and when at last the skiff was hauled ashore, we found that we were too late to prevent the mischief that we had anticipated. All the things had been fastened in the boat, but either from the shock, or the force of the current, one of the pork casks, the head of the still, and the greater part of the carpenter's tools, had been thrown out of her. As the success of the expedition might probably depend upon the complete

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state of the still, I determined to use every effort for its recovery: but I was truly at a loss how to find it; for the waters of the river were extremely turbid. In this dilemma, the blacks would have been of the most essential service, but they were far behind us, so that we had to depend on our own exertions alone. I directed the whale-boat to be moored over the place where the accident had happened, and then used the oars on either side of her, to feel along the bottom of the river, in hopes that by these means we should strike upon the articles we had lost. However unlikely such a measure was to prove successful, we recovered in the course of the afternoon, every thing but the still-head, and a cask of paint. Whenever the oar struck against the substance that appeared, by its sound or feel to belong to us, it was immediately pushed into the sand, and the upper end of the oar being held by two men, another descended by it to the bottom of the river, remaining under water as long as he could, to ascertain what was immediately within arm's length of him. This work was, as may be imagined, most laborious, and the men at length became much exhausted. They would not, however, give up the search for the still head, more especially after M'Leay, in diving, had descended upon it. Had he, by ascertaining his position, left it to us to heave it up, our labours would soon have ended; but, in his anxiety for its recovery, he tried to bring it up, when finding it too heavy, he let it go, and the current again swept it away.

At sunset we were obliged to relinquish our task, the men complaining of violent headaches, which the nature of the day increased. Thinking our own efforts would be unavailing, I directed two of the men to go up the river for the blacks, at day-light in the morning, and set the reeds on fire to attract their notice. The day had been cloudy and sultry in the afternoon, the clouds collecting in the N.E.: we heard the distant thunder, and expected to have been deluged with rain. None, however, fell, although we were anxious for moisture to change the oppressive state of the atmosphere. The fire I had kindled raged behind us, and threw dense columns of smoke into the sky, that cast over the landscape a shade of the most dismal gloom. We were not in a humour to admire the picturesque, but soon betook ourselves to rest, and after such a day of labour as that we had undergone, I dispensed with the night guard.

Pilfering of natives.

In the morning we resumed our search for the still head, which Hopkinson at length fortunately struck with his oar. It had been swept considerably below the place at which M'Leay had dived, or we should most probably have found it sooner. With its recovery, all our fatigues were at once forgotten, and I ordered the breakfast to be got ready preparatory to our reloading the skiff. Fraser and Mulholland, who had left the camp at daylight, had not yet returned.

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I was sitting in the tent, when Macnamee came to inform me that one of the frying-pans was missing, which had been in use the evening previous, for that he himself had placed it on the stump of a tree, and he therefore supposed a native dog had run away with it. Soon after this, another loss was reported to me, and it was at last discovered that an extensive robbery had been committed upon us during the night, and that, in addition to the frying-pan, three cutlasses, and five tomahawks, with the pea of the steelyards, had been carried away. I was extremely surprised at this instance of daring in the natives, and determined, if possible, to punish it. About ten, Fraser and Mulholland returned with two blacks. Fraser told me he saw several natives on our side of the river, as he was returning, to whom those who were with him spoke, and I felt convinced from their manner and hesitation, that they were aware of the trick that had been played upon us. However, as Fraser had promised them a tomahawk to induce them to accompany him, I fulfilled the promise.

Continue our voyage.

Leaving this unlucky spot, we made good about sixteen miles during the afternoon. The river maintained its breadth and depth nor were the reeds continuous upon its banks. We passed several plains that were considerably elevated above the alluvial deposits, and the general appearance of the country induced me strongly to hope that we should shortly get out of the region of reeds, or the great flooded concavity on which we had fixed our depot; but the sameness of vegetation, and the seemingly diminutive size of the timber in the distance, argued against any change for the better in the soil of the interior. Having taken the precaution of shortening the painter of the skiff, we found less difficulty in steering her clear of obstacles, and made rapid progress down the Morumbidgee during the first cool and refreshing hours of the morning. The channel of the river became somewhat less contracted, but still retained sufficient depth for larger boats than ours, and preserved a general westerly course. Although no decline of country was visible to the eye, the current in places ran very strong. It is impossible for me to convey to the reader's mind an idea of the nature of the country through which we passed. On this day the favourable appearances, noticed yesterday, ceased almost as soon as we embarked. On the 10th, reeds lined the banks of the river on both sides, without any break, and waved like gloomy streamers over its turbid waters; while the trees stood leafless and sapless in the midst of them. Wherever we landed, the same view presented itself—a waving expanse of reeds, and a country as flat as it is possible to imagine one. The eye could seldom penetrate beyond three quarters of a mile, and the labour of walking through the reeds was immense; but within our observation all was green and cheerless. The morning had been extremely cold, with a thick haze at E.S.E. About 2 p.m. it came on to rain heavily, so that we did not stir after that hour.

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Contraction of the channel.

I had remarked that the Morumbidgee was not, from the depot downwards, so broad or so fine a river as it certainly is at the foot of the mountain ranges, where it gains the level country. The observations of the last two days had impressed upon my mind an idea that it was rapidly falling off, and I began to dread that it would finally terminate in one of those fatal marshes in which the Macquarie and the Lachlan exhaust themselves. My hope of a more favourable issue was considerably damped by the general appearance of the surrounding country; and from the circumstance of our not having as yet passed a single tributary. As we proceeded down the river, its channel gradually contracted, and immense trees that had been swept down it by floods, rendered the navigation dangerous and intricate. Its waters became so turbid, that it was impossible to see objects in it, notwithstanding the utmost diligence on the part of the men.

About noon, we fell in with a large tribe of natives, but had great difficulty in bringing them to visit us. If they had *heard* of white men, we were evidently the first they had ever *seen*. They approached us in the most cautious manner, and were unable to subdue their fears as long as they remained with us. Collectively, these people could not have amounted to less than one hundred and twenty in number.

Another accident.

As we pushed off from the bank, after having stayed with them about half an hour, the whaleboat struck with such violence on a sunken log, that she immediately leaked on her starboard side. Fortunately she was going slowly at the time, or she would most probably have received some more serious injury. One of the men was employed during the remainder of the afternoon in bailing her out, and we stopped sooner than we should otherwise have done, in order to ascertain the extent of damage, and to repair it. The reeds terminated on both sides of the river some time before we pulled up, and the country round the camp was more elevated than usual, and bore the appearance of open forest pasture land, the timber upon it being a dwarf species of box, and the soil a light tenacious earth.

Aspect of the country and of the river.

About a mile below our encampment of the 12th, we at length came upon a considerable creek-junction from the S.E. Below it, the river increased both in breadth and depth; banks were lofty and perpendicular, and even the lowest levels were but partially covered with reeds. We met with fewer obstructions in consequence, and pursued our journey with restored confidence. Towards evening a great change also took place in the aspect of the country, which no longer bore general marks of inundation. The level of the interior was broken by a small hill to the right of the stream, but the view from its summit rather damped than encouraged my hopes of any

improvement. The country was covered with wood and brush, and the line of the horizon was unbroken by the least swell. We were on an apparently boundless flat, without any fixed point on which to direct our movements, nor was there a single object for the eye to rest upon, beyond the dark and gloomy wood that surrounded us on every side.

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Soon after passing this hill, the whale-boat struck upon a line of sunken rocks, but fortunately escaped without injury. Mulholland, who was standing in the bow, was thrown out of her, head foremost, and got a good soaking, but soon recovered himself. The composition of the rock was iron-stone, and it is the first formation that occurs westward of the dividing range. We noticed a few cypresses in the distance, but the general timber was dwarf-box, or flooded-gum, and a few of the acacia longa scattered at great distances. In verifying our position by some lunars, we found ourselves in 142 degrees 46 minutes 30 seconds of east long., and in lat. 35 degrees 25 minutes 15 seconds S. the mean variation of the compass being 4 degrees 10 minutes E. it appearing that we were decreasing the variation as we proceeded westward.

On the 13th, we passed the first running stream that joins the Morumbidgee, in a course of more than 340 miles. It came from the S.E., and made a visible impression on the river at the junction, although in tracing it up, it appeared to be insignificant in itself. The circumstance of these tributaries all occurring on the left, evidenced the level nature of the country to the north. In the afternoon, we passed a dry creek also from the S.E. which must at times throw a vast supply of water into the river, since for many miles below, the latter preserved a breadth of 200 feet, and averaged from 12 to 20 feet in depth, with banks of from 15 to 18 feet in height. Yet, notwithstanding its general equality of depth, several rapids occurred, down which the boats were hurried with great velocity. The body of water in the river continued undiminished, notwithstanding its increased breadth of channel; for which reason I should imagine that it is fed by springs, independently of other supplies. Some few cypresses were again observed, and the character of the distant country resembled, in every particular, that of the interior between the Macquarie and the Darling. The general appearance of the Morumbidgee, from the moment of our starting on the 13th, to a late hour in the afternoon, had been such as to encourage my hopes of ultimate success in tracing it down; but about three o'clock we came to one of those unaccountable and mortifying changes which had already so frequently excited my apprehension. Its channel again suddenly contracted, and became almost blocked up with huge trees, that must have found their way into it down the creeks or junctions we had lately passed. The rapidity of the current increasing at the same time, rendered the navigation perplexing and dangerous. We Passed reach after reach, presenting the same difficulties, and were at length obliged to pull up at 5 p.m., having a scene of confusion and danger before us that I did not dare to encounter with the evening's light; for I had not only observed that the men's eyesight failed them as the sun descended, and that they mistook shadows for objects under water, and *Vice-versa*,

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but the channel had become so narrow that, although the banks were not of increased height, we were involved in comparative darkness, under a close arch of trees, and a danger was hardly seen ere we were hurried past it, almost without the possibility of avoiding it. The reach at the head of which we stopped, was crowded with the trunks of trees, the branches of which crossed each other in every direction, nor could I hope, after a minute examination of the channel, to succeed in taking the boats safely down so intricate a passage.

Dangerous navigation of the Morumbidgee.

We rose in the morning with feelings of apprehension, and uncertainty; and, indeed, with great doubts on our minds whether we were not thus early destined to witness the wreck, and the defeat of the expedition. The men got slowly and cautiously into the boat, and placed themselves so as to leave no part of her undefended. Hopkinson stood at the bow, ready with poles to turn her head from anything upon which she might be drifting. Thus prepared, we allowed her to go with the stream. By extreme care and attention on the part of the men we passed this formidable barrier. Hopkinson in particular exerted himself, and more than once leapt from the boat upon apparently rotten logs of wood, that I should not have judged capable of bearing his weight, the more effectually to save the boat. It might have been imagined that where such a quantity of timber had accumulated, a clearer channel would have been found below, but such was not the case. In every reach we had to encounter fresh difficulties. In some places huge trees lay athwart the stream, under whose arched branches we were obliged to pass; but, generally speaking, they had been carried, roots foremost, by the current, and, therefore, presented so many points to receive us, that, at the rate at which we were going, had we struck full upon any one of them, it would have gone through and through the boat. About noon we stopped to repair, or rather to take down the remains of our awning, which had been torn away; and to breathe a moment from the state of apprehension and anxiety in which our minds had been kept during the morning. About one, we again started. The men looked anxiously out ahead; for the singular change in the river had impressed on them an idea, that we were approaching its termination, or near some adventure. On a sudden, the river took a general southern direction, but, in its tortuous course, swept round to every point of the compass with the greatest irregularity. We were carried at a fearful rate down its gloomy and contracted banks, and, in such a moment of excitement, had little time to pay attention to the country through which we were passing. It was, however, observed, that chalybeate-springs were numerous close to the water's edge. At 3 p.m., Hopkinson called out that we were approaching a junction, and in less than a minute afterwards, we were hurried into a broad and noble river.

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Junction of A large river—character of the river.

It is impossible for me to describe the effect of so instantaneous a change of circumstances upon us. The boats were allowed to drift along at pleasure, and such was the force with which we had been shot out of the Morumbidgee, that we were carried nearly to the bank opposite its embouchure, whilst we continued to gaze in silent astonishment on the capacious channel we had entered; and when we looked for that by which we had been led into it, we could hardly believe that the insignificant gap that presented itself to us was, indeed, the termination of the beautiful and noble stream, whose course we had thus successfully followed. I can only compare the relief we experienced to that which the seaman feels on weathering the rock upon which he expected his vessel would have struck—to the calm which succeeds moments of feverish anxiety, when the dread of danger is succeeded by the certainty of escape.

To myself personally, the discovery of this river was a circumstance of a particularly gratifying nature, since it not only confirmed the justness of my opinion as to the ultimate fate of the Morumbidgee, and bore me out in the apparently rash and hasty step I had taken at the depot, but assured me of ultimate success in the duty I had to perform. We had got on the high road, as it were, either to the south coast, or to some important outlet; and the appearance of the river itself was such as to justify our most sanguine expectations. I could not doubt its being the great channel of the streams from the S.E. angle of the island. Mr. Hume had mentioned to me that he crossed three very considerable streams, when employed with Mr. Hovell in 1823 in penetrating towards Port Phillips, to which the names of the Goulburn, the Hume, and the Ovens, had been given; and as I was 300 miles from the track these gentlemen had pursued, I considered it more than probable that those rivers must already have formed a junction above me, more especially when I reflected that the convexity of the mountains to the S.E. would necessarily direct the waters falling inwards from them to a common centre.

We entered the new river at right angles, and, as I have remarked, at the point of junction the channel of the Morumbidgee had narrowed so as to bear all the appearance of an ordinary creek. In breadth it did not exceed fifty feet, and if, instead of having passed down it, I had been making my way up the principal streams, I should little have dreamt that so dark and gloomy an outlet concealed a river that would lead me to the haunts of civilized man, and whose fountains rose amidst snow-clad mountains. Such, however, is the characteristic of the streams falling to the westward of the coast ranges. Descending into a low and level interior, and depending on their immediate springs for existence, they fall off, as they increase their distance from the base of the mountains in which they rise, and in their lower branches give little results of the promise they had previously made.

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The opinion I have expressed, and which is founded on my personal experience, that the rivers crossed by Messrs. Hovell and Hume had already united above me, was strengthened by the capacity of the stream we had just discovered. It had a medium width of 350 feet, with a depth of from twelve to twenty. Its reaches were from half to three-quarters of a mile in length, and the views upon it were splendid. Of course, as the Morumbidgee entered it from the north, its first reach must have been E. and W., and it was so, as nearly as possible; but it took us a little to the southward of the latter point, in a distance of about eight miles that we pulled down it in the course of the afternoon. We then landed and pitched our tents for the night. Its transparent waters were running over a sandy bed at the rate of two-and-a-half knots an hour, and its banks, although averaging eighteen feet in height, were evidently subject to floods.

Absence of natives.

We had not seen any natives since falling in with the last tribe on the Morumbidgee. A cessation had, therefore, taken place in our communication with them, in re-establishing which I anticipated considerable difficulty. It appeared singular that we should not have fallen in with any for several successive days, more especially at the junction of the two rivers, as in similar situations they generally have an establishment. In examining the country back from the stream, I did not observe any large paths, but it was evident that fires had made extensive ravages in the neighbourhood, so that the country was, perhaps, only temporarily deserted. Macnamee, who had wandered a little from the tents, declared that he had seen about a dozen natives round a fire, from whom (if he really did see them) he very precipitately fled, but I was inclined to discredit his story, because in our journey on the following day, we did not see even a casual wanderer.

Weather, temperature, &C.

The river maintained its character, and raised our hopes to the highest pitch. Its breadth varied from 160 to 200 yards; and only in one place, where a reef of iron-stone stretched nearly across from the left bank, so as to contract the channel near the right and to form a considerable rapid, was there any apparent obstruction to our navigation. I was sorry, however, to remark that the breadth of alluvial soil between its outer and inner banks was very inconsiderable, and that the upper levels were poor and sandy. Blue-gum generally occupied the former, while the usual productions of the plains still predominated upon the latter, and showed that the distant interior had not yet undergone any favourable change. We experienced strong breezes from the north, but the range of the thermometer was high, and the weather rather oppressive than otherwise. On the night of the 16th, we had a strong wind from the N.W., but it moderated with day-light, and shifted

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to the E.N.E., and the day was favourable and cool. Our progress was in every way satisfactory, and if any change had taken place in the river, it was that the banks had increased in height, in many places to thirty feet, the soil being a red loam, and the surface much above the reach of floods. The bank opposite to the one that was so elevated, was proportionably low, and, in general, not only heavily timbered, but covered with reeds, and backed by a chain of ponds at the base of the outer embankment.

Intercourse with natives.

About 4 p.m., some natives were observed running by the river side behind us, but on our turning the boat's head towards the shore, they ran away. It was evident that they had no idea what we were, and, from their timidity, feeling assured that it would be impossible to bring them to a parley, we continued onwards till our usual hour of stopping, when we pitched our tents on the left bank for the night, it being the one opposite to that on which the natives had appeared. We conjectured that their curiosity would lead them to follow us, which they very shortly did; for we had scarcely made ourselves comfortable when we heard their wild notes through the woods as they advanced towards the river; and their breaking into view with their spears and shields, and painted and prepared as they were for battle, was extremely fine. They stood threatening us, and making a great noise, for a considerable time, but, finding that we took no notice of them, they, at length, became quiet. I then walked to some little distance from the party, and taking a branch in my hand, as a sign of peace, beckoned them to swim to our side of the river, which, after some time, two or three of them did. But they approached me with great caution, hesitating at every step. They soon, however, gained confidence, and were ultimately joined by all the males of their tribe. I gave the *first* who swam the river a tomahawk (making this a rule in order to encourage them) with which he was highly delighted. I shortly afterwards placed them all in a row and fired a gun before them: they were quite unprepared for such an explosion, and after standing stupified and motionless for a moment or two, they simultaneously took to their heels, to our great amusement. I succeeded, however, in calling them back, and they regained their confidence so much, that sixteen of them remained with us all night, but the greater number retired at sunset.

On the following morning, they accompanied us down the river, where we fell in with their tribe, who were stationed on an elevated bank a short distance below—to the number of eighty-three men, women, and children. Their appearance was extremely picturesque and singular. They wanted us to land, but time was too precious for such delays. Some of the boldest of the natives swam round and round the boat so as to impede the use of the oars, and the women on the bank evinced their astonishment by mingled yells and cries. They entreated us, by signs, to remain with them, but, as I foresaw a compliance on this occasion would hereafter be attended with inconvenience,

I thought it better to proceed on our journey, and the natives soon ceased their importunities, and, indeed, did not follow or molest us.

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Aspect of the country and of the river banks.

The river improved upon us at every mile. Its reaches were of noble breadth, and splendid appearance. Its current was stronger, and it was fed by numerous springs. Rocks, however, were more frequent in its bed, and in two places almost formed a barrier across the channel, leaving but a narrow space for the boats to go down. We passed several elevations of from 70 to 90 feet in height, at the base of which the stream swept along. The soil of these elevations was a mixture of clay (marl) and sand, upon coarse sandstone. Their appearance and the manner in which they had been acted upon by water, was singular, and afforded a proof of the violence of the rains in this part of the interior. From the highest of these, I observed that the country to the S.E. was gently undulated, and so far changed in character from that through which we had been travelling; still, however, it was covered with a low scrub, and was barren and unpromising.

About noon of the 18th, we surprised two women at the water-side, who immediately retreated into the brush. Shortly after, four men showed themselves, and followed us for a short distance, but hid themselves upon our landing. The country still appeared undulated to the S.E.; the soil was sandy, and cypresses more abundant than any other tree. We passed several extensive sand-banks in the river, of unusual size and solidity, an evident proof of the sandy nature of the interior generally. The vast accumulations of sand at the junctions of every creek were particularly remarkable. The timber on the alluvial flats was not by any means so large as we had hitherto observed it; nor were the flats themselves so extensive as they are on the Morumbidgee and the Macquarie. Notwithstanding the aspect of the country which I have described, no *positive* change had as yet taken place in the general feature of the interior. The river continued to flow in a direction somewhat to the northward of west, through a country that underwent no perceptible alteration. Its waters, confined to their immediate bed, swept along considerably below the level of its inner banks; and the spaces between them and the outer ones, though generally covered with reeds, seemed not recently to have been flooded; while on the other hand, they had, in many places, from successive depositions, risen to a height far above the reach of inundation. Still, however, the more remote interior maintained its sandy and sterile character, and stretched away, in alternate plain and wood, to a distance far beyond the limits of our examination.

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About the 21st, a very evident change took place in it. The banks of the river suddenly acquired a perpendicular and water-worn appearance. Their summits were perfectly level, and no longer confined by a secondary embankment, but preserved an uniform equality of surface back from the stream. These banks, although so abrupt, were not so high as the upper levels, or secondary embankments. They indicated a deep alluvial deposit, and yet, being high above the reach of any ordinary flood, were covered with grass, under an open box forest, into which a moderately dense scrub occasionally penetrated. We had fallen into a concavity similar to those of the marshes, but successive depositions had almost filled it, and no longer subject to inundation, it had lost all the character of those flooded tracts. The kind of country I have been describing, lay rather to the right than to the left of the river at this place, the latter continuing low and swampy, as if the country to the south of the river were still subject to inundation. As the expedition proceeded, the left bank gradually assumed the appearance of the right; both looked water-worn and perpendicular, and though not more than from nine to ten feet in height, their summits were perfectly level in receding, and bore diminutive box-timber, with widely-scattered vegetation. Not a single elevation had, as yet, broken the dark and gloomy monotony of the interior; but as our observations were limited to a short distance from the river, our surmises on the nature of the distant country were necessarily involved in some uncertainty.

Threatened attack—amicable conference.

On the 19th, as we were about to conclude our journey for the day, we saw a large body of natives before us. On approaching them, they showed every disposition for combat, and ran along the bank with spears in rests, as if only waiting for an opportunity to throw them at us. They were upon the right, and as the river was broad enough to enable me to steer wide of them, I did not care much for their threats; but upon another party appearing upon the left bank, I thought it high time to disperse one or the other of them, as the channel was not wide enough to enable me to keep clear of danger, if assailed by both, as I might be while keeping amid the channel. I found, however, that they did not know how to use the advantage they possessed, as the two divisions formed a junction; those on the left swimming over to the stronger body upon the right bank. This, fortunately, prevented the necessity of any hostile measure on my part, and we were suffered to proceed unmolested, for the present. The whole then followed us without any symptom of fear, but making a dreadful shouting, and beating their spears and shields together, by way of intimidation. It is but justice to my men to say that in this critical situation they evinced the greatest coolness, though it was impossible for any one to witness such a scene

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with indifference. As I did not intend to fatigue the men by continuing to pull farther than we were in the habit of doing, we landed at our usual time on the left bank, and while the people were pitching the tents, I walked down the bank with M'Leay, to treat with these desperadoes in the best way we could, across the water, a measure to which my men showed great reluctance, declaring that if during our absence the natives approached them, they would undoubtedly fire upon them. I assured them it was not my intention to go out of their sight. We took our guns with us, but determined not to use them until the last extremity, both from a reluctance to shed blood and with a view to our future security. I held a long pantomimical dialogue with them, across the water, and held out the olive branch in token of amity. They at length laid aside their spears, and a long consultation took place among them, which ended in two or three wading into the river, contrary, as it appeared, to the earnest remonstrances of the majority, who, finding that their entreaties had no effect, wept aloud, and followed them with a determination, I am sure, of sharing their fate, whatever it might have been. As soon as they landed, M'Leay and I retired to a little distance from the bank, and sat down; that being the usual way among the natives of the interior, to invite to an interview. When they saw us act thus, they approached, and sat down by us, but without looking up, from a kind of diffidence peculiar to them, and which exists even among the nearest relatives, as I have already had occasion to observe. As they gained confidence, however, they showed an excessive curiosity, and stared at us in the most earnest manner. We now led them to the camp, and I gave, as was my custom, the first who had approached, a tomahawk; and to the others, some pieces of iron hoop. Those who had crossed the river amounted to about thirty-five in number. At sunset, the majority of them left us; but three old men remained at the fire-side all night. I observed that few of them had either lost their front teeth or lacerated their bodies, as the more westerly tribes do. The most loathsome diseases prevailed among them. Several were disabled by leprosy, or some similar disorder, and two or three had entirely lost their sight. They are, undoubtedly, a brave and a confiding people, and are by no means wanting in natural affection. In person, they resemble the mountain tribes. They had the thick lip, the sunken eye, the extended nostril, and long beards, and both smooth and curly hair are common among them. Their lower extremities appear to bear no proportion to their bust in point of muscular strength; but the facility with which they ascend trees of the largest growth, and the activity with which they move upon all occasions, together with their singularly erect stature, argue that such appearance is entirely deceptive.

Intercourse with natives.



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The old men slept very soundly by the fire, and were the last to get up in the morning. M'Leay's extreme good humour had made a most favourable impression upon them, and I can picture him, even now, joining in their wild song. Whether it was from his entering so readily into their mirth, or from anything peculiar that struck them, the impression upon the whole of us was, that they took him to have been originally a black, in consequence of which they gave him the name of Rundi. Certain it is, they pressed him to show his side, and asked if he had not received a wound there—evidently as if the original Rundi had met with a violent death from a spear-wound in that place. The whole tribe, amounting in number to upwards of 150, assembled to see us take our departure. Four of them accompanied us, among whom there was one remarkable for personal strength and stature.—The 21st passed without our falling in with any new tribe, and the night of the 22nd, saw us still wandering in that lonely desert together. There was something unusual in our going through such an extent of country without meeting another tribe, but our companions appeared to be perfectly aware of the absence of inhabitants, as they never left our side.

Although the banks of the river had been of general equality of height, sandy elevations still occasionally formed a part of them, and their summits were considerably higher than the alluvial flats.

Rapid in the river—dangerous descent of the boats.

It was upon the crest of one of these steep and lofty banks, that on the morning of the 22nd, the natives who were a-head of the boat, suddenly stopped to watch our proceedings down a foaming rapid that ran beneath. We were not aware of the danger to which we were approaching, until we turned an angle of the river, and found ourselves too near to retreat. In such a moment, without knowing what was before them, the coolness of the men was strikingly exemplified. No one even spoke after they became aware that silence was necessary. The natives (probably anticipating misfortune) stood leaning upon their spears upon the lofty bank above us. Desiring the men not to move from their seats, I stood up to survey the channel, and to steer the boat to that part of it which was least impeded by rocks. I was obliged to decide upon a hasty survey, as we were already at the head of the rapid. It appeared to me that there were two passages, the one down the centre of the river, the other immediately under its right bank. A considerable rock stood directly in own way to the latter, so that I had no alternative but to descend the former. About forty yards below the rock, I noticed that a line of rocks occupied the space between the two channels, whilst a reef, projecting from the left bank, made the central passage distinctly visible, and the rapidity of the current proportionably great. I entertained hopes

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that the passage was clear, and that we should shoot down it without interruption; but in this I was disappointed. The boat struck with the fore-part of her keel on a sunken rock, and, swinging round as it were on a pivot, presented her bow to the rapid, while the skiff floated away into the strength of it. We had every reason to anticipate the loss of our whale-boat, whose build was so light, that had her side struck the rock, instead of her keel, she would have been laid open from stem to stern. As it was, however, she remained fixed in her position, and it only remained for us to get her off the best way we could. I saw that this could only be done by sending two of the men with a rope to the upper rock, and getting the boat, by that means, into the still water, between that and the lower one. We should then have time to examine the channels, and to decide as to that down which it would be safest to proceed. My only fear was, that the loss of the weight of the two men would lighten the boat so much, that she would be precipitated down the rapid without my having any command over her; but it happened otherwise. We succeeded in getting her into the still water, and ultimately took her down the channel under the right bank, without her sustaining any injury. A few miles below this rapid the river took a singular bend, and we found, after pulling several miles, that we were within a stone's throw of a part of the stream we had already sailed down.

The four natives joined us in the camp, and assisted the men at their various occupations. The consequence was, that they were treated with more than ordinary kindness; and Fraser, for his part, in order to gratify these favoured guests, made great havoc among the feathered race. He returned after a short ramble with a variety of game, among which were a crow, a kite, and a laughing jackass (*alcedo gigantea*), a species of king's-fisher, a singular bird, found in every part of Australia. Its cry, which resembles a chorus of wild spirits, is apt to startle the traveller who may be in jeopardy, as if laughing and mocking at his misfortune. It is a harmless bird, and I seldom allowed them to be destroyed, as they were sure to rouse us with the earliest dawn. To this list of Fraser's spoils, a duck and a tough old cockatoo, must be added. The whole of these our friends threw on the fire without the delay of plucking, and snatched them from that consuming element ere they were well singed, and devoured them with uncommon relish.

Deserted native village.

We pitched our tents upon a flat of good and tenacious soil. A brush, in which there was a new species of melaleuca, backed it, in the thickest part of which we found a deserted native village. The spot was evidently chosen for shelter. The huts were large and long, all facing the same point of the compass, and in every way resembling the huts occupied by the natives of the Darling. Large flocks of whistling

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ducks, and other wild fowl, flew over our heads to the N.W., as if making their way to some large or favourite waters. My observations placed us in lat. 34 degrees 8 minutes 15 seconds south, and in east long. 141 degrees 9 minutes 42 seconds or nearly so; and I was at a loss to conceive what direction the river would ultimately take. We were considerably to the N.W. of the point at which we had entered it, and in referring to the chart, it appeared, that if the Darling had kept a S.W. course from where the last expedition left its banks, we ought ere this to have struck upon it, or have arrived at its junction with the stream on which we were journeying.

Conversing by signs.

The natives, in attempting to answer my interrogatories, only perplexed me more and more. They evidently wished to explain something, by placing a number of sticks across each other as a kind of diagram of the country. It was, however, impossible to arrive at their meaning. They undoubtedly pointed to the westward, or rather to the south of that point, as the future course of the river; but there was something more that they were anxious to explain, which I could not comprehend. The poor fellows seemed quite disappointed, and endeavoured to beat it into Fraser's head with as little success. I then desired Macnamee to get up into a tree. From the upper branches of it he said he could see hills; but his account of their appearance was such that I doubted his story: nevertheless it might have been correct. He certainly called our attention to a large fire, as if the country to the N.W. was in flames, so that it appeared we were approaching the haunts of the natives at last.

It happened that Fraser and Harris were for guard, and they sat up laughing and talking with the natives long after we retired to rest. Fraser, to beguile the hours, proposed shaving his sable companions, and performed that operation with admirable dexterity upon their chief, to his great delight. I got up at an early hour, and found to my surprise that the whole of them had deserted us. Harris told me they had risen from the fire about an hour before, and had crossed the river. I was a little angry, but supposed they were aware that we were near some tribe, and had gone on a-head to prepare and collect them.

Large concourse of natives—their hostile demeanour.

After breakfast, we proceeded onwards as usual. The river had increased so much in width that, the wind being fair, I hoisted sail for the first time, to save the strength of my men as much as possible. Our progress was consequently rapid. We passed through a country that, from the nature of its soil and other circumstances, appeared to be intersected by creeks and lagoons. Vast flights of wild fowl passed over us, but always at a considerable elevation, while, on the other hand, the paucity of ducks on the river excited our surprise. Latterly, the

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trees upon the river, and in its neighbourhood, had been a tortuous kind of box. The flooded-gum grew in groups on the spaces subject to inundation, but not on the levels above the influence of any ordinary rise of the stream. Still they were much smaller than they were observed to be in the higher branches of the river. We had proceeded about nine miles, when we were surprised by the appearance in view, at the termination of a reach, of a long line of magnificent trees of green and dense foliage. As we sailed down the reach, we observed a vast concourse of natives under them, and, on a nearer approach, we not only heard their war-song, if it might so be called, but remarked that they were painted and armed, as they generally are, prior to their engaging in deadly conflict. Notwithstanding these outward signs of hostility, fancying that our four friends were with them, I continued to steer directly in for the bank on which they were collected. I found, however, when it was almost too late to turn into the succeeding reach to our left, that an attempt to land would only be attended with loss of life. The natives seemed determined to resist it. We approached so near that they held their spears quivering in their grasp ready to hurl. They were painted in various ways. Some who had marked their ribs, and thighs, and faces with a white pigment, looked like skeletons, others were daubed over with red and yellow ochre, and their bodies shone with the grease with which they had besmeared themselves. A dead silence prevailed among the front ranks, but those in the back ground, as well as the women, who carried supplies of darts, and who appeared to have had a bucket of whitewash capsized over their heads, were extremely clamorous. As I did not wish a conflict with these people, I lowered my sail, and putting the helm to starboard, we passed quietly down the stream in mid channel. Disappointed in their anticipations, the natives ran along the bank of the river, endeavouring to secure an aim at us; but, unable to throw with certainty, in consequence of the onward motion of the boat, they flung themselves into the most extravagant attitudes, and worked themselves into a state of frenzy by loud and vehement shouting.

Preparations for conflict—unexpected interference.

It was with considerable apprehension that I observed the river to be shoaling fast, more especially as a huge sand-bank, a little below us, and on the same side on which the natives had gathered, projected nearly a third-way across the channel. To this sand-bank they ran with tumultuous uproar, and covered it over in a dense mass. Some of the chiefs advanced to the water to be nearer their victims, and turned from time to time to direct their followers. With every pacific disposition, and an extreme reluctance to take away life, I foresaw that it would be impossible any longer to avoid an engagement, yet with such fearful

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numbers against us, I was doubtful of the result. The spectacle we had witnessed had been one of the most appalling kind, and sufficient to shake the firmness of most men; but at that trying moment my little band preserved their temper coolness, and if any thing could be gleaned from their countenances, it was that they had determined on an obstinate resistance. I now explained to them that their only chance of escape depended, or would depend, on their firmness. I desired that after the first volley had been fired, M'Leay and three of the men, would attend to the defence of the boat with bayonets only, while I, Hopkinson, and Harris, would keep up the fire as being more used to it. I ordered, however, that no shot was to be fired until after I had discharged both my barrels. I then delivered their arms to the men, which had as yet been kept in the place appropriated for them, and at the same time some rounds of loose cartridge. The men assured me they would follow my instructions, and thus prepared, having already lowered the sail, we drifted onwards with the current. As we neared the sand-bank, I stood up and made signs to the natives to desist; but without success. I took up my gun, therefore, and cocking it, had already brought it down to a level. A few seconds more would have closed the life of the nearest of the savages. The distance was too trifling for me to doubt the fatal effects of the discharge; for I was determined to take deadly aim, in hopes that the fall of one man might save the lives of many. But at the very moment, when my hand was on the trigger, and my eye was along the barrel, my purpose was checked by M'Leay, who called to me that another party of blacks had made their appearance upon the left bank of the river. Turning round, I observed four men at the top of their speed. The foremost of them as soon as he got a-head of the boat, threw himself from a considerable height into the water. He struggled across the channel to the sand-bank, and in an incredibly short space of time stood in front of the savage, against whom my aim had been directed. Seizing him by the throat, he pushed backwards, and forcing all who were in the water upon the bank, he trod its margin with a vehemence and an agitation that were exceedingly striking. At one moment pointing to the boat, at another shaking his clenched hand in the faces of the most forward, and stamping with passion on the sand; his voice, that was at first distinct and clear, was lost in hoarse murmurs. Two of the four natives remained on the left bank of the river, but the third followed his leader, (who proved to be the remarkable savage I have previously noticed) to the scene of action. The reader will imagine our feelings on this occasion: it is impossible to describe them. We were so wholly lost in interest at the scene that was passing, that the boat was allowed to drift at pleasure. For my own part I was overwhelmed with astonishment, and in truth stunned and confused; so singular, so unexpected, and so strikingly providential, had been our escape.

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Junction of another stream—providential deliverance from danger.

We were again roused to action by the boat suddenly striking upon a shoal, which reached from one side of the river to the other. To jump out and push her into deeper water was but the work of a moment with the men, and it was just as she floated again that our attention was withdrawn to a new and beautiful stream, coming apparently from the north. The great body of the natives having posted themselves on the narrow tongue of land formed by the two rivers, the bold savage who had so unhesitatingly interfered on our account, was still in hot dispute with them, and I really feared his generous warmth would have brought down upon him the vengeance of the tribes. I hesitated, therefore, whether or not to go to his assistance. It appeared, however, both to M'Leay and myself, that the tone of the natives had moderated, and the old and young men having listened to the remonstrances of our friend, the middle-aged warriors were alone holding out against him. A party of about seventy blacks were upon the right bank of the newly discovered river, and I thought that by landing among them, we should make a diversion in favour of our late guest; and in this I succeeded. If even they had still meditated violence, they would have to swim a good broad junction, and that, probably, would cool them, or we at least should have the advantage of position. I therefore, ran the boat ashore, and landed with M'Leay amidst the smaller party of natives, wholly unarmed, and having directed the men to keep at a little distance from the bank. Fortunately, what I anticipated was brought about by the stratagem to which I had had recourse. The blacks no sooner observed that we had landed, than curiosity took place of anger. All wrangling ceased, and they came swimming over to us like a parcel of seals. Thus, in less than a quarter of an hour from the moment when it appeared that all human intervention was at an end, and we were on the point of commencing a bloody fray, which, independently of its own disastrous consequences, would have blasted the success of the expedition, we were peacefully surrounded by the hundreds who had so lately threatened us with destruction; nor was it until after we had returned to the boat, and had surveyed the multitude upon the sloping bank above us, that we became fully aware of the extent of our danger, and of the almost miraculous intervention of Providence in our favour. There could not have been less than six hundred natives upon that blackened sward. But this was not the only occasion upon which the merciful superintendence of that Providence to which we had humbly committed ourselves, was strikingly manifested. If these pages fail to convey entertainment or information, sufficient may at least be gleaned from them to furnish matter for serious reflection; but to those who have been placed in situations of danger where human ingenuity availed them not, and where human foresight was baffled, I feel persuaded that these remarks are unnecessary.

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New river, supposed to be the Darling.

It was my first care to call for our friend, and to express to him, as well as I could, how much we stood indebted to him, at the same time that I made him a suitable present; but to the chiefs of the tribes, I positively refused all gifts, notwithstanding their earnest solicitations. We next prepared to examine the new river, and turning the boat's head towards it, endeavoured to pull up the stream. Our larboard oars touched the right bank, and the current was too strong for us to conquer it with a pair only; we were, therefore, obliged to put a second upon her, a movement that excited the astonishment and admiration of the natives. One old woman seemed in absolute ecstasy, to whom M'Leay threw an old tin kettle, in recompense for the amusement she afforded us.

Hoist the Union Jack.

As soon as we got above the entrance of the new river, we found easier pulling, and proceeded up it for some miles, accompanied by the once more noisy multitude. The river preserved a breadth of one hundred yards, and a depth of rather more than twelve feet. Its banks were sloping and grassy, and were overhung by trees of magnificent size. Indeed, its appearance was so different from the water-worn banks of the sister stream, that the men exclaimed, on entering it, that we had got into an English river. Its appearance certainly almost justified the expression; for the greenness of its banks was as new to us as the size of its timber. Its waters, though sweet, were turbid, and had a taste of vegetable decay, as well as a slight tinge of green. Our progress was watched by the natives with evident anxiety. They kept abreast of us, and talked incessantly. At length, however, our course was checked by a net that stretched right across the stream. I say checked, because it would have been unfair to have passed over it with the chance of disappointing the numbers who apparently depended on it for subsistence that day. The moment was one of intense interest to me. As the men rested upon their oars, awaiting my further orders, a crowd of thoughts rushed upon me. The various conjectures I had formed of the course and importance of the Darling passed across my mind. Were they indeed realized? An irresistible conviction impressed me that we were now sailing on the bosom of that very stream from whose banks I had been twice forced to retire. I directed the Union Jack to be hoisted, and giving way to our satisfaction, we all stood up in the boat, and gave three distinct cheers. It was an English feeling, an ebullition, an overflow, which I am ready to admit that our circumstances and situation will alone excuse. The eye of every native had been fixed upon that noble flag, at all times a beautiful object, and to them a novel one, as it waved over us in the heart of a desert. They had, until that moment been particularly loquacious, but the sight of that flag and the sound of our voices hushed the tumult, and while they were still lost in astonishment, the boat's head was speedily turned, the sail was sheeted home, both wind and current were in our favour, and we vanished from them with a rapidity that surprised even ourselves, and which precluded every hope of the most adventurous among them to keep up with us.

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CHAPTER V.

Character of the country—Damage of provisions—Adroitness of the natives in catching fish—The skiff broken up—Stream from the North-East supposed to be the Darling—Change of country in descending the river—Intercourse with the natives—Prevalence of loathsome diseases among them—Apparent populousness of the country—Junction of several small streams—The Rufus, the Lindesay, &c.—Rainy and tempestuous weather—Curious appearance of the banks—Troublesomeness of the natives—Inhospitable and desolate aspect of the country—Condition of the men—Change in the geological character of the country—The river passes through a valley among hills.

Arrived once more at the junction of the two rivers, and unmolested in our occupations, we had leisure to examine it more closely. Not having as yet given a name to our first discovery, when we re-entered its capacious channel on this occasion, I laid it down as the Murray River, in compliment to the distinguished officer, Sir George Murray, who then presided over the colonial department, not only in compliance with the known wishes of his Excellency General Darling, but also in accordance with my own feelings as a soldier.

The new river, whether the Darling or an additional discovery, meets its more southern rival on a N. by E. course; the latter, running W.S.W. at the confluence, the angle formed by the two rivers, is, therefore, so small that both may be considered to preserve their proper course, and neither can be said to be tributary to the other. At their junction, the Murray spreads its waters over the broad and sandy shore, upon which our boat grounded, while its more impetuous neighbour flows through the deep but narrow channel it has worked out for itself, under the right bank. The strength of their currents must have been nearly equal, since there was as distinct a line between their respective waters, to a considerable distance below the junction, as if a thin board alone separated them. The one half the channel contained the turbid waters of the northern stream, the other still preserved their original transparency.

Inundated and alluvial country.

The banks of the Murray did not undergo any immediate change as we proceeded. We noticed that the country had, at some time, been subject to extensive inundation, and was, beyond doubt, of alluvial formation. We passed the mouths of several large creeks that came from the north and N.W., and the country in those directions seemed to be much intersected by water-courses; while to the south it was extremely low. Having descended several minor rapids, I greatly regretted that we had no barometer to ascertain the actual dip of the interior. I computed, however, that we were not more than from eighty to ninety feet above the level of the sea. We found the channel of the Murray much encumbered with timber, and noticed some banks of sand that were of

unusual size, and equalled the largest accumulations of it on the sea shore, both in extent and solidity.

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State of provisions.

We would gladly have fired into the flights of wild fowl that winged their way over us, for we, about this time, began to feel the consequences of the disaster that befell us in the Morumbidgee. The fresh water having got mixed with the brine in the meat casks, the greater part of our salt provisions had got spoiled, so that we were obliged to be extremely economical in the expenditure of what remained, as we knew not to what straits we might be driven. It will naturally be asked why we did not procure fish? The answer is easy. The men had caught many in the Morumbidgee, and on our first navigation of the Murray, but whether it was that they had disagreed with them, or that their appetites were palled, or that they were too fatigued after the labour of the day to set the lines, they did not appear to care about them. The only fish we could take was the common cod or perch; and, without sauce or butter, it is insipid enough. We occasionally exchanged pieces of iron-hoop for two other kinds of fish, the one a bream, the other a barbel, with the natives, and the eagerness with which they met our advances to barter, is a strong proof of their natural disposition towards this first step in civilization.

Dexterity of natives in fishing.

As they threw off all reserve when accompanying us as ambassadors, we had frequent opportunities of observing their habits. The facility, for instance, with which they procured fish was really surprising. They would slip, feet foremost, into the water as they walked along the bank of the river, as if they had accidentally done so, but, in reality, to avoid the splash they would necessarily have made if they had plunged in head foremost. As surely as they then disappeared under the surface of the water, so surely would they re-appear with a fish writhing upon the point of their short spears. The very otter scarcely exceeds them in power over the finny race, and so true is the aim of these savages, even under water, that all the fish we procured from them were pierced either close behind the lateral fin, or in the very centre of the head, It is certain, from their indifference to them, that the natives seldom eat fish when they can get anything else. Indeed, they seemed more anxious to take the small turtle, which, sunning themselves on the trunks or logs of trees over the water, were, nevertheless, extremely on their guard. A gentle splash alone indicated to us that any thing had dropped into the water, but the quick eyes and ears of our guides immediately detected what had occasioned it, and they seldom failed to take the poor little animal that had so vainly trusted to its own watchfulness for security. It appeared that the natives did not, from choice, frequent the Murray; it was evident, therefore, that they had other and better means of subsistence away from it, and it struck me, at the time, that the river we had just passed watered a better country than any through which the Murray had been found to flow.

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Break up the skiff.

We encamped rather earlier than usual upon the left bank of the river, near a broad creek; for as the skiff had been a great drag upon us, I determined on breaking it up, since there was no probability that we should ever require the still, which alone remained in her. We, consequently, burnt the former, to secure her nails and iron work, and I set Clayton about cutting the copper of the latter into the shape of crescents, in order to present them to the natives. Some large huts were observed on the side of the creek, a little above the camp, the whole of which faced the N.E. This arrangement had previously been noticed by us, so that I was led to infer that the severest weather comes from the opposite quarter in this part of the interior. I had not the least idea, at the time, however, that we should, ere we reached the termination of our journey, experience the effects of the S.W. winds.

We must have fallen considerably during the day from the level of our morning's position, for we passed down many reaches where the decline of country gave an increased velocity to the current of the river.

I had feared, not only in consequence of the unceremonious manner in which we had left them, but, because I had, in some measure, rejected the advances of their chiefs, that none of the natives would follow us, and I regretted the circumstance on account of my men, as well as the trouble we should necessarily have in conciliating the next tribe. We had not, however, been long encamped, when seven blacks joined us. I think they would have passed on if we had not called to them. As it was, they remained with us but for a short time. We treated them very kindly, but they were evidently under constraint, and were, no doubt, glad when they found we did not object to their departing.

New river identified with the Darling.

I have stated, that I felt satisfied in my own mind, that the beautiful stream we had passed was no other than the river Darling of my former journey. The bare assertion, however, is not sufficient to satisfy the mind of the reader, upon a point of such importance, more especially when it is considered how remarkable a change the Darling must have undergone, if this were indeed a continuation of it. I am free to confess that it required an effort to convince myself, but after due consideration, I see no reason to alter the opinion I formed at a moment of peculiar embarrassment. Yet it by no means follows that I shall convince others, although I am myself convinced. The question is one of curious speculation, and the consideration of it will lead us to an interesting conjecture, as to the probable nature of the distant interior, between the two points. It will be remembered that I was obliged to relinquish my pursuit of the Darling, in east long. 144 degrees 48 minutes 30 seconds in lat. 30 degrees 17 minutes 30 seconds south. I

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place the junction of the Murray and the new river, in long. 140 degrees 56 minutes east, and in south lat. 34 degrees 3 minutes. I must remark, however, that the lunars I took on this last occasion, were not satisfactory, and that there is, probably, an error, though not a material one, in the calculation. Before I measure the distance between the above points, or make any remarks on the results of my own observations, I would impress the following facts upon the reader's mind.

I found and left the Darling in a complete state of exhaustion. As a river it had ceased to flow; the only supply it received was from brine springs, which, without imparting a current, rendered its waters saline and useless, and lastly, the fish in it were different from those inhabiting the other known rivers of the interior. It is true, I did not procure a perfect specimen of one, but we satisfactorily ascertained that they were different, inasmuch as they had large and strong scales, whereas the fish in the western waters have smooth skins. On the other hand, the waters of the new river were sweet, although turbid; it had a rapid current in it; and its fish were of the ordinary kind. In the above particulars, therefore, they differed much as they could well differ. Yet there were some strong points of resemblance in the appearance of the rivers themselves, which were more evident to me than I can hope to make them to the reader. Both were shaded by trees of the same magnificent dimensions; and the same kind of huts were erected on the banks of each, inhabited by the same description, or race, of people, whose weapons, whose implements, and whose nets corresponded in most respects.

We will now cast our eyes over the chart: and see if the position of the two rivers upon it, will at all bear out our conclusion that they are one and the same; and whether the line that would join them is the one that the Darling would naturally take, in reference to its previous course.—We shall find that the two points under discussion, bear almost N.E. and S.W. of each other respectively, the direct line in which the Darling had been ascertained to flow, as far as it had been found practicable to trace it. I have already remarked that the fracture of my barometer prevented my ascertaining the height of the bed of the Darling above the sea, during the first expedition. A similar accident caused me equal disappointment on the second; because one of the most important points upon which I was engaged was to ascertain the dip of the interior. I believe I stated, in its proper place, that I did not think the Darling could possibly be 200 feet above the sea, and as far as my observations bear me out, I should estimate the bed of the Murray, at its junction with the new river, to be within 100. It would appear that there is a distance of 300 miles between the Murray River at this place, and the Darling; a space amply sufficient for the intervention of a hilly country.

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No one could have been more attentive to the features of the interior than I was; nor could any one have dwelt upon their peculiarities with more earnest attention. It were hazardous to build up any new theory, however ingenious it may appear. The conclusions into which I have been led, are founded on actual observation of the country through which I passed, and extend not beyond my actual range of vision; unless my assuming that the decline of the interior to the south has been satisfactorily established, be considered premature. If not, the features of the country certainly justify my deductions; and it will be found that they were still more confirmed by subsequent observation.—That the Darling should have lost its current in its upper branches, is not surprising, when the level nature of the country into which it falls is taken into consideration; neither does it surprise me that it should be stationary in one place, and flowing in another; since, if, as in the present instance, there is a great extent of country between the two points, which may perhaps be of considerable elevation, the river may receive tributaries, whose waters will of course follow the general decline of the country. I take it to be so in the case before us; and am of opinion, that the lower branches of the Darling are not at all dependent on its sources for a current, or for a supply of water. I have somewhere observed that it appeared to me the depressed interior over which I had already travelled, was of comparatively recent formation. And, by whatever convulsion or change so extensive a tract became exposed, I cannot but infer, that the Darling is the main channel by which the last waters of the ocean were drained off. The bottom of the estuary, for it cannot be called a valley, being then left exposed, it consequently remains the natural and proper reservoir for the streams from the eastward, or those falling easterly from the westward, if any such remain to be discovered.

From the junction of the Morumbidgee to the junction of the new river, the Murray had held a W.N.W. course. From the last junction it changed its direction to the S.W., and increased considerably in size. The country to the south was certainly lower than that to the north; for, although both banks had features common to each other, the flooded spaces were much more extensive to our left than to our right.

Change of country.

We started on the morning of the 24th, all the lighter from having got rid of the skiff, and certainly freer to act in case the natives should evince a hostile disposition towards us. As we proceeded down the river, the appearances around us more and more plainly indicated a change of country. Cyprresses were observed in the distance, and the ground on which they stood was higher than that near the stream; as if it had again acquired its secondary banks. At length these heights approached the river so nearly as to form a part of its banks, and to separate one alluvial flat from another. Their summits were perfectly level; their soil was a red sandy loam; and their productions, for the most part, salsolae and misembrianthemum. From this it would appear that we had

passed through a second region, that must at some time have been under water, and that still retained all the marks of a country partially subject to flood.

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Introduced from tribe to tribe.

We had, as I have said, passed over this region, and were again hemmed in by those sandy and sterile tracts upon which the beasts of the field could obtain neither food nor water. We overtook the seven deputies some time after we started, but soon lost sight of them again, as they cut off the sweeps of the river, and shortened their journey as much as possible. At 2 p.m. we found them with a tribe of their countrymen, about eighty in number. We pulled in to the bank and remained with them for a short time, and I now determined to convince the blacks who had preceded us, that I had not been actuated by any other desire than that of showing to them that we were not to be intimidated by numbers, when I refused to make them any presents after their show of hostility. I now, therefore, gave them several implements, sundry pieces of iron hoop, and an ornamental badge of copper. When we left the tribe, we were regularly handed over to their care. The seven men who had introduced us, went back at the same time that we continued our journey, and two more belonging to the new tribe, went on a-head to prepare the the neighbouring tribe to receive us; nor did we see anything more of them during the day.

We encamped on the left bank of the river, amidst a polygonum scrub, in which we found a number of the crested pigeon. It was late before the tents were pitched: as Fraser seldom assisted in that operation, but strolled out with his gun after he had kindled a fire, so on this occasion he wandered from the camp in search of novelty, and on his return, informed me that there was a considerable ridge to the south of a plain upon which he had been.

I had myself walked out to the S.E., and on ascending a few feet above the level of the camp, got into a scrub. I was walking quietly through it, when I heard a rustling noise, and looking in the direction whence it proceeded, I observed a small kangaroo approaching me. Having a stick in my hand, and being aware that I was in one of their paths, I stood still until the animal came close up to me, without apparently being aware of my presence. I then gave it a blow an the side of the head, and made it reel to one side, but the stick, being rotten, broke with the force of the blow, and thus disappointed me of a good meal.

During my absence from the camp, a flight of cockatoos, new to us, but similar to one that Mr. Hume shot on the Darling, passed over the tents, and I found M'Leay, with his usual anxiety, trying to get a shot at them. They had, he told me, descended to water, but they had chosen a spot so difficult of approach without discovery, that he had found it impossible to get within shot of them.

Ridge to the south-east.

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There was a considerable rapid just below our position, which I examined before dark. Not seeing any danger, I requested M'Leay to proceed down it in the boat as soon as he had breakfasted, and to wait for me at the bottom of it. As I wished to ascertain the nature and height of the elevations which Fraser had magnified into something grand, Fraser and I proceeded to the centre of a large plain, stretching from the left bank of the river to the southward. It was bounded to the S.E. by a low scrub; to the S. a thickly wooded ridge appeared to break the level of the country. It extended from east to west for four or five miles, and then gradually declined. At its termination, the country seemed to dip, and a dense fog, as from an extensive sheet of water, enveloped the landscape. The plain was crowded with cockatoos, that were making their morning's repast on the berries of the salsolae and rhagodia, with which it was covered.

Distant ranges seen.

M'Leay had got safely down the rapid, so that as soon as I joined him, we proceeded on our journey. We fell in with the tribe we had already seen, but increased in numbers, and we had hardly left them, when we found another tribe most anxiously awaiting our arrival. We stayed with the last for some time, and exhausted our vocabulary, and exerted our ingenuity to gain some information from them. I directed Hopkinson to pile up some clay, to enquire if we were near any hills, when two or three of the blacks caught the meaning, and pointed to the N.W. Mulholland climbed up a tree in consequence of this, and reported to me that he saw lofty ranges in the direction to which the blacks pointed; that there were two apparently, the one stretching to the N.E., the other to the N.W. He stated their distance to be about forty miles, and added that he thought he could observe other ranges, through the gap, which, according to the alignment of two sticks, that I placed according to Mulholland's directions, bore S. 130 W.

We had landed upon the right bank of the river, and there was a large lagoon immediately behind us. The current in the river did not run so strong as it had been. Its banks were much lower, and were generally covered with reeds. The spaces subject to flood were broader than heretofore, and the country for more than twenty miles was extremely depressed. Our view from the highest ground near the camp was very confined, since we were apparently in a hollow, and were unable to obtain a second sight of the ranges we had noticed.

Pass three creeks.

Three creeks fell into the Murray hereabouts. One from the north, another from the N.E., and the third from the south. The two first were almost choked up with the trunks of trees, but the last had a clear channel. Our tents stood on ground high above the reach of flood. The soil was excellent, and the brushes behind us abounded with a new species of melaleuca.

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The heat of the weather, at this time, was extremely oppressive, and the thermometer was seldom under 100 degrees of Fahr. at noon. The wind, too, we observed, seldom remained stationary for any length of time, but made its regular changes every twenty-four hours. In the morning, it invariably blew from the N.E., at noon it shifted to N.W., and as the sun set it flew round to the eastward of south. A few dense clouds passed over us occasionally, but no rain fell from them.

Diseases of the natives.

Our intercourse with the natives had now been constant. We had found the interior more populous than we had any reason to expect; yet as we advanced into it, the population appeared to increase. It was impossible for us to judge of the disposition of the natives during the short interviews we generally had with them, and our motions were so rapid that we did not give them time to form any concerted plan of attack, had they been inclined to attack us. They did not, however, show any disposition to hostility, but, considering all things, were quiet and orderly, nor did any instances of theft occur, or, at least, none fell under my notice. The most loathsome of diseases prevailed throughout the tribes, nor were the youngest infants exempt from them. Indeed, so young were some, whose condition was truly disgusting, that I cannot but suppose they must have been born in a state of disease; but I am uncertain whether it is fatal or not in its results, though, most probably it hurries many to a premature grave. How these diseases originated it is impossible to say. Certainly not from the colony, since the midland tribes alone were infected. Syphilis raged amongst them with fearful violence; many had lost their noses, and all the glandular parts were considerably affected. I distributed some Turner's cerate to the women, but left Fraser to superintend its application. It could do no good, of course, but it convinced the natives we intended well towards them, and, on that account, it was politic to give it, setting aside any humane feeling.

Populous district.

The country through which we passed on the 28th, was extremely low, full of lagoons, and thickly inhabited. No change took place in the river, or in the nature and construction of its banks. We succeeded in getting a view of the hills we had noticed when with the last tribe, and found that they bore from us due north, N. 22 E., and S. 130 W. They looked bare and perpendicular, and appeared to be about twenty miles from us. I am very uncertain as to the character of these hills, but still think that they must have been some of the faces of the bold cliffs that we had frequently passed under. From the size and number of the huts, and from the great breadth of the foot-paths, we were still further led to conclude that we were passing through a very populous district. What the actual number of inhabitants was it is impossible

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to say, but we seldom communicated with fewer than 200 daily. They sent ambassadors forward regularly from one tribe to another, in order to prepare for our approach, a custom that not only saved us an infinity of time, but also great personal risk. Indeed, I doubt very much whether we should ever have pushed so far down the river, had we not been assisted by the natives themselves. I was particularly careful not to do anything that would alarm them, or to permit any liberty to be taken with their women. Our reserve in this respect seemed to excite their surprise, for they asked sundry questions, by signs and expressions, as to whether we had any women, and where they were. The whole tribe generally assembled to receive us, and all, without exception, were in a complete state of nudity, and really the loathsome condition and hideous countenances of the women would, I should imagine, have been a complete antidote to the sexual passion. It is to be observed, that the women are very inferior in appearance to the men. The latter are, generally speaking, a clean-limbed and powerful race, much stouter in the bust than below, but withal, active, and, in some respects, intelligent; but the women are poor, weak, and emaciated. This, perhaps, is owing to their poverty and paucity of food, and to the treatment they receive at the hands of the men; but the latter did not show any unkindness towards them in our presence.

Although I desired to avoid exciting their alarm, I still made a point of showing them the effects of a gunshot, by firing at a kite, or any other bird that happened to be near. My dexterity—for I did not trust Fraser, who would, ten to one, have missed his mark—was generally exerted, as I have said, against a kite or a crow; both of which birds generally accompanied the blacks from place to place to pick up the remnants of their meals. Yet, I was often surprised at the apparent indifference with which the natives not only saw the effect of the shot, but heard the report. I have purposely gone into the centre of a large assemblage and fired at a bird that has fallen upon their very heads, without causing a start or an exclamation, without exciting either their alarm or their curiosity.

Whence this callous feeling proceeded, whether from strength of nerve, or because they had been informed by our forerunners that we should show off before them, I know not, but I certainly expected a very different effect from that which my firing generally produced, although I occasionally succeeded in scattering them pretty well.

Junction of the Rufus.

About 11 a.m., we arrived at the junction of a small river with the Murray, at which a tribe, about 250 in number, had assembled to greet us. We landed, therefore, for the double purpose of distributing presents, and of examining the junction, which, coming from the north, of course, fell into the Murray upon its right bank. Its waters were so extremely muddy, and its current so rapid, that it must have been swollen by some late

rains. Perhaps, it had its sources in the hills we had seen; be that as it may, it completely discoloured the waters of the Murray.

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We made it a point never to distribute any presents among the natives until we had made them all sit, or stand, in a row. Sometimes this was a troublesome task, but we generally succeeded in gaining our point; with a little exertion of patience. M'Leay was a famous hand at ordering the ranks, and would, I am sure, have made a capital drill-sergeant, not less on account of his temper than of his perseverance. I called the little tributary I have noticed, the Rufus, in honour of my friend M'Leay's red head, and I have no doubt, he will understand the feeling that induced me to give it such a name.

Geological examination.

Not many miles below the Rufus, we passed under a lofty cliff upon the same side with it. It is the first elevation of any consequence that occurs below the Darling, and not only on that account, but also on account of the numerous substances of which it is composed, and the singular formation that is near requires to be particularly noticed. [See Appendix.] The examination was a task of considerable danger, and both Fraser and myself had well nigh been buried under a mass of the cliff that became suddenly detached, and, breaking into thousands of pieces, went hissing and cracking into the river.

Thunder storms.

The weather about this time was extremely oppressive and close. Thunder clouds darkened the sky, but no rain fell. The thermometer was seldom below 104 at noon, and its range was very trifling. The wind shifted several times during the twenty-four hours; but these changes had no effect on the thermometer. It was evident, however, as the sun set on the evening of the 26th, that the clouds from which thunder had for the last four or five days disturbed the silence of nature around us, would not long support their own weight. A little before midnight, it commenced raining, and both wind and rain continued to increase in violence until about seven in the morning of the 27th; when the weather moderated.

Two or three blacks had accompanied us from the last tribe, and had lain down near the fire. As the storm increased, however, they got up, and swimming across the river, left us to ourselves. This was a very unusual thing, nor can I satisfy myself as to their object, unless it was to get into shelter, for these people though they wander naked over the country, and are daily in the water, feel the cold and rain very acutely.

Observing the clouds collecting for so many days, I indulged hopes that we were near high lands, perhaps mountains; but from the loftiest spots we could see nothing but a level and dark horizon. Anxious to gain as correct a knowledge of the country as possible we had, in the course of the day, ascended a sandy ridge that was about a mile from the river. The view from the summit of this ridge promised to be more extensive than any we had of late been enabled to obtain; and as far as actual observation went, we

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were not disappointed, although in every other particular, the landscape was one of the most unpromising description. To the S. and S.E., the country might be said to stretch away in one unbroken plain, for it was so generally covered with wood that every inequality was hidden from our observation. To the S.W. the river line was marked out by a succession of red cliffs, similar to those we had already passed. To the north, the interior was evidently depressed; it was overgrown with a low scrub, and seemed to be barren in the extreme. The elevations upon which we stood were similar to the sand-hills near the coast, and had not a blade of grass upon them. Yet, notwithstanding the sterility of the soil, the large white amarillis which grew in such profusion on the alluvial plains of the Macquarie, was also abundant here. But it had lost its dazzling whiteness, and had assumed a sickly yellow colour and its very appearance indicated that it was not in a congenial soil.

Lindesay river.

We passed two very considerable junctions, the one coming from the S.E., the other from the north. Both had currents in them, but the former was running much stronger than the latter. It falls into the Murray, almost opposite to the elevations I have been describing, and, if a judgment can be hazarded from its appearance at its embouchure, it must, in its higher branches, be a stream of considerable magnitude. Under this impression, I have called it the Lindesay, as a tribute of respect to my commanding officer, Colonel Patrick Lindesay of the 39th regt. I place it in east long. 140 degrees 29 minutes, and in lat. 33 degrees 58 minutes south. Mr. Hume is of opinion that this is the most southerly of the rivers crossed by him and Mr. Hovel in 1823; but, as I have already remarked, I apprehend that all the rivers those gentlemen crossed, had united in one main stream above the junction of the Morumbidgee, and I think it much more probable that this is a new river, and that it rises to the westward of Port Phillips, rather than in the S.E. angle of the coast.

Natives become troublesome.

We found the blacks who had deserted us with a tribe at the junction, but it was weak in point of numbers; as were also two other tribes or hordes to whom we were introduced in rapid succession. Taken collectively, they could not have amounted to 230 men, women, and children. The last of these hordes was exceedingly troublesome, and I really thought we should have been obliged to quarrel with them. Whether it was that we were getting impatient, or that our tempers were soured, I know not, but even M'Leay, whose partiality towards the natives was excessive at the commencement of our journey, now became weary of such constant communication as we had kept up with them. Their sameness of appearance, the disgusting diseases that raged among them, their abominable filth, the manner in which they pulled us about, and the impossibility

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of making them understand us, or of obtaining any information from them,—for if we could have succeeded in this point, we should have gladly borne every inconvenience, —all combined to estrange us from these people and to make their presence disagreeable. Yet there was an absolute necessity to keep up the chain of communication, to ensure our own safety, setting aside every other consideration; but as I had been fortunate in my intercourse with the natives during the first expedition, so I hoped the present journey would terminate without the occurrence of any fatal collision between us. The natives, it is true, were generally quiet; but they crowded round us frequently without any regard to our remonstrances, laying hold of the boat to prevent our going away, and I sometimes thought that had any of them been sufficiently bold to set the example, many of the tribes would have attempted our capture. Indeed, in several instances, we were obliged to resort to blows ere we could disengage ourselves from the crowds around us, and whenever this occurred, it called forth the most sullen and ferocious scowl—such, probably, as would be the forerunner of hostility, and would preclude every hope of mercy at their hands. With each new tribe we were, in some measure, obliged to submit to an examination, and to be pulled about, and fingered all over. They generally measured our hands and feet with their own, counted our fingers, felt our faces, and besmeared our shirts all over with grease and dirt. This was no very agreeable ceremony, and a repetition of it was quite revolting, more especially when we had to meet the grins or frowns of the many with firmness and composure.

Tempestuous weather.

The weather had been tempestuous and rainy, for three or four successive days: on the 28th it cleared up a little. Under any circumstances, however, we could not have delayed our journey. We had not proceeded very far when it again commenced to rain and to blow heavily from the N.W. The river trended to the South. We passed down several rapids, and observed the marks of recent flood on the trees, to the height of seven feet. The alluvial flats did not appear to have been covered, or to be subject to overflow. The timber upon them was not of a kind that is found on flooded lands, but wherever reeds prevailed the flooded or blue gum stretched its long white branches over them. The country to the westward was low and bushy.

Singular formation of the banks.

The left bank of the Murray was extremely lofty, and occasionally rose to 100 feet perpendicularly from the water. It is really difficult to describe the appearance of the banks at this place; so singular were they in character, and so varied in form. Here they had the most beautiful columnar regularity, with capitals somewhat resembling the Corinthian order in configuration; there they showed like falls of muddy

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water that had suddenly been petrified; and in another place they resembled the time-worn battlements of a feudal castle. It will naturally be asked, of what could these cliffs have been composed to assume so many different forms? and what could have operated to produce such unusual appearances? The truth is, they were composed almost wholly of clay and sand. Wherever the latter had accumulated, or predominated, the gradual working of water had washed it away, and left the more compact body, in some places, so delicately hollowed out, that it seemed rather the work of art than of nature. This singular formation rested on a coarse grit, that showed itself in slabs.

From the frequent occurrence of rapids I should imagine that we had fallen considerably, but there was no visible decline of country. The river swept along, in broad and noble reaches, at the base of the cliffs. Vast accumulations of sand were in its bed, a satisfactory proof of the sandy character of the distant interior, if other proof were wanting.

We did not see so many natives on the 28th as we had been in the habit of seeing; perhaps in consequence of the boisterous weather. A small tribe of about sixty had collected to receive us, but we passed on without taking any notice of them, Nevertheless they deputed two of their men to follow us, who overtook us just as we stopped for the purpose of pitching our tents before the clouds should burst, that just then bore the most threatening appearance. The blacks seemed to be perfectly aware what kind of a night we should have, and busied themselves preparing a hut and making a large fire.

The evening proved extremely dark, and towards midnight it blew and rained fiercely. Towards morning the wind moderated, and the rain ceased. Still, the sky was overcast, and the clouds were passing rapidly over us. The wind had, however, changed some points, and from the N.W. had veered round to the S.S.W.; and the day eventually turned out cool and pleasant.

Large tribe of natives—their indifference to fire-arms.

We fell in with a large tribe of natives, amounting in all to 270. They were extremely quiet, and kept away from the boat; in consequence of which I distributed a great many presents among them. This tribe was almost the only one that evinced any eagerness to see us. The lame had managed to hobble along, and the blind were equally anxious to touch us. There were two or three old men stretched upon the bank, from whom the last sigh seemed about to depart; yet these poor creatures evinced an anxiety to see us, and to listen to a description of our appearance, although it seemed doubtful whether they would be alive twenty-four hours after we left them. An old woman, a picture of whom would disgust my readers, made several attempts to embrace me. I managed, however, to avoid her, and at length got rid of her by handing her over to

Fraser, who was no wise particular as to the object of his attention. This tribe must have been one of the most numerous on the banks of the Murray, since we fell in with detached families for many miles below the place where we had parted from the main body.

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I have omitted to mention that, while among them, I fired at a kite and killed it; yet, though close to me, the blacks did not start or evince the least surprise. It really is difficult to account for such firmness of nerve or self-command. It is not so much a matter of surprise that they were indifferent to its effects, for probably they knew them not, but it is certainly odd that they should not have been startled by the report.

The river inclined very much to the southward for some miles below our last camp; at length it struck against some elevations that turned it more to the westward. Before we terminated our day's pull it again changed its direction to the eastward of south. The right bank became lofty, and the left proportionably depressed.

Reflections on the progress of the expedition.

In consequence of the boisterous weather we had had, we were uncertain as to our precise situation, even in point of latitude. But I was perfectly aware that we were considerably to the south of the head of St. Vincent's Gulf. I began, therefore, to contemplate with some confidence a speedy termination to our wanderings, or, at least, that we should soon reach the extreme point to which we could advance. The sun was at this time out of my reach, since the sextant would not measure double the altitude. Observations of the stars were, in like manner, uncertain, in consequence of the boisterous weather we had had, and the unavoidable agitation of the quicksilver. My last observation of Antares placed us in latitude 34 degrees 4 minutes; so that we were still 115 miles from the coast.

We had now been twenty-two days upon the river, and it was uncertain how long we should be in compassing the distance we had still to run. Considering all things, we had, as yet, been extremely fortunate; and I hoped that we should terminate our journey without the occurrence of any fatal accident. Had the country corresponded with the noble stream that traversed it, we should have been proportionably elated, but it was impossible to conceal from ourselves its inhospitable and unprofitable character, as far as we had, as yet, penetrated. If we except the partial and alluvial flats on the immediate borders, and in the neighbourhood of its tributaries and creeks, the Murray might be said to flow through a barren and sandy interior. The appearance of the country through which we passed on the 29th, was far from being such as to encourage us with the hopes of any change for the better. The river was enclosed, on either side, by the same kind of banks that have already been described; and it almost appeared as if the plain had been rent asunder to allow of a passage for its waters. The view of the distant interior was unsatisfactory. It was, for the most part, covered with brush, but, at length, cyresses again made their appearance, although at a considerable distance from us.

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The river continued to flow to the southward, a circumstance that gave me much satisfaction, for I now began to feel some anxiety about the men. They had borne their fatigues and trials so cheerfully, and had behaved so well, that I could not but regret the scanty provision that remained for them. The salt meat being spoiled, it had fallen to the share of the dogs, so that we had little else than flour to eat. Fish no one would touch, and of wild fowl there were none to be seen. The men complained of sore eyes, from the perspiration constantly running into them, and it was obvious to me that they were much reduced. It will be borne in mind, that we were now performing the earliest part of our task, and were going down with the stream. I was sure that on our return, (For I had no hopes of meeting any vessel on the coast,) we should have to make every day's journey good against the current; and, if the men were now beginning to sink, it might well be doubted whether their strength would hold out. Both M'Leay and myself, therefore, encouraged any cheerfulness that occasionally broke out among them, and Frazer enlivened them by sundry tunes that he whistled whilst employed in skinning birds. I am sure, no galley-slave ever took to his oar with more reluctance than poor Frazer. He was indefatigable in most things, but he could not endure the oar.

Natives become unruly.

We did not fall in with any natives on the 30th, neither did we see those who had preceded us from the last tribe. On the 31st, to my mortification, the river held so much to the northward, that we undid almost all our southing. What with its regular turns, and its extensive sweeps, the Murray covers treble the ground, at a moderate computation, that it would occupy in a direct course; and we had a practical instance of the truth of this in the course of the afternoon, when we found our friends ready to introduce us to a large assemblage of natives. On asking them how they had passed us, they pointed directly east to the spot at which we had parted. By crossing from one angle of the river to the other, they had performed in little more than half a day, a journey which it had taken us two long days to accomplish. After our usual distribution of presents, we pushed away from the bank; though not without some difficulty, in consequence of the obstinacy of the natives in wishing to detain us; and I was exceedingly vexed to find, while we were yet in sight of them, that we had proceeded down a shallow channel on one side of an island instead of the further and deeper one; so that the boat ultimately grounded. A crowd of the blacks rushed into the water, and surrounded us on every side. Some came to assist us, others, under a pretence of assisting, pulled against us, and I was at length obliged to repel them by threats. A good many of them were very much disposed to annoy us, and, after the boat was in deep water, some of them became quite infuriated, because we would not

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return. Had we been within distance, they would assuredly have hurled their spears at us. Thirteen of them followed us to our resting place. They kept rather apart from us, and kindled their fire in a little hollow about fifty paces to our right; nor did they venture to approach the tents unless we called to them, so that by their quiet and unobtrusive conduct they made up in some measure for the unruly proceedings of others of their tribe.

We had now arrived at a point at which I hoped to gain some information from the natives, respecting the sea. It was to no purpose, however, that I questioned these stupid people. They understood perfectly, by my pointing to the sky, and by other signs, that I was inquiring about large waters, but they could not, or would not, give any information on the subject.

Change in the geology of the country.

As we proceeded down the river, its current became weaker, and its channel somewhat deeper. Our attention was called to a remarkable change in the geology of the country, as well as to an apparent alteration in the natural productions. The cliffs of sand and clay ceased, and were succeeded by a fossil formation of the most singular description. At first, it did not exceed a foot in height above the water, but it gradually rose, like an inclined plane, and resembled in colour, and in appearance, the skulls of men piled one upon the other. The constant rippling of the water against the rock had washed out the softer parts, and made hollows and cavities, that gave the whole formation the precise appearance of a catacomb. On examination, we discovered it to be a compact bed of shells, composed of a common description of marine shell from two to three inches in length, apparently a species of turritella.

Banks of petrified shells.

At about nine miles from the commencement of this formation, it rose to the height of more than 150 feet; the country became undulating, and a partial change took place in its vegetation. We stopped at an early hour, to examine some cliffs, which rising perpendicularly from the water, were different in character and substance from any we had as yet seen. They approached a dirty yellow-ochre in colour, that became brighter in hue as it rose, and, instead of being perforated, were compact and hard. The waters of the river had, however, made horizontal lines upon their fronts, which distinctly marked the rise and fall of the river, as the strength or depth of the grooves distinctly indicated the levels it generally kept. It did not appear from these lines, that the floods ever rose more than four feet above the then level of the stream, or that they continued for any length of time. On breaking off pieces of the rock, we ascertained that it was composed of one solid mass of sea-shells, of various kinds, of which the species first mentioned formed the lowest part.

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It rained a good deal during the night, but the morning turned out remarkably fine. The day was pleasant, for however inconvenient in some respects the frequent showers had been, they had cooled the air, and consequently prevented our feeling the heat so much as we should otherwise have done, in the close and narrow glen we had now entered.

Among the natives who followed us from the last tribe, there was an old man, who took an uncommon fancy or attachment to Hopkinson, and who promised, when we separated, to join us again in the course of the day.

Face of the country.

As we proceeded down the river we found that it was confined in a glen, whose extreme breadth was not more than half-a-mile. The hills that rose on either side of it were of pretty equal height. The alluvial flats were extremely small, and the boldest cliffs separated them from each other. The flats were lightly wooded, and were for the most part covered with reeds or polygonum. They were not much elevated above the waters of the river, and had every appearance of being frequently inundated. At noon we pulled up to dine, upon the left bank, under some hills, which were from 200 to 250 feet in height. While the men were preparing our tea, (for we had only that to boil,) M'Leay and I ascended the hills. The brush was so thick upon them, that we could not obtain a view of the distant interior. Their summits were covered with oyster-shells, in such abundance as entirely to preclude the idea of their having been brought to such a position by the natives. They were in every stage of petrification.

In the course of the afternoon the old man joined us, and got into the boat. As far as we could understand from his signs, we were at no great distance from some remarkable change or other. The river had been making to the N.W., from the commencement of the fossil formation, and it appeared as if it was inclined to keep that direction. The old man pointed to the N.W., and then placed his hand on the side of his head to indicate, as I understood him, that we should sleep to the N.W. of where we then were; but his second motion was not so intelligible, for he pointed due south, as if to indicate that such would be our future course; and he concluded his information, such as it was, by describing the roaring of the sea, and the height of the waves. It was evident this old man had been upon the coast, and we were therefore highly delighted at the prospect thus held out to us of reaching it.

Remarkable cliffs.

A little below the hills under which we had stopped, the country again assumed a level. A line of cliffs, of from two to three hundred feet in height, flanked the river, first on one side and then on the other, varying in length from a quarter of a mile to a mile. They rose perpendicularly from the water, and were of a bright yellow colour, rendered still more vivid occasionally by the sun shining full

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upon them. The summits of these cliffs were as even as if they had been built by an architect; and from their very edge, the country back from the stream was of an uniform level, and was partly plain, and partly clothed by brush. The soil upon this plateau, or table land, was sandy, and it was as barren and unproductive as the worst of the country we had passed through. On the other hand, the alluvial flats on the river increased in size, and were less subject to flood; and the river lost much of its sandy bed, and its current was greatly diminished in strength.

Native character.

It blew so fresh, during the greater part of the day, from the westward, that we had great difficulty in pulling against the breeze. The determined N.W. course the river kept, made me doubt the correctness of the story of the little old black; yet there was an openness of manner about him, and a clearness of description, that did not appear like fabrication. He pointed to the S.S.W. when he left us, as the direction in which he would again join us, thus confirming, without any apparent intention, what he had stated with regard to the southerly course the river was about to take. Among the natives who were with him, there was another man of very different manners and appearance. Our friend was small in stature, had piercing grey eyes, and was as quick as lightning in his movements. The other was tall, and grey headed; anxious, yet unobtrusive; and confident, without the least mixture of boldness. The study of the human character on many occasions similar to this, during our intercourse with these people, rude and uncivilized as they were, was not only pleasing, but instructive. We found that the individuals of a tribe partook of one general character, and that the whole of the tribe were either decidedly quiet, or as decidedly disorderly. The whole of the blacks left us when we started, but we had not gone very far, when the individual I have described brought his family, consisting of about fifteen persons. We were going down a part of the river in which there was a very slight fall. The natives were posted under some blue-gum trees, upon the right bank, and there was a broad shoal of sand immediately to our left. They walked over to this shoal, to receive some little presents, but did not follow when we continued our journey.

Take bearings.

During the whole of the day the river ran to the N.W. We stopped for the night under some cliffs, similar to those we had already passed, but somewhat higher. From their summit, mountains were visible to the N.W., but at a great distance from us. I doubted not that they were at the head of the southern gulfs; or of one of them, at all events. Our observations placed us in 34 degrees 08 minutes south of lat., and in long. 139 degrees 41 minutes 15 seconds; we were consequently nearly seventy miles from Spencer's Gulf, in a direct line, and I should have given that as the distance the hills appeared to be from us. They bore as follows:—

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Lofty round mountain, S. 127 degrees W.
Mountain scarcely visible, S. 128 degrees W.
Northern extremity of a broken range, S. 102 degrees W.
Southern extremity scarcely visible, S. 58 degrees W.

The country between the river and these ranges appeared to be very low, and darkly wooded: that to the N.E. was more open. The summit of the cliff did not form any table-land, but it dipped almost immediately to the westward, and the country, although, as I have already remarked, it was depressed, and undulated.

I walked to some distance from the river, across a valley, and started several kangaroos; but I was quite alone, and could not, therefore, secure one of them. Had the dogs been near, we should have had a fine feast. The soil of the interior still continued sandy, but there was a kind of short grass mixed with the salsolaceous plants upon it, that indicated, as I thought, a change for the better in the vegetation; and the circumstance of there being kangaroos in the valleys to the westward was also a favourable sign.

Feast on A tortoise.

Beneath the cliffs hereabouts, the river was extremely broad and deep. My servant thought it a good place for fishing and accordingly set a night-line, one end of which he fastened to the bough of a tree. During the night, being on guard, he saw a small tortoise floating on the water, so near that he struck it a violent blow with a large stick, upon which it dived: to his surprise, however, in the morning, he found that it had taken the bait, and was fast to the line. On examining it, the shell proved to be cracked, so that the blow must have been a severe one. It was the largest we had ever seen, and made an excellent dish. The flesh was beautifully white, nor could anything, especially under our circumstances, have been more tempting than it was when cooked; yet M'Leay would not partake of it.

The prevailing wind was, at this time, from the S.W. It blew heavily all day, but moderated towards the evening

I was very anxious, at starting on the 3rd, as to the course the river would take, since it would prove whether the little old man had played us false or not. From the cliffs under which we had slept, it held a direct N.W. course for two or three miles. It then turned suddenly to the S.E., and gradually came round to E.N.E., so that after two hours pulling, we found ourselves just opposite to the spot from which we had started, the neck of land that separated the channels not being more than 200 yards across. I have before noticed a bend similar to this, which the Murray makes, a little above the junction of the supposed Darling with it.

Chart of the river.

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It may appear strange to some of my readers, that I should have laid down the windings of the river so minutely. It may therefore be necessary for me to state that every bend of it was laid down by compass, and that the bearings of the angles as they opened were regularly marked by me, so that not a single winding or curve of the Murray is omitted in the large chart. The length of some of the reaches may be erroneous, but their direction is strictly correct. I always had a sheet of paper and the compass before me, and not only marked down the river line, but also the description of country nearest; its most minute changes, its cliffs, its flats, the kind of country back from it, its lagoons, the places at which the tribes assembled, its junctions, tributaries and creeks, together with our several positions, were all regularly noted, so that on our return up the river we had no difficulty in ascertaining upon what part of it we were, by a reference to the chart; and it proved of infinite service to us, since we were enabled to judge of our distance from our several camps, as we gained them day by day with the current against us; and we should often have stopped short of them, weary and exhausted, had we not known that two or three reaches more would terminate our labour for the day.

Remarkable cliffs.

From the spot last spoken of, the river held on a due south course for the remainder of the day; and at the same time changed its character. It lost its sandy bed and its current together, and became deep, still, and turbid, with a muddy bottom. It increased considerably in breadth, and stretched away before us in magnificent reaches of from three to six miles in length. The cliffs under which we passed towered above us, like maritime cliffs, and the water dashed against their base like the waves of the sea. They became brighter and brighter in colour, looking like dead gold in the sun's rays; and formed an unbroken wall of a mile or two in length. The natives on their summits showed as small as crows; and the cockatoos, the eagles, and other birds, were as specks above us; the former made the valley reverberate with their harsh and discordant notes. The reader may form some idea of the height of these cliffs, when informed that the king of the feathered race made them his sanctuary. They were continuous on both sides of the river, but retired, more or less, from it, according to the extent of the alluvial flats. The river held a serpentine course down the valley through which it passed, striking the precipices alternately on each side.

The soil on the flats was better, and less mixed with sand than it had been, but the flats were generally covered with reeds, though certainly not wholly subject to flood at any time. The polygonum still prevailed upon them in places, and the blue-gum tree alone occupied their outskirts. From the several elevations we ascended, the country to the N.W. appeared undulating and well wooded; that to the eastward, seemed to be brushy and low. Certainly there was a great difference in the country, both to the eastward and to the westward. We had frequent views of the mountains we had seen, or, I should have said, of a continuation of them. They bore nearly west from us at a very great distance all day.

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We fell in with several tribes, but did not see our old friend, although, from the inquiries we made, it was evident he was well known among them. It would disgust my readers were I to describe the miserable state of disease and infirmity to which these tribes were reduced. Leprosy of the most loathsome description, the most violent cutaneous eruptions, and glandular affections, absolutely raged through the whole of them; yet we could not escape from the persecuting examination of our persons that curiosity prompted them in some measure to insist upon.

Rejoined by our old native guide.

The old man, whose information had proved strictly correct, joined us again on the 4th, and his joy at being received into the boat was unbounded, as well as the pleasure he expressed at again meeting Hopkinson. He had been on a long journey, it would appear, for he had not then reached his tribe. As we approached their haunt, he landed and preceded us to collect them. We were, of course, more than usually liberal to so old a friend, and we were really sorry to part with him.

Soon after leaving his tribe, which occupied the left bank of the river, and was very weak in point of numbers, we fell in with a very strong tribe upon the right bank. They numbered 211 in all. We lay off the bank, in order to escape their importunities; a measure that by no means satisfied them. The women appeared to be very prolific; but, as a race, these people are not to be compared with the natives of the mountains, or of the upper branches of the Murray.

We passed some beautiful scenery in the course of the day. The river preserved a direct southerly course, and could not in any place have been less than 400 yards in breadth. The cliffs still continued, and varied perpetually in form; at one time presenting a perpendicular wall to the view, at others, they overhung the stream, in huge fragments. All were composed of a mass of shells of various kinds; a fact which will call for further observation and remark.

Delayed by strong winds.

Many circumstances at this time tended to confirm our hopes that the sea could not be very far from us, or that we should not be long in gaining it. Some sea-gulls flew over our heads, at which Fraser was about to shoot, had I not prevented him, for I hailed them as the messengers of glad tidings, and thought they ill deserved such a fate. It blew very hard from the S.W., during the whole of the day, and we found it extremely laborious pulling against the heavy and short sea that came rolling up the broad and open reaches of the Murray at this place.

Four of the blacks, from the last tribe, followed us, and slept at the fires; but they were suspicious and timid, and appeared to be very glad when morning dawned. Our fires were always so much larger than those made by themselves, that, they fancied,



perhaps, we were going to roast them. Our dogs, likewise, gave them great uneasiness; for although so fond of the native brute, they feared ours, from their size. We generally tied them to the boat, therefore, to prevent a recurrence of theft, so that they were not altogether useless.

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CHAPTER VI.

Improvement in the aspect of the country—Increase of the river—Strong westerly gales—Chronometer broken—A healthier tribe of natives—Termination of the Murray in a large lake—Its extent and environs—Passage across it—Hostile appearance of the natives—Beautiful scenery—Channel from the lake to the sea at Encounter Bay—Reach the beach—Large flocks of water fowl—Curious refraction—State of provisions—Embarrassing situation—Inspection of the channel to the ocean—Weak condition of the men—Difficulties of the return.

Delightful country.

It now appeared that the Murray had taken a permanent southerly course; indeed, it might strictly be said that it ran away to the south. As we proceeded down it, the valley expanded to the width of two miles; the alluvial flats became proportionably larger; and a small lake generally occupied their centre. They were extensively covered with reeds and grass, for which reason, notwithstanding that they were little elevated above the level of the stream, I do not think they are subject to overflow. Parts of them may be laid under water, but certainly not the whole. The rains at the head of the Murray, and its tributaries, must be unusually severe to prolong their effects to this distant region, and the flats bordering it appear, by successive depositions, to have only just gained a height above the further influence of the floods. Should this prove to be the case, the valley may be decidedly laid down as a most desirable spot, whether we regard the richness of its soil, its rock formation, its locality, or the extreme facility of water communication along it. It must not, however, be forgotten or concealed, that the summits of the cliffs by which the valley is enclosed, have not a corresponding soil. On the contrary, many of the productions common to the plains of the interior still existed upon them, and they were decidedly barren; but as we measured the reaches of the river, the cliffs ceased, and gave place to undulating hills, that were very different in appearance from the country we had previously noted down. It would have been impossible for the most tasteful individual to have laid out pleasure ground to more advantage, than Nature had done in planting and disposing the various groups of trees along the spine, and upon the sides of the elevations that confined the river, and bounded the low ground that intervened between it and their base. Still, however, the soil upon these elevations was sandy, and coarse, but the large oat-grass was abundant upon them, which yielded pasture at least as good as that in the broken country between Underaliga and Morumbidgee.

We had now gained a distance of at least sixty miles from that angle of the Murray at which it reaches its extreme west. The general aspect of the country to our right was beautiful, and several valleys branched away into the interior upon that side which had a most promising appearance, and seemed to abound with kangaroos, as the traces of

them were numerous, and the dogs succeeded in killing one, which, to our great mortification, we could not find.

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While, however, the country to the westward had so much to recommend it, the hills to our left became extremely bare. It was evident that the right was the sheltered side of the valley. The few trees on the opposite side bent over to the N.E., as if under the influence of some prevailing wind.

Adverse gales.

We experienced at this time a succession of gales from the S.W., against which we, on several occasions, found it useless to contend: the waves on the river being heavy and short; and the boat, driving her prow into them, sent the spray over us and soon wet us through. Indeed, it is difficult for the reader to imagine the heavy swell that rolled up the river, which had increased in breadth to the third of a mile, and in the length of its reaches to eight or ten. I was satisfied that we were not only navigating this river at a particularly stormy, perhaps *the* stormy, season; but also, that the influence of the S.W. wind is felt even as far in the interior as to the supposed Darling; in consequence of the uniform build of the huts, and the circumstance of their not only facing the N.E., but also being almost invariably erected under the lee of some bush.

The weather, under the influence of the wind we experienced, was cool and pleasant, although the thermometer stood at a medium height of 86 degrees; but we found it very distressing to pull against the heavy breezes that swept up the valley, and bent the reeds so as almost to make them kiss the stream.

We communicated on the 6th and 7th with several large tribes of natives, whose manners were on the whole quiet and inoffensive. They distinctly informed us, that we were fast approaching the sea, and, from what I could understand, we were nearer to it than the coast line of Encounter Bay made us. We had placed sticks to ascertain if there was any rise or fall of tide, but the troubled state of the river prevented our experiments from being satisfactory. By selecting a place, however, that was sheltered from the effects of the wind, we ascertained that there was an apparent rise of about eight inches.

Obliged to take repose.

It blew a heavy gale during the whole of the 7th; and we laboured in vain at the oar. The gusts that swept the bosom of the water, and the swell they caused, turned the boat from her course, and prevented us from making an inch of way. The men were quite exhausted, and, as they had conducted themselves so well, and had been so patient, I felt myself obliged to grant them every indulgence consistent with our safety. However precarious our situation, it would have been vain, with our exhausted strength, to have contended against the elements. We, therefore, pulled in to the left bank of the river, and pitched our tents on a little rising ground beyond the reeds that lined it.

Chronometer broken.

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I had been suffering very much front tooth-ache for the last three or four days, and this day felt the most violent pain from the wind. I was not, therefore, sorry to get under even the poor shelter our tents afforded. M'Leay, observing that I was in considerable pain, undertook to wind up the chronometer; but, not understanding or knowing the instrument, he unfortunately broke the spring. I shall not forget the anxiety he expressed, and the regret he felt on the occasion; nor do I think M'Leay recovered the shock this unlucky accident gave him for two or three days, or until the novelty of other scenes drove it from his recollection.

We landed close to the haunt of a small tribe of natives, who came to us with the most perfect confidence, and assisted the men in their occupations. They were cleaner and more healthy than any tribe we had seen; and were extremely cheerful, although reserved in some respects. As a mark of more than usual cleanliness, the women had mats of oval shape, upon which they sat, made, apparently, of rushes. There was a young girl among them of a most cheerful disposition. She was about eighteen, was well made, and really pretty. This girl was married to an elderly man who had broken his leg, which having united in a bent shape, the limb was almost useless. I really believe the girl thought we could cure her husband, from her importunate manner to us. I regretted that I could do nothing for the man, but to show that I was not inattentive to her entreaties, I gave him a pair of trousers, and desired Fraser to put them upon him; but the poor fellow cut so awkward an appearance in them, that his wife became quite distressed, and Fraser was obliged speedily to disencumber him from them again.

We could not gain any satisfactory information, as to the termination of the river, from these people. It was evident that some change was at hand; but what it was we could not ascertain.

Appearance of some approaching change.

On the morning of the 9th, we left our fair friend and her lame husband, and proceeded down the river. The wind had moderated, although it still blew fresh. We ascended every height as we went along, but could not see any new feature in the country. Our view to the eastward was very confined; to the westward the interior was low and dark, and was backed in the distance by lofty ranges, parallel to which we had been running for some days. The right bank of the valley was beautifully undulated, but the left was bleak and bare. The valley had a breadth of from three to four miles, and the flats were more extensive under the former than under the latter. They were scarcely two feet above the level of the water, and were densely covered with reeds. As there was no mark upon the reeds to indicate the height to which the floods rose, I cannot think that these flats are ever wholly laid under water; if they are, it cannot be to any depth: at all events a few

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small drains would effectually prevent inundation. The soil upon the hills continued to be much mixed with sand, and the prevailing trees were cypress and box. Among the minor shrubs and grass, many common to the east coasts were noticed; and although the bold cliffs had ceased, the basis of the country still continued of the fossil formation. At a turn of the stream hereabouts, however, a solitary rock of coarse red granite rose above the waters, and formed an island in its centre; but only in this one place was it visible. The rock was composed principally of quartz and feldspar.

A little below it, we found a large tribe anxiously awaiting our arrival. They crowded to the margin of the river with great eagerness, and evinced more surprise at our appearance than any tribe we had seen during the journey; but we left them very soon, notwithstanding that they importuned us much to stay.

After pulling a mile or two, we found a clear horizon before us to the south. The hills still continued upon our left, but we could not see any elevation over the expanse of reeds to our right. The river inclined to the left, and swept the base of the hills that still continued on that side. I consequently landed once more to survey the country.

Termination of the Murray in A large lake.

I still retained a strong impression on my mind that some change was at hand, and on this occasion, I was not disappointed; but the view was one for which I was not altogether prepared. We had, at length, arrived at the termination of the Murray. Immediately below me was a beautiful lake, which appeared to be a fitting reservoir for the noble stream that had led us to it; and which was now ruffled by the breeze that swept over it. The ranges were more distinctly visible, stretching from south to north, and were certainly distant forty miles. They had a regular unbroken outline; declining gradually to the south, but terminating abruptly at a lofty mountain northerly. I had no doubt on my mind of this being the Mount Lofty of Captain Flinders; or that the range was that immediately to the eastward of St. Vincent's Gulf—Since the accident to the chronometer, we had not made any westing, so that we knew our position as nearly as possible. Between us and the ranges a beautiful promontory shot into the lake, being a continuation of the right bank of the Murray. Over this promontory the waters stretched to the base of the ranges, and formed an extensive bay. To the N.W. the country was exceedingly low, but distant peaks were just visible over it. To the S.W. a bold headland showed itself; beyond which, to the westward, there was a clear and open sea visible, through a strait formed by this headland and a point projecting from the opposite shore. To the E. and S.E. the country was low, excepting the left shore of the lake, which was backed by some minor elevations, crowned with cypresses. Even while gazing on this

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fine scene, I could not but regret that the Murray had thus terminated; for I immediately foresaw that, in all probability, we should be disappointed in finding any practicable communication between the lake and the ocean, as it was evident that the former was not much influenced by tides. The wind had again increased; it still blew fresh from the S.W. and a heavy sea was rolling direct into the mouth of the river. I hoped, notwithstanding, that we should have been enabled to make sail, for which reason we entered the lake about 2 p.m. The natives had kindled a large fire on a distant point between us and the further headland, and to gain this point our efforts were now directed. The waves were, however, too strong, and we were obliged to make for the eastern shore, until such time as the weather should moderate. We pitched our tents on a low track of land that stretched away seemingly for many miles directly behind us to the eastward. It was of the richest soil, being a black vegetable deposit, and although now high above the influence, the lake had, it was evident, once formed a part of its bed. The appearance of the country altogether encouraged M'Leay and myself to walk out, in order to examine it from some hills a little to the S.E. of the camp. From them we observed that the flat extended over about fifty miles, and was bounded by the elevations that continued easterly from the left bank of the Murray to the north, and by a line of rising-ground to the south. The whole was lightly wooded, and covered with grass. The season must have been unusually dry, judging from the general appearance of the vegetation, and from the circumstance of the lagoons in the interior being wholly exhausted.

Thirty-three days had now passed over our heads since we left the depot upon the Morumbidgee, twenty-six of which had been passed upon the Murray. We had, at length, arrived at the grand reservoir of those waters whose course and fate had previously been involved in such obscurity. It remained for us to ascertain whether the extensive sheet of water upon whose bosom we had embarked, had any practicable communication with the ocean, and whether the country in the neighbourhood of the coast corresponded with that immediately behind our camp, or kept up its sandy and sterile character to the very verge of the sea. As I have already said, my hopes on the first of these points were considerably damped, but I could not help anticipating a favourable change in the latter, since its features had so entirely changed.

Detained by the wind.

The greatest difficulty against which we had at present to contend was the wind; and I dreaded the exertion it would call for, to make head against it; for the men were so much reduced that I felt convinced they were inadequate to any violent or prolonged effort. It still blew fresh at 8 p.m., but at that time it began to moderate. It may be imagined that I listened to its subdued gusts with extreme anxiety. It did not wholly abate until after 2 a.m., when it gradually declined, and about 3 a light breeze sprung up from the N. E.

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We had again placed sticks to ascertain with more precision the rise of tide, and found it to be the same as in the river. In the stillness of the night too we thought we heard the roaring of the sea, but I was myself uncertain upon the point, as the wind might have caused the sound.

From the top of the hill from which we had obtained our first view of the lake, I observed the waves breaking upon the distant headland, and enveloping the cliff in spray; so that, independent of the clearness of the horizon beyond it, I was further led to conclude that there existed a great expanse of water to the S.W.; and, as that had been the direction taken by the river, I thought it probable that by steering at once to the S.W. down the lake, I should hit the outlet. I, consequently, resolved to gain the southern extremity of the lake, as that at which it was natural to expect a communication with the ocean would be found.

Geological formation.

At 4 we had a moderate breeze, and it promised to strengthen; we lost no time therefore in embarking, and with a flowing sheet stretched over to the W.S.W., and ran along the promontory formed by the right bank of the Murray. We passed close under its extreme point at nine. The hills had gradually declined, and we found the point to be a flat, elevated about thirty feet above the lake. It was separated from the promontory by a small channel that was choked up with reeds, so that it is more than probable that the point is insulated at certain periods; whilst in its stratification it resembled the first cliffs I have described that were passed below the Darling. It is a remarkable fact in the geology of the Murray, that such should be the case; and that the formation at each extremity of the great bank or bed of fossils should be the same. Thus far, the waters of the lake had continued sweet; but on filling a can when we were abreast of this point, it was found that they were quite unpalatable, to say the least of them. The transition from fresh to salt water was almost immediate, and it was fortunate we made the discovery in sufficient time to prevent our losing ground. But, as it was, we filled our casks, and stood on, without for a moment altering our course.

Passage across the lake—its shallowness.

It is difficult to give a just description of our passage across the lake. The boisterous weather we had had seemed to have blown over. A cool and refreshing breeze was carrying us on at between four and five knots an hour, and the heavens above us were without a cloud. It almost appeared as if nature had resisted us in order to try our perseverance, and that she had yielded in pity to our efforts. The men, relieved for a time from the oar, stretched themselves at their length in the boat, and commented on the scenery around them, or ventured their opinions as to that which was before them. Up to this moment their conduct had been most exemplary; not a murmur had escaped from them, and they filled the water-casks with the utmost cheerfulness, even whilst

tasting the disagreeable beverage they would most probably have to subsist on for the next three or four days.

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As soon as we had well opened the point, we had a full view of the splendid bay that, commencing at the western most of the central points, swept in a beautiful curve under the ranges. No land was visible to the W.N.W. or to the S.S.W.: in both these quarters the lake was as open as the ocean. It appeared, therefore, that the land intermediate was an island. To the north the country was extremely low, and as we increased our distance from it we lost sight of it altogether. At noon we were nearly abreast of the eastern headland, or in the centre of the strait to which I have alluded. At this time there was an open sea from W.N.W. to N. by E. A meridian altitude gave our latitude 35 degrees 25 minutes. The land to our left was bold and precipitous; that to the right was low and wooded; and there was evidently a considerable space between the shores of the lake and the base of the ranges. The country to the eastward was hidden from us by the line of cliffs, beyond which from E.S.E. to W.S.W. there was an open sea. We had kept the lead going from the first, and I was surprised at the extreme shallowness of the lake in every part, as we never had six feet upon the line. Its bottom was one of black mud, and weeds of enormous length were floating on its surface, detached by the late gales, and which, from the shallowness of the lake, got constantly entangled with our rudder.

We tried to land on the eastern point, but found the water too shallow, and were obliged to try the western shore. In passing close under the head, we observed several natives upon it, who kindled a large fire as soon as they saw they were noticed, which was answered from every point; for, in less than ten minutes afterwards, we counted no fewer than fourteen different fires, the greater number of which were on the side of the ranges.

Shores of the lake.

As we were standing across from one shore to the other, our attention was drawn to a most singular object. It started suddenly up, as above the waters to the south, and strikingly resembled an isolated castle. Behind it, a dense column of smoke rose into the sky, and the effect was most remarkable. On a nearer approach, the phantom disappeared and a clear and open sea again presented itself to our view. The fact was, that the refractive power upon the coast had elevated the sand-hillocks above their true position, since we satisfactorily ascertained that they alone separated the lake from the ocean, and that they alone could have produced the semblance we noticed. It is a singular fact, that this very hillock was the one which Capt. Barker ascended whilst carrying on the survey of the south coast, and immediately previous to his tragical death.

It was not without difficulty that we succeeded in landing on the western shore; but we did, at length, succeed, and prepared our dinners. The shore was low, but above the reach of all floods; the soil was rich, and superficially sandy. It was covered with high grasses, and abounded in kangaroos; within the space of a few yards we found five or

six, but they were immediately lost to us and to the dogs in the luxuriance of the vegetation amidst which they were feeding.

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As soon as we had finished our meal, we once more embarked, and stood along the shore to the S.W., but the lake was so shoal, that I was every moment apprehensive we should ground. I ran across, therefore, to the south, towards a low flat that had just appeared above the line of the horizon, in hope that, in sounding, we should have found the channel, but there either was none, or else it was so narrow that we passed over it between the heavens of the lead. At this time, the western shore was quite distinct, and the scenery was beautiful.

The flat we were approaching was a mud-flat, and, from its appearance, the tide was certainly at the ebb. We observed some cradles, or wicker frames, placed far below high water-mark, that were each guarded by two natives, who threatened us violently as we approached. In running along the land, the stench from them plainly indicated what they were which these poor creatures were so anxiously watching.

We steered a S.W. course, towards some low and wooded hills, passing a rocky island, and found that we had struck the mouth of a channel running to the W.S.W. It was about half-a-mile wide, was bounded to the right by some open flat ground, and to the left by a line of hills of about sixty or seventy feet in elevation, partly open and partly covered with beefwood.

Warlike demeanour of the natives.

Upon the first of these hills, we observed a large body of natives, who set up the most terrific yells as we approached. They were fully equipped for battle and, as we neared the shore, came down to meet us with the most violent threats. I wished much to communicate with them, and, not without hopes of quieting them, stood right in with the intention of landing. I observed, however, that if I did so, I should have to protect myself. I hauled a little off, and endeavoured, by holding up a branch and a tomahawk, to gain their confidence, but they were not to be won over by my show of pacification. An elderly man walked close to the water's edge unarmed, and, evidently, directed the others. He was followed by seven or eight of the most daring, who crept into the reeds, with their spears shipped to throw at us. I, therefore, took up my gun to return their salute. It then appeared that they were perfectly aware of the weapon I carried, for the moment they saw it, they dashed out of their hiding place and retreated to the main body; but the old man, after saying something to them, walked steadily on, and I, on my part, laid my firelock down again.

Lovely evening.

It was now near sunset; and one of the most lovely evenings I had ever seen. The sun's radiance was yet upon the mountains, but all lower objects were in shade. The banks of the channel, with the trees and the rocks, were reflected in the tranquil waters, whose surface was unruffled save by the thousands of wild fowl that rose before us, and

made a noise as of a multitude clapping hands, in their clumsy efforts to rise from the waters. Not one of them allowed us to get within shot.

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We proceeded about a mile below the hill on which the natives were posted; some few still following us with violent threats. We landed, however, on a flat, bounded all round by the continuation of the hills. It was an admirable position, for, in the centre of it, we could not be taken by surprise, and, on the other hand, we gave the natives an opportunity of communicating with us if they would. The full moon rose as we were forming the camp, and, notwithstanding our vicinity to so noisy a host, the silence of death was around us, or the stillness of the night was only broken by the roar of the ocean, now too near to be mistaken for wind, or by the silvery and melancholy note of the black swans as they passed over us, to seek for food, no doubt, among the slimy weeds at the head of the lake. We had been quite delighted with the beauty of the channel, which was rather more than half-a-mile in width. Numberless mounds, that seemed to invite civilised man to erect his dwelling upon them, presented themselves to our view. The country round them was open, yet ornamentally wooded, and rocks and trees hung or drooped over the waters.

Extent of the lake.

We had in one day gained a position I once feared it would have cost us infinite labour to have measured. Indeed, had we been obliged to pull across the lake, unless during a calm, I am convinced the men would have been wholly exhausted. We had to thank a kind Providence that such was not the case, since it had extended its mercy to us at so critical a moment. We had indeed need of all the little strength we had remaining, and could ill have thrown it away on such an effort as this would have required. I calculated that we could not have run less than forty-five miles during the day, a distance that, together with the eight miles we had advanced the evening previously, would give the length of the lake at fifty-three miles.

We had approached to within twelve miles of the ranges, but had not gained their southern extremity. From the camp, Mount Barker bore nearly north. The ranges appeared to run north and south to our position, and then to bend away to the S.S.W., gradually declining to that point, which I doubted not terminated in Cape Jervis. The natives kept aloof during the night, nor did the dogs by a single growl intimate that any had ventured to approach us. The sound of the surf came gratefully to our ears, for it told us we were near the goal for which we had so anxiously pushed, and we all of us promised ourselves a view of the boundless ocean on the morrow.

Channel to the sea—its shallowness.

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As the morning dawned, we saw that the natives had thrown an out-post of sixteen men across the channel, who were watching our motions; but none showed themselves on the hills behind us, or on any part of the south shore. We embarked as soon as we had breakfasted, A fresh breeze was blowing from the N.E. which took us rapidly down the channel, and our prospects appeared to be as cheering as the day, for just as we were about to push from the shore, a seal rose close to the boat, which we all regarded as a favourable omen. We were, however, shortly stopped by shoals; it was in vain that we beat across the channel from one side to the other; it was a continued shoal, and the deepest water appeared to be under the left bank. The tide, however, had fallen, and exposed broad flats, over which it was hopeless, under existing circumstances, to haul the boat. We again landed on the south side of the channel, patiently to await the high water.

M'Leay, myself, and Fraser, ascended the hills, and went to the opposite side to ascertain the course of the channel, for immediately above us it turned south round the hills. We there found that we were on a narrow tongue of land. The channel was immediately below us, and continued to the E.S.E. as far as we could trace it. The hills we were upon, were the sandy hills that always bound a coast that is low, and were covered with banksias, casuarina and the grass-tree.

To the south of the channel there was a flat, backed by a range of sand-hummocks, that were covered with low shrubs; and beyond them the sea was distinctly visible. We could not have been more than two and a half miles from the beach where we stood.

Notwithstanding the sandy nature of the soil, the fossil formation again showed itself, not only on these hills, but also on the rocks that were in the channel.

A little before high water we again embarked. A seal had been observed playing about, and we augured well from such an omen. The blacks had been watching us from the opposite shore, and as soon as we moved, rose to keep abreast of us. With all our efforts we could not avoid the shoals. We walked up to our knees in mud and water, to find the least variation in the depth of the water so as to facilitate our exertions, but it was to no purpose. We were ultimately obliged to drag the boat over the flats; there were some of them a quarter of a mile in breadth, knee-deep in mud; but at length got her into deep water again. The turn of the channel was now before us, and we had a good run for about four or five miles. We had completed the bend, and the channel now stretched to the E.S.E. At about nine miles from us there was a bright sand-hill visible, near which the channel seemed to turn again to the south; and I doubted not that it terminated there. It was to no purpose, however, that we tried to gain it. Shoals again closed in upon us on every side. We dragged the boat over several, and at last got amongst quicksands. I, therefore, directed our efforts to hauling the boat over to the south side of the channel, as that on which we could most satisfactorily ascertain our position. After great labour we succeeded, and, as evening had closed in, lost no time in pitching the tents.



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Beach of encounter bay.

While the men were thus employed, I took Fraser with me, and, accompanied by M'Leay, crossed the sand-hummocks behind us, and descended to the sea-shore. I found that we had struck the south coast deep in the bight of Encounter Bay. We had no time for examination, but returned immediately to the camp, as I intended to give the men an opportunity to go to the beach. They accordingly went and bathed, and returned not only highly delighted at this little act of good nature on my part, but loaded with cockles, a bed of which they had managed to find among the sand. Clayton had tied one end of his shirt up, and brought a bag full, and amused himself with boiling cockles all night long.

If I had previously any hopes of being enabled ultimately to push the boat over the flats that were before us, a view of the channel at low water, convinced me of the impracticability of any further attempt. The water was so low that every shoal was exposed, and many stretched directly from one side of the channel to the other; and, but for the treacherous nature of the sand-banks, it would not have been difficult to have walked over dry footed to the opposite side of it. The channel stretched away to the E.S.E., to a distance of seven or eight miles, when it appeared to turn south under a small sand-hill, upon which the rays of the sun fell, as it was sinking behind us.

Curious effect of refraction.

There was an innumerable flock of wild-fowl arranged in rows along the sides of the pools left by the tide, and we were again amused by the singular effect of the refraction upon them, and the grotesque and distorted forms they exhibited. Swans, pelicans, ducks, and geese, were mingled together, and, according to their distance from us, presented different appearances. Some were exceedingly tall and thin, others were unnaturally broad. Some appeared reversed, or as if they were standing on their heads, and the slightest motion, particularly the flapping of their wings, produced a most ridiculous effect. No doubt, the situation and the state of the atmosphere were favourable to the effect I have described. The day had been fine, the evening was beautiful,—but it was the rarefaction of the air immediately playing on the ground, and not the haze at sunset that caused what I have noticed. It is distinct from mirage, although it is difficult to point out the difference. The one, however, distorts, the other conceals objects, and gives them a false distance. The one is clear, the other is cloudy. The one raises objects above their true position, the other does not. The one plays about, the other is steady; but I cannot hope to give a proper idea either of mirage or refraction so satisfactorily as I could wish. Many travellers have dwelt upon their effects, particularly upon those of the former, but few have attempted to account for them.



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Our situation was one of peculiar excitement and interest. To our right the thunder of the heavy surf, that almost shook the ground beneath us, broke with increasing roar upon our ears; to our left the voice of the natives echoed through the brush, and the size of their fires at the extremity of the channel, seemed to indicate the alarm our appearance had occasioned.

Critical situation of the party.

While the men were enjoying their cockles, a large kettle of which they had boiled, M'Leay and I were anxiously employed in examining the state of our provisions, and in ascertaining what still remained. Flour and tea were the only articles we had left, so that the task was not a difficult one. It appeared that we had not sufficient of either to last us to Pondebadgery, at which place we expected to find supplies; and, taking every thing into consideration, our circumstances were really critical.

The first view of Encounter Bay had convinced me that no vessel would ever venture into it at a season when the S.W. winds prevailed. It was impossible that we could remain upon the coast in expectation of the relief that I doubted not had been hurried off for us; since disappointment would have sealed our fate at once. In the deep bight in which we were, I could not hope that any vessel would approach sufficiently near to be seen by us. Our only chance of attracting notice would have been by crossing the Ranges to the Gulf St. Vincent, but the men had not strength to walk, and I hesitated to divide my party in the presence of a determined and numerous enemy, who closely watched our motions. Setting aside the generous feelings that had prompted M'Leay to participate in every danger with me, and who I am persuaded would have deeply felt a separation, my anxiety not only on his account, but on account of the men I might leave in charge of the boat, made me averse to this measure; the chance of any misfortune to them involving in it the destruction of our boat and the loss of our provisions. My anxiety of mind would have rendered me unfit for exertion; yet so desirous was I of examining the ranges and the country at their base, that I should, had our passage to the salt water been uninterrupted, have determined on coasting it homewards, or of steering for Launceston; and most assuredly, with my present experience, I would rather incur the hazards of so desperate a step, than contend against all the evils that beset us on our homeward journey. And the reader may rest assured, I was as much without hopes of our eventual safety, as I was astonished, at the close of our labours, to find that they had terminated so happily.

Inspection of the channel from the lake to the ocean.

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Further exertion on the part of the men being out of the question, I determined to remain no longer on the coast than to enable me to trace the channel to its actual junction with the sea, and to ascertain the features of the coast at that important point. I was reluctant to exhaust the strength of the men in dragging the boat over the numberless flats that were before us, and made up my mind to walk along the shore until I should gain the outlet. I at length arranged that M'Leay, I, and Fraser, should start on this excursion, at the earliest dawn, leaving Harris and Hopkinson in charge of the camp; for as we were to go towards the position of the natives, I thought it improbable they would attack the camp without my being instantly aware of it.

We had, as I have said, intended starting at the earliest dawn, but the night was so clear and refreshing, and the moon so bright that we determined to avail ourselves of both, and accordingly left the tents at 3 a.m. I directed Harris to strike them at 8, and to have every thing in readiness for our departure at that hour. We then commenced our excursion, and I led my companions rapidly along the shore of Encounter Bay, after crossing the sand-hills about a mile below the camp. After a hasty and distressing walk of about seven miles, we found that the sand-hills terminated, and a low beach spread before us. The day was just breaking, and at the distance of a mile from us we saw the sand-hill I have already had occasion to notice, and at about a quarter of a mile from its base, we were checked by the channel; which, as I rightly conjectured, being stopped in its easterly course by some rising ground, the tongue of land on which the blacks were posted, suddenly turns south, and, striking this sand-hill, immediately enters the sea; and we noticed, in the bight under the rising ground, that the natives had lit a chain of small fires. This was, most probably, a detached party watching our movements, as they could, from where they were posted, see our camp.

At the time we arrived at the end of the channel, the tide had turned, and was again setting in. The entrance appeared to me to be somewhat less than a quarter of a mile in breadth. Under the sand-hill on the off side, the water is deep and the current strong. No doubt, at high tide, a part of the low beach we had traversed is covered. The mouth of the channel is defended by a double line of breakers, amidst which, it would be dangerous to venture, except in calm and summer weather; and the line of foam is unbroken from one end of Encounter Bay to the other. Thus were our fears of the impracticability and inutility of the channel of communication between the lake and the ocean confirmed.

Difficulties and dangers of the return.

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I would fain have lingered on my way, to examine, as far as circumstances would permit, the beautiful country between the lake and the ranges; and it was with heart-felt sorrow that I yielded to necessity. My men were indeed very weak from poverty of diet and from great bodily fatigue. Hopkinson, Mulholland, and Macnamee were miserably reduced. The two former, especially, had exerted themselves beyond their strength, and although I am confident they would have obeyed my orders to the last, I did not feel myself justified, considering the gigantic task we had before us, to impose additional labour upon them.

It will be borne in mind that our difficulties were just about to commence, when those of most other travellers have ceased; and that instead of being assisted by the stream whose course we had followed, we had now to contend against the united waters of the eastern ranges, with diminished strength, and, in some measure, with disappointed feelings.

Under the most favourable circumstances, it was improbable that the men would be enabled to pull for many days longer in succession; since they had not rested upon their oars for a single day, if I except our passage across the lake, from the moment when we started from the depot; nor was it possible for me to buoy them up with the hope even of a momentary cessation from labour. We had calculated the time to which our supply of provisions would last under the most favourable circumstances, and it was only in the event of our pulling up against the current, day after day, the same distance we had compassed with the current in our favour, that we could hope they would last us as long as we continued in the Murray. But in the event of floods, or any unforeseen delay, it was impossible to calculate at what moment we might be driven to extremity.

Independent of these casualties, there were other circumstances of peril to be taken into consideration. As I have already observed, I foresaw great danger in again running through the natives. I had every reason to believe that many of the tribes with which we had communicated on apparently friendly terms, regretted having allowed us to pass unmolested; nor was I at all satisfied as to the treatment we might receive from them, when unattended by the envoys who had once or twice controlled their fury. Our best security, therefore, against the attacks of the natives was celerity of movement; and the men themselves seemed to be perfectly aware of the consequences of delay. Our provisions, moreover, being calculated to last to a certain point only, the slightest accident, the staving-in of the boat, or the rise of the river, would inevitably be attended with calamity. To think of reducing our rations of only three quarters of a pound of flour per diem, was out of the question, or to hope that the men, with less sustenance than that, would perform the work necessary to ensure their safety, would have been unreasonable. It was better that our provisions should hold out to a place from which we might abandon the boat with some prospect of reaching by an effort a stock station, or the plain on which Robert Harris was to await our return, than that they should be consumed before the half of our homeward journey should be accomplished. Delay, therefore, under our circumstances, would have been imprudent and unjustifiable.

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Patience of the men—re-enter the Murray. On the other hand, it was sufficiently evident to me, that the men were too much exhausted to perform the task that was before them without assistance, and that it would be necessary both for M'Leay and myself, to take our share of labour at the oars. The cheerfulness and satisfaction that my young friend evinced at the opportunity that was thus afforded him of making himself useful, and of relieving those under him from some portion of their toil, at the same time that they increased my sincere esteem for him, were nothing more than what I expected from one who had endeavoured by every means in his power to contribute to the success of that enterprise upon which he had embarked. But although I have said thus much of the exhausted condition of the men,—and ere these pages are concluded my readers will feel satisfied as to the truth of my statement—I would by no means be understood to say that they flagged for a moment, or that a single murmur escaped them. No reluctance was visible, no complaint was heard, but there was that in their aspect and appearance which they could not hide, and which I could not mistake. My object in dwelling so long upon this subject has been to point out our situation and our feelings when we re-entered the Murray. The only circumstance that appeared to be in our favour was the prevalence of the south-west wind, by which I hoped we should be assisted in running up the first broad reaches of that river. I could not but acknowledge the bounty of that Providence, which had favoured us in our passage across the lake, and I was led to hope that its merciful superintendence would protect us from evil, and would silently direct us where human foresight and prudence failed. We re-entered the river on the 13th under as fair prospects as we would have desired. The gale which had blown with such violence in the morning gradually abated, and a steady breeze enabled us to pass our first encampment by availing ourselves of it as long as day light continued. Both the valley and the river showed to advantage as we approached them, and the scenery upon our left (the proper right bank of the Murray) was really beautiful.

CHAPTER VII.

Valley of the Murray—Its character and capabilities—Laborious progress up the river—Accident to the boat—Perilous collision with the natives —Turbid current of the Rufus—Passage of the Rapids—Assisted by the natives—Dangerous intercourse with them—Re-enter the Morumbidgee— Verdant condition of its banks—Nocturnal encounter with the natives— Interesting manifestation of feeling in one family—Reach the spot where the party had embarked on the river—Men begin to fail entirely— Determine to send two men forward for relief—Their return—Excursion on horseback—Reach Pondebadgery Plain, and meet the supplies from the colony—Cannibalism of the natives—Return to Sydney—Concluding remarks.

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Valley of the Murray.

The valley of the Murray, at its entrance, cannot be less than four miles in breadth. The river does not occupy the centre but inclines to either side, according to its windings, and thus the flats are of greater or less extent, according to the distance of the river from the base of the hills. It is to be remarked, that the bottom of the valley is extremely level, and extensively covered with reeds. From the latter circumstance, one would be led to infer that these flats are subject to overflow, and no doubt can exist as to the fact of their being, at least partially, if not wholly, under water at times. A country in a state of nature is, however, so different from one in a state of cultivation, that it is hazardous to give an opinion as to its practical availableness, if I may use such a term. I should, undoubtedly, say the marshes of the Macquarie were frequently covered with water, and that they were wholly unfit for any one purpose whatever. It is evident from the marks of the reeds upon the banks, that the flood covers them occasionally to the depth of three feet, and the reeds are so densely embodied and so close to the river side that the natives cannot walk along it. The reeds are the broad flag-reed (*arundo phragmatis*), and grow on a stiff earthy loam, without any accompanying vegetation; indeed, they form so solid a mass that the sun cannot penetrate to the ground to nourish vegetation. On the other hand, the valley of the Murray, though covered with reeds in most places, is not so in all. There is no mark upon the reeds by which to judge as to the height of inundation, neither are they of the same kind as those which cover the marshes of the Macquarie. They are the species of round reed of which the South-sea islanders make their arrows, and stand sufficiently open, not only to allow of a passage through, but for the abundant growth of grass among them. Still, I have no doubt that parts of the valley are subject to flood; but, as I have already remarked, I do not know whether these parts are either deeply or frequently covered. Rain must fall simultaneously in the S.E. angle of the island in the inter-tropical regions, and at the heads of all the tributaries of the main stream, ere its effects can be felt in the lower parts of the Murray. If the valley of the Murray is not subject to flood, it has only recently gained a height above the influence of the river, and still retains all the character of flooded land. In either case, however, it contains land that is of the very richest kind—soil that is the pure accumulation of vegetable matter, and is as black as ebony. If its hundreds of thousands of acres were practically available, I should not hesitate to pronounce it one of the richest spots of equal extent on earth, and highly favoured in other respects. How far it is available remains to be proved; and an opinion upon either side would be hazardous, although

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that of its liability to flood would, most probably, be nearest to truth. It is, however, certain that any part of the valley would require much labour before it could be brought under cultivation, and that even its most available spots would require almost as much trouble to clear them as the forest tract, for nothing is more difficult to destroy than reeds. Breaking the sod would, naturally, raise the level of the ground, and lateral drains would, most probably, carry off all floods, but then the latter, at least, is the operation of an advanced stage of husbandry only. I would, however, observe that there are many parts of the valley decidedly above the reach of flood. I have, in the above observations, been particularly alluding to the lowest and broadest portions of it. I trust I shall be understood as not wishing to over-rate this discovery on the one hand, or on the other, to include its whole extent in one sweeping clause of condemnation.

On the 14th, the wind still continued to blow fresh from the N.W. It moderated at noon, and assisted us beyond measure. We passed our first encampment, but did not see any natives.

Cordiality of the natives.

On the 15th, the wind was variable at daylight, and a dense fog was on the river. As the sun rose, it was dissipated and a light breeze sprung up from W.S.W. We ran up the stream with a free sheet for six hours, when we stopped for a short time to get the kettle boiled. Four natives joined us, but with the exception of the lowest tribe upon the right bank, we had not seen any number. We were extremely liberal to this tribe, in consequence of the satisfaction they evinced at our return. We had alarmed them much on our passage down the river by firing at a snake that was swimming across it. We, at first, attempted to kill it with the boat-hook, but the animal dived at our approach, and appeared again at a considerable distance. Another such dive would have ensured his escape, but a shot effectually checked him, and as the natives evinced considerable alarm, we held him up, to show them the object of our proceedings. On our return, they seemed to have forgotten their fright, and received us with every demonstration of joy. The different receptions we met with from different tribes are difficult to be accounted for.

The country appeared to rise before us, and looked more hilly to the N.W. than I had supposed it to be. Several fine valleys branched off from the main one to the westward, and, however barren the heights that confined them were, I am inclined to think, that the distant interior is fertile. The marks of kangaroos were numerous, and the absence of the natives would indicate that they have other and better means of subsisting in the back country than what the river affords.

In the evening, we again ran on for two hours and a half, and reached the first of the cliffs.

On the 16th, we were again fortunate in the wind, and pressed up the river as long as day-light continued. At the termination of our journey, we found ourselves a day's journey in advance. This inspirited the men, and they began to forget the labours they had gone through, as well as those that were before them.

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On the 17th, we again commenced pulling, the wind being at north, and contrary. It did not, however, remain in that quarter long, but backed at noon to the S.W., so that we were enabled to make a good day's journey, and rather gained than lost ground.

Remarkable cliff—geological remarks.

Having left the undulating hills, at the mouth of the valley behind us, we passed cliff after cliff of fossil formation: they had a uniform appearance as to the substance of which they were composed, and varied but little in colour. Having already examined them, we thought it unnecessary to give them any further special attention, since it was improbable we should find anything new. In turning an angle of the river, however, a broad reach stretched away before us. An alluvial flat extended to our left, and a high line of cliffs, that differed in no visible respect from those we had already passed, rose over the opposite side of the river. The cliffs faced the W.N.W., and as the sun declined, his beams struck full upon them. As we shot past, we were quite dazzled with the burst of light that flashed upon us, and which gave to the whole face of the cliff the appearance of a splendid mirror. The effect was of course momentary; for as soon as we had passed the angle of refraction, there was nothing unusual in its appearance. On a nearer approach, however, it appeared again as if studded with stars. We had already determined on examining it more closely, and this second peculiarity still further excited our curiosity. On landing, we found the whole cliff to be a mass of selenite, in which the various shells already noticed were plentifully embedded, as in ice. The features of the cliff differed from any we had previously remarked. Large masses, or blocks of square or oblong shape, had fallen to its base, and its surface was hard, whereas the face of the majority of the other cliffs was soft from the effect of the atmosphere; and the rock was entirely free from every other substance, excepting the shells of which it was composed. We of course collected some good specimens, although they added very considerably to the weight of our cargo.

The morning of the 18th was calm and cloudless. The wind, of which there was but little, came from the north, and was as usual warm. We availed ourselves of a favourable spot to haul our boat on shore under one of the cliffs upon the proper left of the river, and cleaned her well both inside and out.

Laborious ascent of the boat.

The breezes that had so much assisted us from the lake upwards, had now lost their influence, or failed to reach to the distance we had gained. Calms succeeded them, and obliged us to labour continually at the oars. We lost ground fast, and it was astonishing to remark how soon the men's spirits drooped again under their first efforts. They fancied the boat pulled heavily, and that her bottom

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was foul; but such was not the case. The current was not so strong as when we passed down, since the river had evidently fallen more than a foot, and was so shallow in several places, that we were obliged to haul the boat over them. On these occasions we were necessarily obliged to get out of her into the water, and had afterwards to sit still and to allow the sun to dry our clothes upon us. The unemployed consequently envied those at the oars, as they sat shivering in their dripping clothes. I was aware that it was more from imagination than reality, that the men fancied the boat was unusually heavy, but I hesitated not in humouring them, and rather entered into their ideas than otherwise, and endeavoured to persuade them that she pulled the lighter for the cleaning we gave her.

A tribe of natives joined us, and we had the additional trouble of guarding our stores. They were, however, very quiet, and as we had broken up our casks, on leaving the coast, we were enabled to be liberal in our presents of iron hoop, which they eagerly received. We calculated that we should reach the principal junction in about fifteen days from this place.

Native burial-place.

The natives left us to pursue our solitary journey as soon as the boat was reloaded. Not one of them had the curiosity to follow us, nor did they appear to think it necessary that we should be attended by envoys. We stopped for the night upon the left bank; and close to a burial-ground that differed from any I had ever seen. It must have been used many years, from the number of bones that were found in the bank, but there were no other indications of such a place either by mounds or by marks on the trees. The fact, therefore, is a singular one. I have thought that some battle might have been fought near the place, but I can hardly think one of their battles could have been so destructive.

Impeded by shoals.

We had now only to make the best of our journey, rising at dawn, and pulling to seven and often to nine o'clock. I allowed the men an hour from half-past eleven to half-past twelve, to take their bread and water. This was our only fare, if I except an occasional wild duck; but these birds were extremely difficult to kill, and it cost us so much time, that we seldom endeavoured to procure any. Our dogs had been of no great use, and were now too weak to have run after anything if they had seen either kangaroos or emus; and for the fish, the men loathed them, and were either too indifferent or too much fatigued to set the night-lines. Shoals frequently impeded us as we proceeded up the river, and we passed some rapids that called for our whole strength to stem. A light wind assisted us on two or three of these occasions, and I never failed hoisting the sail at every fitting opportunity. In some parts the river was extremely shallow, and the sand-banks of amazing size; and the annoyance of dragging the boat over these

occasional bars, was very great. We passed several tribes of blacks on the 19th and 20th; but did not stop to communicate with them.

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I believe I have already mentioned that shortly after we first entered the Murray, flocks of a new paroquet passed over our heads, apparently emigrating to the N.W. They always kept too high to be fired at, but on our return, hereabouts, we succeeded in killing one. It made a good addition to our scanty stock of subjects of natural history. It is impossible to conceive how few of the feathered tribe frequent these distant and lonely regions. The common white cockatoo is the most numerous, and there are also a few pigeons; but other birds descend only for water, and are soon again upon the wing. Our botanical specimens were as scanty as our zoological, indeed the expedition may, as regards these two particulars, almost be said to have been unproductive.

Compilation of the chart.

When we came down the river, I thought it advisable to lay its course down as precisely as circumstances would permit: for for this purpose I had a large compass always before me, and a sheet of foolscap paper. As soon as we passed an angle of the river, I took the bearings of the reach before us, and as we proceeded down it, marked off the description of country, and any remarkable feature. The consequence was, that I laid down every bend of the Murray River, from the Morumbidgee downwards. Its creeks, its tributaries, its flats, its valleys, and its cliffs, and, as far as I possibly could do, the nature of the distant interior. This chart was, of course, erroneous in many particulars, since I had to judge the length of the reaches of the river, and the extent of its angles, but I corrected it on the scale of the miles of latitude we made during the day, which brought out an approximate truth at all events. The hurried nature of our journey would not allow me to do more; and it will be remembered that my observations were all siderial, by reason that the sextant would not embrace the sun in his almost vertical position at noon. Admitting, however, the imperfection of this chart, it was of inconceivable value and comfort to us on our return, for, by a reference to it, we discovered our place upon the river, and our distance from our several encampments. And we should often have stopped short of them had not the chart shown us that a few reaches more would bring us to the desired spots. It cheered the men to know where they were, and gave them conversation. To myself it was very satisfactory, as it enabled me to prepare for our meetings with the larger tribes, and to steer clear of obstacles in the more difficult navigation of some parts of the stream.

On the 21st, by dint of great labour we reached our camp of the 2nd February, from which it will be remembered the Murray took up a southerly course, and from which we likewise obtained a first view of the coast ranges. The journey to the sea and back again, had consequently occupied us twenty days. From this point we turned our boat's head homewards; we made it, therefore, a fixed position among the stages into which we divided our journey. Our attention was now directed to the junction of the principal tributary, which we hoped to reach in twelve days, and anticipated a close to our labours on the Murray in eight days more from that stage to the Morumbidgee.

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Current of the Murray.

The current in the Murray from the lake, to within a short distance of this singular turn in it, is weak, since its bed is almost on a level with the lake. The channel, which, at the termination, is somewhat more than the third of a mile across, gradually diminishes in breadth, as the interior is gained, but is nowhere under 300 yards; while its depth averages from eighteen to thirty feet, within a foot of the very bank. The river might, therefore, be navigated by boats of considerable burden, if the lake admitted of the same facility; but I am decidedly of opinion, that the latter is generally shallow, and that it will, in the course of years, be filled up by depositions. It is not, however, an estuary in any sense of the word, since no part of it is exposed at low water, excepting the flats in the channel, and the flat between the lake and the sea.

Accident to the boat.

On the 23rd, we stove the boat in for the first time. I had all along anticipated such an accident, from the difficulty of avoiding obstacles, in consequence of the turbid state of the river. Fortunately the boat struck a rotten log. The piece remained in her side, and prevented her filling, which she must, otherwise, inevitably have done, ere we could have reached the shore. As it was, however, we escaped with a little damage to the lower bags of flour only. She was hauled up on a sand bank, and Clayton repaired her in less than two hours, when we reloaded her and pursued our journey. It was impossible to have been more cautious than we were, for I was satisfied as to the fate that would have overtaken the whole of us in the event of our losing the boat, and was proportionably vigilant.

Molested by the natives.

At half-past five we came to an island, which looked so inviting, and so quiet, that I determined to land and sleep upon it. We consequently, ran the boat into a little recess, or bay, and pitched the tents; and I anticipated a respite from the presence of any natives, as did the men, who were rejoiced at my having taken up so snug a berth. It happened, however, that a little after sunset, a flight of the new paroquets perched in the lofty trees that grew on the island, to roost; when we immediately commenced the work of death, and succeeded in killing eight or ten. The reports of our guns were heard by some natives up the river, and several came over to us. Although I was annoyed at their having discovered our retreat, they were too few to be troublesome. During the night, however, they were joined by fresh numbers, amounting in all to about eighty, and they were so clamorous, that it was impossible to sleep.

Natives become troublesome.

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As the morning broke, Hopkinson came to inform me that it was in vain that the guard endeavoured to prevent them from handling every thing, and from closing in round our camp. I went out, and from what I saw I thought it advisable to double the sentries. M'Leay, who was really tired, being unable to close his eyes amid such a din, got up in ill-humour, and went to see into the cause, and to check it if he could. This, however, was impossible. One man was particularly forward and insolent, at whom M'Leay, rather imprudently, threw a piece of dirt. The savage returned the compliment with as much good will as it had been given, and appeared quite prepared to act on the offensive. At this critical moment my servant came to the tent in which I was washing myself, and stated his fears that we should soon come to blows, as the natives showed every disposition to resist us. On learning what had passed between M'Leay and the savage, I pretended to be equally angry with both, and with some difficulty forced the greater part of the blacks away from the tents. I then directed the men to gather together all the minor articles in the first instance, and then to strike the tents; and, in order to check the natives, I drew a line round the camp, over which I intimated to them they should not pass. Observing, I suppose, that we were on our guard, and that I, whom they well knew to be the chief, was really angry, they crept away one by one, until the island was almost deserted by them. Why they did not attack us, I know not, for they had certainly every disposition to do so, and had their shorter weapons with them, which, in so confined a space as that on which we were, would have been more fatal than their spears.

They left us, however; and a flight of red-crested cockatoos happening to settle on a plain near the river, I crossed in the boat in order to shoot one. The plain was upon the proper left bank of the Murray. The natives had passed over to the right. As the one channel was too shallow for the boat, when we again pursued our journey we were obliged to pull round to the left side of the island. A little above it the river makes a bend to the left, and the angle at this bend was occupied by a large shoal, one point of which rested on the upper part of the island, and the other touched the proper right bank of the river. Thus a narrow channel, (not broader indeed than was necessary for the play of our oars,) alone remained for us to pass up against a strong current. On turning round the lower part of the island, we observed that the natives occupied the whole extent of the shoal, and speckled it over like skirmishers. Many of them had their spears, and their attention was evidently directed to us.—As we neared the shoal, the most forward of them pressed close to the edge of the deep water, so much so that our oars struck their legs. Still this did not induce them to retire. I kept my eye on an elderly man who stood one of the most forward, and who motioned

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to us several times to stop, and at length threw the weapon he carried at the boat. I immediately jumped up and pointed my gun at him to his great apparent alarm. Whether the natives hoped to intimidate us by a show of numbers, or what immediate object they had in view, it is difficult to say; though it was most probably to seize a fitting opportunity to attack us. Seeing, I suppose, that we were not to be checked, they crossed from the shoal to the proper right bank of the river, and disappeared among the reeds that lined it.

Treachery of the natives.

Shortly after this, eight of the women, whom we had not before noticed, came down to the water side, and gave us the most pressing invitation to land. Indeed they played their part uncommonly well, and tried for some time to allure us by the most unequivocal manifestations of love. Hopkinson however who always had his eyes about him, observed the spears of the men among the reeds. They kept abreast of us as we pulled up the stream, and, no doubt, were anticipating our inability to resist the temptations they had thrown in our way. I was really provoked at their barefaced treachery, and should most undoubtedly have attacked them, had they not precipitately retreated on being warned by the women that I was arming my men, which I had only now done upon seeing such strong manifestations of danger. M'Leay set the example of coolness on this occasion; and I had some doubts whether I was justified in allowing the natives to escape with impunity, considering that if they had wounded any one of us the most melancholy and fatal results would have ensued.

We did not see anything more of the blacks during the rest of the day, but the repeated indications of hostility we perceived as we approached the Darling, made me apprehensive as to the reception we should meet from its numerous population; and I was sorry to observe that the men anticipated danger in passing that promising junction.

Having left the sea breezes behind us, the weather had become oppressive; and as the current was stronger, and rapids more numerous, our labour was proportionably increased. We perspired to an astonishing degree, and gave up our oars after our turn at them, with shirts and clothes as wet as if we had been in the water. Indeed Mulholland and Hopkinson, who worked hard, poured a considerable quantity of perspiration from their shoes after their task. The evil of this was that we were always chilled after rowing, and, of course, suffered more than we should otherwise have done.

Re-pass the Lindesay.

On the 25th we passed the last of the cliffs composing the great fossil bed through which the Murray flows, and entered that low country already described as being immediately above it. On a more attentive examination of the distant interior, my



opinion as to its flooded origin was confirmed, more especially in reference to the country to the S.E. On the 30th we passed the mouth of the Lindesay, and from the summit of the sand hills to the north of the Murray overlooked the flat country, through which I conclude it must run, from the line of fires we observed amid the trees, and most probably upon its banks.

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We did not fall in with the natives in such numbers as when we passed down to the coast: still they were in sufficient bodies to be troublesome. It would, however, appear that the tribes do not generally frequent the river. They must have a better country back from it, and most probably linger amongst the lagoons and creeks where food is more abundant. The fact is evident from the want of huts upon the banks of the Murray, and the narrowness of the paths along its margin.

Re-passed the Rufus.

We experienced the most oppressive heat about this time. Calms generally prevailed, and about 3 p.m. the sun's rays fell upon us with intense effect. The waters of the Murray continued extremely muddy, a circumstance we discovered to be owing to the turbid current of the Rufus, which we passed on the 1st of March. It is, really, singular whence this little stream originates. It will be remembered that I concluded it must have been swollen by rains when we first saw it; yet, after an absence of more than three weeks we found it discharging its waters as muddy as ever into the main stream; and that, too, in such quantities as to discolour its waters to the very lake. The reader will have some idea of the force of the current in both, when I assure him that for nearly fifty yards below the mouth of the Rufus, the waters of the Murray preserve their transparency, and the line between them and the turbid waters of its tributary was as distinctly marked as if drawn by a pencil. Indeed, the higher we advanced, the more did we feel the strength of the current, against which we had to pull.

Difficulties at the rapids.

A little below the Lindesay, a rapid occurs. It was with the utmost difficulty that we stemmed it with the four oars upon the boat, and the exertion of our whole strength. We remained, at one time, perfectly stationary, the force we employed and that of the current being equal. We at length ran up the stream obliquely; but it was evident the men were not adequate to such exertion for any length of time. We pulled that day for eleven successive hours, in order to avoid a tribe of natives who followed us. Hopkinson and Fraser fell asleep at their oars, and even the heavy Clayton appeared to labour.

We again occupied our camp under the first remarkable cliffs of the Murray, a description of which has been given in page 128 of this work. [*Geological examination.*] Their summit, as I have already remarked forms a table land of some elevation. From it the distant interior to the S.S.E. appears very depressed; that to the north undulates more. In neither quarter, however, does any bright foliage meet the eye, to tell that a better soil is under it; but a dark and gloomy vegetation occupies both the near and distant ground, in proof that the sandy sterile tracts, succeeding the river deposits, stretch far away without a change.

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A little above our camp of the 28th of January, we fell in with a large tribe of natives, whose anxiety to detain us was remarkable. The wind, however, which, from the time we lost the sea breezes, had hung to the S.E., had changed to the S.W., and we were eagerly availing ourselves of it. It will not be supposed we stopped even for a moment. In truth we pressed on with great success, and did not land to sleep until nine o'clock. As long as the wind blew from the S.W., the days were cool, and the sky overcast even so much so as to threaten rain.

The least circumstance, in our critical situation, naturally raised my apprehensions, and I feared the river would be swollen in the event of any heavy rains in the hilly country; I hoped, however, we should gain the Morumbidgee before such a calamity should happen to us, and it became my object to press for that river without delay.

Obstacles to the navigation—dangerous rapids.

Although we had met with frequent rapids in our progress upwards, they had not been of a serious kind, nor such as would affect the navigation of the river. The first direct obstacle of this kind occurs a little above a small tributary that falls into the Murray from the north, between the Rufus and the cliffs we have alluded to. At this place a reef of coarse grit contracts the channel of the river. No force we could have exerted with the oars would have taken us up this rapid; but we accomplished the task easily by means of a rope which we hauled upon, on the same principle that barges are dragged by horses along the canals.

As we neared the junction of the two main streams, the country, on both sides of the river, became low, and its general appearance confirmed the opinion I have already given as to its flooded origin. The clouds that obscured the sky, and had threatened to burst for some time, at length gave way, and we experienced two or three days of heavy rain. In the midst of it we passed the second stage of our journey, and found the spot lately so crowded with inhabitants totally deserted. A little above it we surprised a small tribe in a temporary shelter; but neither our offers nor presents could prevail on any of them to expose themselves to the torrent that was falling. They sat shivering in their bark huts in evident astonishment at our indifference. We threw them some trifling presents and were glad to proceed unattended by any of them.

Perilous ascent of the rapids.

It will be remembered that in passing down the river, the boat was placed in some danger in descending a rapid before we reached the junction of the Murray with the stream supposed by me to be the Darling. We were now gradually approaching the rapid, nor did I well know how we should surmount such an obstacle. Strength to pull up it we had not, and I feared our ropes would not be long enough to reach to the shore

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over some of the rocks, since it descended in minor declivities to a considerable distance below the principal rapid, in the centre of which the boat had struck. We reached the commencement of these rapids on the 6th, and ascended the first by means of ropes, which were hauled upon by three of the men from the bank; and, as the day was pretty far advanced, we stopped a little above it, that we might attempt the principal rapid before we should be exhausted by previous exertion. It was fortunate that we took such a precaution. The morning of the 7th proved extremely dark, and much rain fell. We commenced our journey in the midst of it, and soon gained the tail of the rapid. Our attempt to pull up it completely failed. The boat, as soon as she entered the ripple, spun round like a toy, and away we went with the stream. As I had anticipated, our ropes were too short; and it only remained for us to get into the water, and haul the boat up by main force. We managed pretty well at first, and drew her alongside a rock to rest a little. We then recommenced our efforts, and had got into the middle of the channel. We were up to our armpits in the water, and only kept our position by means of rocks beside us. The rain was falling, as if we were in a tropical shower, and the force of the current was such, that if we had relaxed for an instant, we should have lost all the ground we had gained. Just at this moment, however, without our being aware of their approach, a large tribe of natives, with their spears, lined the bank, and took us most completely by surprise. At no time during this anxious journey were we ever so completely in their power, or in so defenceless a situation. It rained so hard, that our firelocks would have been of no use, and had they attacked us, we must necessarily have been slaughtered without committing the least execution upon them. Nothing, therefore, remained for us but to continue our exertions. It required only one strong effort to get the boat into still water for a time, but that effort was beyond our strength, and we stood in the stream, powerless and exhausted.

Assisted by the natives.

The natives, in the meanwhile, resting on their spears, watched us with earnest attention. One of them, who was sitting close to the water, at length called to us, and we immediately recognised the deep voice of him to whose singular interference we were indebted for our escape on the 23rd of January. I desired Hopkinson to swim over to him, and to explain that we wanted assistance. This was given without hesitation; and we at length got under the lee of the rock, which I have already described as being in the centre of the river. The natives launched their bark canoes, the only frail means they possess of crossing the rivers with their children. These canoes are of the simplest construction and rudest materials, being formed of an oblong piece of bark, the ends of which are stuffed with clay, so as to render them impervious

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to the water. With several of these they now paddled round us with the greatest care, making their spears, about ten feet in length,(which they use at once as poles and paddles,) bend nearly double in the water. We had still the most difficult part of the rapid to ascend, where the rush of water was the strongest, and where the decline of the bed almost amounted to a fall. Here the blacks could be of no use to us. No man could stem the current, supposing it to have been shallow at the place, but it was on the contrary extremely deep. Remaining myself in the boat, I directed all the men to land, after we had crossed the stream, upon a large rock that formed the left buttress as it were to this sluice, and, fastening the rope to the mast instead of her head, they pulled upon it. The unexpected rapidity with which the boat shot up the passage astonished me, and filled the natives with wonder, who testified their admiration of so dextrous a manoeuvre, by a loud shout.

It will, no doubt, have struck the reader as something very remarkable, that the same influential savage to whom we had already been indebted, should have been present on this occasion, and at a moment when we so much needed his assistance. Having surmounted our difficulties, we took leave of this remarkable man, and pursued our journey up the river.

It may be imagined we did not proceed very far; the fact was, we only pushed forward to get rid of the natives, for, however pacific, they were always troublesome, and we were seldom fitted for a trial of temper after the labours of the day were concluded. The men had various occupations in which, when the natives were present, they were constantly interrupted, and whenever the larger tribes slept near us, the utmost vigilance was necessary on the part of the night-guard, which was regularly mounted as soon as the tents were pitched. We had had little else than our flour to subsist on. Hopkinson and Harris endeavoured to supply M'Leay and myself with a wild fowl occasionally, but for themselves, and the other men, nothing could be procured to render their meal more palatable.

Good conduct of the men.

I have omitted to mention one remarkable trait of the good disposition of all the men while on the coast. Our sugar had held out to that point; but it appeared, when we examined the stores, that six pounds alone remained in the cask. This the men positively refused to touch. They said that, divided, it would benefit nobody; that they hoped M'Leay and I would use it, that it would last us for some time, and that they were better able to submit to privations than we were. The feeling did them infinite credit, and the circumstance is not forgotten by me. The little supply the kindness of our men left to us was, however, soon exhausted, and poor M'Leay preferred pure water to the bitter draught that remained. I have been some times unable to refrain from smiling, as I

watched the distorted countenances of my humble companions while drinking their tea and eating their damper.

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The ducks and swans, seen in such myriads on the lake, seldom appeared on the river, in the first stages of our journey homewards. About the time of which I am writing, however, a few swans occasionally flew over our heads at night, and their silvery note was musically sweet.

From the 10th to the 15th, nothing of moment occurred: we pulled regularly from daylight to dark, not less to avoid the natives than to shorten our journey. Yet, notwithstanding that we moved at an hour when the natives seldom stir, we were rarely without a party of them, who followed us in spite of our efforts to tire them out.

Molested by natives.

On the 15th, we had about 150 at our camp. Many of them were extremely noisy, and the whole of them very restless. They lay down close to the tents, or around our fire. I entertained some suspicion of them, and when they were apparently asleep, I watched them narrowly. Macnamee was walking up and down with his firelock, and every time he turned his back, one of the natives rose gently up and poised his spear at him, and as soon as he thought Macnamee was about to turn, he dropped as quietly into his place. When I say the native got up, I do not mean that he stood up, but that he raised himself sufficiently for the purpose he had in view. His spear would not, therefore, have gone with much force, but I determined it should not quit his hand, for had I observed any actual attempt to throw it, I should unquestionably have shot him dead upon the spot. The whole of the natives were awake, and it surprised me they did not attempt to plunder us. They rose with the earliest dawn, and crowded round the tents without any hesitation. We, consequently, thought it prudent to start as soon as we had breakfasted.

Fraser in danger.

We had all of us got into the boat, when Fraser remembered he had left his powder-horn on shore. In getting out to fetch it, he had to push through the natives. On his return, when his back was towards them, several natives lifted their spears together, and I was so apprehensive they would have transfixed him, that I called out before I seized my gun; on which they lowered their weapons and ran away. The disposition to commit personal violence was evident from these repeated acts of treachery; and we should doubtless have suffered from it on some occasion or other, had we not been constantly on the alert.

We had been drawing nearer the Morumbidgee every day. This was the last tribe we saw on the Murray; and the following afternoon, to our great joy, we quitted it and turned our boat into the gloomy and narrow channel of its tributary. Our feelings were almost as strong when we re-entered it, as they had been when we were launched from it into that river, on whose waters we had continued for upwards of fifty-five days; during which

period, including the sweeps and bends it made, we could not have travelled less than 1500 miles.

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Our provisions were now running very short; we had, however, “broken the neck of our journey,” as the men said, and we looked anxiously to gaining the depot; for we were not without hopes that Robert Harris would have pushed forward to it with his supplies. We were quite puzzled on entering the Morumbidgee, how to navigate its diminutive bends and its encumbered channel. I thought poles would have been more convenient than oars; we therefore stopped at an earlier hour than usual to cut some. Calling to mind the robbery practised on us shortly after we left the depot, my mind became uneasy as to Robert Harris’s safety, since I thought it probable, from the sulky disposition of the natives who had visited us there, that he might have been attacked. Thus, when my apprehensions on our own account had partly ceased, my fears became excited with regard to him and his party.

Re-enter the Morumbidgee.

The country, to a considerable distance from the junction on either side the Morumbidgee, is not subject to inundation. Wherever we landed upon its banks, we found the calistemma in full flower, and in the richest profusion. There was, also, an abundance of grass, where before there had been no signs of vegetation, and those spots which we had condemned as barren were now clothed with a green and luxuriant carpet. So difficult is it to judge of a country on a partial and hurried survey, and so differently does it appear at different periods. I was rejoiced to find that the rains had not swollen the river, for I was apprehensive that heavy falls had taken place in the mountains, and was unprepared for so much good fortune.

Feast on A swan.

The poles we cut were of no great use to us, and we soon laid them aside, and took to our oars. Fortune seemed to favour us exceedingly. The men rallied, and we succeeded in killing a good fat swan, that served as a feast for all. I imagine the absence of mud and weeds of every kind in the Murray, prevents this bird from frequenting its waters.

On the 18th, we found ourselves entering the reedy country, through which we had passed with such doubt and anxiety. Every object elicited some remark from the men, and I was sorry to find they reckoned with certainty on seeing Harris at the depot, as I knew they would be proportionally depressed in spirits if disappointed. However, I promised Clayton a good repast as soon as we should see him.

Lose one of our dogs.

I had walked out with M’Leay a short distance from the river, and had taken the dogs. They followed us to the camp on our return to it, but the moment they saw us enter the tent, they went off to hunt by themselves. About 10 p.m., one of them, Bob, came to the

fire, and appeared very uneasy; he remained, for a short time, and then went away. In about an hour, he returned, and after exhibiting

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the same restlessness, again withdrew. He returned the third time before morning dawned, but returned alone. The men on the watch were very stupid not to have followed him, for, no doubt, he went to his companion, to whom, most likely, some accident had happened. I tried to make him show, but could not succeed, and, after a long search, reluctantly pursued our journey, leaving poor Sailor to his fate. This was the only misfortune that befell us, and we each of us felt the loss of an animal which had participated in all our dangers and privations. I more especially regretted the circumstance for the sake of the gentleman who gave him to me, and, on account of his superior size and activity.

Encounter with natives.

With the loss of poor Sailor, our misfortunes re-commenced. I anticipated some trouble hereabouts, for, having succeeded in their hardihood once, I knew the natives would again attempt to rob us, and that we should have some difficulty in keeping them off. As soon as they found out that we were in the river, they came to us, but left us at sunset. This was on the 21st. At nightfall, I desired the watch to keep a good look out, and M'Leay and I went to lie down. We had chosen an elevated bank for our position, and immediately opposite to us there was a small space covered with reeds, under blue-gum trees. About 11, Hopkinson came to the tent to say, that he was sure the blacks were approaching through the reeds. M'Leay and I got up, and, standing on the bank, listened attentively. All we heard was the bark of a native dog apparently, but this was, in fact, a deception on the part of the blacks. We made no noise, in consequence of which they gradually approached, and two or three crept behind the trunk of a tree that had fallen. As I thought they were near enough, George M'Leay, by my desire, fired a charge of small shot at them. They instantly made a precipitate retreat; but, in order the more effectually to alarm them, Hopkinson fired a ball into the reeds, which we distinctly heard cutting its way through them. All was quiet until about three o'clock, when a poor wretch who, most probably, had thrown himself on the ground when the shots were fired, at length mustered courage to get up and effect his escape.

In the morning, the tribe kept aloof, but endeavoured, by the most earnest entreaties, and most pitiable howling, to gain our favour; but I threatened to shoot any that approached, and they consequently kept at a respectful distance, dogging us from tree to tree. It appeared, therefore, that they were determined to keep us in view, no doubt, with the intention of trying what they could do by a second attempt. As they went along, their numbers increased, and towards evening, they amounted to a strong tribe. Still they did not venture near us, and only now and then showed themselves. Our situation at this moment would have been much more awkward in the event of attack, than when we were in the open channel of the Murray; because we were quite at the mercy of the natives if they had closed upon us, and, being directly under the banks, should have

received every spear, while it would have been easy for them to have kept out of sight in assailing us.

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Apparent obstruction of the channel.

It was near sunset, the men were tired, and I was looking out for a convenient place at which to rest, intending to punish these natives if they provoked me, or annoyed the men. We had not seen any of them for some time, when Hopkinson, who was standing in the bow of the boat, informed me that they had thrown boughs across the river to prevent our passage. I was exceedingly indignant at this, and pushed on, intending to force the barrier. On our nearer approach, a solitary black was observed standing close to the river, and abreast of the impediment which I imagined they had raised to our further progress. I threatened to shoot this man, and pointed to the branches that stretched right across the stream. The poor fellow uttered not a word, but, putting his hand behind him, pulled out a tomahawk from his belt, and held it towards me, by way of claiming our acquaintance; and any anger was soon entirely appeased by discovering that the natives had been merely setting a net across the river which these branches supported. We, consequently, hung back, until they had drawn it, and then passed on.

Manoeuvres of the natives to rob the boat at night.

The black to whom I had spoken so roughly, cut across a bight of the river, and walking down to the side of the water with a branch in his hand, in mark of confidence, presented me with a fishing net. We were highly pleased at the frank conduct of this black, and a convenient place offering itself, we landed and pitched our tents. Our friend, who was about forty, brought his two wives, and a young man, to us: and at length the other blacks mustered courage to approach; but those who had followed us from the last camp, kept on the other side of the river. On pretence of being different families, they separated into small bodies, and formed a regular cordon round our camp. We foresaw that this was a manoeuvre, but, in hopes that if I forgave the past they would desist from further attempts, M'Leay took great pains in conciliating them, and treated them with great kindness. We gave each family some fire and some presents, and walked together to them by turns, to show that we had equal confidence in all. Our friend had posted himself immediately behind our tents, at twenty yards distance, with his little family, and kept altogether aloof from the other natives. Having made our round of visits, and examined the various modes the women had of netting, M'Leay and I went into our tent.

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It happened, fortunately, that my servant, Harris, was the first for sentry. I told him to keep a watchful eye on the natives, and to call me if any thing unusual occurred. We had again chosen a lofty bank for our position; behind us there was a small plain, of about a quarter of a mile in breadth, backed by a wood. I was almost asleep, when my servant came to inform me, that the blacks had, with one accord, made a precipitate retreat, and that not one of them was to be seen at the fires. I impressed the necessity of attention upon him, and he again went to his post. shortly after this, he returned: "Master," said he, "the natives are coming." I jumped up, and, taking my gun, followed him, leaving my friend George fast asleep. I would not disturb him, until necessity required, for he had ever shown himself so devoted to duty as to deserve every consideration. Harris led me a little way from the tents, and then stopping, and pointing down the river, said, "There, sir, don't you see them?" "Not I, indeed, Harris," I replied, "where do you mean? are you sure you see them?" "Positive, sir," said he; "stoop and you will see them." I did so, and saw a black mass in an opening. Convinced that I saw them, I desired Harris to follow me, but not to fire unless I should give the word. The rascals would not stand our charge, however, but retreated as we advanced towards them. We then returned to the tents, and, commending my servant for his vigilance, I once more threw myself on my bed. I had scarcely lain down five minutes, when Harris called out, "The blacks are close to me, sir; shall I fire at them?" "How far are they?" I asked. "Within ten yards, sir." "Then fire," said I; and immediately he did so. M'Leay and I jumped up to his assistance. "Well, Harris," said I, "did you kill your man?" (he is a remarkably good shot.) "No, sir," said he, "I thought you would repent it, so I fired between the two." "Where were they, man?" said I. "Close to the boat, sir; and when they heard me, they swam into the river, and dived as soon as I fired between them." This account was verified by one of them puffing as he rose below us, over whose head I fired a shot. Where the other got to I could not tell. This watchfulness, on our part, however, prevented any further attempts during the night.

I was much pleased at the coolness of my servant, as well as his consideration; and relieving him from his post, desired Hopkinson to take it. I have no doubt that the approach of the natives, in the first instance, was made with a view to draw us off from the camp, while some others might rob the boat. If so, it was a good manoeuvre, and might have succeeded.

Natives desert their weapons—ingenuous conduct of A native.

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In the morning, we found the natives had left all their ponderous spears at their fires, which were broken up and burnt. We were surprised to find that our friend had left every thing in like manner behind him—his spears, his nets, and his tomahawk; but as he had kept so wholly aloof from the other blacks, I thought it highly improbable that he had joined them, and the men were of opinion that he had retreated across the plain into the wood. On looking in that direction we observed some smoke rising among the trees at a little distance from the outskirts of the plain, and under an impression that I should find the native at the fire with his family, I took his spears and tomahawk, and walked across the plain, unattended into the wood. I had not entered it more than fifty yards when I saw a group of four natives, sitting round a small fire. One of them, as I approached, rose up and met me, and in him I recognised the man for whom I was seeking. When near enough, I stuck the spears upright into the ground. The poor man stood thunderstruck; he spoke not, he moved not, neither did he raise his eyes from the ground. I had kept the tomahawk out of his sight, but I now produced and offered it to him. He gave a short exclamation as his eyes caught sight of it, but he remained otherwise silent before me, and refused to grasp the tomahawk, which accordingly fell to the ground. I had evidently excited the man's feelings, but it is difficult to say how he was affected. His manner indicated shame and surprise, and the sequel will prove that both these feelings must have possessed him. While we were thus standing together, his two wives came up, to whom, after pointing to the spears and tomahawk, he said something, without, however, looking at me; and they both instantly burst into tears and wept aloud. I was really embarrassed during so unexpected a scene, and to break it, invited the native to the camp, but I motioned with my hand, as I had not my gun with me, that I would shoot any other of the blacks who followed me. He distinctly understood my meaning, and intimated as distinctly to me that they should not follow us; nor did they. We were never again molested by them.

I left him then, and, returning to the camp, told M'Leay my adventure, with which he was highly delighted. My object in this procedure was to convince the natives, generally, that we came not among them to injure or to molest them, as well as to impress them with an idea of our superior intelligence; and I am led to indulge the hope that I succeeded. Certain it is, that an act of justice or of lenity has frequently, if well timed, more weight than the utmost stretch of severity. With savages, more particularly, to exhibit any fear, distrust, or irresolution, will inevitably prove injurious.

But although these adventures were happily not attended with bloodshed, they harassed the men much; and our camp for near a week was more like an outpost picquet than any thing else. This, however, terminated all attempts on the part of the natives. From henceforth none of them followed us on our route.

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Breach the depot.

At noon, I stopped about a mile short of the depot to take sights. After dinner we pulled on, the men looking earnestly out for their comrades whom they had left there, but none appeared. My little harbour, in which I had written my letters, was destroyed, and the bank on which our tents had stood was wholly deserted. We landed, however, and it was a satisfaction to me to see the homeward track of the drays. The men were sadly disappointed, and poor Clayton, who had anticipated a plentiful meal, was completely chop fallen. M'Leay and I comforted them daily with the hopes of meeting the drays, which I did not think improbable.

Thus, it will appear, that we regained the place from which we started in seventy-seven days, during which, we could not have pulled less than 2000 miles. It is not for me, however, to make any comment, either on the dangers to which we were occasionally exposed, or the toil and privations we continually experienced in the course of this expedition. My duty is, simply to give a plain narrative of facts, which I have done with fidelity, and with as much accuracy as circumstances would permit. Had we found Robert Harris at the depot, I should have considered it unnecessary to trespass longer on the patient reader, but as our return to that post did not relieve us from our difficulties, it remains for me to carry on the narrative of our proceedings to the time when we reached the upper branches of the Morumbidgee.

Disappointed of supplies.

The hopes that had buoyed up the spirits of the men, ceased to operate as soon as they were discovered to have been ill founded. The most gloomy ideas took possession of their minds, and they fancied that we had been neglected, and that Harris had remained in Sydney. It was to no purpose that I explained to them that my instructions did not bind Harris to come beyond Pondebadgerly, and that I was confident he was then encamped upon that plain.

We had found the intricate navigation of the Morumbidgee infinitely more distressing than the hard pulling up the open reaches of the Murray, for we were obliged to haul the boat up between numberless trunks of trees, an operation that exhausted the men much more than rowing. The river had fallen below its former level, and rocks and logs were now exposed above the water, over many of which the boat's keel must have grazed, as we passed down with the current. I really shuddered frequently, at seeing these complicated dangers, and I was at a loss to conceive how we could have escaped them. The planks of our boat were so thin that if she had struck forcibly against any one branch of the hundreds she must have grazed, she would inevitably have been rent asunder from stem to stern.

Complete exhaustion of the men—one loses his senses.

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The day after we passed the depot, on our return, we began to experience the effects of the rains that had fallen in the mountains. The Morumbidgee rose upon us six feet in one night, and poured along its turbid waters with proportionate violence. For seventeen days we pulled against them with determined perseverance, but human efforts, under privations such as ours, tend to weaken themselves, and thus it was that the men began to exhibit the effects of severe and unremitting toil. Our daily journeys were short, and the head we made against the stream but trifling. The men lost the proper and muscular jerk with which they once made the waters foam and the oars bend. Their whole bodies swung with an awkward and laboured motion. Their arms appeared to be nerveless; their faces became haggard, their persons emaciated, their spirits wholly sunk; nature was so completely overcome, that from mere exhaustion they frequently fell asleep during their painful and almost ceaseless exertions. It grieved me to the heart to see them in such a state at the close of so perilous a service, and I began to reproach Robert Harris that he did not move down the river to meet us; but, in fact, he was not to blame. I became captious, and found fault where there was no occasion, and lost the equilibrium of my temper in contemplating the condition of my companions. No murmur, however, escaped them, nor did a complaint reach me, that was intended to indicate that they had done all they could do. I frequently heard them in their tent, when they thought I had dropped asleep, complaining of severe pains and of great exhaustion. "I must tell the captain, to-morrow," some of them would say, "that I can pull no more." To-morrow came, and they pulled on, as if reluctant to yield to circumstances. Macnamee at length lost his senses. We first observed this from his incoherent conversation, but eventually from manner. He related the most extraordinary tales, and fidgeted about eternally while in the boat. I felt it necessary, therefore, to relieve him from the oars.

Amidst these distresses, M'Leay preserved his good humour, and endeavoured to lighten the task, and to cheer the men as much as possible. His presence at this time was a source of great comfort to me. The uniform kindness with which he had treated his companions, gave him an influence over them now, and it was exerted with the happiest effect.

Despatch two men to Pondebadgery.

On the 8th and 9th of April we had heavy rain, but there was no respite for us. Our provisions were nearly consumed, and would have been wholly exhausted, if we had not been so fortunate as to kill several swans. On the 11th, we gained our camp opposite to Hamilton's Plains, after a day of severe exertion. Our tents were pitched upon the old ground, and the marks of our cattle were around us. In the evening, the men went out with their guns, and M'Leay and I walked to the rear of the camp,

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to consult undisturbed as to the most prudent measures to be adopted, under our embarrassing circumstances. The men were completely sunk. We were still between eighty and ninety miles from Pondebadgery, in a direct line, and nearly treble that distance by water. The task was greater than we could perform, and our provisions were insufficient. In this extremity I thought it best to save the men the mortification of yielding, by abandoning the boat; and on further consideration, I determined on sending Hopkinson and Mulholland, whose devotion, intelligence, and indefatigable spirits, I well knew, forward to the plain.

The joy this intimation spread was universal, Both Hopkinson and Mulholland readily undertook the journey, and I, accordingly, prepared orders for them to start by the earliest dawn. It was not without a feeling of sorrow that I witnessed the departure of these two men, to encounter a fatiguing march. I had no fears as to their gaining the plain, if their reduced state would permit them. On the other hand, I hoped they would fall in with our old friend the black, or that they would meet the drays; and I could not but admire the spirit and energy they both displayed upon the occasion. Their behaviour throughout had been such as to awaken in my breast a feeling of the highest approbation. Their conduct, indeed, exceeded all praise, nor did they hesitate one moment when I called upon them to undertake this last trying duty, after such continued exertion. I am sure the reader will forgive me for bringing under his notice the generous efforts of these two men; by me it can never be forgotten.

Abandon and Burn the boat.

Six days had passed since their departure; we remaining encamped. M'Leay and myself had made some short excursions, but without any result worthy of notice. A group of sand-hills rose in the midst of the alluvial deposits, about a quarter of a mile from the tents, that were covered with coarse grasses and banksias. We shot several intertropical birds feeding in the latter, and sucking the honey from their flowers. I had, in the mean time, directed Clayton to make some plant cases of the upper planks of the boat, and then to set fire to her, for she was wholly unserviceable, and I felt a reluctance to leave her like a neglected log on the water. The last ounce of flour had been served out to the men, and the whole of it was consumed on the sixth day from that on which we had abandoned the boat. I had calculated on seeing Hopkinson again in eight days, but as the morrow would see us without food, I thought, as the men had had a little rest it would be better to advance towards relief than to await its arrival.

Men return with supplies.

On the evening of the 18th, therefore, we buried our specimens and other stores, intending to break up the camp in the morning. A singular bird, which invariably passed it at an hour after sunset, and which, from its heavy flight, appeared to be of unusual

size so attracted my notice, that in the evening M'Leay and I crossed the river, in hope to get a shot at it. We had, however, hardly landed on the other side, when a loud shout called us back to witness the return of our comrades.

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They were both of them in a state that beggars description. Their knees and ankles were dreadfully swollen, and their limbs so painful, that as soon as they arrived in the camp they sunk under their efforts, but they met us with smiling countenances, and expressed their satisfaction at having arrived so seasonably to our relief. They had, as I had foreseen, found Robert Harris on the plain, which they reached on the evening of the third day. They had started early the next morning on their return with such supplies as they thought we might immediately want. Poor Macnamee had in a great measure recovered, but for some days he was sullen and silent: sight of the drays gave him uncommon satisfaction. Clayton gorged himself; but M'Leay, myself and Fraser could not at first relish the meat that was placed before us.

It was determined to give the bullocks a day of rest, and I availed myself of the serviceable state of the horses to visit some hills about eighteen miles to the northward. I was anxious to gain a view of the distant country to the N.W., and to ascertain the geological character of the hills themselves. M'Leay, Fraser, and myself left the camp early in the morning of the 19th, on our way to them. Crossing the sand hills, we likewise passed a creek, and, from the flooded or alluvial tracks, got on an elevated sandy country, in which we found a beautiful grevillia. From this we passed a barren ridge of quartz-formation, terminating in open box forest. From it we descended and traversed a plain that must, at some periods, be almost impassable. It was covered with acacia pendula, and the soil was a red earth, bare of vegetation in many places. At its extremity we came to some stony ridges, and, descending their northern side, gained the base of the hills. They were more extensive than they appeared to be from our camp; and were about six hundred feet in height, and composed of a conglomerate rock. They were extremely barren, nor did the aspect of the country seem to indicate a favourable change. I was enabled, however, to connect my line of route with the more distant hills between the Morumbidgee and the Lachlan. We returned to the camp at midnight.

Meet with the drays.

On the following morning we left our station before Hamilton's Plains. We reached Pondebadgery on the 28th, and found Robert Harris, with a plentiful supply of provisions. He had everything extremely regular, and had been anxiously expecting our return, of which he at length wholly despaired. He had been at the plain two months, and intended to have moved down the river immediately, had we not made our appearance when we did.

I had sent M'Leay forward on the 20th with letters to the Governor, whose anxiety was great on our account. I remained for a fortnight on the plain to restore the men, but Hopkinson had so much over-exerted himself that it was with difficulty he crawled along.

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In my despatches to the Governor, from the depot, I had suggested the policy of distributing some blankets and other presents to the natives on the Morumbidgee, in order to reward those who had been useful to our party, and in the hope of proving beneficial to settlers in that distant part of the colony. His Excellency was kind enough to accede to my request, and I found ample means for these purposes among the stores that Harris brought from Sydney.

We left Pondebadgery Plain early on the 5th of May, and reached Guise's Station late in the afternoon. We gained Yass Plains on the 12th, having struck through the mountain passes by a direct line, instead of returning by our old route near Underaliga. As the party was crossing the plains I rode to see Mr. O'Brien, but did not find him at home.

Instance of cannibalism.

While waiting at his hut, one of the stockmen pointed out two blacks to me at a little distance from us. The one was standing, the other sitting. "That fellow, sir," said he, "who is sitting down, killed his infant child last night by knocking its head against a stone, after which he threw it on the fire and then devoured it." I was quite horror struck, and could scarcely believe such a story. I therefore went up to the man and questioned him as to the fact, as well as I could. He did not attempt to deny it, but slunk away in evident consciousness. I then questioned the other that remained, whose excuse for his friend was that the child was sick and would never have grown up, adding he himself did not *Patter* (eat) any of it.

Many of my readers may probably doubt this horrid occurrence having taken place, as I have not mentioned any corroborating circumstances. I am myself, however, as firmly persuaded of the truth of what I have stated as if I had seen the savage commit the act; for I talked to his companion who did see him, and who described to me the manner in which he killed the child. Be it as it may, the very mention of such a thing among these people goes to prove that they are capable of such an enormity.

We left Yass Plains on the 14th of May, and reached Sydney by easy stages on the 25th, after an absence of nearly six months.

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CONCLUDING REMARKS.

To most of my readers, the foregoing narrative will appear little else than a succession of adventures. Whilst the expedition was toiling down the rivers, no rich country opened upon the view to reward or to cheer the perseverance of those who composed it, and when, at length, the land of promise lay smiling before them, their strength and their means were too much exhausted to allow of their commencing an examination, of the

result of which there could be but little doubt. The expedition returned to Sydney, without any splendid discovery to gild its proceedings; and the labours and dangers it had encountered were considered as nothing more than ordinary occurrences. If I myself had entertained hopes that my researches would have benefited the colony, I was wholly disappointed. There is a barren tract of country lying to the westward of the Blue Mountains that will ever divide the eastern coast from the more central parts of Australia, as completely as if seas actually rolled between them.

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Geographical remarks.

In a geographical point of view, however, nothing could have been more satisfactory, excepting an absolute knowledge of the country to the northward between the Murray and the Darling, than the results of the expedition. I have in its proper place stated, as fairly as I could, my reasons for supposing the principal junction (which I consequently left without a name) to be the Darling of my former journey, as well as the various arguments that bore against such a conclusion.

Of course, where there is so much room for doubt, opinions will be various. I shall merely review the subject, in order to connect subsequent events with my previous observations, and to give the reader a full idea of that which struck me to be the case on a close and anxious investigation of the country from mountain to lowland. I returned from the Macquarie with doubts on my mind as to the ultimate direction to which the waters of the Darling river might ultimately flow; for, with regard to every other point, the question was, I considered, wholly decided. But, with regard to that singular stream, I was, from the little knowledge I had obtained, puzzled as to its actual course; and I thought it as likely that it might turn into the heart of the interior, as that it would make to the south. It had not, however, escaped my notice, that the northern rivers turned more abruptly southward (after gaining a certain distance from the base of the ranges) than the more southern streams: near the junction of the Castlereagh with the Darling especially, the number of large creeks joining the first river from the north, led me to conclude that there was at that particular spot a rapid fall of country to the south.

The first thing that strengthened in my mind this half-formed opinion, was the fall of the Lachlan into the Morumbidgee. I had been told that Australia was a basin; that an unbroken range of hills lined its coasts, the internal rivers of which fell into its centre, and contributed to the formation of an inland sea; I was not therefore prepared to find a break in the chain—a gap as it were for the escape of these waters to the coast.

Subsequently to our entrance into the Murray, the remarkable efforts of that river to maintain a southerly course were observed even by the men, and the singular runs it made to the south, when unchecked by high lands, clearly evinced its natural tendency to flow in that direction.

Had we found ourselves at an elevation above the bed of the Darling when we reached the junction of the principal tributary with the Murray, I should still have had doubts on my mind as to the identity of that tributary with the first-mentioned river; but considering the trifling elevation of the Darling above the sea, and that the junction was still less elevated above it, I cannot bring myself to believe that the former alters its course. It is not, however, on this simple geographical principle that I have built my conclusions; other corroborative circumstances have tended also to confirm in my mind the opinion I have already given, not only of the comparatively recent appearance above the ocean

of the level country over which I had passed, but that the true dip of the interior is from north to south.

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In support of the first of these conclusions, it would appear that a current of water must have swept the vast accumulation of shells, forming the great fossil bank through which the Murray passes from the northern extremity of the continent, to deposit them where they are; and it would further appear from the gradual rise of this bed, on an inclined plain from N.N.E. to S.S.W., that it must in the first instance, have swept along the base of the ranges, but ultimately turned into the above direction by the convexity of the mountains at the S.E. angle of the coast. From the circumstance, moreover, of the summit of the fossil formation being in places covered with oyster shells, the fact of the whole mass having been under water is indisputable, and leads us naturally to the conclusion that the depressed interior beyond it must have been under water at the same time.

It was proved by barometrical admeasurement, that the cataract of the Macquarie was 680 feet above the level of the sea, and, in like manner, it was found that the depot of Mr. Oxley, on the Lachlan, was only 500, there being a still greater fall of country beyond these two points. The maximum height of the fossil bank was 300 feet; and if we suppose a line to be drawn from its top to the eastward, that line would pass over the marshes of the two rivers, and would cut them at a point below which they both gradually diminish. Hence I am brought to conclude that in former times the sea washed the western base of the dividing ranges, at or near the two points whose respective elevations I have given; and that when the mass of land now lying waste and unproductive, became exposed, the rivers, which until then had pursued a regular course to the ocean, having no channel beyond their original termination, overflowed the almost level country into which they now fall; or, filling some extensive concavity, have contributed, by successive depositions, to the formation of those marshes of which so much has been said. I regret extremely, that my defective vision prevents me giving a slight sketch to elucidate whet I fear I have, in words, perhaps, failed in making sufficiently intelligible.

Geological remarks.

Now, as we know not by what means the changes that have taken place on the earth's surface have been effected, and can only reason on them from analogy, it is to be feared we shall never arrive at any clear demonstration of the truth of our surmises with regard to geographical changes, whether extensive or local, since the causes which produced them will necessarily have ceased to operate. We cannot refer to the dates when they took place, as we may do in regard to the eruptions of a volcano, or the appearance or disappearance of an island. Such events are of minor importance. Those mighty changes to which I would be understood to allude, can hardly be laid to the account of chemical agency. We can easily comprehend how subterranean fires will occasionally

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burst forth, and can thus satisfactorily account for earthquake or volcano; but it is not to any clashing of properties, or to any visible causes, that the changes of which I speak can be attributed. They appear rather as the consequences of direct agency, of an invisible power, not as the occasional and fretful workings of nature herself. The marks of that awful catastrophe which so nearly extinguished the human race, are every day becoming more and more visible as geological research proceeds. Thus, in the limestone caves at Wellington Valley, the remains of fossils and exuviae, show that their depths were penetrated by the same searching element that poured into the caverns of Kirkdale and other places. They are as gleams of sunshine falling upon the pages of that sublime and splendid volume, in which the history of the deluge is alone to be found; as if the Almighty intended that His word should stand single and unsupported before mankind: and when we consider that such corroborative testimonies of his wrath, as those I have noticed, were in all probability wholly unknown to those who wrote that sacred book, the discovery of the remains of a past world, must strike those under whose knowledge it may fall with the truth of that awful event, which language has vainly endeavoured to describe and painters to represent.

CHAPTER VIII.

Environs of the lake Alexandrina—Appointment of Capt. Barker to make a further survey of the coast near Encounter Bay—Narrative of his proceedings—Mount Lofty, Mount Barker, and beautiful country adjacent— Australian salmon—Survey of the coast—Outlet of lake to the sea— Circumstances that led to the slaughter of Capt. Barker by the natives— His character—Features of this part of the country and capabilities of its coasts—Its adaptation for colonization—Suggestions for the furtherance of future Expeditions.

Environs of the lake Alexandrina.

The foregoing narrative will have given the reader some idea of the state in which the last expedition reached the bottom of that extensive and magnificent basin which receives the waters of the Murray. The men were, indeed, so exhausted, in strength, and their provisions so much reduced by the time they gained the coast, that I doubted much, whether either would hold out to such place as we might hope for relief. Yet, reduced as the whole of us were from previous exertion, beset as our homeward path was by difficulty and danger, and involved as our eventual safety was in obscurity and doubt, I could not but deplore the necessity that obliged me to re-cross the Lake Alexandrina (as I had named it in honour of the heir apparent to the British crown), and to relinquish the examination of its western shores. We were borne over its ruffled and agitated surface with such rapidity, that I had scarcely time to view it as we passed; but, cursory as my glance was, I could not

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but think I was leaving behind me the fullest reward of our toil, in a country that would ultimately render our discoveries valuable, and benefit the colony for whose interests we were engaged. Hurried, I would repeat, as my view of it was, my eye never fell on a country of more promising aspect, or of more favourable position, than that which occupies the space between the lake and the ranges of St. Vincent's Gulf, and, continuing northerly from Mount Barker, stretches away, without any visible boundary.

It appeared to me that, unless nature had deviated from her usual laws, this tract of country could not but be fertile, situated as it was to receive the mountain deposits on the one hand, and those of the lake upon the other.

Further examination of the coast.

In my report to the Colonial Government, however, I did not feel myself justified in stating, to their full extent, opinions that were founded on probability and conjecture alone. But, although I was guarded in this particular, I strongly recommended a further examination of the coast, from the most eastern point of Encounter Bay, to the head St. Vincent's Gulf, to ascertain if any other than the known channel existed among the sand-hills of the former, or if, as I had every reason to hope from the great extent of water to the N.W., there was a practicable communication with the lake from the other; and I ventured to predict, that a closer survey of the interjacent country, would be attended with the most beneficial results; nor have I a doubt that the promontory of Cape Jervis would ere this have been settled, had Captain Barker lived to complete his official reports.

Capt. Barker's survey.

The governor, General Darling, whose multifarious duties might well have excused him from paying attention to distant objects, hesitated not a moment when he thought the interests of the colony, whose welfare he so zealously promoted, appeared to be concerned; and he determined to avail himself of the services of Captain Collet Barker, of the 39th regiment, who was about to be recalled from King George's Sound, in order to satisfy himself as to the correctness of my views.

Captain Barker had not long before been removed from Port Raffles, on the northern coast, where he had had much intercourse with the natives, and had frequently trusted himself wholly in their hands. It was not, however, merely on account of his conciliating manners, and knowledge of the temper and habits of the natives, that he was particularly fitted for the duty upon which it was the governor's pleasure to employ him. He was, in addition, a man of great energy of character, and of much and various information.



Orders having reached Sydney, directing the establishment belonging to New South Wales to be withdrawn, prior to the occupation of King George's Sound by the government of Western Australia, the *Isabella* schooner was sent to receive the troops and prisoners on board; and Captain Barker was directed, as soon as he should have handed over the settlement to Captain Stirling, to proceed to Cape Jervis, from which point it was thought he could best carry on a survey not only of the coast but also of the interior.

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This excellent and zealous officer sailed from King George's Sound, on the 10th of April, 1831, and arrived off Cape Jervis on the 13th. He was attended by Doctor Davies, one of the assistant surgeons of his regiment, and by Mr. Kent, of the Commissariat. It is to the latter gentleman that the public are indebted for the greater part of the following details; he having attended Captain Barker closely during the whole of this short but disastrous excursion, and made notes as copious as they are interesting. At the time the *Isabella* arrived off Cape Jervis, the weather was clear and favourable. Captain Barker consequently stood into St. Vincent's Gulf, keeping, as near as practicable, to the eastern shore, in soundings that varied from six to ten fathoms, upon sand and mud. His immediate object was to ascertain if there was any communication with the lake Alexandrina from the gulf. He ascended to lat. 34 degrees 40 minutes where he fully satisfied himself that no channel did exist between them. He found, however, that the ranges behind Cape Jervis terminated abruptly at Mount Lofty, in lat. 34 degrees 56 minutes, and, that a flat and wooded country succeeded to the N. and N.E. The shore of the gulf tended more to the N.N.W., and mud flats and mangrove swamps prevailed along it.

Inviting country—mount lofty.

Mr. Kent informs me, that they landed for the first time on the 15th, but that they returned almost immediately to the vessel. On the 17th, Captain Barker again landed, with the intention of remaining on shore for two or three days. He was accompanied by Mr. Kent, his servant Mills, and two soldiers. The boat went to the place at which they had before landed, as they thought they had discovered a small river with a bar entrance. They crossed the bar, and ascertained that it was a narrow inlet, of four miles in length, that terminated at the base of the ranges. The party were quite delighted with the aspect of the country on either side of the inlet, and with the bold and romantic scenery behind them. The former bore the appearance of natural meadows, lightly timbered, and covered with a variety of grasses. The soil was observed to be a rich, fat, chocolate coloured earth, probably the decomposition of the deep blue limestone, that showed itself along the coast hereabouts. On the other hand, a rocky glen made a cleft in the ranges at the head of the inlet; and they were supplied with abundance of fresh water which remained in the deeper pools that had been filled by the torrents during late rains. The whole neighbourhood was so inviting that the party slept at the head of the inlet.

Mount lofty and its environs.

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In the morning, Captain Barker proceeded to ascend Mount Lofty, accompanied by Mr. Kent and his servant, leaving the two soldiers at the bivouac, at which he directed them to remain until his return. Mr. Kent says they kept the ridge all the way, and rose above the sea by a gradual ascent. The rock-formation of the lower ranges appeared to be an argillaceous schist; the sides and summit of the ranges were covered with verdure, and the trees upon them were of more than ordinary size. The view to the eastward was shut out by other ranges, parallel to those on which they were; below them to the westward, the same pleasing kind of country that flanked the inlet still continued.

Mount Barker.

In the course of the day they passed round the head of a deep ravine, whose smooth and grassy sides presented a beautiful appearance. The party stood 600 feet above the bed of a small rivulet that occupied the bottom of the ravine. In some places huge blocks of granite interrupted its course, in others the waters had worn the rock smooth. The polish of these rocks was quite beautiful, and the veins of red and white quartz which traversed them, looked like mosaic work. They did not gain the top of Mount Lofty, but slept a few miles beyond the ravine. In the morning they continued their journey, and, crossing Mount Lofty, descended northerly, to a point from which the range bent away a little to the N.N.E., and then terminated. The view from this point was much more extensive than that from Mount Lofty itself. They overlooked a great part of the gulf, and could distinctly see the mountains at the head of it to the N.N.W. To the N.W. there was a considerable indentation in the coast, which had escaped Captain Barker's notice when examining it. A mountain, very similar to Mount Lofty, bore due east of them, and appeared to be the termination of its range. They were separated by a valley of about ten miles in width, the appearance of which was not favourable. Mr. Kent states to me, that Capt. Barker observed at the time that he thought it probable I had mistaken this hill for Mount Lofty, since it shut out the view of the lake from him, and therefore he naturally concluded, I could not have seen Mount Lofty. I can readily imagine such an error to have been made by me, more especially as I remember that at the time I was taking bearings in the lake, I thought Captain Flinders had not given Mount Lofty, as I then conceived it to be, its proper position in longitude. Both hills are in the same parallel of latitude. The mistake on my part is obvious. I have corrected it in the charts, and have availed myself of the opportunity thus afforded me of perpetuating, as far as I can, the name of an inestimable companion in Captain Barker himself.

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Immediately below the point on which they stood, Mr. Kent says, a low undulating country extended to the northward, as far as he could see. It was partly open, and partly wooded; and was every where covered with verdure. It continued round to the eastward, and apparently ran down southerly, at the opposite base of the mount Barker Range. I think there can be but little doubt that my view from the S.E., that is, from the lake, extended over the same or a part of the same country. Captain Barker again slept on the summit of the range, near a large basin that looked like the mouth of a crater, in which huge fragments of rocks made a scene of the utmost confusion. These rocks were a coarse grey granite, of which the higher parts and northern termination of the Mount Lofty range are evidently formed; for Mr. Kent remarks that it superseded the schistose formation at the ravine we have noticed—and that, subsequently, the sides of the hills became more broken, and valleys, or gullies, more properly speaking, very numerous. Captain Barker estimated the height of Mount Lofty above the sea at 2,400 feet, and the distance of its summit from the coast at eleven miles. Mr. Kent says they were surprised at the size of the trees on the immediate brow of it; they measured one and found it to be 43 feet in girth. Indeed, he adds, vegetation did not appear to have suffered either from its elevated position, or from any prevailing wind. Eucalypti were the general timber on the ranges; one species of which, resembling strongly the black butted-gum, was remarkable for a scent peculiar to its bark.

Australian salmon.

The party rejoined the soldiers on the 21st, and enjoyed the supply of fish which they had provided for them. The soldiers had amused themselves by fishing during Captain Barker's absence, and had been abundantly successful. Among others they had taken a kind of salmon, which, though inferior in size, resembled in shape, in taste, and in the colour of its flesh, the salmon of Europe. I fancied that a fish which I observed with extremely glittering scales, in the mouth of a seal, when myself on the coast, must have been of this kind; and I have no doubt that the lake is periodically visited by salmon, and that these fish retain their habits of entering fresh water at particular seasons, also in the southern hemisphere.

Immediately behind Cape Jervis, there is a small bay, in which according to the information of the sealers who frequent Kangaroo Island, there is good and safe anchorage for seven months in the year, that is to say, during the prevalence of the E. and N.E. winds.

Survey of the coast.

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Captain Barker landed on the 21st on this rocky point at the northern extremity of this bay. He had, however, previously to this, examined the indentation in the coast which he had observed from Mount Lofty, and had ascertained that it was nothing more than an inlet; a spit of sand, projecting from the shore at right angles with it, concealed the mouth of the inlet. They took the boat to examine this point, and carried six fathoms soundings round the head of the spit to the mouth of the inlet, when it shoaled to two fathoms, and the landing was observed to be bad, by reason of mangrove swamps on either side of it. Mr. Kent, I think, told me that this inlet was from ten to twelve miles long. Can it be that a current setting out of it at times, has thrown up the sand-bank that protects its mouth, and that trees, or any other obstacle, have hidden its further prolongation from Captain Barker's notice? I have little hope that such is the case, but the remark is not an idle one.

Beautiful valleys.

Between this inlet and the one formerly mentioned, a small and clear stream was discovered, to which Captain Barker kindly gave my name. On landing, the party, which consisted of the same persons as the former one, found themselves in a valley, which opened direct upon the bay. It was confined to the north from the chief range by a lateral ridge, that gradually declined towards and terminated at, the rocky point on which they had landed. The other side of the valley was formed of a continuation of the main range, which also gradually declined to the south, and appeared to be connected with the hills at the extremity of the cape. The valley was from nine to ten miles in length, and from three to four in breadth. In crossing it, they ascertained that the lagoon from which the schooner had obtained a supply of water, was filled by a watercourse that came down its centre. The soil in the valley was rich, but stony in some parts. There was an abundance of pasture over the whole, from amongst which they started numerous kangaroos. The scenery towards the ranges was beautiful and romantic, and the general appearance of the country such as to delight the whole party.

Preserving a due east course, Captain Barker passed over the opposite range of hills, and descended almost immediately into a second valley that continued to the southwards. Its soil was poor and stony, and it was covered with low scrub. Crossing it, they ascended the opposite range, from the summit of which they had a view of Encounter Bay. An extensive flat stretched from beneath them to the eastward, and was backed, in the distance, by sand hummocks, and low wooded hills. The extreme right of the flat rested upon the coast, at a rocky point near which there were two or three islands. From the left a beautiful valley opened upon it. A strong and clear rivulet from this valley traversed the flat obliquely, and fell into the sea at the rocky point, or a little

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to the southward of it. The hills forming the opposite side of the valley had already terminated. Captain Barker, therefore, ascended to higher ground, and, at length, obtained a view of the Lake Alexandrina, and the channel of its communication with the sea to the N.E. He now descended to the flat, and frequently expressed his anxious wish to Mr. Kent that I had been one of their number to enjoy the beauty of the scenery around them, and to participate in their labours. Had fate so ordained it, it is possible the melancholy tragedy that soon after occurred might have been averted.

Outlet of lake to the sea.

At the termination of the flat they found themselves upon the banks of the channel, and close to the sand hillock under which my tents had been pitched. From this point they proceeded along the line of sand-hills to the outlet; from which it would appear that Kangaroo Island is not visible, but that the distant point which I mistook for it was the S.E. angle of Cape Jervis. I have remarked, in describing that part of the coast, that there is a sand-hill to the eastward of the inlet, under which the tide runs strong, and the water is deep. Captain Barker judged the breadth of the channel to be a quarter of a mile, and he expressed a desire to swim across it to the sand-hill to take bearings, and to ascertain the nature of the strand beyond it to the eastward.

It unfortunately happened, that he was the only one of the party who could swim well, in consequence of which his people remonstrated with him on the danger of making the attempt unattended. Notwithstanding, however, that he was seriously indisposed, he stripped, and after Mr. Kent had fastened his compass on his head for him, he plunged into the water, and with difficulty gained the opposite side; to effect which took him nine minutes and fifty-eight seconds. His anxious comrades saw him ascend the hillock, and take several bearings; he then descended the farther side, and was never seen by them again.

Circumstances attending the loss of captain Barker.

For a considerable time Mr. Kent remained stationary, in momentary expectation of his return; but at length, taking the two soldiers with him, he proceeded along the shore in search of wood for a fire. At about a quarter of a mile, the soldiers stopped and expressed their wish to return, as their minds misgave them, and they feared that Captain Barker had met with some accident. While conversing, they heard a distant shout, or cry, which Mr. Kent thought resembled the call of the natives, but which the soldiers positively declared to be the voice of a white man. On their return to their companions, they asked if any sounds had caught their ears, to which they replied in the negative. The wind was blowing from the E.S.E., in which direction Captain Barker had gone; and, to me, the fact of the nearer party not having heard that which must have been his cries for assistance, is satisfactorily accounted for, as, being immediately

under the hill, the sounds must have passed over their heads to be heard more distinctly at the distance at which Mr. Kent and the soldiers stood. It is more than probable, that while his men were expressing their anxiety about him, the fearful tragedy was enacting which it has become my painful task to detail.

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Evening closed in without any signs of Captain Barker's return, or any circumstance by which Mr. Kent could confirm his fears that he had fallen into the hands of the natives. For, whether it was that the tribe which had shown such decided hostility to me when on the coast had not observed the party, none made their appearance; and if I except two, who crossed the channel when Mr. Kent was in search of wood, they had neither seen nor heard any; and Captain Barker's enterprising disposition being well known to his men, hopes were still entertained that he was safe. A large fire was kindled, and the party formed a silent and anxious group around it. Soon after night-fall, however, their attention was roused by the sounds of the natives, and it was at length discovered, that they had lighted a chain of small fires between the sand-hill Captain Barker had ascended and the opposite side of the channel, around which their women were chanting their melancholy dirge. It struck upon the ears of the listeners with an ominous thrill, and assured them of the certainty of the irreparable loss they had sustained. All night did those dismal sounds echo along that lonely shore, but as morning dawned, they ceased, and Mr. Kent and his companions were again left in anxiety and doubt. They, at length, thought it most advisable to proceed to the schooner to advise with Doctor Davies. They traversed the beach with hasty steps, but did not get on board till the following day. It was then determined to procure assistance from the sealers on Kangaroo Island, as the only means by which they could ascertain their leader's fate, and they accordingly entered American Harbour. For a certain reward, one of the men agreed to accompany Mr. Kent to the main with a native woman, to communicate with the tribe that was supposed to have killed him. They landed at or near the rocky point of Encounter Bay, where they were joined by two other natives, one of whom was blind. The woman was sent forward for intelligence, and on her return gave the following details:

Account of his murder.

It appears that at a very considerable distance from the first sand-hill, there is another to which Captain Barker must have walked, for the woman stated that three natives were going to the shore from their tribe, and that they crossed his tract. Their quick perception immediately told them it was an unusual impression. They followed upon it, and saw Captain Barker returning. They hesitated for a long time to approach him, being fearful of the instrument he carried. At length, however, they closed upon him. Capt. Barker tried to soothe them, but finding that they were determined to attack him, he made for the water from which he could not have been very distant. One of the blacks immediately threw his spear and struck him in the hip. This did not, however, stop him. He got among the breakers, when he received the second spear in the shoulder.

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On this, turning round, he received a third full in the breast: with such deadly precision do these savages cast their weapons. It would appear that the third spear was already on its flight when Capt. Barker turned, and it is to be hoped, that it was at once mortal. He fell on his back into the water. The natives then rushed in, and dragging him out by the legs, seized their spears, and indicted innumerable wounds upon his body; after which, they threw it into deep water, and the sea-tide carried it away.

His character.

Such, we have every reason to believe, was the untimely fate of this amiable and talented man. It is a melancholy satisfaction to me thus publicly to record his worth; instrumental, as I cannot but in some measure consider my last journey to have been in leading to this fatal catastrophe. Captain Barker was in disposition, as he was in the close of his life, in many respects similar to Captain Cook. Mild, affable, and attentive, he had the esteem and regard of every companion, and the respect of every one under him. Zealous in the discharge of his public duties, honourable and just in private life; a lover and a follower of science; indefatigable and dauntless in his pursuits; a steady friend, an entertaining companion; charitable, kind-hearted, disinterested, and sincere—the task is equally difficult to find adequate expressions of praise or of regret. In him the king lost one of his most valuable officers, and his regiment one of its most efficient members. Beloved as he was, the news of his loss struck his numerous friends with sincere grief, but by none was it more severely felt than by the humble individual who has endeavoured thus feebly to draw his portrait.

From the same source from which the particulars of his death were obtained, it was reported that the natives who perpetrated the deed were influenced by no other motive than curiosity to ascertain if they had power to kill a white man. But we must be careful in giving credit to this, for it is much more probable that the cruelties exercised by the sealers towards the blacks along the south coast, may have instigated the latter to take vengeance on the innocent as well as on the guilty. It will be seen, by a reference to the chart, that Captain Barker, by crossing the channel, threw himself into the very hands of that tribe which had evinced such determined hostility to myself and my men. He got into the rear of their strong hold, and was sacrificed to those feelings of suspicion, and to that desire of revenge, which the savages never lose sight of until they have been gratified.

Features of the country, and capabilities of the coast.

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It yet remains for me to state that when Mr. Kent returned to the schooner, after this irreparable loss, he kept to the south of the place at which he had crossed the first range with Captain Barker, and travelled through a valley right across the promontory. He thus discovered that there was a division in the ranges, through which there was a direct and level road from the little bay on the northern extremity of which they had last landed in St. Vincent's Gulf, to the rocky point of Encounter Bay. The importance of this fact will be better estimated, when it is known that good anchorage is secured to small vessels inside the island that lies off the point of Encounter Bay, which is rendered still safer by a horse shoe reef that forms, as it were, a thick wall to break the swell of the sea. But this anchorage is not safe for more than five months in the year. Independently of these points, however, Mr. Kent remarks, that the spit a little to the north of Mount Lofty would afford good shelter to minor vessels under its lee. When the nature of the country is taken into consideration, and the facility of entering that which lies between the ranges and the Lake Alexandrina, from the south, and of a direct communication with the lake itself, the want of an extensive harbour will, in some measure, be compensated for, more especially when it is known that within four leagues of Cape Jervis, a port little inferior to Port Jackson, with a safe and broad entrance, exists at Kangaroo Island. The sealers have given this spot the name of American Harbour. In it, I am informed, vessels are completely land-locked, and secure from every wind. Kangaroo Island is not, however, fertile by any means. It abounds in shallow lakes filled with salt water during high tides, and which, by evaporation, yield a vast quantity of salt.

I gathered from the sealers that neither the promontory separating St. Vincent from Spencer's Gulf, nor the neighbourhood of Port Lincoln, are other than barren and sandy wastes. They all agree in describing Port Lincoln itself as a magnificent roadstead, but equally agree as to the sterility of its shores. It appears, therefore, that the promontory of Cape Jervis owes its superiority to its natural features; in fact, to the mountains that occupy its centre, to the debris that has been washed from them, and to the decomposition of the better description of its rocks. Such is the case at Illawarra, where the mountains approach the sea; such indeed is the case every where, at a certain distance from mountain ranges.

Adaption of this part of the country for colonisation.

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From the above account it would appear that a spot has, at length, been found upon the south coast of New Holland, to which the colonist might venture with every prospect of success, and in whose valleys the exile might hope to build for himself and for his family a peaceful and prosperous home. All who have ever landed upon the eastern shore of St. Vincent's Gulf, agree as to the richness of its soil, and the abundance of its pasture. Indeed, if we cast our eyes upon the chart, and examine the natural features of the country behind Cape Jervis, we shall no longer wonder at its differing in soil and fertility from the low and sandy tracks that generally prevail along the shores of Australia. Without entering largely into the consideration of the more remote advantages that would, in all human probability, result from the establishment of a colony, rather than a penal settlement, at St. Vincent's Gulf, it will be expedient to glance hastily over the preceding narrative, and, disengaging it from all extraneous matter, to condense, as much as possible, the information it contains respecting the country itself; for I have been unable to introduce any passing remark, lest I should break the thread of an interesting detail.

The country immediately behind Cape Jervis may, strictly speaking, be termed a promontory, bounded to the west by St. Vincent's Gulf, and to the east by the lake Alexandrina, and the sandy track separating that basin from the sea. Supposing a line to be drawn from the parallel of 34 degrees 40 minutes to the eastward, it will strike the Murray river about 25 miles above the head of the lake, and will clear the ranges, of which Mount Lofty and Mount Barker are the respective terminations. This line will cut off a space whose greatest breadth will be 55 miles, whose length from north to south will be 75, and whose surface exceeds 7 millions of acres; from which if we deduct 2 millions for the unavailable hills, we shall have 5 millions of acres of land, of rich soil, upon which no scrub exists, and whose most distant points are accessible, through a level country on the one hand, and by water on the other. The southern extremity of the ranges can be turned by that valley through which Mr. Kent returned to the schooner, after Captain Barker's death. It is certain, therefore, that this valley not only secures so grand a point, but also presents a level line of communication from the small bay immediately to the north of the cape, to the rocky point of Encounter Bay, at both of which places there is safe anchorage at different periods of the year.

Hints for future expeditions.

The only objection that can be raised to the occupation of this spot, is the want of an available harbour. Yet it admits of great doubt whether the contiguity of Kangaroo Island to Cape Jervis, (serving as it does to break the force of the prevailing winds, as also of the heavy swell that would otherwise roll direct into the bay,) and the fact of its possessing a safe and commodious harbour, certainly at an available distance, does not in a great measure remove the objection. Certain it is that no port, with the exception of that on the shores of which the capital of Australia is situated, offers half the convenience of this, although it be detached between three and four leagues from the main.

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On the other hand it would appear, that there is no place from which at any time the survey of the more central parts of the continent could be so effectually carried on; for in a country like Australia, where the chief obstacle to be apprehended in travelling is the want of water, the facilities afforded by the Murray and its tributaries, are indisputable; and I have little doubt that the very centre of the continent might be gained by a judicious and enterprising expedition. Certainly it is most desirable to ascertain whether the river I have supposed to be the Darling be really so or not. I have stated my objection to depots, but I think that if a party commenced its operations upon the Murray from the junction upwards, and, after ascertaining the fact of its ultimate course, turned away to the N.W. up one of the tributaries of the Murray, with a supply of six months' provisions, the results would be of the most satisfactory kind, and the features of the country be wholly developed. I cannot, I think, conclude this work better than by expressing a hope, that the Colonial Government will direct such measures to be adopted as may be necessary for the extension of our geographical knowledge in Australia. The facilities of fitting out expeditions in New South Wales, render the expenses of little moment, when compared with the importance of the object in view; and although I am labouring under the effects of former attempts, yet would I willingly give such assistance as I could to carry such an object into effect.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX No. I.

GEOLOGICAL SPECIMENS FOUND TO THE SOUTH-WEST OF PORT JACKSON.

Considering the nature of the country over which the first expedition travelled, it could hardly have been expected that its geological specimens would be numerous. It will appear, however, from the following list of rocks collected during the second expedition, that the geological formation of the mountains to the S.W. of Port Jackson is as various as that to the N.W. of it is mountainous. The specimens are described not according to their natural order, but in the succession in which they were found, commencing from Yass Plains, and during the subsequent stages of the journey.

Sandstone, Old Red.—Found on various parts of Yass Plains.

Limestone, Transition.—Colour dark grey; composes the bed of the Yass River, and apparently traverses the sandstone formation. Yass Plains lie 170 miles to the S.W. of Sydney.



Sandstone, Old Red.—Again succeeds the limestone, and continues to the N.W. to a considerable distance over a poor and scrubby country, covered for the most part with a dwarf species of Eucalyptus.

Granite.—Colour grey; feldspar, black mica, and quartz: succeeds the sandstone, and continues to the S.W. as far as the Morumbidgee River, over an open forest country broken into hill and dale. It is generally on these granite rocks that the best grazing is found.

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Greywacke.—Colour grey, of light hue, or dark, with black specks. Soft.—Composition of a part of the ranges that form the valley of the Morumbidgee.

Serpentine.—Colour green of different shades, striped sulphur yellow; slaty fracture, soft and greasy to the touch. Forms hills of moderate elevation, of peculiarly sharp spine, resting on quartz. Composition of most of the ranges opposite the Doomot River on the Morumbidgee, in lat. 35 degrees 4 minutes and long. 147 degrees 40 minutes.

Quartz.—Colour snow-white; formation of the higher ranges on the left bank of the Morumbidgee, in the same latitude and longitude as above; showing in large blocks on the sides of the hills.

Slaty Quartz, with varieties.—Found with the quartz rock, in a state of decomposition.

Granite.—Succeeds the serpentine, of light colour; feldspar decomposed; mica, glittering and silvery white.

Sandstone, Old Red.—Composition of the more distant ranges on the Morumbidgee. Forms abrupt precipices over the river flats; of sterile appearance, and covered with Banksias and scrub.

Mica Slate.—Colour dark brown, approaching red; mica glittering. The hills enclosing Pondebadgery Plain at the gorge of the valley of the Morumbidgee, are composed of this rock. They are succeeded by

Sandstone.—Which rises abruptly from the river in perpendicular cliffs, of 145 feet in height.

Jasper and quartz.—Colour red and white. Forms the slope of the above sandstone, and may be considered the outermost of the rocks connected with the Eastern or Blue Mountain Ranges. It will be remembered that jasper and quartz were likewise found on a plain near the Darling River, precisely similar to the above, although occurring at so great a distance from each other.

Granite.—Light red colour; composition of a small isolated hill, to all appearance wholly unconnected with the neighbouring ranges. This specimen is very similar to that found in the bed of New-Year's Creek.

Breccia.—Silicious cement, composed of a variety of pebbles. Formation of the most *westerly* of the hills between the Lachlan and Macquarie Rivers. This conglomerate was also found to compose the minor and most westerly of the elevations of the more northern interior.

Chrystallized Sulphate of Lime.—Found embedded in the deep alluvial soil in the banks of the Morumbidgee River, in lat. 34 degrees 30 minutes S., and long. 144 degrees 55

minutes E. The same substance was found on the banks of the Darling, in lat. 29 degrees 49 minutes S., and in long. 145 degrees 18 minutes E.

A reference to the chart will show that the Morumbidgee, from the first of the above positions, may be said to have entered the almost dead level of the interior. No elevation occurs to the westward for several hundreds of miles. A coarse grit occasionally traversed the beds of the rivers, and their lofty banks of clay or marl appear to be based on sandstone and granitic sand. The latter occurs in slabs of four inches in thickness, divided by a line of saffron-coloured sand, and seems to have been subjected to fusion, as if the particles or grains had been cemented together by fusion.

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The first decided break that takes place in the level of the interior occurs upon the right bank of the Murray, a little below the junction of the Rufus with it. A cliff of from 120 to 130 feet in perpendicular elevation here flanks the river for about 200 yards, when it recedes from it, and forms a spacious amphitheatre that is occupied by semicircular hillocks, that partake of the same character as the cliff itself; the face of which showed the various substances of which it was composed in horizontal lines, that if prolonged would cut the same substance in the hillocks. Based upon a soft white sandstone, a bed of clay formed the lowest part of the cliff; upon this bed of clay, a bed of chalk reposed; this chalk was superseded by a thick bed of saponaceous earth, whilst the summit of the cliff was composed of a bright red sand. Semi-opal and hydrate of silex were found in the chalk, and some beautiful specimens of brown menelite were collected from the upper stratum of the cliff.

A little below this singular place, the country again declines, when a tertiary fossil formation shows itself, which, rising gradually as an inclined plain, ultimately attains an elevation of 300 feet. This formation continues to the very coast, since large masses of the rock were observed in the channel of communication between the lake and the ocean; and the hills to the left of the channel were based upon it. This great bank cannot, therefore, average less than from seventy to ninety miles in width. At its commencement, it strikingly resembled skulls piled one on the other, as well in colour as appearance. This effect had been produced by the constant rippling of water against the rock. The softer parts had been washed away, and the shells (a bed of *Turritella*) alone remained.

Plate 1, Figures 1, 2, and 3, represent the selenite formation.

Plate 2, represents a mass of the rock containing numerous kinds of shells, of which the following are the most conspicuous:

Cardium
Pectunculus
Corbula
Arca
Conus, and
Others unknown.

* * *

The following is a list of the fossils collected from various parts of this formation, from which it is evident that a closer examination would lead to the discovery of numberless species.



TUNICATA.

PLATE III.

Fig.1 Eschara celleporacea.

2 ----- piriformis.

3 ----- *Unnamed*.

Fig.4 Cellepora echinata.

5 ----- escharoides?

6 Retepora disticha.

7 ----- vibicata.

8 Glauconome rhombifera.

All Tertiary in Westphalia and England.

RADIATA

9 Scutella.

10 Spatangus Hoffmanni—Goldfuss.

Tertiary, in Westphalia.

11 Echinus.

CONCHIFERA—BIVALVED SHELLS.



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- Corbula gallica—Paris basin—Tertiary.
 Tellina?
 Corbis lamellosa—Tertiary—Paris.
 Lucina.
 Venus (Cytherea) laevigata—ibid.
 ----- obliqua --ibid.
 Venus
 Cardium?—fragments.
 12 Nucula—such is found in London clay.
 13 Pecten coarctatus?—Placentia.
 ----- various?--recent.
 14 ----- species unknown.
 Two other Pectens also occur.
 Ostrea elongata—Deshayes.
 15 Terebratula.
 16 One cast, genus unknown, perhaps a Cardium.

MOLUSCA—UNIVALVED SHELLS.

- Bulla? Plate II., fig. 2.
 Fig.17 Natica—small.
 18 ----- large species.
 Dentalium?
 19 Trochus.
 20 Turritella.
 ----- in gyps.
 21 Murex.
 22 Buccinum?
 23 Mitra.
 24 ----- very short.
 25 Cypraea.
 26 Conus.
 27 ----- (Plate II., fig. 3.)
 28 Two, unknown, (Also Plate II, fig. 4.)
 The above all appear to belong to the newer tertiary formations.

[Fig.17 to 27—These genera are scarcely ever, and some of them not at all, found in any but tertiary formations.]

A block of coarse red granite forms an island in the centre of the river near the lake, but is nowhere else visible, although it is very probably the basis of the surrounding country.



ROCK FORMATION OF THE COAST RANGE OF ST. VINCENT'S GULF.

Primitive Transition Limestone.—Light grey, striped. Altered in appearance by volcanic action; occurs on the Ranges north of Cape Jervis.

Granite.—Colour, red; found on the west side of Encounter Bay.

Brown Spar.—South point of Cape Jervis.

Sandstone, Old Red.—East coast of St, Vincent's Gulf.

Limestone, Transition.—Colour, blue. East Coast of St. Vincent's Gulf. Formation near the first inlet. Continuing to the base of the Ranges.

Clay Slate.—Composition of the lower part of the Mount Lofty Range.

Granite.—Fine grained, red; forms the higher parts of the Mount Lofty Range.

Quartz, with Tourmaline.—Lower parts of the Mount Lofty Range.

Limestone Flustra, and their Corallines, probably tertiary.—From the mouth of the Sturt, on the coast line, nearly abreast of Mount Lofty.

APPENDIX No. II.

OFFICIAL REPORT TO THE COLONIAL GOVERNMENT.

* * * * *

Government order.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Sydney,
May 10, 1830.

His Excellency the Governor has much satisfaction in publishing the following report of the proceedings of an expedition undertaken for the purpose of tracing the course of the river "Morumbidgee," and of ascertaining whether it communicated with the coast forming the southern boundary of the colony.

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The expedition, which was placed under the direction of Captain Sturt, of his Majesty's 39th Regiment, commenced its progress down the "Morumbidgee" on the 7th day of January last, having been occupied twenty-one days in performing the journey from Sydney.

On the 14th January they entered a new river running from east to west, now called the "Murray," into which the "Morumbidgee" flows.

After pursuing the course of the "Murray" for several days, the expedition observed another river (supposed to be that which Captain Sturt discovered on his former expedition), uniting with the "Murray" which they examined about five miles above the junction.

The expedition again proceeded down the "Murray," and fell in with another of its tributaries flowing from the south east, which Captain Sturt has designated the "Lindesay;" and on the 8th February the "Murray" was found to enter or form a lake, of from fifty to sixty miles in length, and from thirty to forty in breadth, lying immediately to the eastward of gulf St. Vincent, and extending to the southward, to the shore of "Encounter Bay."

Thus has Captain Sturt added largely, and in a highly important degree, to the knowledge previously possessed of the interior.

His former expedition ascertained the fate of the rivers Macquarie and Castlereagh, on which occasion he also discovered a river which, there is every reason to believe, is, in ordinary seasons, of considerable magnitude.

Should this, as Captain Sturt supposes, prove to be the same river as that above-mentioned, as uniting with the "Murray," the existence of an interior water communication for several hundreds of miles, extending from the northward of "Mount Harris," down to the southern coast of the colony, will have been established.

It is to be regretted, that circumstances did not permit of a more perfect examination of the lake, (which has been called "Alexandrina"), as the immediate vicinage of Gulf St. Vincent furnishes a just ground of hope that a more practicable and useful communication may be discovered in that direction, than the channel which leads into "Encounter Bay."

The opportunity of recording a second time the services rendered to the colony by Captain Sturt, is as gratifying to the government which directed the undertaking, as it is creditable to the individual who so successfully conducted it to its termination.—It is an additional cause of satisfaction to add, that every one, according to his sphere of action, has a claim to a proportionate degree of applause. All were exposed alike to the same privations and fatigue, and every one submitted with patience, manifesting the most

anxious desire for the success of the expedition. The zeal of Mr. George M'Leay, the companion of Captain Sturt, when example was so important, could not fail to have the most salutary effect; and the obedience, steadiness, and good conduct of the men employed, merit the highest praise.

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By his Excellency's command,

Alexander M'LEAY.

* * * * *

BANKS OF THE MORUMBIDGEE, APRIL 20TH, 1830.

Sir,—The departure of Mr. George M'Leay for Sydney, who is anxious to proceed homewards as speedily as possible, affords me an earlier opportunity than would otherwise have presented itself, by which to make you acquainted with the circumstance of my return, under the divine protection, to the located districts; and I do myself the honour of annexing a brief account of my proceedings since the last communication for the information of His Excellency the Governor, until such time as I shall have it in my power to give in a more detailed report.

On the 7th of January, agreeably to the arrangements which had been made, I proceeded down the Morumbidgee in the whale boat, with a complement of six hands, independent of myself and Mr. M'Leay, holding the skiff in tow. The river, for several days, kept a general W.S.W. course; it altered little in appearance, nor did any material change take place in the country upon its banks. The alluvial flats had occasionally an increased breadth on either side of it, but the line of reeds was nowhere so extensive as from previous appearances I had been led to expect. About twelve miles from the depot, we passed a large creek junction from the N.E. which, from its locality and from the circumstance of my having been upon it in the direction of them, I cannot but conclude originates in the marshes of the Lachlan.

On the 11th, the Morumbidgee became much encumbered with fallen timber, and its current was at times so rapid that I was under considerable apprehension for the safety of the boats. The skiff had been upset on the 8th, and, although I could not anticipate such an accident to the large boat, I feared she would receive some more serious and irremediable injury. On the 14th, these difficulties increased upon us.—The channel of the river became more contracted, and its current more impetuous. We had no sooner cleared one reach, than fresh and apparently insurmountable dangers presented themselves to us in the next. I really feared that every precaution would have proved unavailing against such multiplied embarrassments, and that ere night we should have possessed only the wrecks of the expedition. From this state of anxiety, however, we were unexpectedly relieved, by our arrival at 2 p.m. at the termination of the Morumbidgee; from which we were launched into a broad and noble river, flowing from E. to W. at the rate of two and a half knots per hour, over a clear and sandy bed, of a medium width of from three to four hundred feet.

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During the first stages of our journey upon this new river, which evidently had its rise in the mountains of the S.E., we made rapid progress to the W.N.W. through an unbroken and uninteresting country of equal sameness of feature and of vegetation. On the 23rd, as the boats were proceeding down it, several hundreds of natives made their appearance upon the right bank, having assembled with premeditated purposes of violence. I was the more surprised at this show of hostility, because we had passed on general friendly terms, not only with those on the Morumbidgee, but of the new river. Now, however, emboldened by numbers, they seemed determined on making the first attack, and soon worked themselves into a state of frenzy by loud and vehement shouting. As I observed that the water was shoaling fast, I kept in the middle of the stream; and, under an impression that it would be impossible for me to avoid a conflict, prepared for an obstinate resistance. But, at the very moment when, having arrived opposite to a large sand bank, on which they had collected, the foremost of the blacks had already advanced into the water, and I only awaited their nearer approach to fire upon them, their impetuosity was restrained by the most unlooked for and unexpected interference. They held back of a sudden, and allowed us to pass unmolested. The boat, however, almost immediately grounded on a shoal that stretched across the river, over which she was with some difficulty hauled into deeper water,—when we found ourselves opposite to a large junction from the eastward, little inferior to the river itself. Had I been aware of this circumstance, I should have been the more anxious with regard to any rupture with the natives, and I was now happy to find that most of them had laid aside their weapons and had crossed the junction, it appearing that they had previously been on a tongue of land formed by the two streams. I therefore landed among them to satisfy their curiosity and to distribute a few presents before I proceeded up it. We were obliged to use the four oars to stem the current against us; but, as soon as we had passed the mouth, got into deeper water, and found easier pulling, The parallel in which we struck it, and the direction from which it came, combined to assure me that this could be no other than the “Darling.” To the distance of two miles it retained a breadth of one hundred yards and a depth of twelve feet. Its banks were covered with verdure, and the trees overhanging them were of finer and larger growth than those on the new river by which we had approached it. Its waters had a shade of green, and were more turbid than those of its neighbours, but they were perfectly sweet to the taste.

Having satisfied myself on those points on which I was most anxious, we returned to the junction to examine it more closely.

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The angle formed by the Darling with the new river is so acute, that neither can be said to be tributary to the other; but more important circumstances, upon which it is impossible for me to dwell at the present moment, mark them as distinct rivers, which have been formed by Nature for the same purposes, in remote and opposite parts of the island. Not having as yet given a name to the latter, I now availed myself of the opportunity of complying with the known wishes of His Excellency the Governor, and, at the same time, in accordance with my own feelings as a soldier I distinguished it by that of the "Murray."

It had been my object to ascertain the decline of the vast plain through which the Murray flows, that I might judge of the probable fall of the waters of the interior; but by the most attentive observation I could not satisfy myself upon the point. The course of the Darling now confirmed my previous impression that it was to the south, which direction it was evident the Murray also, in the subsequent stages of our journey down it, struggled to preserve; from which it was thrown by a range of minor elevations into a more westerly one. We were carried as far as 139 degrees 40 minutes of longitude, without descending below 34 degrees in point of latitude; in consequence of which I expected that the river would ultimately discharge itself, either into St. Vincent's Gulf or that of Spencer, more especially as lofty ranges were visible in the direction of them from the summit of the hills behind our camp, on the 2nd of February, which I laid down as the coast line bounding them.

A few days prior to the 2nd of February, we passed under some cliffs of partial volcanic origin, and had immediately afterwards entered a limestone country of the most singular formation. The river, although we had passed occasional rapids of the most dangerous kind, had maintained a sandy character from our first acquaintance with it to the limestone division. It now forced itself through a glen of that rock of half a mile in width, frequently striking precipices of more than two hundred feet perpendicular elevation, in which coral and fossil remains were plentifully embedded. On the 3rd February it made away to the eastward of south, in reaches of from two to four miles in length. It gradually lost its sandy bed, and became deep, still, and turbid; the glen expanded into a valley, and the alluvial flats, which had hitherto been of inconsiderable size, became proportionally extensive. The Murray increased in breadth to more than four hundred yards, with a depth of twenty feet of water close into the shore, and in fact formed itself into a safe and navigable stream for any vessels of the minor class. On the 6th the cliffs partially ceased, and on the 7th they gave place to undulating and picturesque hills, beneath which thousands of acres of the richest flats extended, covered, however, with reeds, and apparently subject to overflow at any unusual rise of the river.

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It is remarkable that the view from the hills was always confined.—We were apparently running parallel to a continuation of the ranges we had seen on the 2nd, but they were seldom visible. The country generally seemed darkly wooded, and had occasional swells upon it, but it was one of no promise; the timber, chiefly box and pine, being of a poor growth, and its vegetation languid. On the 8th the hills upon the left wore a bleak appearance, and the few trees upon them were cut down as if by the prevailing winds. At noon we could not observe any land at the extremity of a reach we had just entered; some gentle hills still continued to form the left bank of the river, but the right was hid from us by high reeds. I consequently landed to survey the country from the nearest eminence, and found that we were just about to enter an extensive lake which stretched away to the S.W., the line of water meeting the horizon in that direction. Some tolerably lofty ranges were visible to the westward at the distance of forty miles, beneath which that shore was lost in haze. A hill, which I prejudged to be Mount Lofty, bearing by compass S. 141 degrees W. More to the northward, the country was low and unbacked by any elevations. A bold promontory, which projected into the lake at the distance of seven leagues, ended the view to the south along the eastern shore; between which and the river the land also declined. The prospect altogether was extremely gratifying, and the lake appeared to be a fitting reservoir for the whole stream which had led us to it.

In the evening we passed the entrance; but a strong southerly wind heading us, we did not gain more than nine miles. In the morning it shifted to the N.E. where we stood out for the promontory on a S.S.W. course. At noon we were abreast of it, when a line of sand hummocks was ahead, scarcely visible in consequence of the great refraction about them; but an open sea behind us from the N.N.W. to the N.N.E. points of the compass. A meridian altitude observed here, placed us in 35 degrees 25 minutes 15 seconds S. lat.—At 1, I changed our course a little to the westward, and at 4 p.m. entered an arm of the lake leading W.S.W. On the point, at the entrance, some natives had assembled, but I could not communicate with them. They were both painted and armed, and evidently intended to resist our landing. Wishing, however, to gain some information from them, I proceeded a short distance below their haunt, and landed for the night, in hopes that, seeing us peaceably disposed, they would have approached the tents; but as they kept aloof, we continued our journey in the morning. The water, which had risen ten inches during the night, had fallen again in the same proportion, and we were stopped by shoals shortly after starting. In hopes that the return of tide would have enabled us to float over them, we waited for it very patiently, but were ultimately obliged to drag the boat across a mud-flat of more than a quarter of a mile into deeper

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water; but, after a run of about twenty minutes, were again checked by sand banks. My endeavours to push beyond a certain point were unsuccessful, and I was at length under the necessity of landing upon the south shore for the night. Some small hummocks were behind us, on the other side of which I had seen the ocean from our morning's position; and whilst the men were pitching the tents, walked over them in company with Mr. M'Leay to the sea shore, having struck the coast at Encounter Bay, Cape Jervis, bearing by compass S. 81 degrees W. distant between three and four leagues, and Kangaroo Island S.E. extremity S. 60 degrees W. distant from nine to ten.

Thirty-two days had elapsed since we had left the depot, and I regretted in this stage of our journey, that I could not with prudence remain an hour longer on the coast than was necessary for me to determine the exit of the lake. From the angle of the channel on which we were, a bright sand-hill was visible at about nine miles distance to the E.S.E.; which, it struck me, was the eastern side of the passage communicating with the ocean. Having failed in our attempts to proceed further in the boat, and the appearance of the shoals at low water having convinced me of the impracticability of it, I determined on an excursion along the sea-shore to the southward and eastward, in anxious hopes that it would be a short one; for as we had had a series of winds from the S.W. which had now changed to the opposite quarter, I feared we should have to pull across the lake in our way homewards. I left the camp therefore at an early hour, in company with Mr. M'Leay and Fraser, and at day-break arrived opposite to the sand-bank I have mentioned. Between us and it the entrance into the back water ran. The passage is at all periods of the tide rather more than a quarter of a mile in width, and is of sufficient depth for a boat to enter, especially on the off side; but a line of dangerous breakers in the bay will always prevent an approach to it from the sea, except in the calmest weather, whilst the bay itself will always be a hazardous place for any vessels to enter under any circumstances.

Having, however, satisfactorily concluded our pursuit, we retraced our steps to the camp, and again took the following bearings as we left the beach, the strand trending E.S.E. 1/2 E.:—

Kangaroo Island, S.E. angle	S. 60 degrees W..
Low rocky point of Cape Jervis	S. 81 degrees W.
Round Hill in centre of Range	S. 164 degrees W.
Camp, distant one mile	S. 171 degrees W.
Mount Lofty, distant forty miles	N. 9 degrees E.

Before setting sail, a bottle was deposited between four and five feet deep in a mound of soft earth and shells, close to the spot on which the tent had stood, which contained a

paper of the names of the party, together with a simple detail of our arrival and departure.

It appeared that the good fortune, which had hitherto attended us was still to continue, for the wind which had been contrary, chopped round to the S.W., and ere sunset we were again in the mouth of the river, having run from fifty to sixty miles under as much canvass as the boat would bear, and with a heavy swell during the greater part of the day.

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The lake which has thus terminated our journey, is from fifty to sixty miles in length, and from thirty to forty in width. With such an expanse of water, I am correct in stating its medium depth at four feet. There is a large bight in it to the S.E. and a beautiful and extensive bay to the N.W. At about seven miles from the mouth of the river, its waters are brackish, and at twenty-one miles they are quite salt, whilst seals frequent the lower parts. Considering this lake to be of sufficient importance, and in anticipation that its shores will, during her reign, if not at an earlier period, be peopled by some portion of her subjects, I have called it, in well-meant loyalty, "The Lake Alexandrina."

It is remarkable that the Murray has few tributaries below the Darling. It receives one, however, of considerable importance from the S.E., to which I have given the name of the "Lindesay," as a mark of respect to my commanding-officer, and in remembrance of the many acts of kindness I have received at his hands.

Having dwelt particularly on the nature of the country through which the expedition has passed in the pages of my journal, it may be unnecessary for me to enter into any description of it in this place, further than to observe, that the limestone continued down to the very coast, and that although the country in the neighbourhood of the Lake Alexandrina must, from local circumstances, be rich in point of soil, the timber upon it is of stunted size, and that it appears to have suffered from drought, though not to the same extent with the eastern coast. It is evident, however, that its vicinity to high lands does not altogether exempt it from such periodical visitations; still I have no doubt that my observations upon it will convince His Excellency the Governor, that it is well worthy of a closer, and more attentive examination, than I had it in my power to make.

In a geographical point of view, I am happy to believe that the result of this expedition has been conclusive; and that, combined with the late one, it has thrown much light upon the nature of the interior of the vast Island; that the decline of waters, as far as the parallel of 139 degrees E., is to the south, and that the Darling is to the N.E. as the Murray is to the S.E. angle of the coast, the main channel by which the waters of the central ranges are thrown or discharged into one great reservoir.

Our journey homewards was only remarkable for its labour: in conclusion, therefore, it remains for me to add that we reached the depot on the 23rd of March.

Our sugar failed us on the 18th of February, and our salt provisions, in consequence of the accident which happened to the skiff, on the 8th of March; so that from the above period we were living on a reduced ration of flour; and as we took few fish, and were generally unsuccessful with our guns, the men had seldom more than their bread to eat.

I regretted to observe that they were daily falling off, and that although unremitting in their exertions they were well nigh exhausted, ere we reached the Morumbidgee.

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We were from sunrise to five o'clock on the water, and from the day that we left the depot to that of our return we never rested upon our oars. We were thirty-nine days gaining the depot from the coast, against a strong current in both rivers, being seven more than it took us to go down. From the depot to this station we had seventeen days hard pulling, making a total of eighty-eight, during which time we could not have travelled over less than 2000 miles. I was under the necessity of stopping short on the 10th instant, and of detaching two men for the drays, which happily arrived on the 17th, on which day our stock of flour failed us. Had I not adopted this plan, the men would have become too weak to have pulled up to Pondebadgery, and we should no doubt have suffered some privations.

This detail will, I am sure, speak more in favour of the men composing the party than anything I can say. I would most respectfully recommend them all to His Excellency's notice; and I beg to assure him that, during the whole of this arduous journey, they were cheerful, zealous, and obedient. They had many harassing duties to perform, and their patience and temper were often put to severe trials by the natives, of whom we could not have seen fewer than 4000 on the Murray alone.

I am to refer His Excellency the Governor to Mr. M'Leay for any more immediate information he may require,—to whom I stand indebted on many points—and not less in the anxiety he evinced for the success of the undertaking, than in the promptitude with which he assisted in the labours attendant on our return, and his uniform kindness to the men.

I have the honour to subscribe myself,
Sir,
Your most obedient humble Servant,
Charles sturt,
Captain of the 39th Regt.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary.

END OF VOLUME II