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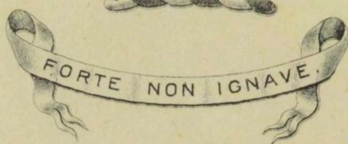


Alfred Lee.

CASE .... SHELF ....

No. ....

RECOLLECTIONS

OF

BUSH LIFE IN AUSTRALIA,

DURING A

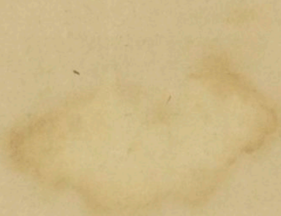
RESIDENCE OF EIGHT YEARS IN THE INTERIOR.

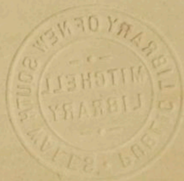
BY

HENRY WILLIAM HAYGARTH, ESQ.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1848.





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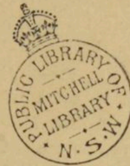

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RECOLLECTIONS

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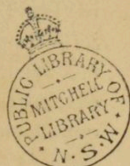

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INTRODUCTION.

IT is now more than ten years since Australia was at the zenith of its prosperity and reputation. At that time it annually attracted to its shores a considerable share of British capital and enterprise. Many of the resources of the country had been developed, with surprising skill and energy, by the Anglo-Saxon race, which has ever furnished the most industrious and successful colonists; and the progress of improvement was proportionably rapid. Australia was the land of promise. Companies were formed, which realized large profits. The most triumphant reports reached home by public and private channels, and these reports were confirmed to the fullest extent by the successful adventurers who returned.

A class of persons were induced to emigrate, who had hitherto never thought of casting their lot out of England; and by all extravagant expectations were entertained—expectations which no natural advantages of the country could warrant, and no continuance of its prosperity could have fulfilled.

About the year 1840 the tide of fortune began to ebb. Immigration, the most important element of the welfare of an infant colony, was checked. The system of unbounded credit, which had produced its usual over-stimulating effects, was suddenly destroyed; and a panic ensued, bringing with it a series of pecuniary embarrassments, which almost amounted to a public bankruptcy, and caused a shock throughout the community, from which the colony is only now recovering.

Since this commencement of its adversity, Australia has been paying the penalty of having been over-praised and flattered in its prosperity. Its real advantages have been undervalued ; it has been blamed for faults not its own, and made responsible for casualties from which no country is exempt. In the overweening confidence of full-blown prosperity, the ordinary precautions had been neglected, the means usually thought necessary to ensure success had been dispensed with, and the most extravagant speculations had been made.

When the time of re-action arrived, an extraordinary fall of prices was the immediate consequence ; and the over-sanguine colonist, who had ventured his all in the hope of a speedy return to the land of his birth with a competent fortune, found not only that the prospect of wealth was removed to an indefinite distance, but that he could no longer withdraw from the adventure, and that he must remain chained to the spot, unless he chose to retire with the loss of the greater part of his capital. He had probably expended more on his stock and establishment than it would have been prudent to lay out, even if he could have had a guarantee of the continued prosperity of the colony ; and, in the moment of distress, he blames Australia for his disappointment, and not his own want of prudence and foresight.

Australia, it must be admitted, has failed to realize the expectations which it once had raised ; yet much that has been said in its praise is still undeniably true. Few countries have been more highly favoured by nature ; its many yet undeveloped resources, the interesting peculiarities of its animal and vegetable productions, the great success with which those of other countries have been naturalized on its soil, and its healthy and genial climate, all speak strongly in its favour.

It is not a country in which a large fortune can be rapidly made from a small capital ; it is not a country in which thirst for gain will supply the place of knowledge of business, or in which haste and rashness will obtain the rewards of prudence and perseverance. In Australia, as elsewhere, markets are liable to be overstocked and prices to fluctuate ; like other countries, it is subject to natural casualties beyond the control of man ; but it may be doubted whether, upon the whole, any country could with better prospect of success be adopted by the English-

man who is urged by a spirit of adventure, or induced by the hope of improving his situation, to wander from his native land.

The pursuits of the interior, as is generally known, are chiefly pastoral, and these necessitate an active, independent mode of life, which is congenial to English taste, and is singularly attractive to the young. In no position of life, perhaps (as will hereafter be shown), is business so much blended with amusement. For these pursuits the country still holds out an adequate encouragement, and will not disappoint the settler whose expectations are not raised unreasonably high.

If I am compelled to admit the ill-judged haste with which some of my countrymen entered into speculation in Australia, I must also bear testimony to the firmness with which they have met adversity. Whatever had been their previous education and pursuits, nothing could exceed the zeal and energy with which they have learned the business, and adapted themselves to the habits of pastoral life; and not a few among them, who had been brought up to luxury and refinement, have become so enamoured of their new existence, that they would not readily embrace any other less independent, or, as we should call it here, more civilized.

During my residence in the interior, I was in the habit of noting down in a journal the principal events of a life so new, and the most interesting sights of a country so strange. I had at that time no idea of publication: my motive was to preserve, for my own satisfaction, the impressions made upon me by new objects while they yet retained their freshness; believing that, if it should be my fate to return to England, this record of my Australian life would be interesting to me hereafter; or that if my lot should be cast in the colony, it would be amusing to me to look back on the first impressions made by scenes which would then have become too familiar to excite remark.

It is from these notes that I have drawn up my 'Recollections of the Bush.'

Most readers know, or will readily guess, that "the Bush" is the name given to the districts which lie beyond the limits of the colony, and are occupied entirely as a grazing country. In these wild and extensive regions are now gathered such numbers of our countrymen, that in English society there are few who cannot mention some relation or acquaintance among the list of emi-

grants ; and it is the hope of gratifying the curiosity of some of those who have thus an interest in our Australian settlements, which has cheered me on in the task of extracting from my journal such notices as, corrected by subsequent experience and observation, will present most clearly to the reader, in all its details, an idea of pastoral life at the antipodes.

The graver subjects of colonial politics, and commercial and statistical details, I leave to those who are better qualified to discuss them. My situation in a remote district, and the nature of my occupations, gave me no facilities for procuring any new or valuable information on these important points.

I have omitted as far as possible all beaten subjects, which, however amusing, have already been exhausted by others. It has been my object to confine my notices to scenes that I have witnessed myself, and to the life of which I have had eight years' experience, in the hope of making that experience serviceable to those who may tread the same path hereafter.

Bearing this main object in view, I have endeavoured to avoid all exaggeration, and to deserve at least the praise of strict impartiality—to write as one neither soured by disappointment nor elevated by success.

I would fain set before the young colonist's eyes, as clearly and dispassionately as I can, the mode of life he must embrace; neither throwing over its hardships the air of romance and adventure, to captivate his imagination, nor drawing ludicrous pictures of its privations and incongruities, to shock his taste and love of refinement.

Such advice as my experience suggests I venture to offer; and if any one of my countrymen is dissuaded by a faithful account of a Bush life from adopting a course to which he is unfitted, or if any one, who still persists in his design of emigrating, is saved from the errors which have been so mischievous to many of his predecessors, I shall have the satisfaction of not having written in vain.

It is necessary to beg the reader's indulgence for the style of the following pages. I would not have shrunk from any degree of labour which might have been necessary to render them more fit for the perusal of the public, but I feared that, in making the attempt, I should deprive them of the air of freshness and truth, which I cannot but feel is their only recommendation.

CHAPTER I.

Early Impressions of Australia—Start for the Interior—Mode of Travelling—Receding Civilization—Scenery—A Way-side Inn—Bush Innkeepers—Alarming Reports—Passing the boundaries of the Colony—Definition of "the Bush"—Arrival at the Station.

I WELL remember how vague and confused, and in many points how unlike the truth, were my early ideas of Australia, of which as yet I had only heard, and to see which I was about to cross some sixteen thousand weary miles of ocean. I had read of some of the most remarkable peculiarities which distinguish its animal and vegetable productions, and I longed more and more to see the country of black swans and bronze pigeons,—of trees that shed their bark instead of their leaves,—cherries that produce their stones on the outside of the fruit,—of cuckoos that, in the same spirit of contradiction, are heard only by night,—and, finally, of that strange anomaly, the ornithorhynchus paradoxus, which, from its peculiar attributes, seems to realize the show-man's description of the animal that "could not live on land, and died in the water."

In everything, as well as in its geographical position, Australia seemed to my fancy to be the direct opposite—the antipodes of England. I became more and more perplexed by every attempt to picture to my mind my future residence, "the Bush;" and I anxiously wondered whether it would prove to be a tangled mass of brushwood, or a barren and desolate heath, or, again, a dense forest, where the axe alone could clear away a spot for the destined abode of the white man.

It was with great satisfaction, therefore, that, some six months subsequently to these speculations, I found myself on the point of having my curiosity satisfied, and without regret I left farther and farther behind me at every step the less interesting civilization of Sydney, as with a well-equipped party we proceeded on our journey towards a station many hundred miles in the interior.

The most usual, and certainly the most agreeable, mode of

travelling in Australia is on horseback: there are coaches which run to a great distance from the capital, but they are of so inferior a description, that, like their now neglected brethren of the present day in England, they are filled only by those who cannot avoid them: for the first stage or two out of the capital they are tolerable enough, but at each change of carriage they gradually dwindle away from good to indifferent, and from indifferent to grotesque, until at last the traveller finds himself seated in a vehicle to which the name of coach can be applied only by courtesy or by metaphor. But on horseback he is thoroughly independent: the valise, strapped on neatly in front of the saddle, contains his whole wardrobe; and, being master of his own time, he can dispose of it to the best advantage. When the weather is hot he can indulge in a few hours' rest at noon, while his horse crops the herbage around him; to make up for which delay, he will push on during the cool of the evening; and, if he is not wholly destitute of the "organ of locality," he can make many a short cut, which will sensibly diminish the dreary length of his journey.

At first he has some power of choice in fixing on a resting-place for the night; but, as he gradually leaves behind him the "big smoke" (as the aborigines picturesquely call the town), the accommodations become more and more scanty, until at length a night in the open air is the sole alternative, if he fails to reach the solitary wayside inn. As he proceeds farther and farther into the interior, it is curious to remark the gradual descent in the scale of civilization, until scarcely a remnant of it is left. As the royal Sydney mail subsides into a vehicle little better than a market-cart, so the stone or brick hotel gives place to the weatherboard cottage, and this in due time dwindles down to the slab hut beyond the boundaries of the colony, where the traveller's entertainment is confined to the "old thing," as it is contemptuously called, that is to say, beef and "damper"—a sort of cake with which we shall be more familiar as we proceed—and that of his horse to a pair of hobbles, and injunctions from his master to be within sight at daybreak.

From his first few days' journey in the interior the traveller would be apt to form a very unfavourable opinion of Australian scenery. Shortly after leaving the capital he plunges into a vast

mass of forest, through which the route is very uninviting: the trees, which are nearly all of the eucalyptus or gum species (among the least picturesque of the forest tribes), present little or no variety, either in trunk or foliage, except where the bark, hanging in tattered festoons from the branches, reminds him that he is in the land of contrarieties; the sun shines with a ceaseless glare, and, gaining its full power soon after its rise, abates not a jot in its vigour, until, with seeming reluctance and an evident promise of another warm visit on the morrow, it sinks below the horizon. Not a bird is to be seen, not a note enlivens the ear; the awful silence is broken only by the dreary cry of the locust, which from somewhere or other (for, as we are told of deceased postboys and donkeys, nobody ever sees one) keeps up the same sing-song chirp, which rings in one's ears long after the sound itself has died away.

Yet Australia has many beauties; and though its wood-scenery is monotonous, its plains and "open forest" can boast a delightful variety. Many spots are to be met with which are truly picturesque, and these, like oases in the desert, are doubly agreeable, from the contrast.

There is nothing more pleasant during a journey "up the country" than, after a long ride through the forest, to emerge, towards evening, upon some clear and verdant space, surrounded by woods, not terminating abruptly, but shelving down, and opening gradually, as if placed there by the hand of nature as a picturesque fringe to the plain. Here there is a brief but delightful change of sight and sound; the chirp of the locust ceases, and the murmur of bleating flocks and lowing herds soothes the ear, while the eye dwells refreshed upon a variety of water and pasture, and marks the distant white smoke, which, curling upwards against a dark mass of wooded hills, points out the habitation of man; the "coach-whip," with his peculiar jerking cry, excites the curiosity of the stranger; and the bell-bird, never found but in the vicinity of water, adds its musical note. But soon, as the traveller journeys onward, the forest once more closes behind him, and shuts out from view the favoured spot.

After one of these passing glimpses of civilization, it is not without some slight misgivings that the stranger in the colony continues his route, until a casual meeting with a flock of sheep,

or drove of half-wild cattle or horses, hurrying down to market, or with the slow and ponderous wool-dray, again cheers his spirits, as it tells of habitable regions still farther in the interior.

Again the forest opens, and discovers the "running fence" of a paddock, leading to a wayside inn, at the erection of which Nature seems to have lent her aid; and, as if to spare the labours of the axe, to have purposely created a gap just spacious enough for its site, beyond which the gum-trees are once more seen, as dense and monotonous as ever.

The arrival of a party of travellers at a bush-inn in Australia creates little of that eagerness to "give satisfaction" and anticipate the strangers' wants, that is to be met with at most decent country-inns in a land of competition. The owner of the house is usually civil, but the tone of his reception is very unlike what we are used to in the mother-country; and, while he sets forth his accommodations for the benefit of his guests, he does so with the air of a man who is thoroughly aware of the fact that between his own house and the nearest in any direction lie not less than perhaps twenty good miles. Upon the whole, when the traveller rides away on the following morning, he has no reason to

> "Sigh to think he still has found
> His warmest welcome at an Inn;"

for at many of the settlers' houses, where he gives for his entertainment no other equivalent than his company, his reception will generally be far more cordial.

The fact is, that the chief source of profit to a bush-innkeeper is the custom of the labouring classes. The tap-room is his first consideration, not the parlour; and he more gladly hails the arrival of a party of stock-keepers, bullock-drivers, and men of that stamp, who he knows will drink deep and give little trouble, than that of a better class of travellers, who will require more attendance without a proportionate expenditure.

The larder is necessarily kept on a most limited scale, owing to that pest of the colony, the blow-fly. Eggs and bacon form a standing dish at all country-inns in Australia, as being quickly prepared, and generally preferred to salt-beef, which it is a point of etiquette not to set before the traveller towards the interior, where he must necessarily get too much of it. If a dainty

stranger should attempt to improve his fare by ordering poultry, he must be contented to feast upon the same bird which narrowly escaped his horse's heels as he rode up to the inn, and which he has probably encountered a second time since his arrival, as it came rushing into the house, all legs and wings, screaming dismally, and hotly pursued by the cook.

In less steady climates country-innkeepers are said to avail themselves of their weather-wisdom to detain a hesitating guest by prognostications of bad weather. The dry atmosphere and cloudless skies of Australia drive the cunning host to a different resource, but one still more efficacious with new-comers to the colony—the prevalence of bushrangers, who, somehow or other, always happen to infest the road which the traveller is destined to take at the time. These stories are occasionally only too true, but so many are fabrications, that perhaps the best way is to turn a deaf ear to them altogether. However, the stranger who listens to them will find them "full of incident," and very alarming, especially if he should arrive at an inn at that time of day which renders it doubtful whether he ought to proceed or make himself at home for the night. He will be informed how Mr. Longbow, the member of council, was stopped "only yesterday, and robbed of his horse, valise, and 'all the et-ceteras' of his style," by the well-known "croppies"—"Black Joe" or "Irish Jem," one of whom afterwards relented, and in a very handsome manner gave him back his inexpressibles. There will be an account of the disasters which befell Mr. Woolpack, the rich Bathurst settler, who, being suspected of tyrannizing over his men, was tied up to a gum-tree, and only saved from a strong infliction of the stirrup-leather by a false alarm of the approach of the police, upon which the bushrangers decamped, leaving him in a state of bondage, where at nightfall he would infallibly have been eaten alive by native dogs, had he not been fortunately rescued by some "gentle shepherd."

There is one advantage to be derived from these exciting stories: the thought that they may for once prove true often serves to keep the traveller on his mettle when his energies are beginning to flag, and his body to weary, with the deep solitude and the length of the road.

Such is the usual routine of a journey on horseback from

Sydney into the interior, and such were the events by which my first trip is imprinted on my memory.

Having travelled in this manner some 230 miles in a south-westerly direction from Sydney, we reached the extreme boundary of the colony, beyond which lay, not as a new-comer might naturally expect, a still more uncivilized region, a sort of sylvan chaos, but a country at least as thickly populated and as much reclaimed from the wilds as any that our last two days' journey had shown us; it was, in fact, one of the large grazing districts, covered with as many flocks and herds as the pasture could feed or the neighbouring stockowners allow, without appealing at once to the commissioner of crown lands, with a grievous outcry at the encroachment.

By this time, however, I began to understand the value of that hackneyed expression "the bush," which had formerly perplexed me so much, and to see that it meant little more or less than the country at the antipodes.

Its precise definition, however, like that of the north, is perhaps not so easily given, even by an old colonist: the resident in Sydney would be apt to consider it any place beyond the suburbs of the town; the Haukesbury or Illawarra farmer would place it between 30 and 100 miles from the capital; while the distant settler, the *bonâ fide* bushman, would smile at such fireside notions, and from his dwelling, 300 miles from Port Jackson, he still talks of "going into the bush," which in his sense of the term implies his own lonely out-stations, or regions yet untrodden by the white man; in short, any place beyond the boundaries of his own homestead, and "on this side Sundown."

As a young Englishman draws near the end of his journey, some eight or ten days after leaving the capital, and sees his future abode, where his romance is about to be realized in the actual experience of life in the Bush: his first question perhaps may be, Am I to laugh or cry? Perhaps he has left behind him an affectionate home and a refined society. He brings with him cultivated tastes and a polished education, in which has been included not one subject or branch of knowledge that can be of the slightest use to him in his present pursuits. Perhaps he is conscious that he cast the die in mere wantonness, though on the result of the throw depended the fortunes and complexion of his

whole future life. Is it surprising that, at the moment of completing the sacrifice, he should feel a thrill of compunction? But one qualification he brings with him, in which our young English adventurers are seldom deficient, and which in time supplies the place of all others: I mean that combination of active and passive courage which we call pluck, and for which I know no other term equally comprehensive. He will not acknowledge, even to himself, his hesitation, or rising disappointment. He takes a second survey. He has not wandered away from the old country in search of luxuries; and, upon second thoughts, the appearance of his recent purchase is as promising as he has a right to expect beyond the boundaries of a colony, itself the antipodes of Europe; so, dismissing from his mind all comparisons with home, and all unreasonable expectations or too flattering pictures, he turns and cheerfully contemplates the reality.

The sun was sinking for the ninth time since our departure from the shores of Port Jackson, as our horses stopped to drink at the ford of a pebbly-margined river which ran in front of our station. At that time great expectations were generally entertained as to the fortunes that might be realized in the colony, and my hopes of success and a speedy return were high. Yet I am not ashamed to own, that at this trying hour misgivings *would* arise to sadden my prospects. I was prepared for hardship, but I had hazarded an important step: was I to reap the harvest of my expectations? or had I given up friends, family, civilization, and dear old England, in vain? My companion asked me what I was thinking about; I would not tell him I was thinking of home.

And yet I was better off than many, for we had purchased an "improved station." Scattered here and there over a considerable space of ground, stood the various buildings, eight or ten in number, of which it was composed. In front was the owner's residence, a better sort of wooden cottage, chiefly distinguished on the outside by a verandah; behind and on either side of the house were several huts of an inferior structure, the abodes of the working men. The wool-shed, a long rambling building, surrounded by several low sheep-yards, stood out by itself; while on a distant "flat" appeared a large space, fenced round for a wheat "paddock;" and in another direction a most for-

midable-looking enclosure, covering about half an acre of ground, formed the stockyard for cattle. The whole was backed by some low hills, thinly wooded, and agreeably receding in the distance, and at the foot of these appeared a chain of clear ponds or "waterholes." The general aspect of the place, though holding out, it must be owned, but little promise of luxury, and hardly more of that greater desideratum—comfort, had yet, I remember, an interesting and primitive air, as it thus appeared starting up in the midst of desolation; and this it was which caused it speedily to find favour in the eyes of its new occupants, and stimulated them to toil for its further improvement.

CHAPTER II.

A Head Station in the Interior—Disposition of the Stock—Arrangement of the Buildings—Bush Architecture—An Out-station—Forming a new Station—A Race for Fresh Pasture—A Settler's Stratagem—Anecdotes—Shifting Stock—Hardships—Mode of Watching Cattle by Night—An Encampment in the Bush.

THE residence of a stockowner beyond the boundaries of the colony is usually situated in the most central part of his "station," as that portion of territory is called of which he holds the temporary possession, it being in fact the property of the crown, to which he annually pays a certain sum for permission to depasture his stock thereon. By stock, in Australia, are understood sheep, horned cattle, and horses ; some breeders turn their whole attention to the former, and some confine it to the two latter conjointly, but, generally speaking, it is usual, as it is most judicious and profitable, to combine each sort.

On an establishment where each kind of stock is kept, they are separated as much as possible, different parts of the station being allotted to each ; the object of this is to prevent their interfering with each other, to their mutual detriment; for though horses and cattle will feed together upon the same spots, yet both have a strong antipathy to the vicinity of sheep, so much so that there is no more effectual method of driving them away than by feeding a flock or two of sheep over their pasture grounds.

The sheep, therefore, are "put out" at smaller "stations," on which two or three flocks are grazed ; these are generally from two to five miles distant from the residence of the proprietor, or overseer, and for the most part consist merely of a single hut, capable of accommodating two or three men, and are erected in such parts of the station as are particularly favourable to sheep, which, being the most profitable stock, receive the greatest share of attention. The judicious manager, however, contrives to make the most of his run, as well as of his stock, by placing

each sort upon those parts which, from the quality of the pasture, and nature of the country, are best suited to their habits; he occupies the dry hills and sound plains with his sheep, and allows his cattle to appropriate the spots most congenial to their nature, such as river banks, swampy creeks, and the moist, low grounds, generally; while his horses, which, though of a rambling disposition, do not require such constant inspection as the rest, are suffered to roam far and wide, over the whole station, and are not much restricted so long as they do not transgress its extreme bounds.

The head station, at which the owner or superintendent resides, is generally so situated as to be as nearly as possible equidistant from the several sheep stations, to which frequent visits are necessary. The huts, paddocks, and various other "improvements," as they are generally called, are often spread out here and there, over a large space of ground, the land being of little value; and perhaps on this account it is, that a large establishment, though composed separately of very rude materials, presents, upon the whole, from its extent, rather an imposing appearance, especially when viewed from a distance.

The principal buildings are generally placed upon a gentle eminence, slightly removed from the rest, and consist of the owner's residence, the kitchen, and store; the two latter, situated behind the former, are generally mere huts, built after the ordinary bush fashion, of wooden slabs, whitewashed on the outside, and roofed with the bark of trees; the proprietor's abode has, however, greater pretensions to comfort and external effect; the rough slabs of which it is built, in common with the other edifices, are concealed by lath and plaster, which, being whitewashed, and "lined" on the outside so as to resemble a stone structure, has a more substantial appearance. Weather-board cottages, which are better and more expensive, are occasionally constructed: but though very common nearer the capital, and in the more settled parts of the colony, they are looked on as a sort of unnecessary luxury, beyond the boundaries. The roof is covered with shingles, instead of the more unsightly bark of trees, while a verandah is carried out in front, and frequently serves, in default of any other external distinction, to point out to a stranger the owner's abode.

The largest building on the whole establishment is the wool-shed, where the sheep are shorn, and the wool stowed, during the short time it remains upon the station, previously to its being sent to Sydney ; it is usually placed at some little distance from the owner's residence, and is also constructed of wooden slabs, with a roof of bark, but is much higher and longer than the other buildings, and somewhat resembles a barn or out-house ; it is floored with narrow slabs of wood, to protect the fleeces from dirt, whilst the sheep are shorn, for which purpose they are always placed on the ground. The door of the wool-shed opens upon several low yards, used at shearing time to separate the sheep, while a higher fence encloses a larger space beyond, which is used as a stackyard for wheat and hay ; a wool-press, and a table on which the fleeces are folded, constitute the only furniture of the interior.

Still further off, an open space is occupied by the stockyard, for the reception of the numerous herds of cattle and horses ; and nearer the house is another yard of similar construction, but much smaller, in which the cows are milked, working oxen yoked, saddle horses driven when they are wanted, and cattle slaughtered for home consumption ; for this latter purpose it is furnished with what is usually known as a gallows, which is simply formed by two saplings, about twenty feet high, forked at the top, on which is laid a strong cross piece, to which the carcase of the animal is pulled up by means of a windlass, fixed outside the yard, and thus it is suspended to cool during the night. The abodes of the working men, which are merely slab huts of the rudest description, each containing two rooms or divisions, are scattered here and there, usually in the back ground, and complete the picture of the head station.

Bush, or slab huts, are built wholly of wood, in the following manner: four posts are sunk in the ground to a depth varying with the height and size of the building, and form the four corners : these support long beams, or wall-plates, grooved on the under side, and immediately beneath these again wooden sleepers are laid in the ground, a little below the surface, which are grooved similarly to the wall-plates, and are, in fact, the main foundations of the building ; the sides, or wooden walls, are formed of slabs, the ends of which are respectively fitted into

these grooved plates, and the sides are smoothed off with the adze to make them fit close together. On the wall-plates a simple roof is fixed in the usual manner, the covering of which consists either of shingles, or of the long wiry grass of the country, or of the bark of trees, usually of the "stringy bark," or of the box-tree. The bark is stripped from the trunk in sheets of about six feet by three, and is fastened to the roof by means of a wooden frame, so constructed as to press some part of every sheet, and thus to keep down the whole. The chimneys, which are placed outside at either end, are also built of wood, and are fortified on the inside with stone, which is carried up sufficiently high to prevent the flames from reaching the outer slabs.

In the course of a few years, when the stock-owner finds that the station he originally occupied is becoming too small to support the increased numbers of his flocks and herds, (as will be the case if he has met with average success,) he is compelled, in order to prevent his "run" from being too heavily stocked, either to sell off his superfluity, or find new pasturage elsewhere. On this point he uses his own judgment, but as it frequently happens both that the state of the market is unfavourable for effecting sales, and that no unoccupied land is to be procured in the vicinity, even for money, at the time, he has no alternative but to push off with his extra stock in quest of some new country, and there to form a branch, or out-station. Here he erects huts, paddocks, and other "improvements," sufficient for the number of men he purposes leaving in charge of his stock; and hither he makes periodical journeys, more or less frequently, as circumstances render necessary. The requisite supplies are sent by means of bullock teams, which, if the station be a distant one, take at each trip sufficient for six or twelve months, or when the roads are so bad as to be impassable for drays, pack-bullocks are used, which will carry about two hundredweight each.

When the stock at one of these out-stations consists of sheep, it is usual to have them brought in to the head station at shearing time; and when of horses or cattle, the owner travels out to visit them several times during the year, generally in spring, or towards the end of summer, for the purpose of collecting them, branding the young stock, and sending to market any that are fit for sale.

There are few more lonely spots than the majority of these out-stations; they are seldom occupied by more than two or three men—the stock-keeper, who has charge of the herd, and another man, whose business it is to cook, fetch water, grind and bake, and, in short, keep house. The head station, or owner's residence, is distant perhaps 100 miles and upwards, and the nearest habitation of any sort is probably some solitary bush hut, similarly occupied by a herdsman or shepherd, and his helpmate. The settler, though accustomed to the loss of society, is, in truth, seldom fond of visiting these places more often than is absolutely necessary for the welfare of his property; and on returning to his head station, so strong is the contrast, that he feels as if he were restored again to the centre of civilization.

When about to form one of these out-stations, the settler endeavours previously to obtain as much information respecting the country which he intends to occupy as he can procure without divulging his intentions, an indiscretion which would perhaps be equivalent to frustrating them altogether, for some of his neighbours also are probably on the look-out for new pasture; and as the right to a station in a new part of the country beyond the boundaries of the colony belongs, not to the original discoverer, but to him who is the first to occupy it with stock, it behoves him to keep the "whereabouts" of the spot which he has in view as much to himself as possible. But it is always desirable for the stock-owner to visit a new country in person, and form his own opinion as to the quality of its pasture, and other capabilities, previously to taking possession, provided always that he can do so unobserved.

When, however, two parties, having the same object in view, meet on the road, all disguise is at an end, each speedily penetrates the other's object, and the war, with its manœuvres, commences—first possession, in this case, being every point of the law. Under such circumstances, as these, the energy and ingenuity of both parties are called into action; and though the strongest stock and best mounted men have a great advantage, yet the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; stratagem, and the casualties of the road, frequently turn the scale in favour of the weaker side.

As an instance of this I recollect hearing of the ruse by which

a very fine station, many hundred miles in the interior (where I once passed a night), came originally into its owner's possession. He went out by agreement with two or three others on an exploring expedition, in search of new land for grazing purposes, and, after penetrating some very broken and "scrubby" country, they emerged from the forest upon a fine plain, verdant and well watered. He at once saw that it would suit his purpose, provided that he could get the sole possession of it, but that it would be over-stocked if divided. In a case of this sort, I fear that, according to the code of morality in an infant colony, most artifices are accounted fair; so accordingly he seemed to take but little notice of the spot, speaking rather disparagingly of its merits, and expressing his opinion that better country would be discovered by going farther on, and, as his judgment had considerable weight with the party, they all proceeded on their journey. On the following day he was taken ill, and, regretting that he was obliged to return, he left his fellow-travellers to prosecute their search. But, after seeing them fairly on their road, he recovered from the illness which had answered his purpose, and, making his way back to his old station, he speedily returned to the place he had fixed on, with stock sufficient to occupy the whole of it, to the exclusion of his disappointed companions, who discovered too late that his illness had only been what the blacks would have called "plenty too much gammon."

It is upon such occasions as these that the energy which a bush life at no time suffers to stagnate is fully displayed: I remember the instance of a man who was making his way through the country with his stock, drays, &c., for the purpose of occupying a very desirable station in some newly discovered "land of promise." When within a few days of his journey's end he arrived at the foot of a mountain which lay in his road, and which was so steep and difficult of access, that, to a party driving stock, it was considered a good day's journey to accomplish the ascent. Here he was preparing to encamp for the night in the usual way, when he received intelligence that another party, having in view the same object as himself, were halting at a short distance from the top, fully aware of his vicinity, and prepared to start at daybreak on the following morning.

Though all his men were thoroughly wearied by a long day's

journey, he was determined to be first at the goal; so, selecting some of the strongest animals from his herds, he set out again directly, and by dint of working all night succeeded in getting his stock to the top of the mountain before dawn of day. Then making a slightly circuitous route, he pushed a-head of his competitors, who, on arriving at the station they were bound for, were astonished to find it already in the possession of those whom they had believed to be a full day's journey in their rear.

The removal of stock from one part of the country to another is attended with no little trouble and labour: previously to setting out, the sheep must be brought in from the several stations, classed, and counted; the cattle, numbering perhaps upwards of a thousand, have to be driven into the enclosures, and "draughted," or subdivided; the drays must be repaired, and loaded with supplies, and everything requisite for a long trip; this occupies several days, to say nothing of minor delays from stray saddle-horses, and the absence of working bullocks (which seem to have a fellow-feeling with the horses, in never being at hand when most wanted), and from the constant insatiable demands on the part of the servants for every sort of saddlery, bullock-gear, and harness of every description; nor is it the least difficult part of the business to manage the working men at so critical a time, who, thoroughly knowing their own importance on such occasions, are apt, if not treated with great tact, to throw many obstacles in the way of "the master," who often finds that the only means of ending them is by giving orders for starting at once, and feels heartily glad, like the mate of a merchantman, that he has been able to get off upon any terms.

Once fairly upon the road, the appearance of the line of march is animated and interesting, and may be compared, without any great stretch of fancy, to some of the migrations of the early patriarchs, Abraham or Lot, journeying in the land of Canaan.

As long as the travellers can calculate on reaching a station at night, their hardships are lessened by the enjoyment of a roof over head, and the use of enclosures for the stock; but as they recede more and more from the habitations of men, these advantages cease, and the flocks and herds must be watched during the night, a process which, with cattle, is very tiresome, and one that effectually murders sleep, doubly welcome as it is

after the fatigues of the day. But watching is absolutely necessary, as the cattle, if not confined by some means or other, would, ere the dawn, be many miles on their road back to their old pastures, urged by the strong local attachment which they invariably possess.

The manner in which a large herd of cattle is enclosed at night in default of stockyards, is, I believe, peculiar to Australia: shortly before dusk they are driven on to some open, level ground, where, if procurable, some natural barrier on one side, such as a steep hill or river bank, is a great advantage. Here they are stopped, and encircled by horsemen, who continue to hem them in until others have in the mean time lit large log fires around them, at a distance of ten or twelve yards apart. As soon as these are blazing pretty strongly, the horsemen retire by the intervening spaces, and the cattle find themselves encompassed by a ring of flame, of which they have at all times a dread, and particularly at night.

Notwithstanding every precaution, however, it is no easy matter to keep them together until daybreak: a constant watch must be continued on all sides, to prevent their breaking through the spaces between the fires, which some of them are always on the alert to do, if the flames begin to slacken; and if one of the cattle leads the way, it is next to impossible to prevent the others from following the example. The stockmen, therefore, are obliged to walk backwards and forwards during the whole night, replenishing the flames, and keeping back the cattle with as little noise as possible, for if suddenly alarmed, the whole herd would certainly rush through every obstacle, and make their escape; but with proper care the end is usually gained: hundreds of huge animals, any one of whose strength would be too great for that of all the men united, are thus made to yield to human stratagem, and remain within the limits of the prescribed circle.

The vagrant and primitive mode of life experienced in these overland trips, if it has hardships, can boast on the other hand of many pleasures peculiar to itself, especially to the young and adventurous, to many of whom its utter dissimilarity with early habits renders it more pleasing from the contrast; there are charms in the early morning breeze, and the breakfast, like a pic-

nic, at sunrise; in the thoroughly independent way in which the adventurer traverses the pathless wilds, with the whole land before him; in the drowsy halt at noon, and finally in the quiet evening's encampment, when, after washing away all remembrance of the toil and heat of the journey in some cool stream, as yet untouched by the white man, he can rest beneath the canopy of heaven, "nor care beyond to-day."

Under these circumstances preparations for passing the night are soon made: every traveller in "the bush" carries with him his tinder-box, and as soon as the tin quart pot, which has been dangling all day at the saddle-bow, boils at the crackling log-fire, and is converted into a tea-pot, and the eatables, consisting of corned beef and "damper," are spread out upon the grass, the meal is ready, and he has nothing to do but to fall to with the appetite of a traveller. After allowing an hour or so for digestion, he rolls himself for the night in the blanket or "'possum-cloak," which by day is strapped on before him, and sleeps with his head between the flaps of the saddle, which, turned upwards, is the ordinary bush substitute for a pillow.

This sensation of absolute freedom, which is one of the chief attractions of this sort of life, some might say its only one, gains a strong hold upon many minds; and it is certain that in a new country, such as Australia, there are few men who, after leading a pastoral life, would be able to content themselves with the less exciting and less independent occupations of agriculture, such as it is pursued in the more thickly populated parts of the colony, or in the vicinity of the capital.

CHAPTER III.

Society in the Inland Districts—Hospitality of Settlers—The Labouring Classes—State of Morality—Habitual Swearing—Intoxication—A Bush Public House—Anecdotes—An Inland "Spa"—Prospects of Improvement.

FEW places can show so strange a mixture, and yet so complete a "fusion," of the heterogeneous materials of its society, as "the Bush" of Australia. It is curious to see men differing so entirely in birth, education, and habits, and in their whole moral and intellectual nature, thrown into such close contact, united by common interests, engaged under circumstances of perfect equality in the same pursuits, and mutually dependent on each other for all the good offices of civility and neighbourhood. Here, perhaps, is the station of a Sydney merchant, or member of council, who seldom visits it in person, and leaving its entire management to an overseer, seems to consider it rather beneath his dignity to trouble himself about it, except during the wool season, when he makes his annual visit, to "send down his produce, and find fault with the superintendent."

In such cases, therefore, the real neighbour for all practical purposes is the overseer, a hired servant, though, strange to say, he is often a man of more education than his principal.

The owner of the adjoining station is perhaps an emancipist, a reformed character of course, as his emancipation and his present occupation prove; under this name an extraordinary variety, from the lowest to a high degree, of intellect and cultivation may be found. The next may be a native white of the lower grade, who, notwithstanding that he is possessed of numerous flocks and herds, lives on in the same rough style as when he began to settle, and in appearance and manner is hardly to be distinguished from one of his own men, while the nearest neighbour to this "specimen of raw material" is an Etonian, who has perhaps originally entered upon a bush life in the hope of making sufficient money to enable him to return in comfort to the land of

his birth: in this he has been disappointed, but his former tastes and habits display themselves in all that surrounds him. He has given to his slab hut the external appearance of what the advertisements may be supposed to mean by their own favourite phrase, a cottage ornée. In the interior he has softened down the rude materials of bush architecture into the likeness of an English drawing-room or library. Book-shelves fill every available nook; here and there are to be seen articles of exotic luxury, perhaps of ladies' work, the remembrances of distant friends; and every resource of ingenuity is exhausted to produce imitations of the elegances and refinements which he has left behind him, perhaps for ever.

In the most agreeable and useful class of neighbours are the native whites of the better stamp, or, as they are usually called, "natives," for be it understood, once for all, that the word native, as used in the colony, invariably means a white man, one born in Australia of European parents. The aborigines are called "the blacks." Many of these are kindhearted, intelligent men; they are tormented by no secret contempt for the country they inhabit, and no wish to exchange it for another; they accept "the bush" as their home, and are desirous to improve to the utmost its advantages.

However, to a resident in these remote districts, society must always be a lottery; and no one, when purchasing a station, cares to inquire who or what his neighbours may be, if satisfied with his bargain in other respects. But, generally speaking, he is nearly sure of having in his vicinity at least some companionable people; it is well if they are to be found within a few miles, but, if otherwise, the contempt of distance created by circumstances in the interior of New South Wales will probably place some of them within his reach. All his neighbours must at least be possessed of energy, industry, and the good qualities which these imply, for otherwise they will soon cease to be his neighbours, as they will be ruined and obliged to leave the district, and from all he may learn much. It would be very bad philosophy to fancy that he was keeping up his European refinements by being fastidious in discovering their faults and deficiencies. But it is not merely toleration that may be claimed for his brother settlers, he will find some whose acquaintance

may be cultivated with pleasure, and whose friendship may be sought with real advantage.

On one point all residents in "the Bush" are agreed, however different may have been their early lives and habits, and whatever are their further views—hospitality is an universal virtue, so much so that its merits are frequently overlooked; and there is probably no part of the world that can be traversed by the total stranger without friends or money so easily as the bush of Australia, where, for hundreds of miles together, so long as he can reach a station, he will be sure of finding a home.

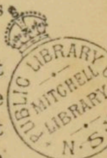
This necessitates an item in the expenses of an establishment little dreamt of in the calculations of a new comer; a certain amount of extra provisions, regulated by the extent of the neighbouring population, is weekly allowed, and duly served out, "for callers:" this, though not absolutely imperative, has become nearly so by custom, and he who in this respect chose to stand in single opposition to the feelings and practice of the society around him, would find ample cause to repent his churlishness if the law of retaliation were applied to him whenever he stirred abroad.

In fact hospitality among so widely scattered a population is a necessity; but it is from impulse, and not from a sense of this necessity, that its duties are practised. Indeed it has been doubted whether any merit can be claimed for its exercise by men who lead so solitary a life that the sight of any strange face may be considered as a pleasure. But in every part of the world hospitality must spring in some measure from a dislike of solitude. It is hardly fair to analyze so closely the composition of human virtues; and on retrospection of several years' experience, I can confidently affirm that in Australia hospitality is not, on the whole, its own reward. Of the medley of travellers there are so many whose company, so far from being agreeable, can hardly be tolerable to their entertainers, that the profuse hospitality of "the Bush" may fairly claim at least whatever merit is assigned to this virtue in more civilized parts of the globe.

What hospitality can in fact compare with that which extends its favours without distinction to it knows not whom, and in the exercise of which every old association or prejudice is to be subdued? How often does the new comer from England find his family pride alarmed by the company of one whose forefathers'

deeds, and even perhaps his own, will not bear recollection; while not unfrequently the Scotch emigrant, a rigid Presbyterian, is forced, on a Sunday evening, to learn a lesson of practical toleration by receiving the visit of a Roman Catholic priest!

All travellers are universally welcome throughout the far districts, literally stopping, as the blacks call it, "all about." There is something positively ludicrous in the coolness with which a total stranger rides up to a station, turns out his horse, and, confident of his reception, makes himself at home as quickly as possible, with a very secondary care as to what the proprietor may think about his proceedings. This is also the custom among the labouring classes, and in addition to the hired servants there are often assembled several others, some from the neighbourhood, and some wholly unknown, to pass the night among their fellows at a head station.



The most irksome part of the economy of a stock establishment in the interior of New South Wales is the management of the labouring classes, over whom the owner or the superintendent has so little hold that considerable dexterity is required to keep matters in a proper state. Working men are usually hired by the year, seldom with any intention on their part of staying beyond that time. The wages are not paid weekly, but at the expiration of the term of agreement, though in the interim a portion of them is advanced if desired. A written character is seldom given or required, the only questions asked of a new man being whether he is free, or a "ticket of leave holder," and if he is competent to perform his work; if he can give a satisfactory answer on these points his previous conduct is seldom looked into, so long as he does not grossly misbehave.

This is one of the many bad effects arising from the scarcity of labour, from which most new colonies suffer, and which is at present the most serious drawback to the rising prosperity of Australia; for there the labourer cares little to keep any situation but a very lucrative one, well knowing that he need not be long out of employment whenever he is really desirous of obtaining it.

Of those among the labouring classes who emigrate to Australia, the best, as may naturally be supposed, do not ordinarily find their way very far into the interior; being eagerly sought

after, they naturally prefer to live in the vicinity of the capital, and in the more civilized districts. It is only the inferior class, for the most part, who push off beyond the boundaries of the colony; and the difficulty which residents in the bush find in procuring good, or even tolerable servants, can only be known to those who have experienced the vexations of a search after "a steady couple."

It frequently happens, in contradiction to what might be expected, that those labourers who have been most exposed to hardship in the old country are the most troublesome and fastidious when they find themselves in another. There was a story current in our part of the colony of a stockowner who was much pestered by the complaints of one of his shepherds, an Irish emigrant, to the effect that his weekly allowance of tea was insufficient. But as it was ample for most men, the proprietor instituted an inquiry into the matter, and discovered that the ill-advised grumbler knew so little of the use and value of his new acquisition, that he was in the habit of boiling the leaves, and eating them with his meat by way of a vegetable.

Churches are now being erectea in most parts of the far districts in the interior of Australia, which before had been grievously in want of them; and when their widely scattered and migratory population receive the benefits arising from an organized system of religious instruction, we may reasonably hope for a visible change for the better in the aspect of society, but up to the present time the general tone of morality, especially among the working classes, has been extremely low. The two most glaring vices, intoxication and profane swearing, prevail throughout the interior of New South Wales to an extent hardly conceivable but by those who have actually witnessed it.

Upon hearing a party of what are called "old hands" in the country talking together, not under the influence of liquor, but in their usual manner, or perhaps slightly excited by some recent occurrence, a stranger might not unreasonably suppose that he was listening to a race of people who had forgotten their mother tongue, and adopted that of the devil in its stead. From the force of constant example, which is always so very contagious in this particular, the native-born youths often inherit this way of talking, and grow gradually callous to its enormity, thus handing

down to succeeding generations one of the most pernicious legacies of the old Botany Bay convicts. Additional incentives to this vice are found in the exciting character of the pursuits in the interior, and in the nature of the climate, which, fine as it is, has, from its extreme dryness, a tendency to produce irritability.

It is melancholy to witness the effect of this habit, which, until better means for checking it are taken, must naturally be a widely spreading evil; most painful of all is it to hear the aborigines, a race declared by many to be so rude that all instruction is thrown away upon them, adopting in their quarrels, and even in their ordinary discourse, the worst expressions of their civilized brethren, from an intercourse with whom they have not only gained no advantage, but have learned unconsciously to blaspheme their Maker. Theirs has been the education of Caliban—

> "You taught me language, and my profit on 't
> Is, I know how to curse."

The prevalence of intoxication is hardly less universal; a drunkard in the interior of New South Wales cannot, like those among the labouring classes in England, spend his wages in daily or weekly visits to the ale-house, but, after the manner of a buccaneer of old, or a sailor at the end of a long cruise, having been debarred by circumstances from his favourite dissipation, he makes amends by plunging deeper into it when he has it within his reach. After living perhaps at a distance of many days' journey from the possibility of indulgence in this vice, he finds himself, at the expiration of six or twelve months, master of a good sum of money, perhaps (with the exception of a trifle spent upon clothes) the whole of his yearly wages; after receiving which he repairs alone, or with one or two congenial spirits, to the nearest public-house or "grog-shop," where, in the course of a few days, he often dissipates the whole earnings of the past year.

Many of these men have a custom of placing their whole stock of money in the publican's hands from the very commencement of their visit, with the intention of drinking as much as they think sufficient, and receiving the balance. They are apt to consider this a highly prudent plan, as it prevents the possibility of their pockets being rifled by their companions while they are

in a happy state of unconsciousness; but they too often find that they have only fallen from Scylla into Charybdis, and literally "reckoned without their host," whose hands, which readily closed upon their money, cannot easily be induced to relax their grasp.

Some of these road-side "grog-shops" are the curse of the neighbourhood, and are particularly dreaded by the sheep-owners whose stations are adjacent, and who are obliged to be constantly on the alert to prevent the neglect and loss of their flocks from the effects of tippling among their shepherds. The proprietors of these houses are frequently men of very indifferent character, whose sole object is to make money and decamp as soon as possible; and, not contented with getting the unfortunate labouring man's money in the proper, or rather improper, course of business, they have been detected in making great additions to his account while he is in a state of insensibility, trusting that when he recovers he will be entirely unable to dispute the items.

A strong instance of absolute slavery to this habit was afforded by a man in our neighbourhood, who had repeatedly started for the purpose of visiting his relations in the vicinity of Sydney, but who had not succeeded in reaching them during a space of several years, being unable to guard his pockets against the Siren influence of the road-side inns, from one of which he would constantly retrace his steps with exhausted means, to toil again, like a modern Sisyphus, for an end that he was never to attain.

I was once riding alone through the bush, on my way to Sydney, and as I approached one of these road-side inns I became sensible of an indescribable sort of scuffling sound, which gradually increased as I came to the entrance, where, like Petruchio, I found "no attendance, no regard, no duty;" but as both man and horse were hungry, I walked in, and soon penetrated the mystery. In an inner apartment some eight or ten men, the whole of the visible inmates of the house, were deeply engaged in a pugilistic mêlée, apparently without there being any private quarrel in the case, for each individual, without any invidious distinction, was, in sporting phraseology, "pitching into" his nearest neighbour. The owner of the house, upon seeing me,

extricated himself from the fray, and tried to accomplish an apology ; but I saw that there was little prospect of the restoration of order for some time, so I resumed my journey, speculating whether returning sobriety, or the total extinction of the combatants, would first occur to bring matters to a conclusion.

However slight, and even ludicrous an impression such scenes as these may make at the time, they must painfully recur to the mind in moments of reflection, and cause us to fear that if proper steps are not taken by those who have the power, by Government as far as it can act, and by individuals each in his own sphere, to check the progress of vice in an infant colony, retribution may one day fall heavily on those who have been guilty of this neglect. If, upon the approach of the white man, these majestic forests are to echo to the uncontrolled sound of riot and debauchery, it would have been better that their deep silence had remained unbroken for ever.

In one of the southern districts a fine soda spring was discovered, and on the strength of this a bush inn had been erected in its vicinity, its owner speculating on the probability of its bringing him a quick sale of spirits, by admixture of its water with acid and alcohol. In this he was not disappointed, for it soon became a favourite beverage among his customers, until the following characteristic incident took place. It entered the heads of a party of carousers at the inn that a great deal of time and trouble would be saved by converting the whole well into one large effervescing draught, and for this purpose they collected a great quantity of spirit, sugar, and acid, and having showered them down into the water and stirred it about with a pole, they awaited the mighty result : this, the story goes on to say, proved unsatisfactory ; little besides mud came to the top, and the spring never recovered the outrage.

At these inns in the interior little else is drunk but raw spirits, for a mixture with water is commonly considered equivalent to spoiling both. It is terrible to see the state to which a man is sometimes reduced who, in a warm climate like that of Australia, has been drinking new and bad liquor for several days, during which he has eaten little or nothing. He suddenly awakes out of a drunken sleep and finds that his money is all gone, and with

it his best means of recovery, which, in such cases, is to take smaller quantities of liquor, diminishing them by degrees till he recovers his strength: as he is unable to do this, his nerves are suddenly relaxed, and he is attacked by delirium tremens, the severe penalty of his excesses.

At a township on the eastern coast of Australia I saw a most salutary method put into practice for keeping order among a set of these hard drinkers: there was a large empty room at one end of the inn, into which its owner, who was a very powerful man, used to thrust his customers as soon as ever they grew noisy; and thus one might see them "quoited down" by couples, and locked in, until soberness again dawned upon them.

There is no arguing with men confirmed in this habit. I have frequently done so, and cannot boast of ever having made a convert, even to the theory of temperance. The conversation on such occasions was pretty much as follows:—"Now, my man, you've worked hard during the last twelve months, and let me recommend you to give up your old practices, and lay by your money."—"Well, so I would, Sir, if it was a good round sum, but where's the use of hoarding up a few pounds? it's better to 'be happy' while it lasts." "But what will you do when you grow old and can't work, if you go on in this way?"—"Oh! I don't know, Sir; if it comes to the worst I must get some one to knock me on the head." It was useless to remonstrate with such an arguer; he would sooner die in poverty than deny himself the gratification of "drinking his wages."

This prevailing habit is in fact the chief cause that prevents servants, such as stock-keepers and persons of that description, from speedily realizing a sum sufficient to enable them to become stockowners on their own account. Thus, were the habits of the working classes more temperate, labour would be far dearer and scarcer than it is, for no steady or sober man need pass many years of his life as a servant.

It is satisfactory to know that, prevalent as this vice still is, it has certainly decreased in the interior, since the pecuniary difficulties under which the colony laboured a few years ago, and from which it is now but just recovering, taught all classes a severe practical lesson.

In former years excessive prosperity, and an overweening con-

fidence in its duration, had encouraged extravagance and recklessness; but the stockowners of the present day are, generally speaking, as temperate and economical as they are industrious. Many strangers, however, who have visited Sydney, have been misled in this particular, and have imbibed an idea that dissipation is as common among the higher as the lower classes in the interior, from hearing of the extravagant feats of a few "wild ones," who happen at the time to be "down the country."

Being "down the country,"—it is necessary to explain, for the benefit of the English reader, who otherwise would not probably guess it—is the phrase by which, in "the bush," a visit to the capital is signified.

In order to check the vices of which we are speaking among the labouring population, and to raise the general tone of morality in the far inland districts, we can only look to a wider and more effectual dissemination of religious instruction. But, unhappily, the extensive dispersion of the population opposes the most serious impediment to the establishment of churches and schools. Nor can this impediment be removed as long as the country is occupied for pastoral purposes, (for which it offers every advantage, and none, as far as we now see, for any other,) and as long as the inhabitants pursue their present mode of life, imposed on them as it is by the necessity of the case. The population has no tendency to concentrate itself; each man, for the safety and welfare of his own property, is desirous to keep his neighbour at the greatest possible distance; and as his own property increases, and his household multiplies, he must seek for them some distant establishment. Many clever and well-meaning persons, not understanding the state and nature of a pastoral country, have given advice which, however well intended, can only have the effect of lowering their authority with the colonists, and of misleading the public at home. They have recommended, as a primary step to improvement, that the population should be concentrated, not considering that concentration is impossible, for to a pastoral population the condition of existence is dispersion.

Under these circumstances no plan has been proposed that holds out a better prospect of success than to establish a suf-

ficient number of clergymen, who, at stated periods, may visit the whole of the districts entrusted to their charge; and thus endeavour to revive the spark of religion which the cares of the world, under the most favourable circumstances, are only too powerful to smother; and how burdensome, how overwhelming are those cares to the settler struggling for existence in the bush of Australia!

Some difficulty no doubt would arise from the want of unanimity in religious opinions among the settlers. But under the peculiar circumstances, in the absence of all other religious aid, it may be hoped that most men would be inclined to consider rather the much in which they agree than the little in which they differ; and zeal, aided by charity, could not fail to do much.

Among the lower orders especially, very great obstacles to improvement exist. Even the more respectable, those who are not hardened by the habitual practice of gross vices, have long been disused to religious services, have grown up in religious ignorance, and are but little susceptible of religious impressions.

The clergyman would have an arduous, and often a repulsive task before him. The habits of constant change of service and residence would be at first a great obstacle to his making any lasting impression; but these difficulties would gradually become less as this love of change evidently arises in some measure from bad habits which it is his first object to reform.

He will need much patience, much forbearance, much Christian love, and the charity that "hopeth all things," that hopeth when there seems every reason to despair. He must proceed, like the Vicar of Wakefield in his prison, fortified by hope alone. There is always room for hope; the profligate ruffian is often nearest relenting when he seems most brutal; he is then, it may be, only endeavouring to harden himself against what he considers a rising weakness, and a little more perseverance, another word in season, may complete the conquest, in spite of the struggles of his worse nature.

But, above all things, it is necessary that the persons of better education should co-operate with the clergyman. Let every proprietor endeavour to be, like the patriarchs of old, the priest

to his own household, and, as far as the thing is practicable, the schoolmaster. The benefit to his own mind which he would derive from these attempts cannot be questioned; the possible benefit to those under his charge might be such as to animate the most indolent to exertion.

I have no doubt that to many these hopes would seem visionary, and these plans chimerical. But only let some one possessing the union of zeal and judgment make the attempt; the most scoffing and most worldly of his opponents would be silenced by even a partial success, and would admit that, in his own phraseology, his "speculation had answered" in the improvement of his servants.

So low a motive as mere worldly advantage is quite incapable of stimulating to such noble exertion; nor, if it were, would it lead to success; sincerity only can produce sincerity, and feeling awake feeling. I hope I have not expressed myself so as to convey any meaning derogatory to religion, as though it were designed to be introduced as an engine of government, and to make the clergy subsidiary to the police. But the cause of order and that of religion are united. It is a law of God's providence, and the remark is as old as Socrates, that the infringement of his commands carries with it its own punishment. Every guilty act does not, as far as we can see, bring its appropriate punishment, but sinful habits, we *can* see, invariably do; and on extending our views, we can still more plainly see that, in a large community, profligate habits, and a low tone of morality, bring on that community poverty and degradation.

These truths, commonplace as they are in theory, cannot be too often brought home in a practical form to the minds of the pious and well-disposed; and with the selfish and worldly they may prevail when even higher considerations avail nothing.

I wish to impress earnestly on the reader, and I would that my powers were equal to the importance of the subject, that, while there is much of evil in the state of society in the far inland districts of our colony of New South Wales, enough of evil to create alarm, yet there is enough of good to cheer with hope and stimulate to exertion. The evil is still of manageable extent. Government, aided by the exertions of British piety and munificence, may do much. They have already made a

beginning; they may supply yet further means, and hold out further encouragement. To carry out the work the settlers themselves must lend their best energies, and rely mainly on their own exertions.

CHAPTER IV.

Report of Bushrangers—Its effect in the Neighbourhood—The Discomfited Settler—An Unwelcome Visit—Buchan Charley—His History—Confessions of a Bushranger—The Mounted Police—Sequel of the career of Charley and his Gang.

THE reader has been told that, like other settlers, we had heard, on our way to our station, various alarming reports of bushrangers and their outrages. But after our arrival the subject was seldom mentioned, till at last one day, after many years of quiet had led us to look upon the existence of such things as merely "a tale that is told," we received a most unwelcome piece of intelligence—there were actually bushrangers in our neighbourhood. They had made their first appearance at a station in our district a day or two previously, which they had pillaged, without, however, injuring any one in person, though report stated that they had threatened to shoot the stock-keeper, or, to use their own expression, to "put a ball into him," for being backward in producing the saddle-horses.

It appeared that they were three in number, and that their ringleader was a man who had once been a hired servant in our district, on a station called "Buchan." At that time he was honest and industrious, but had left his situation, and since then his character had rapidly changed for the worse; he had "got into trouble," or, in other words, had been committed for trial for an offence against the law, had been sentenced to hard labour, but had escaped with one or two others from his "iron gang," and, taking to the last resource of desperation, had now reappeared among the scenes of his former and better life, to become a general bugbear, under the denomination of "Buchan Charley" the bushranger—

"Timor atque infamia sylvæ."

From this time forth all was anxiety: we lived in daily expectation of a most unwelcome visit, and were never suffered to

forget our danger for an hour. If anything went wrong upon the station, the same excuse was always at hand; if a party of strange horsemen were seen to disturb the cattle on the plains before us, "they were the bushrangers," of course; if the saddle-horses strayed away farther than usual in the morning, the stock-keeper would prematurely give up the search and return home in despair—"Buchan Charley had taken them;" and manifold as his depredations really were, many more, of which he was perfectly innocent, were laid to his charge.

But as a subject of conversation, the bushrangers were quite a boon to the whole population of the district: wool, colonial prospects, and the breeding of stock, were all laid aside for a time to make room for the discussion of the common enemy:—how long they were likely to be "out;" were the mounted police in pursuit of them; which of the neighbours, if attacked, would show fight, and so forth; these, and many similar speculations, were in every one's mouth.

Most people in the neighbourhood had, however, by their own account, received correct information of Charley's latest movements, and had devised some capital plan for defeating either a day or night attack. On every station the guns were discharged and reloaded every evening, and there was an accumulation of powder and ball sufficient for a tolerable garrison. It sometimes happens that matters are in this thoroughly defensive state, and the settler, chuckling over his precautions, is perhaps finishing his last cup of hyson, when he suddenly finds himself "covered" with the bore of a rifle, protruding through the window; his arms are close to him in a corner of the room; his ammunition is neatly arranged on an adjacent table, and to stir towards them is instant death. The mysterious stranger on the outside maintains his post until his companions have bound the victim fast to his chair, when he joins them in the work of pillage, and after taking what they please, and perhaps cutting many a rude jest on the unhappy colonist, they leave him to call the police at his leisure; to empty the barrels of his guns, now filled with water (in order to preclude the possibility of a shot in the rear as they are galloping away); to rearrange his house, and, if he thinks proper, to render it once more proof against "a visit from the bushrangers."

Mighty preparations have frequently ended no better than this; and so it eventually proved in our case. About that time we might have been taken for gunsmiths instead of settlers, and I well remember a most romantic night that we passed, with all the furniture of the house piled up against the doors and windows, while we lay in arms on the bare floor, in expectation of our enemies, who, by the bye, we subsequently discovered were not at that time within many miles of us, and were little dreaming of the excitement they were creating at a distance.

At length, one evening, long after we had grown tired of the rumours of wars, and had discontinued all our preparations for defence, "Buchan Charley" came in person, accompanied by only one of his party, whom he stationed on the outside, while he himself undertook the head department, and acted as spokesman. Finding that no resistance was likely to be offered, for we were all, as he intended, taken by surprise, he behaved, on the whole, with civility and moderation; for though he took all he wanted, including two of our best saddle-horses, for which he kindly left his own jaded animals in exchange, he committed no wanton damage, and refrained, and also compelled his companion, who was a ruffianly-looking Irishman of the lowest grade, to refrain from committing any personal outrage upon any one on the station; and this forbearance has much merit in the case of a desperate man, who had already incurred the heaviest penalty of the law, and therefore cared little about further consequences.

He had lately been plundering a store, and was most bravely apparelled, better, in fact, than many of us whom he came to rob. His dress consisted of a new moleskin shooting-coat, a gaudy waistcoat, with a profusion of watch-chain, cord trowsers, and leather leggings; and he wore a "cabbage-tree" hat, the ribbons of which streamed fantastically over his shoulders. A powder-flask was suspended at his side, two brace of pistols were stuck in his huge belt, and in his hand he carried a short and highly finished double-barrelled rifle, probably the favourite Manton or Nock of one of our neighbours. He was a tall, lathy-looking man, of about eight-and-twenty, and his countenance had an expression of calm determination, but of assumed recklessness rather than depravity.

"Well," said the bushranger, as he stalked into our little

abode, "I suppose you all know pretty well who I am, 'Buchan Charley,' as they call me. Now I'm not going to hurt anybody, if you're civil; but we want the money, arms, and horses; and those," he added emphatically, "we'll have. A nice place you've got of it here," said he, with a glance at our book-shelves; "I could stay where I am all the rest of my life." This seemed to remind him of the fearful uncertainty of its duration; for he looked grave, and for a minute or two laid aside his effrontery. In fact, all this volubility only betrayed the nervous excitement it was intended to conceal, or perhaps under which he unconsciously acted; for nervous he undoubtedly was, in spite of his assumed coolness. My leather hat-case attracted his notice; he cut asunder the band which fastened the top, evidently not in the spirit of wanton mischief, but because, in his agitation, he did not see the key, which was standing in the lock. His talk was chiefly apologetical, and calculated to regain, as far as possible, our good opinion. He rambled incessantly from one subject to another. The disjointed fragments of his conversation, when put together in a more connected form, gave us in substance the following history.

Ill treatment, he said, had brought him to his present situation. Having worked hard and steadily for several years, he had been paid by an "order," for which he could never get the cash, as the house in Sydney, on which it was drawn, had stopped payment, and he had no redress. So, finding that, in his opinion, "honesty was a fool," as Iago says, he tried its opposite, which soon brought him to a "road-party." There his punishment was extreme. Loaded with irons, working hard upon the sandy roads, beneath a burning summer's sun, with a diet of salt beef and "hominy," and not even a sufficiency of that, he could endure it no longer, and resolved to escape, or be shot in the attempt. He succeeded in communicating his intentions to a fellow-prisoner, who agreed to join him, and they resolved to "chance it" on the very next opportunity. It was some time before one presented itself, for between soldiers and overseers it was difficult to stir a finger without observation.

At length the moment arrived. They had been sent to work on a part of the road at some distance from the stockade, and, as luck would have it for them, the overseer happened to keep the

gang at work rather longer than usual, and it was dusk ere they returned; so, on passing a "patch of scrub" on the road-side, they managed to slip into it unseen. Here they lay concealed for several hours, during which they could hear the soldiers from the stockade in pursuit of them; but the night was so dark, and the "scrub" so thick, that there was little chance of their being discovered.

At midnight they ventured to emerge from their hiding-place, and repairing to a blacksmith in the neighbourhood, prevailed on him, partly by threats and partly by entreaties (the man having been himself a convict), to knock off their irons. Thus they were once more fairly at large; but to set them up in their new line both arms and horses must be obtained. From a party of stock-keepers, whom they dismounted, they soon procured the latter; and then galloping up to their station, got possession of their fowling-pieces, and thenceforth were thoroughly equipped.

And what sort of a life were they then leading? was it a change for the better, even after the horrors of the "iron gang?" No; Charley confessed voluntarily that it was wretched beyond conception, and that, if he could have formed the least idea of what it was to be, he would rather have remained in his fetters. Lurking in caves and fastnesses of the bush, the very silence of which drove him to think—his greatest curse; hunted day and night by the mounted police; prevented from sleeping, or even taking a meal in security, by the knowledge that they were always on his track, with "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him," he was now more like a wild beast than a human being, and the never-ceasing strain upon his mind was, he said, almost insupportable; but it was then too late to retract.

Yet there was courtesy even among bushrangers. About two years before Charley had become what he was, I had met him on his way to a station where he had been hired, and had put him upon the right road. This he remembered, and though he was now under what, in a state of civilization, would be called the "disagreeable necessity" of taking one of my saddle-horses, he promised not to injure him, but to leave him where he might be afterwards recovered, all which he duly performed. Had I, on the above-mentioned occasion, ridden by without noticing him, he would probably have remembered that also, and, instead of leaving

my horse in a place of safety, would either have shot him, as he or his gang served many others, or put him in some inaccessible part of the country, where he might not have been found again. We never know, in this fluctuating sea of life, when, or in what manner, a civility may be repaid.

The mounted police, who, immediately upon a confirmed report of "bushrangers being out," are despatched in pursuit of them, with orders to capture or shoot them down wherever they can, have a most irksome and laborious duty to perform, rendered still more arduous by the difficulty of gaining correct information of their movements. The shepherds and stockkeepers, occupying the lonely out-stations, are the best authorities upon these matters, if they choose to be so; but it unfortunately happens that many of these men, who have themselves been "in trouble," have a secret leaning towards the runaways, or at least they remain neutral, and only see what they think proper, and this renders it very difficult for the police to worm out of them any intelligence upon which they can depend. The bushrangers, on the other hand, before they have been "out" very long, are sure to have correct informants in many quarters; thus it frequently happens that while the police, concealed on some adjacent spot, are watching a suspected hut, ready to sally forth and surround it on the arrival of the bushrangers, their track has been noticed by one of the inmates, through whose means intelligence has been conveyed to the enemy that "all is not right," and so the bushrangers keep away until they hear better news, and laugh in their sleeves at their misdirected pursuers. The bushrangers moreover are sure to be well-mounted, for they can take fresh horses from every station, whereas the police can seldom obtain a remount; and, in addition to this, the vast preponderance of energy possessed by men who are riding for their lives over those who pursue them for the ends of justice, gives them another great advantage.

"Buchan Charley" indeed talked with the greatest contempt of the local authorities: the commissioner of the district was an "old woman," and the mounted police a set of "harmless men," who could never get a glimpse of his party, nor dare to follow him, if they did, through the broken country to which he would betake himself.

After all, the reality of the unwelcome visit fell far short of the anticipation, and we suffered no great detriment from it; money we had none to lose, for it is an article seldom kept on an establishment at any distance in the interior, business being transacted by means of cheques and "orders" on Sydney. They took some articles of clothing; among other things, a new white hat of mine (from the hat-case before mentioned), which Charley wore with great satisfaction to himself, and which moreover was a mark that long served to distinguish him. The most annoying part of the affair was the conclusion, when we saw our unwelcome visitors scamper off, in a cloud of dust, towards the next station, mounted on our two best horses, which we had been keeping in condition for very different purposes.

In one instance only, while they were at our station, they threatened violence. They had met and dismounted the son of a settler who was much respected in the neighbourhood, but had restored him his horse upon hearing his father's name. This young man, more from love of adventure than anything else, joined the mounted police in pursuit of the bushrangers, who, upon ascertaining this, were much exasperated at what they considered unhandsome treatment, and sent him a laconic message, that, "if they came across him, he was a dead man."

The sequel of their history is soon told. After a career of ten months, they were at last very cleverly captured by the police, in an unguarded moment, when they had left their encampment, unarmed, in search of their horses. But as they were on their way to jail they managed to procure a handcuff-key at a station where they were halting for the night, and, simultaneously freeing their wrists, made a sudden attack upon their captors. Each party rushed to seize the muskets of the policemen, which were standing in a corner of the room. These in the scuffle were trampled under foot, and the contest was long protracted above them. The bushrangers were one less in number than their opponents, but by far the most powerful men, and were gradually getting the mastery, when the sergeant of the police, by a dexterous manœuvre, succeeded in regaining his carbine, and in placing it at the head of his antagonist, the luckless Buchan Charley. This decided the event; two of the bushrangers surrendered; but the third, our Irish visitor, fairly fought his way

out of the place, and was not recaptured until some time afterwards.

They were tried at the ensuing assizes at Berrima; accusers enough and to spare appeared against them, so we were saved the trouble of the journey and expenses of the prosecution—no slight matters in Australia, however amply they might have been repaid by hearing our old enemies convicted of "flat burglary," and brought up to receive their fearful sentence, transportation to Van Diemen's Land for life.

For a long time subsequently to their capture, it was quite a pleasure to awake in the morning, and feel that "the bush-rangers had been taken," and that our supplies might thenceforth remain safe in the store, and our saddle-horses once more thrive for their owners.

Ill-fated Charley!—his unceremonious visit often recurred to our minds, and, bugbear as he was to us all, we felt something like pity for his fate, and gratitude to him for restraining his ruffianly companion, who richly merited his sentence. But Charley seemed capable of better things, as if, could he have retraced his steps, he would yet have repented him of the evil. Even when plunged in crime, beyond the pale of human mercy, he was not a hardened villain; and for this reason the more bitter must be his remorse, as he now pays the lingering penalty of his last rash step, tempted by the bushranger's motto, "A short life and a merry one."

CHAPTER V.

Sheep Farming—Mode of Depasturing Sheep—Dislike of Shepherds to their Vocation—Appearance of a Sheep Station—Unsettled habits of its Inmates—Wages—Laziness induced by the Occupation—Shearing—Bush Shearers—Interior of a Wool Shed at Shearing Time—Conveyance of Wool to Sydney—Horse and Bullock Drays—Life on the Road—Return of the Teams—The Catarrh—Cause of the Disease—A Head-station during the Catarrh—Lambing Time—Management of the Ewes—Other Diseases among Sheep—The Scab—Causes—Mode of Cure—Difficulty of preventing Contagion—Regulations concerning Removal of Diseased Flocks—Footrot—Sheep the best Stock in the Colony—Advice to Purchasers of Sheep.

Ever since the earliest days of the colony, when the climate of Australia was found to be particularly suitable to the growth and improvement of fine wool, the value of sheep has always been steadier, and higher in proportion, than that of any other stock. A settler may take most pleasure in the breed of his horses, or the pursuit of his wandering and unreclaimed herds, but he feels that his main dependence for support lies in his flocks; give him a good lambing and a heavy "clip," and he looks upon the rest as a secondary consideration. Except the merino, few breeds have been tried, and none with equal success. Throughout the year the sheep are wholly supported and fattened for market on the natural grasses of the country, of which, except in cases of extreme drought, there is always a sufficiency; and, from the equability of the temperature, they require no housing nor any extra attention during the winter.

On the head-station, where the pasture is required for the use of saddle-horses and working oxen, sheep are seldom kept, but are "put out" in various parts of the run, at stations on which two or three flocks are depastured.

The number of sheep grazed together varies at different times, according to circumstances, of which the most pressing is the scarcity of labour, which compels the stockowner to put his sheep in larger flocks than his judgment would otherwise recom-

mend, as, when kept in smaller flocks, they thrive better, and yield heavier fleeces.

The want of labouring men, especially shepherds, has of late years been so severely felt by the colonists, that in some districts, where, a few years ago, the flocks seldom exceeded from five to eight hundred sheep, two thousand and upwards may now be seen grazing together. But this, of course, is practicable only in very open country. In "scrubby" or forest "runs" the shepherds would be unable to prevent a numerous flock from separating, and this, by exposing them to the ravages of the native dog, would entail certain loss.

For every flock two men are required, the shepherd, and another called the watchman, whose duty consists in taking care of the station, preparing the meals, watching the sheep at night, and shifting the folds every day. But the most usual, because the most economical method, is to keep two flocks at one station, and to fold them near each other at night, so that one watchman is sufficient for both; and thus, for their entire management, three men instead of four are employed.

Every morning, soon after sunrise, the shepherd sets out with his flock, which he follows without intermission during the whole day, keeping within certain limits pointed out to him by his master as the extent of his "run," and which if he wilfully transgresses he is liable, upon the second offence, to be fined by the commissioner of the district. He returns at sunset, when, as soon as he has seen his sheep safely in the folds, his day's work is over, and he resigns all charge of them to the watchman, who passes the night alongside the folds in a "watch-box." This is simply a sort of wooden frame, covered with hides, or the bark of trees, and standing about a foot from the ground, with an opening at one side large enough to admit a small mattress and blankets. Here the watchman, after tying up near the folds several of his "coolie" dogs, who will awaken him on the approach of a "warragle," or native dog, his only cause of alarm, rests well enough until sunrise; when he re-delivers his fleecy charge to the shepherd, and resumes his work as hutkeeper.

The sheep are counted out of the folds some two or three times a-week by the owner or superintendent, who rides over from the head-station for that purpose at a very early hour,

before they are let out of the folds. Each shepherd is accountable for his flock; and when any are missing through his negligence, is liable to have their value deducted from his wages.

While the shepherds of Spain are said to be so much attached to their own occupation that they could follow no other, in New South Wales the reverse is the case: although sheep cause the principal demand for labour in the interior, the majority of working men are averse to shepherding, as long as any other employment is to be got. It is remarkable that there is a feeling among them that it is the lowest sort of labour: stock-keepers, bullock-drivers, and farming-men of all kinds, though not receiving more, and frequently less wages than the shepherds on the same establishment, all consider their own line as in some way superior to that of the shepherd.

A shepherd's life in the interior of New South Wales is, it must be confessed, monotonous and uninviting in the extreme; a more unpoetical one can hardly be, in spite of Theocritus and Virgil: and it is the usual complaint of men who have followed sheep for any length of time, that the listlessness and inactivity produced by their mode of life gradually, but surely, unfits them for any other more laborious occupation.

The appearance of a sheep-station is but little in its favour; there are no "improvements" beyond a mere hut, and perhaps a small and ill-constructed milking-yard; the grass is almost invariably cropped off close to the roots for some distance round, giving a faded and barren appearance to the whole exterior; while the ground in the immediate vicinity of the hut is strewed with bits of sheepskin, strips of bullock-hide, and broken hurdles. Nor can much more be said for the comforts of the interior; its inmates, from sheer laziness, seldom care to make themselves even as comfortable as they might, or pay much attention to the cleanliness of their abodes; while it is remarkable that cattle-stations, occupied by men of a precisely similar stamp, and not better paid, are almost always comparatively neat and clean, and frequently very comfortable.

Shepherds are also more affected by the restless love of change than any other class of labouring men in the colony; a sheep-owner is seldom troubled with the necessity of raising his men's wages on the score of long service; and upon making inquiries

into the condition of a shepherd, you usually find that he is just then thinking of "bettering himself," by trying a new situation, or returning to an old one.

Their wages, however, are high—about 25*l.* per annum, with ample rations; so that steady men can generally lay by a considerable sum in the course of a few years. Married couples, with two or three boys old enough to work, can hire with sheep-owners upon the most favourable terms, as they can engage to shepherd and watch two flocks of sheep; they thus receive the pay of three men, and are rendered more than usually comfortable by having the use of a station to themselves.

Many stories were circulated in our neighbourhood to the prejudice of lazy shepherds, which was the epithet usually substituted for "gentle." It was said that a new comer to the country, travelling alone, lost his way, and fell in with three shepherds as they were lying at ease upon the plain, to whom he applied for information, with the stimulus of half-a-crown; but this, far from rousing them to the exertion he anticipated, merely extracted a few words from the first, a jerk of the elbow from the second, and from the third an inclination of the head in the right direction. Being a whimsical man, or thinking that where there was no industry to be had its opposite should be encouraged, he produced the reward with the intention of bestowing it on the most indolent of the three. The first man jumped up to receive it; the second held out his hand; while the third—he of the nod—merely pointing to his pocket, and saying, "Put it in here, master," received the reward, as the laziest of the lazy.

The most interesting time to the sheep-owner is the close of the year, though he may then expect to have his hands full of work, of which in a bush life there is no equable distribution; at one time there is a dearth of it, at another a superabundance. It is, however, merry Christmas in the bush of Australia, as in England, though in a different way. There is no wassailing, or gathering round the fire, with the thermometer at 90 and 100; but the approach of Christmas brings with it the harvest, and, most important of all, "the clip;" the shearing months being October, November, and December, varying with the climate in different parts of the colony.

Previously to shearing, in order to provide for the wants of the additional number of men employed, it is necessary to lay in an extra stock of supplies; by which, in bush parlance, are meant tea, sugar, tobacco, wheat, and beef, in addition to wool-packs, sheep-shears, and all other requisites for the "getting up" of the wool for sale.

Shearers are usually paid by the score, the price varying at different seasons from 2*s*. 6*d*. to 4*s*., according to the value of wool, and the demand for labour at the time. Out of this the shearer has to find his own rations and shears, which he purchases from the stores of his employer. It is also customary to allow the men two or three glasses of rum, both at the times of washing and shearing; in the latter case no unreasonable allowance, as they have to remain stationary in the water for several hours together.

The number of sheep daily shorn by professed shearers varies from 50 to 80. A man seldom "goes out" to shear if he cannot do at least as many as the former number, as he would lose by his contract. Now and then very fast shearers are met with, who can get through as many as 120 a-day; but these are very apt to work in a slovenly manner, and require such constant overlooking on this account, that they are often more troublesome than useful. A man who in one day can cut 80 fleeces properly is a very good shearer, and as fast as can be safely depended on.

The proprietor or overseer stands in the wool-shed during the whole time of shearing, and keeps account of the number shorn by each man, who, as he finishes his sheep, takes care to signify it to his employer; of whose business it is not the least important part to keep a sharp eye on each man, to prevent "racing," as in their endeavours to outshear each other they are apt to skip the wool nearest the skin, or, as it is called, the "bottom wool," which is the hardest to cut, but the most weighty and valuable. This trick they are certain to practise when under the eyes of some inexperienced man, or "new chum," who is thus an unconscious sufferer.

Whenever a fresh lot of sheep are put into the shearing-yards, there is at first a great deal of picking and choosing, each shearer aiming to get those sheep which have the lightest and most open

fleeces. The most closely-woolled animals are consequently left to the last; and it is curious to watch the manœuvres by which some tough-coated old wether is studiously avoided, as if by general consent.

As soon as the fleece is taken off, it is laid upon the "folding-table," which merely consists of some bars of light wood, set in a frame, and after being shaken, so as to let the dirt and coarser outside pieces of wool fall through on a heap underneath, (which is afterwards put together, and sold under the denomination of "clippings,") it is folded up neatly, and set aside to be ready for the press, which is in full operation throughout the day.

Australian wool is liable to be injured by the seed of the long grass, which is very troublesome just before shearing-time. To avoid this is a very essential part of the sheepowner's care, as the value of the fleece is greatly deteriorated thereby, for it cannot be wholly extracted by any subsequent process.

It is usually desirable to get the wool down to Sydney as soon as possible, as the price is apt to fall towards the close of the season; and it is therefore seldom kept upon a station after shearing any longer than the time occupied in loading the drays, mustering the working oxen, and making the various preparations necessary for a journey of perhaps two or three hundred miles. Each dray, drawn by eight or ten oxen, carries from fifteen to twenty bales of wool; the average weight of the whole load being about two tons. Horse-teams are sometimes used, chiefly near the capital, and on the farms in its vicinity; but, for long journeys, oxen are generally preferred. The former have the advantage of greater speed, especially in dry weather; but the latter have more power of resistance, and can better endure a long journey with wool, which, from the great height of the bales, sways very much from side to side in broken parts of the road, and is consequently a very fatiguing load. Horses are also less used on account of their greater value, which makes the loss of one or two of them a comparatively serious matter; and, in the long journeys from the interior, accidents may always be expected.

The bush-dray, the only vehicle used in New South Wales for the conveyance of wool and other produce, is open and low, more resembling a brewer's dray than any other description of

dray known in England. The pole and wheels, on which the most stress is laid, are made of the toughest wood of the colony, generally of box, or of "iron-bark." The other parts are of lighter wood. The bed of the dray is formed of broad slabs, placed about eight inches apart, as small articles are seldom carried on it. There are no sides, but upright pins and low guards of iron are placed at the corners and edges; to which a bulky load, such as wool, is fastened by the additional security of ropes or a wooden frame; while in wet weather a tarpawling is thrown over the whole.

In some districts, chiefly in the vicinity of Bathurst, shaft-drays are used; but pole-drays are found to be more suitable to the nature of the country. The price of a good pole-dray is about 14*l.*, exclusive of harness for the oxen.

During the long journeys to and from the capital, each team is entrusted to the charge of two men—the bullock-driver and his assistant, or "mate." These men, though they are in truth usually good customers at the wayside public-houses, have no need to visit them during their whole journey, as they can carry with them their own supplies, and every requisite for a journey of several months.

The life they lead is thoroughly independent. At the end of their daily stage of from twelve to sixteen miles, they draw up towards evening at a little distance from the road, in the vicinity of water and grass for their cattle, which require no additional food, and, from hunger and the fatigue of their day's work, are little inclined to ramble far before daybreak; by which time the driver is again upon their track, as an early start is half the battle, especially during the wool-season, when the summer's heat often necessitates a halt at noon. When two of these drays are travelling in company, one "mate" is sufficient for both, as his chief employment is merely to cook the meals, and take care of the drays in the morning while the drivers are absent in search of their oxen.

The men all sleep under the drays at night, when the ends of the tarpawling, which are rolled up during the day, are let down on all sides, and form a protection from the weather. The appearance of several drays, thus grouped together, is not unlike that of an encampment of gipsies.

When at length the wool is fairly off on its way to Sydney the settler feels his mind considerably lightened, and congratulates himself that his laborious life during the past year has not been spent in vain. His thoughts, however, are still dwelling on his teams, like those of a merchant on his ships; the time of their absence, the state of the roads, and the probability of accidents, are his frequent topics of conversation, until in the course of two or three months he again descries his dray in the distance, dragging its slow length along, with jaded bullocks, and every mark of a wearisome journey, bringing back, in a less bulky but more compact load, his supplies for the coming year.

The amount of these supplies is surprising and amusing to a new comer: half-a-dozen large chests of tea seem sufficient to last one's whole lifetime; and a ton of sugar is an inconceivable mass to one who has perhaps seldom seen a larger quantity than that contained in a china sugar-basin.

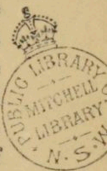
The scourge of the sheepowner is the catarrh; a disease peculiar to Australia, and of a nature so inexplicable, that it has hitherto baffled all attempts to discover either a prevention or a cure. It is not equally prevalent in all districts; some are visited by it nearly every year, some suffer from slight attacks, and in others it is as yet wholly unknown. It usually makes its appearance at the end of autumn or beginning of winter—that is to say, about March or April—which consequently becomes a very anxious time of year to the sheep-owner, whose organs of sight and hearing are then most painfully acute. At this season his greatest bugbear is the arrival of a pastoral-looking man, with several coolie dogs at his heels, in whom, from as far as the eye can reach, he anticipates one of his watchmen, coming from the "Rocky Creek" or "Honeysuckle Flat," to report the first appearance of the dreaded "catarrh."

The principal symptoms are a discharge from the nostrils of a dark slimy matter, a drooping of the head, feeble gait, and loss of appetite; the infected animal lags behind, or separates itself from the flock, and dies, apparently in great pain, often within twenty-four hours from the time of its first seizure. The liver and stomach are, on examination, usually found in a highly disordered state. It is a most ruinous disease, not only from the number of animals it destroys, but from the consequent depre-

ciation of those it spares, as one of the first questions asked by a buyer of sheep is if they have ever had the catarrh? Nor do its effects cease even on its departure, for the sheep that have survived its attacks frequently lose the whole of their wool, which falls off their backs in flakes.

Among the most probable of the many causes which have been assigned of this capricious disease is the state of the stomach; for it is remarkable that the sheep suffer most severely from its attacks in dry seasons, when the want of moisture in the grass produces constipation; while a return of wet weather, or even a single shower of rain, which acts as an alterative, very frequently lessens, and often wholly arrests, the progress of the disease.

Whatever be its origin, it is certain that the settler is unable to stop its progress, and on its first appearance may always expect some, if not considerable, loss. All that can be done, however, he does: he hires more men; skins the carcases of the sheep, and boils them down for the sake of the tallow, so that he may at least save something out of the wreck; and endeavours to persuade himself that the disease will cease at that indefinite period to-morrow, notwithstanding his secret misgivings, and wishes that his original capital were once more safe in his pocket. Any one who should happen to discover a cure, or means of prevention of this disease, might reasonably expect to realize a considerable sum of money in Australia.



Life at a stock establishment, when the catarrh is raging, is a very different thing from life at ordinary times. The usual air of repose, bordering on languor, which hangs over the residence of a settler, is exchanged for a continued bustle, impatience, and feverish excitement. There is a constant succession of horsemen hurriedly starting off in all directions to the various sheep-stations, and returning with evidently bad news, and no better tempers. The arrival of drays loaded with unsightly carcases, "that do infect the air," and innumerable sheepskins hung around on every fence to dry in the sun, mark the ravages of the disease; while at a little distance apart, in the vicinity of water, a column of smoke points out the situation of the boiling-pans, now the last resource of the unlucky sheepowner.

To him indeed it is a trying time, and no wonder if his courage is shaken; he sees the fruits of perhaps many years' labour

and self-denial dissipated in the course of a few months, and his hopes of increasing the comforts of a bush life, or exchanging it for a more civilised one, placed further than ever beyond his reach by circumstances over which he has no control. He has the more cause for anxiety, since from the first appearance of the catarrh to its ultimate departure he can form no estimate of the probable extent of its ravages ; and unless he has very numerous flocks or other property to fall back upon, he has good reason to fear that he may soon wholly cease to be a stockowner.

But everything has an end ; the catarrh usually takes its departure at the approach of spring, which being also the lambing season, the prospect of increase revives the sheepowner's falling fortunes. At this season the ewe flocks require constant attention and additional labour for about six weeks, and various methods are taken to encourage the shepherds to more than usual exertion ; some sheepowners allow them a bonus of so much per head for all weaned lambs, or award a prize to the man who succeeds in rearing the greatest number; and plans of this kind have generally been found successful.

At this time much rain is very destructive, as there is seldom any convenience for sheltering the lambs, which are all bred in the open air ; but if the weather is tolerably favourable, as is usually the case, strict attention and proper management are the best security for a good increase.

Besides the catarrh, sheep in New South Wales are subject to a few other diseases, though comparatively of minor importance, inasmuch as they are better understood, and admit of a cure. Of these the most serious is the scab, which, though not usually fatal, causes considerable loss to the sheepowner, both in the quantity and quality of the wool, the condition of the flocks, and in the necessity which it creates for trouble and expense.

Its primary cause seems to be a disease of the blood, which is often brought on in the first instance by folding the sheep too long upon the same spot, or by driving them into the pens at night in a heated state, by which means, if the ground should chance to be chilly and damp, the perspiration is checked, and cutaneous eruption superinduced. The value of a trustworthy shepherd is here very apparent, for the sheepowner is greatly at the mercy of his servant, who, if ill-disposed or

careless, may cause his master serious loss, with little danger of being detected.

Sheep affected with the scab are dressed with the mercurial ointment, as in England, or with a solution of corrosive sublimate; and it is expedient, if practicable, to remove them immediately afterwards to some new and healthy station, the only means by which a complete cure can be effected.

Some sheepowners have their sheep constantly rubbed over, or, as it is called, "spotted," with the ointment; but the best way is to dress the whole flock thoroughly directly after shearing; for which purpose some settlers, whose flocks are much infected, shear twice in the year, though this lessens the value of the wool.

When one flock is infected, it is no easy matter to prevent the disease from spreading, owing to the mode of sheep-farming pursued in the interior. The sheep-stations are seldom more than three or four miles apart, and are not divided by any enclosures or other artificial boundaries, so that the flocks are apt to run over the same ground on the borders of their respective stations; the more so as the shepherds are fond of getting together, for the sake of relieving their solitude by each other's company. When a sheepowner has a large extent of pasture land, the infected flock is put out alone at some distant station, and the shepherds are restricted to certain bounds on either side. But, in spite of every precaution, the chances are in favour of contagion spreading, as it can be communicated by the least accident, such as the straggling away of a single infected sheep, or the accidental removal of a few hurdles from the unhealthy station.

As a method of precaution against contagion, stockowners are prohibited, on pain of a heavy fine, from removing their sheep, when affected with the scab, from one part of the country to another, excepting at one season of the year. Were it not for this arrangement there would be no end to the disputes, damage, and consequent law-suits arising out of the injuries inflicted by a single diseased flock on its road to new pastures.

Foot-rot is occasionally met with in some districts, usually on rich soil and low, moist runs. In aggravated cases the feet swell out to a great size, the animal attacked is wholly unable to travel, and sometimes dwindles away to a mere skeleton, but the fleece

usually remains uninjured, and not unfrequently weighs half as much as the whole carcase. This is a troublesome disease, but comparatively of minor importance.

Upon the whole, notwithstanding their greater liability to disease, sheep are by far the best stock in New South Wales; and with tolerable success they hold out the most favourable prospects as a source of annual income. Owing to the mode of sheep-farming pursued throughout the colony, a large establishment, if properly conducted, can be managed with less proportionate expense than one on a limited scale; indeed, it is very questionable whether, all things being considered, sheep are an advisable speculation to a small capitalist. With success they will bring him the best and quickest interest for his money; but, owing to the smallness of his flocks, he must for several years run a considerable risk; as, by the attacks of catarrh or other casualties, they may be wholly annihilated, or so much reduced as to be insufficient in number to repay their expenses.

But both on a large and small establishment judicious and economical management is now indispensable. The once received notion that by sheep-farming in Australia it is easy, in the course of a few years, to make a fortune sufficient to enable the settler to return to England and live in luxury, has long been exploded as chimerical, if indeed it ever was formed on rational grounds; and the best advice that can be given to an emigrant of the present day, intending to become a sheep-owner, is to discard at once all extravagant ideas, to look forward to a permanent residence in the colony, considering his station as his home, and by making himself as comfortable as his situation will permit, to learn to be contented with that independence which, with perseverance and moderate success, he may yet reasonably expect.

CHAPTER VI.

Bush Cattle—Their interesting Habits—Rapid Increase—Mode of Management—"Tailing"—Powerful Instinct—A "rendezvous"—Number depastured together—A Muster—Speed of the Half-wild Cattle—Stock-horses—"Cutting Out" a Bullock—Bush Riding—Propensity of Cattle to acquire Bad Habits—Loss to the Owner occasioned thereby—Anecdote—A Muster by Moonlight—Interesting Scene—Application of the term "Quiet"—Habits of the Bulls—An Encounter upon the Plains—"Draughting" Cattle—Scene in a Stockyard—Description of a Cattle Enclosure in the Interior—Branding—Disadvantages in Selling—"Boiling Down"—Quality of Australian Cattle—Hints to Breeders.

THE management of cattle in New South Wales is conducted in a manner so peculiar to the colony, and so widely different from that of almost every other country, that some account of it may be amusing, if only from its novelty; but to one who is fond of observing animals, and of marking the difference that circumstances create in their habits, those of the bush herds in the interior of Australia are particularly interesting, the more so as many of them are unknown to those who have only been acquainted with cattle in a more domesticated state, and are evidently suggested by an admirable provision of nature, to supply the place of advantages from which they are excluded by the absence of the care of man.

Of the three sorts of stock which compose the principal wealth of Australia, viz., sheep, horses, and horned cattle, the increase of the latter has been in proportion the most rapid, and is truly astonishing if we consider how short a time has elapsed since the earlier days of the colony, when it must have been an easy morning's work to collect their whole number. Already they are countless; the census of stock, taken annually, must always be considerably under the reality, for few of the large stockowners keep an exact account of what they possess, and as it is next to impossible, owing to the wild habits of the cattle in New South Wales, to collect the whole of a herd at

once, the number driven into the enclosures at mustering time is necessarily set down as the total, of which perhaps it falls short by some ten per cent.; the census, moreover, only takes notice of cattle that are regularly branded and acknowledged by their owners; in addition to these innumerable animals of every kind of brand, and others with no brand at all, and known as "stragglers," are mixed with the herds in the interior. Of these some are wholly unclaimed, and others are the property of persons who have removed elsewhere, and are never likely to take the trouble of gathering them together, whilst vast quantities, wholly wild, roam at large in many parts of the colony, and occupy the most inaccessible places, being totally distinct in their habits from the half-wild herds, to which they originally belonged.

Cattle seldom get much credit for intellectual capacity, but no one who has seen them in the interior of Australia will deny that they have been undervalued in this respect; in the half-wild state their mental faculties seem to be called into more active play than when they are domesticated, and they exhibit strong powers of memory and combination, which, under many circumstances, are extraordinary: indeed the ox, though he has little more than half the brain of the horse, seems in point of instinct to be scarcely, if at all, his inferior.

The vast herds in the interior of the country graze unconfined throughout the year. With the exception of stock-yards, into which they are driven at certain seasons, there are no enclosures, and it is generally matter of surprise to strangers that without them they can be kept within due bounds. It would, in fact, be impossible to do so were it not for the strong local attachment they invariably possess, of which man avails himself so well, as not only to render them through it subservient to his will, but to be so voluntarily.

When cattle are first brought to a new country they are subjected to a process called "tailing," which consists in watching them with horsemen by day, and driving them into their enclosures every night: they grow very much out of condition under this treatment, but it must be continued as long as they show any inclination to ramble back to their old pastures, and usually lasts from three to five weeks, according to circumstances.

Cattle that have been brought overland from a great distance soonest lose the recollection of their former haunts; and young stock are more easily managed in this respect, as their memories are less retentive.

The desire of returning to the pastures on which they have been reared, even though of inferior quality, is the most difficult to eradicate of all their bad habits, for they have been known to "make back" through every obstacle, for hundreds of miles; and animals that have escaped from the very slaughter-houses in Sydney have been found again, within a short time, upon their former feeding grounds at a vast distance in the interior.

This instinct has occasionally been still more forcibly exhibited. It has sometimes happened that settlers, when removing their cattle to a new station, have taken the precaution of sending them by a circuitous route to their place of destination, by way of mystifying their troublesome organs of locality; but it has afterwards been ascertained, both by the track and actual sight, that the stragglers, of which there are always a few, have returned by the direct line, through a country of which they had not the slightest previous knowledge.

Numberless well-authenticated anecdotes might be told of the topographical instinct of cattle, but I will only mention an incident of which I was an eye-witness. I was returning from an overland trip, and passed the night at an out-station, the occupants of which were anxiously awaiting the arrival of their supplies. These were always sent by means of pack bullocks, for the road was so mountainous as to be nearly impassable for drays. When on the point of resuming my journey on the following morning, the expected bullock was seen slowly approaching, with his load upon his back, but without any driver. We were now all anxiety for the man's supposed fate; and as my road home was the same as that by which the bullock had arrived, the investigation of the matter was entrusted to me, so I got upon the animal's "back track," and pushed off as soon as possible.

Sixty miles from the station, as evening was closing in, I found the driver, alive and well, but in great tribulation at the loss of his charge; and deep was his satisfaction when, in answer to his inquiries, I informed him that the animal, more sagacious than himself, had reached his journey's end in safety.

It appeared that he had missed the bullock on the previous morning, while he was halting for breakfast, and could not regain sight of him. Being a "new hand" in the country, he was an indifferent tracker, and had been wandering about in despair near the spot where he first lost sight of his charge, who, having been bred on the station, had pushed on alone, and reached it on the following morning.

I had kept his track all day, and found that he had never once been at fault, or even stopped to feed; and several articles, which had dropped from his load at different times, were all lying in the direct line.

Notwithstanding this strong propensity, cattle are made to forget their old pastures by means of judicious management, and to settle quietly upon any new station intended for them, if it is not wholly unsuited to their habits.

As soon as they seem reconciled to the new ground, and are again trusted wholly at large, they do not long remain in one herd, as during the time of "tailing," but separate into several droves, and spread here and there over the whole extent of pasture.

It is remarkable that each of these droves remains perfectly distinct from the others; and so strictly do they adhere to this habit, that, although several of them may chance to mix during mid-day in the dry creeks and open flats, to which they usually resort, and appear inextricably jumbled together, yet each animal well knows his own party; and it is very curious to observe the readiness with which, upon any sudden alarm, the droves detach themselves from each other, and make off towards the forest, each in its own separate direction. The knowledge of this habit is of great service to the stock-keepers or herdsmen of the colony, when they are in quest of any particular animal; for if they have once remarked the drove to which he belongs, they may always know subsequently in what direction he will be found.

The usual feeding times are in the morning and evening, and during the first part of the night; at mid-day they congregate on the low grounds in the vicinity of water, where each drove appropriates one particular spot, apart from the rest, from which it never deviates. Here they bask for many hours, lying closely grouped together until the heat begins to abate, when they draw off towards the forest in all directions, moving leisurely, and

grazing as they go. A numerous herd, thus spread out in the evening, and dotting the plain with party-coloured hues, forms a pleasing pastoral sight.

A spot on which cattle are thus in the habit of assembling and basking during the day is called a "rendezvous," and is easily known, for, from the constant pressure of innumerable vast bodies, the surface of the ground becomes smooth and hard, resembling a blighted ring in the midst of verdure; these marks still remain on stations from which the cattle have long been removed, and being seen from a considerable distance, are frequently used as a means of direction to the lonely traveller.

The number of cattle depastured together is regulated by no fixed rate. In the large grazing districts of the interior, herds are to be met with varying from five hundred to as many thousands, the only limit to their further increase being the extent of "run" possessed by their owners.

There are settlers who are owners of far more cattle, but 5000 is the largest number that I remember to have met with in one herd.

The breeding of horned cattle in Australia, though perhaps less profitable than sheep-farming, has the advantage, no inconsiderable one at this time, when wages are high, of requiring comparatively little labour. Two men, a stock-man and "hut-keeper," are all that are needed on a cattle station during the greater part of the year. The hut-keeper, as his name implies, has nothing whatever to do with the out-door work. This devolves wholly on the stock-man, to whose charge the herd is delivered in the first instance, and whose duty it is to be able to muster, or satisfactorily account for, the same number that has been counted out to him, together with their increase, whenever required to do so by his employer.

The muster of a large herd of cattle is a very stirring business, and may be described as a scene characteristic of "the Bush" of Australia. Preparations are made for a day or two previously, and word sent to the adjoining cattle-stations, as it is customary for neighbours to assist each other; and at such a time as this there can scarcely be too much help, the most indifferent performer on horseback serving at least to "stop a gap."

Operations commence at an early hour, as soon as the sun has

acquired sufficient power to draw the cattle from the forest towards the water. The horsemen separate into parties of two or three together, and skirt the boundaries of the pasture, driving down the cattle in every direction towards the "rendezvous" by crack of "stockwhip," an implement of peculiar construction, the handle being little more than a foot in length, while the thong, which is made of plaited hide, varies from twelve to seventeen feet; it is only used in New South Wales, and when cracked, makes a report which may be heard at a very considerable distance, while its powers of flagellation are formidable even to a wild bullock.

The cattle, thus roused, make off towards the low grounds, where they are met by other horsemen, whose business it is to keep them together upon the rendezvous until the whole party are reassembled, and then, after a few minutes' breathing time, they again start off for the enclosures. The labour now begins in earnest, for cattle seem to have some instinctive anticipation of what is in store for them, and when they are inclined to be refractory, nothing but the most persevering exertions will drive them to their place of destination.

As they proceed the scene becomes more and more animated. From the main body of the herd, dimly seen through a dense cloud of dust, a succession of furious animals break off on all sides, some making back towards the "rendezvous," others to their old haunts in the forest: these are instantly pursued, and hunted back by the stock-men, who may be seen belabouring them with their long whips in every direction, until, driven to desperation by over-driving and the severe discipline of the lash, they frequently turn the tables, and become themselves the pursuers. The air meanwhile is filled with the report of the stock-whips, the barking of dogs, and the cries and shouts of the men, mingled with the heavy, tramping sound of many thousand hoofs, as the herd rushes on towards the enclosures.

The speed and activity displayed by these half-wild cattle would astonish a stranger, who had been brought up in the belief that the ox is naturally a slow and clumsy animal. On a level plain, or down a gentle slope, which is most favourable to the action of cattle, it is often as much as a horse, and a tolerably fast horse too, can do to head some of them for the first hundred

or two hundred yards; and as for agility, it is no small leap that a cow or bullock will "refuse" when hotly pursued. In many herds there are animals whom the enclosures will not hold, though six or seven feet high, even at a time when the yards are so filled with cattle that they are obliged to take a standing jump.

Some of them show excellent bottom, and instances are known of horses having been run to a stand-still by them even in open country. In addition to the gallop, which is their usual pace, they have a long, swinging trot, which enables them to get very fast over the ground.

Cattle-hunting in Australia is excellent sport, and many go out merely with the view to a day's amusement; with less speed than in horse-hunting, there is more variety, and from the constant sharp turning and close contact to which you are brought with the animal pursued, greater skill in the saddle is requisite. Serious accidents are not so frequent as might be expected, and generally occur from fool-hardiness or want of experience. However, it is never safe to trust the half-wild cattle too far; if closely pressed they are always apt to wheel round and charge at a moment's notice, when, as their pursuer is close behind, some disastrous accident may occur, if his horse should chance to be hard in the mouth, or unused to the work; but this is seldom the case, for perhaps no animal in man's employment more thoroughly understands what he is about than the "stock-horse" of New South Wales. From the earliest period of his breaking, he is taught to wheel instantly when at full speed, on any ground; and from the innate sagacity which horses have in discerning their rider's object, one that has been "after stock" for a year or two reaches such perfection in this point as almost to justify the ordinary recommendation of an Australian horse-dealer, that he can "turn upon a cabbage-leaf." The best exemplification of this faculty is in the process of driving, or, as it is called, "cutting out" a single bullock, to which he will not submit without a sharp tussle, from the instinctive dislike to separation which all the bush cattle exhibit. At first starting he trusts wholly to his speed, but finding, after a trial of two or three hundred yards, that his retreat to the herd is still intercepted, he doubles short round in the rear of his pursuer, who, were he to continue his onward career, would thereby lose a great

deal of ground; but such is the agility of the stock-horse that he simultaneously wheels round, and still keeps on the inside, without losing an inch: this sort of thing is repeated again and again, until the baffled animal, by this time exhausted with rage and well scored with the whip, is fain to single out, and take any course that his tormentor may direct.

The purchase and wear and tear of working horses, and of saddlery, forms a considerable item in the expenses of a cattle-station. A stock-keeper in charge of a large herd must be supplied with three or four good horses throughout the year, and at busy times, such as mustering, branding, &c., more are required. The best horses seldom hold out long, as their work is peculiarly distressing; from constant sharp turning when at speed, they are always liable to strains, and their fast down-hill galloping, which is rendered necessary by the invariable propensity of cattle, when pursued, to take the falling ground, divides the weight unfairly, by throwing it all upon their fore-legs, which seldom remain sound after two years' work. But this is a secondary consideration; where horses are so plentiful much trouble is seldom taken to cure an old one, which consequently has to work on, whether sound or unsound, as long as he can "head a bullock."

This sort of riding is at first very difficult, even to one who has long been at home on his horse under other circumstances; the stock-keepers are generally well practised in it, and, indeed, as it is their trade, one that was not so would be useless. Their style of riding, however, does not exactly answer the usual idea of excellence: they have generally a long and loose seat, with the foot home, and the toe pointed to the ground in a line with the knee, and they have seldom a good hand on their horse; but notwithstanding this they are very expert at sticking on under difficulties, and have a most astonishing knack of getting along fast in broken country, and especially down hill, in which perhaps they are unequalled. The native youths particularly excel in bush-riding, to which they are accustomed from boyhood, and pride themselves not a little upon their feats while "after stock." Early practice, however, is not indispensable; many stockowners who have arrived in the colony late in life, become themselves excellent cattle-hunters; and one of the best I remember to have

seen was an ex-pickpocket from London, who before he was transported had hardly ever been in the saddle.

The half-wild cattle have a constant tendency to acquire bad habits, or what a sportsman would call to run riot, and to counteract these forms a great part of the stock-keeper's daily labour, as any of them, if confirmed by time, become insurmountable, and then the only remedy is removal to new pastures, which is an expensive affair, and not always practicable. The most frequent and troublesome habit is that of breaking off from the main body, or "splitting;" this, if not checked at first, gradually spreads through the whole herd, and is so infectious, that if a single animal, when the herd draws near the enclosures, singles off, and is not soundly hunted back there and then, he is pretty sure to repeat it on the next occasion, with the additional annoyance of taking several others in his company. The memory of the half-wild cattle, which is at all times retentive, is never more so than under these circumstances: they seldom forget a bad trick, if once found to be successful. The value of a herd of cattle is of course considerably lessened by these refractory habits, as they necessitate a great addition of horses and labour.

As an instance of the extent of annoyance to which this evil may come at last, I may mention what occurred on a station in one of the large grazing districts to the southward of Sydney. On and about the pastures, which were very extensive, there were supposed to be about 4000 head of cattle, speaking in round numbers, or, as the auctioneers say, "more or less," for, as will be shown by the sequel, they were more easily seen than counted.

From original mismanagement they had become so wild, and had acquired so confirmed a habit of "splitting," that to muster them was an impossibility; and notwithstanding that all the assistance was obtained that could be got for love or money in the neighbourhood, often amounting to treble the number of horsemen usually requisite in such cases, the party considered themselves lucky if they reached the enclosure with a third of the drove with which they had started from the rendezvous, a distance of three or four miles, the whole extent of which presented one continued scene of confusion, covered with men galloping helter-skelter after numberless cattle, which were making off at all points, determined to go in every direction but the right one.

The luckless proprietor of this lively stock, a man well versed in such matters, tried every scheme that long experience could suggest to gain the control once more over his cattle, but in vain; and, in short, to use the colonial expression, "they would not have gone into the enclosures for the governor and all the legislative council." His last attempt to muster them, at least showed that his failure did not arise from lack of energy. Finding that his cattle had become too cunning by day, he resolved to try if he could not outwit them in the dark, and laid his plans accordingly. It was arranged that the pastures were to be undisturbed during the day, but shortly before sundown the whole party were to sally forth as silently as possible, driving before them some quiet cattle, which, being thoroughly under control, might be easily driven into the enclosures, and thus serve as a decoy for the wild herd.

I forget how it happened, but so it was, that business took me in that direction with one companion, and as we were pushing on across the bush, unconscious of the busy times that were awaiting us, we came full upon the party in question, where they were encamped at sundown, at a distance of four or five miles from home, eager for nightfall to open their campaign. As we were neighbours, and, what was more to the purpose, well mounted, our arrival was hailed with joy. We were pressed at once into the service, and thus we had an opportunity of witnessing, and taking part in, a scene which was unusual, even in a country so thoroughly pastoral as Australia—a "muster by moonlight."

Accustomed as we then were to life in the interior, this sort of work differed as much from anything we had previously seen in the usual routine of cattle-hunting as night from day, and no less different was the plan of operations. All noise was strictly prohibited; the crack of the stock-whip, which by day is indispensable, would here have been treason; and we hardly ever had occasion to put our horses into a gallop, but placed all our hopes upon stratagem.

Driving the decoy-herd before us, we skirted the edge of the plains, and whenever we were led to suspect the vicinity of other cattle, we halted, and, dismounting, so as to be less liable to observation, awaited their arrival in silence.

It was seldom long before the lowing of our decoy-herd was answered from the distant forest, and presently the wild cattle would come down from all quarters, and mixing with the others, were driven on with them quietly enough towards the enclosures, which, suffice it to say, we reached at length with a large number of cattle, which for once were outwitted; and on the following morning we left their owner in a state of great satisfaction at having at length hit upon a plan for surmounting his difficulties, though at the cost of turning night into day.

Cattle-hunting had long ceased to be a novelty to any of us, but I well remember how highly interested we were with the whole scene. The night, as is usual in Australia, was fine and clear, and as we proceeded, gradually increasing the size of our drove, we could plainly distinguish the evolutions of the wild cattle as they mingled with ours, and mark their vast bodies "darkling" amidst the trees, their innumerable horns glancing in the moonbeams, and hear the quick tread of their hoofs upon the sward; sometimes a few, more wary than the rest, would join us, and then, as if suspicious of foul play, would single off again towards the forest, for which we had no preventive, as silence was our cue, and the pursuit of them might have alarmed, and occasioned the loss of, the whole. Sometimes a bull, roaming alone through the pastures, would enter our ranks, and long ere he came in sight, his varied tones, now sullen and deep, then rising into a shrill scream, clear as a bugle, until they died away in wailing notes, would announce his approach from a considerable distance.

This is one of the most melodious of Australian pastoral sounds, particularly on a calm night, when it may be heard, awakening the echoes for miles round, through the deep glens, and pathless solitudes.

I was sorry to hear afterwards that the scheme commenced so auspiciously, proved eventually a failure; the cattle, with their usual sagacity, penetrated it in a short time, and thenceforth it was all lost labour, and their unfortunate proprietor found himself once more in *statu quo*. As an expiring effort, he erected enclosures of extra strength and height, and at no little cost, in that very part of his station towards which the refractory animals had always been observed to shape their course; but this plan

fared no better than the rest, and at the last muster there was a deficiency of about 500.

When cattle or horses are spoken of in New South Wales as being "quiet," the word must always be understood with some latitude, as no comparison can be fairly made with stock that is kept under confinement; many herds that might well be considered dangerous in more civilized situations, are looked upon in the colony as rather docile than otherwise, and it is decidedly amusing to witness the cool way in which a new-comer is informed, seemingly against the evidence of his calm senses, that such and such cattle are "not wild," which indeed an animal is seldom allowed to be, in the interior of the country, except one that, in colonial parlance, would "run at a musquito."

The bulls are permitted to remain with the herds during the whole year, but they voluntarily single off during the winter months, and retire to some dry creek, or "gully," in the forest, where they remain in solitude, and rejoin the herd at the beginning of spring. Their contests, if they meet at this time, are desperate. Bulls of the same herd seem to have forgotten each other during the interval of separation, and severe, and even mortal injuries are often the result of an encounter.

A bull is at all times a lordly animal; but when roaming unconfined, as in Australia, there is a dignity and freedom in all his movements which a state of domestication does not develop, and it is remarkable that, wild as is the nature of cattle in New South Wales, the bulls are seldom vicious or dangerous, even in spring, when in England they are not often to be trusted.

Their senses of sight and hearing are very acute, and it is interesting to watch the sudden change which comes over a bull, when, as he basks on some vast plain, in the midst of his harem, he hears in the distance the deep note which announces the vicinity of a rival. At the first sound he springs up and looks eagerly round in quest of his foe, while with his loud and angry roar he seems to caution him against a nearer approach; at sight of each other their rage increases, and, like the Baresarks of Gothic story, they seem to be preparing for the combat, by lashing themselves into a state of frenzy, throwing up the dust into the air with their hoofs, digging up the turf with their horns, and even going down on their knees in their excitement,

as if, in imagination, they were already trampling each other under foot. All this time they are gradually approaching to a distance of five or six yards apart, when each draws himself up, and stands for a minute or two, "collecting all his might." There is something positively sublime in this pause, which makes the ensuing rush still more terrific. At length they close, with an impetus which, but that their foreheads are of the hardest, would be sufficient to split them both, each manœuvring to get the advantage of the upper ground, and bringing either horn to bear alternately upon his adversary, while the noise of the contest may be heard at a great distance, for the rest of the cattle, well knowing what is going on, run bellowing from all directions towards the scene of action, and surround the combatants, who thus fight, as it were, in a ring. When they are evenly matched, the event is long dubious; but if one of them gains the flank of his antagonist, he is nearly sure to injure or upset him, and a bull is naturally so spiteful, that if he once gets his adversary down, he frequently continues to gore and trample him for a long time after all resistance has ceased, as if his rage were not to be satiated by submission, or even by death.

It is very annoying to the settler, in the course of a ride over his "run," to find his best bull, perhaps recently purchased for a good round sum, at his last gasp. Fortunately this does not happen very often: the weaker or less skilful animal, finding his efforts unavailing, generally rushes away with a dismal roar, "*multa gemens ignominiam*," and is pursued, not only by the victor, but by many of the other cattle, who, like true courtiers, have been waiting for the issue of the contest before they declare for either party. The conqueror then takes possession of the disputed herd, while the beaten bull wanders off alone across the plain in search of other cattle, being at such times most dangerous to meet with, except in the vicinity of some rock or tree, which may serve for a means of escape.

The most disagreeable, as well as the most laborious work connected with cattle farming in Australia is that of "draughting," or separating and classing a herd, which is necessary at certain times of the year, especially when any are to be sold, or removed to fresh pastures. It is, properly speaking, part of the stock-keeper's duty, though many settlers go through it all in

person, being fond of the excitement of the business, which indeed requires both nerve and activity. A cattle enclosure is usually subdivided into five yards: two of them facing the entrance are large, the three others are smaller; the former are known as "receiving," and the latter as "draughting" yards, all of which communicate with one another. The whole herd are first enclosed in one of the large yards, and thence as many are forced into one of the smaller as will about half fill it; the gateway is then closed behind them, and those leading to the other divisions are thrown open, at each of which a man is stationed, armed with a "waddy," or green sapling, about as thick, and four times as long, as an Irish shilelagh, and operations then commence. It is no easy matter to part the cattle in the first instance, as they instinctively keep close together, and will not single out, except on compulsion; and when at length an animal is forced to do so, he is usually well belaboured, and makes for the nearest gateway, literally "like mad." If this happens to be the right one, he is suffered to pass unscathed, but if otherwise, he receives such a rap upon the head from the "waddy" of the man who is defending the gateway, that he is fain to turn tail and try his luck elsewhere, and he is thus bandied about, amidst blows and shouts innumerable, until he takes the right direction.

As the numbers in the draughting-yard diminish, the risk increases, for the wildest of the cattle remain among the last, and when compelled to leave the rest, frequently charge through every obstacle into one of the wrong yards, whence they are dislodged with still greater difficulty. The chief share of the danger falls upon the draughter, who has to go amongst the cattle in the first instance, and being sometimes threatened on all sides, should be a very Argus of watchfulness. When pursued, he makes for the nearest part of the fence; but when there is not time to reach it, he throws himself down upon the ground, and lets the infuriated animal pass by or over him. The other men, meanwhile, who are stationed at the several gateways, have no sinecure, especially when three or four animals rush together pell-mell towards an opening, through which only one, perhaps, is to be allowed to pass, and the others are to be stopped, almost at the same moment.

Practice, however, does wonders; and the stock-keepers,

whose chief recommendation for employment, next to bold riding, is that of being "good men in a yard," display wonderful agility and indifference to danger, drawing aside to let an animal go by, then springing back again almost simultaneously to stop the rest, with a dexterity in the use of their "waddies" that would do credit to a Spanish matador.

A stock-yard, or enclosure for cattle and horses, which no station in the interior of Australia is without, is usually erected on a flat, or gentle slope, in the vicinity of good riding ground, so that the animals, when breaking off, as they are particularly apt to do at the entrance, may not have the advantage of broken country on their side. The fence is five-barred, and of very strong construction, for otherwise it would be unable to sustain the vast pressure to which it is subjected when filled with the half-wild cattle.

It is built entirely of wood, strong rails of which are firmly driven into mortised posts, sunk in the ground to the depth of three feet and upwards, and rammed down hard at the butt end. Nails are not used in any part of it. The timber generally preferred is the stringy-bark, blue-gum, or mountain ash.

The size of an enclosure varies with the quantity of stock it is intended to contain, as, being an expensive structure, nobody builds a larger one than he actually requires. A space of about 14 roods in length by 12 in breadth, will contain some 800 or 1000 head of mixed cattle.

One of the smaller enclosures is used as a branding-yard, and here the young stock are branded with the initials or mark of their owner. No two proprietors residing in one district are allowed to use the same brand, and it is the business of the new comer to make inquiries on this point, so as to avoid all risk of confusion of property.

Two side fences, called "wings," are carried out in front of the enclosures, extending to a distance of 10 or 12 roods. These are sufficiently wide at the outer extremities to admit at once the whole herd of cattle, but they gradually become narrower towards the gateway, and are of great service to the horsemen when riding in the cattle, by concentrating them, and preventing them either from breaking away at the sides, or running past the entrance.

Calves are branded at any age under six months, for when the

herd is numerous or refractory they must be caught when they may. The roughness of the stockmen's proceedings can be equalled only by its rapidity—hundreds of calves are roped, mutilated, and branded in a day. The stock-owners never seem to apprehend any ill effects from this hasty treatment, or, if they do, they have obviously made up their minds, in the colonial phrase, to "chance it."

The fence of the branding-yard is more closely constructed than that of the other divisions, and is provided with what is called a "branding panel," which is, in fact, a sort of screen, behind which the men take refuge, if suddenly charged by an infuriated animal.

The markets in Sydney are very fluctuating, and much of the settler's success depends upon his bringing his stock to market at the proper moment. The detention of a week, or even a day, on the road, has been known to make an important diminution in his profits. The wholesale butchers, who are the principal purchasers, combine to keep down prices, and to oblige the seller to part with his stock on terms which they themselves have fixed. The stock-owner or his agent, when within a day or two's journey from Sydney, and as yet ignorant of the current prices, is met by a butcher, who inspects his stock, and concludes by making him an offer. If he declines it, he is accosted, in due time, by another confederate, who offers him still less; this, of course, he also refuses, when shortly a third comes to him with no higher terms, and so on. By this time he is full of nervous perplexity, and returns to the man who made him the first offer; but it is then too late—the first bidder will either make no offer at all, or bid still lower than the rest; and thus the settler is bandied about like a shuttlecock, until he is reduced to such a state of anxiety and mortification that he is glad to take anything he can get.

Sometimes, however, it happens that these plots are unsuccessful. I remember a particular occasion on which some cattle were brought to Sydney from the interior in excellent condition, and as there were no others to be procured at the time, they were very much sought after. They were worth about ten pounds each, a large price in Australia, where a fine ox is often sold for thirty shillings, and good beef may be bought for 1*d.* per pound. The

butchers, as usual, combined together, and agreed to offer not more than eight pounds, with which intention three or four of them sought out the owner. He, on his part, took some time to consider the proposal, and while he was doing so, the plot was discovered. Another of the purchasers, in his eagerness, made a higher offer, for which breach of agreement he was summarily knocked down by the first spokesman, to the astonishment of the unsuspecting settler, who, being thus put into possession of the real state of affairs, was enabled to retaliate on the purchasers, and obtain his own price.

In addition to the demand for colonial consumption, and for salting, a new market for the surplus stock has been found within the last few years, by the discovery of the process of "boiling down," or converting the whole carcase into tallow. He who first put this plan into operation deserved the thanks of all the colonists, for had not this method, or some equivalent to it, been invented, cattle and sheep must soon have become almost unsaleable, as the supply had so greatly exceeded the demand, whereas now, though the colonial market should be overstocked, the animal, whether sheep or ox, is at least worth its hide and tallow for exportation.

"Boiling down" is a very simple and rapid process. The whole carcase, having been cut up into pieces, and thrown into large cast-iron pans, each capable of containing several bullocks, is boiled to rags, during which operation the fat is skimmed off, until no more rises to the surface. The boiled meat is then taken out of the pans, and, after having been squeezed in a wooden press, which forces out the remaining particles of tallow, it is either thrown away, or used as food for pigs, vast numbers of which are sometimes kept in this manner, in the neighbourhood of a boiling establishment.

The proprietors of these places will either boil down the settler's sheep and cattle at so much per head, or purchase them wholly from him in the first instance, and convert them into tallow at their own risk. The value of an animal for this purpose depends of course entirely on his condition, and usually varies from 30*s*. to 3*l*. 10*s*.

Horned cattle will reach a high pitch of perfection under the climate of Australia, in the hands of an experienced breeder.

Pure animals of several breeds have always been imported from England, and, on the whole, no sort is so popular, or found to combine more of the necessary qualifications, than the improved short horn, of which many colonial bred specimens are to be met with, that might well compete for a prize at some of our most important shows.

Though to capitalists now visiting the colony for the purpose of engaging in pastoral pursuits, a speculation in cattle does not hold out such advantages as sheep farming, yet there is less risk connected with it, and it may be particularly recommended under certain circumstances. The profits of a cattle station very far inland must always be much lessened by the expense and loss of condition of the stock, attending long overland journeys to the capital. But if, on the other hand, a good and tolerably quiet herd can be purchased, together with a station which has been ascertained to be capable of fattening readily, in the vicinity of the coast, so as to command facilities for shipping live stock to the various colonial markets, and also for salting beef, most favourable results are attainable, without calculating on any unreasonable share of good fortune.

CHAPTER VII.

The Half-wild Horses of the Interior—Roving Mode of Life—Local Attachments—Appearance of a large Herd on the Plains—Entire Horses—The Vicious Habits they occasionally acquire—Anecdote—A Bush Incident—Value of a good Saddle Horse—"Buckjumping"—Mode of Breaking Young Horses—Roping a Coit—Horse-hunting—Irreclaimable Herds—A rash Speculation—Quality of Australian Horses—Advice to Breeders.

THE half-wild, or bush horses, bred on the large grazing districts in the interior of Australia, differ greatly in their habits from those in a state of domestication, and their treatment, which is similar to that of the horned cattle, produces similar results. The natural grasses of the country being sufficient to keep them in condition both in summer and winter, they never require any additional food from their owners, but are suffered to roam at large within certain limits, and are brought back to the enclosures "en masse," whenever they are wanted, either for the purpose of branding the foals, or taking out colts and fillies for breaking or for sale. They are driven in more or less frequently according to circumstances; those herds that show symptoms of running riot and getting out of control, by rambling beyond the bounds of their owner's pastures, require to be ridden in constantly, while those that remain contented upon their feeding-grounds are often left undisturbed for many months; the stock-keepers to whose charge they are entrusted, use their own judgment in this matter, and treat them accordingly.

Nothing can be more congenial to their natural disposition than the wandering life they lead in New South Wales; at one time revelling upon a bank of wild oats, at another trooping off to a patch of "burnt feed" (as the young herbage is called which springs up on the spots where the old grass has been set on fire), to-day resorting to some well-known haunt, "to-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new;" now slaking their thirst *ad libitum* in some cool stream or gushing spring, or shunning the noon-

day heat beneath the shady honeysuckle or feathery mimosa. As they roam across the boundless plains there is a freedom and elasticity in all their motions which domesticated animals seldom exhibit; and yet, in the midst of one's admiration of such a scene, it is painful to mark the contrast between the fine promising colt, as yet "by spur and bridle undefiled," and some broken-kneed and wind-galled stock-horse, who has for a time rejoined but finds it difficult to keep pace with his old associates.

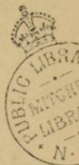
Their rambling propensities are, however, as in the case of cattle, counteracted by the strong attachment they acquire to any spots on which they have been depastured for a time, but especially to the places where they have been bred: were it not for this, the trouble in keeping them within reasonable bounds would be endless, and even as it is, when horses are removed from pastures on which they have been reared, they must be closely watched for some time subsequently, or they will ramble back again from incredibly long distances, having been known to make their way home, through every obstacle, for 300 miles.

From the mode of life they lead, restrained in their wanderings by no bounds, unaccustomed to the hand of man, and not dependent upon him for food, they learn to look upon him with alarm and suspicion, and it requires some manœuvring to approach them without creating a premature panic. A stock-keeper would be able to go through the midst of a herd without causing much disturbance, while a stranger to their habits would disperse them at once by his approach. It requires a kind of craft to make them imagine you have come among them accidentally, and not for any ulterior purpose, as they have a most feminine instinct in guessing "what your intentions are;" and if they suspect you are come for the purpose of driving them into the enclosures, they make off at once, thereby defeating your first object, which is to make sure, before you start, that the animal you are in quest of is amongst them.

On the approach of a horseman, one or two on the outside sound an alarm, and make off towards the rest, who thereupon rush together, and a general concentration takes place. It is a fine sight to see a large herd of these horses, of every size, age, and colour, mustering in this manner from hill and valley, as if by common consent. Though physically very powerful, they

assume no threatening aspect: their safety lies in their speed; and as they eye the suspicious object, their meaning is obvious—they say, as plainly as looks and gestures can say, Now what do you want? If you are a stranger, pass on quietly; but if you are for a gallop, we are quite ready to try of what mettle that horse of yours is made.

It might naturally be supposed that animals thus unencumbered would be able to distance one of their own species with the disadvantage of weight on his back, but the reverse is usually the case.



In every herd the entire horse is suffered to remain at large throughout the year, and has often great influence upon the movements of the rest, over whom he reigns paramount and supreme; he watches them with a jealous eye, allows no rival to approach with impunity, and is evidently conscious of, and pleased with, his guardianship. Those who have long lorded it over their fellows acquire at times eccentric and fanciful habits: some of them will allow neither any addition to nor separation from their own particular herd, bringing back instantly those who show a wish to straggle away or lag behind, and foiling any attempt of a strange horse to join company, by hunting him backwards and forwards, always keeping on the inside, and interposing between him and the rest, with fierce and menacing gestures, until the intruder is glad to seek quarters elsewhere—in short, "cutting him out" as well as could be done by the most expert cattle hunter.

Occasionally they become vicious, and will not hesitate to attack a horseman, if he ventures too near their herd, laying back their ears, and charging him open mouthed; this, however, is of rare occurrence. A more common, though less natural habit, is that of destroying foals: this is a ruinous vice, and most unaccountable: horses that acquire it are removed at once from the pastures; but they cannot always be detected, the native dog, and other causes, being often wrongfully suspected in the first instance. I knew a stockowner in one of the southern districts, who kept a numerous herd of mares, amongst which he had lately introduced a promising horse; some months afterwards he visited his station, when he made the usual inquiries of his stockkeeper concerning the state of his stud, and was in-

formed that, owing to a drought, they were all rather thin, except the new horse, whose condition was excellent, "and," added the man, "it's no wonder, for he eats all the foals;" and in short it turned out, to the dismay of the proprietor, that although he had not actually eaten, yet he had destroyed all that he could lay hold of, which did not except many.

This extraordinary propensity is usually peculiar to horses which have long been running at large, but this is not always the case, for I remember a remarkable instance of it in an animal that was constantly worked. He was tethered in his owner's paddock, when a man leading a large Clydesdale mare, with her young foal, passed within reach of his rope; the horse, seeing the foal within the length of his tether, immediately seized him, threw him down, and would have killed him in a very short time, had it not been for a lucky thought which struck the groom, who, guessing from the violent efforts made by the mare to break away, that she would best defend her offspring, slipped the halter from her head, when she attacked the enemy with such fury that she beat him off, and saved her foal from the jaws of destruction.

The half-wild herds are necessarily kept separate from the saddle-horses and those that are used for the daily work on the station; these are not allowed to ramble far, but are taught to remain within two or three miles of home, which, in New South Wales, is considered a very moderate distance. They are, however, always apt to mix with the rest, and this inclination which they retain for each other's company is a frequent source of annoyance to the settler. A visit to a sheep-station being necessary on the following morning, he gives orders to his stockkeeper to have the saddle-horses at hand by an early hour. After dressing and breakfasting in a hurry, he finds that his man has been out since daybreak, but has not yet returned, and accordingly is fast losing his temper, when to his great joy he discerns him coming at a brisk walk, and driving the horses before him. Inwardly congratulating himself that there is still sufficient time left to reach the sheep-station by the appointed hour, he arranges along the fence his saddle, bridle, stockwhip, &c., so that not a moment may be lost. By this time the saddle-horses are close at hand, the lapse of a few minutes will see

them safe in the stockyard, when suddenly a rumbling noise is heard, and from some unexpected quarter a herd of unbroken horses "come quickly thundering on;" these, neither knowing nor caring whether the saddle-horses are wanted or not, at one fell swoop take off the whole of them, nothing loth, in their company, leaving their owner to chew the cud of mortification and to speculate whether they will continue their onward career for two miles or five. As the climax of his distress he remembers that his best stock-horse having been "hobbled" on the previous evening to prevent him from rambling too far, cannot fail to cut his fetlocks severely in his violent efforts to keep pace with the rest, and when he is brought home again will probably be unserviceable for several days.

The value of a good saddle-horse can nowhere be more thoroughly appreciated than in the interior of Australia. In more civilized countries, if anything goes wrong with one's steed, there is no difficulty in finding other modes of conveyance, but the settler is like an Arab, wholly dependent upon his horse; with him he is free as air, without him little better than a fixture. He feels uneasy when his horse is not to be found, even though he should not happen to be in want of him at the time; he looks upon any accident that may befall him as a most serious matter, and would even let you meddle with his purse rather than his stud. A good hack is the first thing he purchases in prosperity, and the last that adversity can wrench from him. In fact the settler's home is in the saddle; and though he never actually goes out for a ride, which would be as great an anomaly as a Lambeth waterman taking, for his private pleasure, a row upon the Thames, yet he does so because it is necessary to his vocation, and forms part of his daily labour. He betakes himself to the saddle in as business-like a way as the merchant to his desk, or the lawyer to his brief.

The worthlessness of an indifferent horse, on the other hand, is felt most severely in the bush: this he only can tell, who, in the midst of a journey through the pathless wilds, where a night in the open air is the sole alternative of not reaching the solitary station, has felt his horse by degrees grow weaker and weaker, "while his drooped head sinks gradually low," until at length the exhausted animal stands still under him, and refuses to advance

an inch further, so that at last he has to carry his saddle, bridle, and all the etcæteras, on his shoulders, and trudge on alone, for many a weary mile, to the intended halting-place.

Australian horses have a vicious habit known as "buck-jumping," or as it is more familiarly called, "bucking." This trick, in its aggravated form, is peculiar to the colts bred in the colony and in Van Diemen's Land, and is decidedly the most expeditious way that could be devised for emptying a saddle. An expert "buck-jumper" usually begins when his rider is in some degree off his guard and has not got him tight in hand; then, watching his opportunity, he flings down his head between his forelegs, sets up or "arches" his back, and concentrating all his muscular force, gives a succession of short, quick plunges, all his legs being at times off the ground together. While thus "bucking," he usually describes a circle, squealing and snorting the whole time in a most excited manner, and frequently continuing his jumps, after throwing his rider, until the girths also give way, and the saddle follows its owner. There are not many horsemen, however good riders under other circumstances, who can "sit a buckjumper;" a practised few, by keeping the horse's head well up, and taking a vice-like grasp of the saddle with their knees, can manage to sit it out, if not taken unawares; but no man can escape a fall if the horse once gets his head down—he then has it all his own way, and the longer the rider keeps on, the greater will be the impetus with which he finally meets the ground. This habit, though common, is by no means universal: many colts that show it when first handled, are entirely cured when put to regular work; but an aged horse, who is a confirmed buckjumper, is never to be depended on, and if he finds a good opportunity of disposing of his rider, is as likely to do so at the end as at the commencement of his day's work.

No satisfactory reason has been given for the prevalence of this habit, though the probability seems to be that it is caused in a great many instances by the hasty, insufficient mode of breaking horses, pursued in most parts of the colony. If a stockowner has some colts fit for handling, he engages a horse-breaker, who contracts to break them all at so much per head, and whose interest it is to finish his work quickly; and so, as the bush phrase goes, he "roughs them off" as speedily as possible, and pursues

the same hasty treatment towards all, without making any allowance for variety of disposition and temper. Many of these men have no other qualifications for their trade than a firm seat in the saddle, and the power, as it is called, of "sitting a buck-jumper;" patience and perseverance, which are indispensable to a steady horse-breaker, are qualities not expeditious enough for New South Wales. Accordingly young horses are very severely treated, and sometimes fairly "beaten into shape," whip and spur being used indiscriminately as the only means of correction. The consequence is, that many a colt whose temper might otherwise have been good, comes out of the breaker's hands either full of vice, or brokenspirited and worthless.

The way in which a half-wild colt is first caught resembles the rest of his treatment. The whole herd having been driven into the stock-yard, he is enclosed, together with a few others, in one of the smaller divisions; three or four men then go into them, the most expert of whom, usually the head stock-keeper, advances towards the horses, having in his hand a pole, about ten feet in length, from the end of which hangs the noose of a strong rope, made of platted thongs of hide, which, watching his opportunity as the horses rush past him, he drops gently round the animal's neck. This is the critical moment: the colt, frantic with terror, if not checked immediately, would dash himself against the fence, or be crippled in attempts to jump over; and if stopped too suddenly, is liable to be choked, or otherwise injured by the jerk. On the instant, therefore, that the noose is "placed," the rope is seized by all hands, who stop the animal's career as gradually as possible, by giving him plenty of line when he rears, and so threatens to injure himself by falling back, and resuming a steady pull when he attempts to break away by force; in short, playing him much as an angler does a trout, until at length he is dragged, half throttled, into the middle of the yard, where he stands, the picture of mingled rage and fear, squealing and furiously beating the air with his forelegs, while, as the pressure of the rope increases, his tongue hangs out of his mouth, and his eyes are swollen in their sockets. The next step is to get the halter upon his head; this, if practicable, is done as he stands, in which case the catching-rope is still kept tight, while the halter is gently "insinuated" on by means of a short

forked stick, and sometimes by the hand, the man on whom this part of the work devolves taking care to elude a blow from the colt's forefeet, with which he strikes very quickly. But if the animal falls from exhaustion, which usually happens, the noose is immediately slackened, and he is kept down upon his side by main strength, one man pressing his head, another clinging to the uppermost foreleg, the power of which is greatly lessened by its being bent, while a third confines the hind legs in a shorter rope; the halter is then put on and fastened; and, finally, the catching-rope is taken off as he lies upon the ground. It is some time, however, before he recovers his fright; and for a long while after being allowed to rise, he looks, to use the colonial phrase, "as if he couldn't believe it:" and, indeed, the whole affair is anything but moderate exercise to all parties concerned. Next day, when the colt's excitement has had time to subside, his breaking commences; and it frequently happens that the saddle is fairly put on his back in the course of three days from the time when he was first roped.

I have often wondered that the lasso has never yet found its way into the interior of Australia, as the use of it would soon be acquired by men who are so skilful in everything connected with the management of stock. The present method, of catching animals with a rope placed on the end of a pole, is less dexterous, and attended with more danger, inasmuch as it cannot be practised without coming into very close contact with the animal destined to be caught.

Horse-hunting is glorious sport, the best perhaps that Australia can afford. The animal you are on, accustomed to his work, is doubly eager when in chase of his own species, and strains every nerve in the pursuit; while before you a large "body" of horses, "the wild, the free," going at a racing pace, up hill and down dale, with their long matted manes and tails streaming in the wind, form a very animated sight; and the "quadrupedans pedum sonitus," which makes the music of the chase, is peculiarly exhilarating.

The degree of excitement and trouble depends very much upon the habits of the herd pursued. Those which have been kept under constant control are driven in with ease; at starting, they take the right direction, and all that is to be done is to follow

them at a steady gallop, within a moderate distance, always taking care to be well up with them as they draw near the enclosures, to prevent their running past the entrance or breaking away, a trick which, like the half-wild cattle, they are apt to acquire. On the other hand, those that have been neglected soon become very refractory, urged by the natural propensity which all animals have, when running at large, as in Australia, to relapse into the wild state: and they frequently give infinite trouble to their owners, by doing their best to avoid the right route to the enclosures, which, however, they well know, and submit to enter only on sheer compulsion; and this cannot be effected except by what, in colonial phrase, is denominated "solid galloping."

Some herds of horses have become, like numbers of the wild cattle, wholly irreclaimable; and having long defeated all attempts to drive them into the enclosures, are useless to their owner, to whom they are a tantalizing sort of property, visible, yet beyond his reach.

A friend of mine once purchased, on speculation, some of these wild horses, tempted probably by their low price, and by the hope that, as he had great experience in these matters, he might accomplish more than his forerunners; having, however, previously secured himself from loss by stipulating that the horses were to be delivered to him by their owner at the distance of fifteen miles from his station: for the great difficulty with the wild stock consists in driving them off their own pasture grounds in the first instance; when removed elsewhere, they invariably become less refractory.

The first party that went out in pursuit were five horsemen, all tried men, and well mounted for the occasion. After a long search, they happened to fall in with a small group of the same number, with which, in sporting phraseology, they immediately "went away." For a time they succeeded in keeping them together, which is a great point; but all attempts to get them into the enclosure proved, as before, abortive, for they would go no way but their own; and, finally, when hard pressed, would separate, or "split off," each in his own direction. The horsemen had no alternative but to do the same, and each singling out his quarry, continued the chase alone. The finale was the same as it had constantly been before, nearly all

parties, both pursuers and pursued, being run to a stand-still. One or two of the colts were brought in to the enclosures, so thoroughly exhausted that the horsemen could throw their stock-whips around their necks, and fairly lead them home, incapable of resistance. After many days' continued exertion, the party succeeded in getting a few together in the enclosures; but when they were again let out to be driven to the place of delivery, they all broke away in different directions, in spite of the efforts of seven or eight horsemen, and notwithstanding that they had been kept without food or water for some time previously; so that the purchaser, who in the early stage of the pursuit had dislocated his shoulder against a gum-tree, was forced to abandon his speculation.

The greater part of these bad habits arise in the first instance from neglect; and it is always very imprudent to allow horses to acquire the habit of rambling far from head-quarters, for, besides the wildness which it fosters, the severe gallops to which they will be subjected over all sorts of country are very injurious to them, especially to the young stock, many of whom are thereby crippled before they are old enough for breaking. Australian horses are chiefly descended from English blood, with a few Arabs. Their quality varies so much in different parts of the colony, that a fair estimate of them cannot be formed except by one who has visited many of the large breeding districts. In some of these coach and cart-horses are principally reared; in others, hacks and well-bred horses; and in not a few the stock-owners, either from carelessness or want of judgment, pay no attention to quality, so long as they can increase their numbers; for this reason there are many herds in the interior of a very worthless description, being neither fit for saddle nor harness. But in other districts, where more attention has been paid to breeding, many excellent animals are produced—better, indeed, than might be expected, when it is remembered that no horses of first-rate form have as yet been imported to the colony, and that English horses certainly deteriorate in Australia, inasmuch as the young stock seldom equal their sires either in shape or size. This is chiefly owing to the nature of the climate, which, from the excessively rapid growth it promotes in all kinds of animals, causes them to shoot up too hastily, and, as a natural conse-

quence, does not bring them ultimately to the same perfection to which they attain in England, where the form is more gradually developed.

One striking defect in the Australian-bred horses is the narrowness of their "build;" there is usually a want of expansion of the ribs and of the frame generally. Saddles intended for colonial use must be made narrower in the tree than those used in England, which would not be serviceable in New South Wales. On the other hand, they have many excellent qualities; activity and hardiness enabling them to sustain a great deal of work upon little food; journeys of many hundred miles in the interior, and all the severe work of the stock-stations, being performed by horses who neither in winter nor summer get more solid sustenance than the natural grass of the country. Their hoofs are remarkably sound and good, rendering the loss of a shoe a matter of little consequence.

But it must be owned that horses in New South Wales are, generally speaking, very harshly and injudiciously treated. In the interior, colts are usually broken and put to hard work at the age of two years, long before their strength is equal to it. Many suffer from this unfair treatment; and those that do not cannot long bear up against the very severe work to which they are afterwards unavoidably subjected, from the nature of the pursuits of the country; the consequence of which is that the majority are broken down before they have passed their prime; and it is a rarity in New South Wales to meet with a sound horse after the age of eight or nine years: one that has long been used for the saddle in the interior, and remains sound, must indeed be a prodigy of hardiness.

Like the human race, horses are subject to very few disorders in Australia; that most fatal one, the glanders, being as yet unknown. Young stock are frequently attacked by inflammation of the throat, commonly called "the strangles," when under the age of eighteen months; but they suffer less from it than animals kept on artificial food, and usually recover without the assistance of man.

The best shaped horse of its kind to be met with in Australia is the light cart-horse, of which some very good specimens are bred, particularly on the beautiful farms in the vicinity of Windsor,

on the river Hawkesbury. The lighter sort is preferred, as being best adapted to a warm climate, where excessive size is less desirable than moderate bulk with more activity.

For long journeys and general purposes, the most useful sort of hack that a resident in the interior can possess, is a tolerably well-bred animal, combining activity and strength with compactness of form, or what is aptly described as a "large horse in a small compass."

To the breeder the most valuable animal is one suited to the Calcutta market. The East India Company have lately purchased numbers of Australian horses for the use of their cavalry; and for this and other purposes the better sort of animal selected from New South Wales has been much approved. One advantage which these horses possess is that, having been bred in a warm climate, they are less liable to be enervated by the excessive heat of India than those imported from colder latitudes.

Whatever be the description of animal that the breeder may prefer, only good ones of their kind hold out any prospect of remuneration; those of inferior quality are now hardly worth rearing, as the supply of all sorts of stock has long exceeded the colonial demand; and as the surplus of the horses cannot, like that of the sheep and cattle, be converted into an article of export by means of boiling down, there is little prospect but of their further depreciation. There is no property on a stock establishment so thoroughly valueless as a breed of ill-shaped and weedy, or, as they are styled in the colony, "three-cornered" horses. On the other hand, he who produces good animals, though at a greater expense, has a double chance of success; he will always find them more saleable in Sydney than inferior ones at half the price; and when the colonial market is unfavourable, their excellence will enable him to ship them to India with advantage.

CHAPTER VIII.

Economy of a Station—An "Up-Country" Store—Mode of Transacting Business—Agriculture in the Bush—Diet—Receipt for "a Damper"—Killing a Bullock—Boundary Questions—A Court of Enquiry—Sunday in the Far Districts.

EVERY proprietor of a large establishment in the interior of the country endeavours so to regulate the arrival of his "supplies" from Sydney, that he may never be wholly at a loss for any necessary article. This is a great point in the internal economy of a station; for when, by the detention of his teams upon the road, or any unexpected consumption of food, the supplies will not last out during the time that has been calculated, the proprietor pays the disagreeable penalty of being obliged to procure the needful article at some public store in the neighbourhood, to which he goes a most unwilling customer, expecting nothing else than to pay double the ordinary prices, and, in truth, but seldom returning disappointed in this expectation.

The exterior of a bush or "up-country" store in Australia is usually similar to that of an ordinary slab building, except that it is somewhat longer, and of stronger construction. A glance at the inside shows a rude counter, behind which are several shelves, running round the whole length of the building, on which, as well as in all corners from the roof to the ground, is collected a mixture of everything that the pursuits of the country, or tastes of its motley population, render saleable. Slop clothing for the men, Manilla and cabbage-tree hats, gown print and perfumery for women, coarse silk handkerchiefs, for which there is a great demand, as they are much used for stock whip-lashes, saddlery of every description, horseshoes and shoeing utensils, sheep-shears and butchers' knives, Epsom salts and castor oil, are piled up in motley array above the heavier articles, consisting of chests of tea, bags of sugar and salt, and kegs of Virginian and colonial tobacco. The stock, in short, appears

to have been formed by a contribution of all the shopkeepers in Sydney, and there is hardly anything which the owner of a bush store does not keep, or which he considers "out of his line." His trade is frequently a flourishing one, though the cause of its being so is somewhat remarkable, as he may be said to thrive chiefly through the mistakes of his neighbours, for fixed prices are unknown in the bush; and as his chief advantage lies in his possessing an article when no one else in the vicinity is supplied with it, it may be easily understood that on such occasions he sells pretty much on his own terms.

Very little money, however, passes through the storekeeper's hands, for one may reside in the bush for months together without catching a glimpse of the current coin, the "order" system, which has long been adopted in the interior of the colony, being found desirable as a substitute for payment in cash. It is usual for proprietors of stations "up the country" to keep an account current with a Sydney merchant or agent, from whom they also purchase their annual supplies, and, when discharging any debt in the interior, they simply draw an "order" upon him for the amount; their produce is likewise intrusted to his charge, and he either sells it in Sydney, purchases it himself from the settler, or ships it to England, as may be most advisable from the state of the market. A storekeeper's cash-box, therefore, seldom contains anything more than a number of these "orders," commencing with "Please to pay," and addressed to various mercantile houses in the capital. Every now and then he remits a number of them to his agent in Sydney, who collects them, and credits him with the amount. In the interior they pass current throughout the districts where the signatures are known, and thus often remain in circulation for a considerable time.

Were a practical modern agriculturist suddenly transplanted from the mother country to a grazing station some three hundred miles in the interior of New South Wales, just at the time when the paddocks are being prepared for wheat, it would be amusing to see his astonishment at a system, if such it can be called, so utterly at variance with anything he had previously witnessed in farming. Manure is here never used, and a rotation of crops seldom heard of; in fact, a stock-owner who thought about

either would be set down by his neighbours as "cranky." Matters are managed pretty much in the following way:—As many acres of land as are considered sufficient to ensure a supply of wheat in the event of partial failure (for which allowances, owing to the prevalence of drought, should always be made), having been enclosed with a strong three-rail fence, the soil is turned up once with the plough, after which the sower "lays on" the seed, frequently with as little care as if, to use a colonial simile, he were feeding his poultry: the harrow is then drawn once over the whole, and Nature is left to do the rest. This is certainly trusting her a great way; but in spite of this hasty agriculture, very tolerable crops are frequently obtained, far better, it must be confessed, than is merited by the labour bestowed upon them.

But this is not all, for in the far districts it is a common practice, after once ploughing a field, or, as it is always called, a paddock, to trust during the next, and sometimes even the two following years, to what is known as a "self-sown" crop, in which case nothing whatever is done to the land from one season to another: it is taken for granted that sufficient grain for seed has been spilt during the previous harvest, partly from what has shelled out of the ear, and partly from careless reaping, and that each portion of ground has received a little of it, and on the faith of this no further trouble is taken about the matter. Some of these self-sown crops, though seldom yielding as much in quantity as when the land has been ploughed, are still very good; and it is remarkable that the grain thus produced, besides being usually the finest, is never attacked by smut; it seems to acquire a hardiness by its exposure during the winter months, which protects it against this otherwise prevalent evil.

The fact is, that as the chief source of wealth to the colony springs from pastoral pursuits, the stockowner is seldom a good agriculturist; he takes pains to acquire knowledge in the quality of wool, and prides himself not a little upon his judgment in horses and horned cattle, and in the breeding of live stock generally, but his crops are a secondary consideration. The large grazing districts are situated so far inland that there is no market for any surplus wheat, owing to the impossibility of conveying it to the capital upon remunerating terms, so he only cultivates

as much land as he thinks will supply his own establishment; and, indeed, if there should be a prospect of flour being procurable elsewhere at a low price, he does not cultivate at all, his sole consideration being how he may feed, in the most economical manner, the number of men which he is obliged to employ in the care of the articles on which he does actually depend—the produce of his flocks and herds. In the far districts, therefore, the land is cropped year after year successively, until the soil either becomes worn out or choked up with weeds, upon which the fence is pulled down and removed to a fresh spot, a process which, where land is of so little value, requires less time and labour than would be occupied in cleaning and manuring the old ground.

Wheat is converted into flour by means of steel mills, turned by the hand, at least one of which is kept upon every station, and each of the working men has to grind his own weekly allowance of grain.

Men who are hired by the year in the bush, whether as shepherds, stock-keepers, or agricultural labourers, never engage to find their own provisions; they are always supplied by the owner of the station on which they are employed, at a rate previously agreed upon. The usual weekly allowance for a single man is 4 ounces of tea, 2 lbs. of sugar, 4 ounces of tobacco, 1 peck of wheat, and 10 or 12 lbs. of beef; anything that he may require beyond this must be paid for, but this is usually ample. Married men generally have a double allowance, and those who have large families, and to whom a liberal supply of food is a primary consideration, are in the habit of agreeing to take less wages, the difference being made up to them by their receiving an additional quantity of rations.

A loaf of bread is an article seldom seen in the abodes of the working classes in the interior of New South Wales; the proprietor's table is usually the only place on which it is found. In every other part of the establishment a sort of cake, peculiar to the country, and known by the discouraging appellation of "damper," is used as a substitute. I am inclined to think this is an acquired taste, for I remember the first which I ate seemed very unpalatable; those, however, who wish to try for themselves may do so from the following genuine receipt:—Take

eight or ten pounds of second flour, and having placed them upon a strong table, mix with warm water, beginning from the centre of the heap, and knead until both arms ache thoroughly, and until the whole mass has acquired the consistency of tolerably stiff clay; then flatten it out to a thickness of about an inch and a half, rub each side with flour, and prick it all over with a fork. Next, having removed the upper logs from a large wood fire, rake away the ashes on either side, so as to leave a gap in the middle sufficient for the admission of the damper: then cover it over again with the hot ashes, and turn it once during the process of baking. Lastly, brush off the adhering ashes with a cloth, and let it stand on its edge until it is quite cold.

At best it is very inferior to bread, and I presume that its prevalence has arisen from its being used of necessity in the long journeys and overland trips through the country, where it would be impossible to make bread, and hence, partly through idleness, and partly through the force of habit, it has maintained its ground on other occasions, and has thus become the staff of life throughout the interior.

The consumption of animal food in the bush is very large, beef being most generally eaten. When a working man hires upon a stock establishment for so many pounds of meat weekly, he usually expects to receive beef; and on stations where a great many hands are employed, a considerable number of cattle are slaughtered in the course of the year.

As soon as the previous supply begins to be exhausted, the stockkeeper is dispatched to the cattle station to hunt a fat bullock into the enclosures, for which purpose he starts early in the morning, so that the animal, who, when first brought into the yard, is usually in a very hot and excited state, owing to hard driving, may have some time to cool before evening.

About an hour before sundown the stockkeeper brings word that it is time to kill the bullock. In this matter the owner's share of the work is to shoot him, for which purpose, as soon as everything is reported ready, he loads his piece, and proceeds to the enclosure.

When the marksman is skilful, and the animal tolerably quiet, all goes on smoothly enough; but when, as sometimes

happens, the reverse is the case, the result is very different, and a scene something like the following takes place.

The bullock, which has been left quietly standing in the enclosure since the early part of the day, again becomes excited upon the approach of the men, who, with their long knives, pails of water, and other requisites for his final conversion into beef, gather around the yard, awaiting the moment when he falls by the hand of "the master." But just as the latter is on the point of drawing the trigger, the animal, who has been narrowly watching his movements, lowers his head, and makes a mad charge at him, until he comes into violent concussion with the fence, while the ball whistles harmlessly over its intended victim. The bullock then turning tail, runs desperately round his prison, in search of a weak point; and having satisfied himself that none such is to be found, stands out again in the middle, and faces his danger, but with a tremulous motion of the head, which renders the next shot very much like a flying one, and causes considerable delay.

"Go over to him, sir," suggests one of the bystanders, "you'll get a better chance from the inside; he's 'quite quiet,' I've known him since he was a calf."

This bit of advice, however, the settler declines, and resting his gun upon the fence, again takes aim at the fatal spot, a little above the curl on the forehead. This time the ball takes effect, so much so that the bullock falls headlong down, and a man runs in to administer a few additional blows to make assurance doubly sure.

But he is quite premature, for the poor animal, who has been only stunned, comes to himself, and regaining his legs with the rapidity of thought, and seeing one of his tormentors within the precincts of his prison, makes after him with such good will, that he is barely saved by a precipitate scramble over the fence, to the great amusement of his companions.

It is now no easy matter to get anything like a fair shot at the victim of unskilfulness, who is tearing round the enclosures as hard as he can, and the matter must often be brought to a conclusion by catching him with a rope, in the usual way, and putting an end to his sufferings with an axe.

When however this painful scene is over, and the animal is

at last killed, the rest of the work is soon despatched; the carcase, having been skinned and dressed, is pulled up to the "gallows" by means of a windlass, and left to cool during the night. At daybreak it is taken down, salted, and packed away in casks, before the sun has appeared to injure the meat, or the blow-flies have had time to learn anything about the matter.

In the large grazing districts, where the boundaries of the land, over which each stockowner exercises his right of pasture, are not clearly defined by means of fences or hedges, as in more civilized countries, disputes are naturally of frequent occurrence. When a station changes hands, it is usual for the purchaser to ride round the outside of it, accompanied by the neighbouring settlers, so that the limits may be mutually agreed upon. But in spite of every precaution misunderstandings will arise; in process of time some hill or gully, which had originally constituted the landmark, becomes forgotten, or mistaken for another; and the result is, that the right of pasture is claimed by both parties. Remonstrances succeed each other, but in vain; each claimant is resolved to trust to his own memory rather than to that of his neighbour. Matters remain in this unsatisfactory state for a time, until some fine morning, one of the disputants, seeing a large flock of sheep, not his own, upon the contested ground, loses all patience, and starts off, on the very first horse he can catch, to the commissioner of crown lands for the district; and by him, after he has told the usual story about encroachment, damage done to his run, representing himself as the sole legitimate owner of the contested spot, and a most ill-used individual, he is informed that his neighbour, whose forbearance also appears to have been exhausted much about the same time, has been to the commissioner upon the very day before, and has lodged, *mutatis mutandis*, the same complaint. Things having come to this pass, the decision is left wholly to the commissioner, who, seeing no prospect of an amicable arrangement, appoints a day for his requested visit to the scene of controversy, usually within a month or so from the period of the appeal to his judgment; during which the disputed pasture is occupied by both parties, and consequently soon becomes as bare, and nearly as well polished, as a mahogany table.

The court of inquiry is usually held at the head station of one

of the claimants, and thither the commissioner arrives on the day appointed, where he meets both the proprietors, each with a host of witnesses. The first occupant, or he who purchased his right of pasture from the first occupant, is the lawful owner, and the point at issue consequently is the fact of prior occupation.

On the witnesses being called, first comes the shepherd of the plaintiff A., who affirms that he has been several years in his master's employ, and has fed his flock upon the disputed land ever since he can remember.

Next appears the stockkeeper of B., who declares on the other hand that his master's cattle occupied the place before any sheep were brought into the neighbourhood, and offers, in corroboration of his testimony, to point out the marks of their old "rendezvous."

But A. also produces his stockman, who states his conviction that the said rendezvous was not made by B.'s cattle at all, but by a herd belonging to a former owner of his master's station.

B. again calls up a witness of longer standing in that part of the country, and the scale of testimony is once more evenly balanced; and thus each party goes back a step beyond the other, and the subject of contention, like a Welsh pedigree, bids fair to be lost in the clouds, while the unhappy commissioner, amidst such conflicting evidence, is gradually taking leave of his wits. In addition to the usual causes of his perplexity, he loses much time from the difficulty in arriving at the real names of some of the attesting parties, for, in the bush of Australia, *aliases* are frequently as prevalent among the labouring classes as in the English collieries. Some of these are ludicrous enough: a neighbour of ours had a stockman who often used to be sent to our assistance at "gathering" times, and was only known, probably from his rough-riding feats, by the title of "Go by 'em;" and I remember that on another occasion, when it was necessary to discover the real name of a man in our district, for the purpose of taking out a warrant against him, for having aided and abetted a party of bush-rangers then in the vicinity, we could get no further, for some time, than the sobriquet of "Terrible Billy."

However, to return to our trial. A. now brings forth his reserve, a man who, by his own account, is of so long standing in the neighbourhood as to have been what is called in the

colony a "first fleeter." He declares that he has been originally in the service of the actual explorer and earliest occupant of the run, part of which is now in dispute, from whom it gradually changed hands, until it fell into those of its present owner. Now, as this man is the oldest of the party, and can therefore claim the longest memory, and as, moreover, he takes care to interlard his testimony with remarks upon the "first sight of the district," wild blacks, and flocks of kangaroos in quiet possession of the plains, all the other witnesses are put to silence, and listen in admiration to their more enterprising companion.

The matter now seems brought to a conclusion, and A. and his party are already congratulating themselves on the result; but just as the commissioner is on the point of deciding the contest in their favour, a sudden idea crosses his mind: he remembers that this primæval settler, though acknowledged to have been the first occupant, omitted, on one occasion, to pay his annual assessment for stock, which has not been subsequently made good; this completely alters the state of affairs; A.'s claim, arising from his prior occupancy, is lost, and his opponent, whose predecessors have been more punctual in their payments to the crown, is installed in possession of the disputed pasture.

On a large sheep establishment the busiest day in the week is Saturday, when the supplies, consisting of tea, sugar, tobacco, wheat, and beef, are weighed out, and sent away in all directions, on carts and drays, to the various sheep-stations.

Sunday is duly observed, even in the bush. It brings with it a cessation of labour, but leisure to some brings listlessness, and to others thought, and the alien's thoughts must often be sad. With what fond regrets, at such a time, does the recollection of home rush upon the mind! The sound of the village bells seems almost to ring in the ear, as fancy recalls the church that "points with taper spire to heaven," and the once familiar faces flocking under the well-known porch. Perhaps, too, something of self-reproach mingles with the settler's dream, as his thoughts wander back to the stately towers and solemn groves of our seats of learning; and he blames the blindness of his credulity, when he left the studies which he now feels were so much more congenial to his tastes—when he left them "non hoc pollicitus suis," and feels conscious that he has facul-

ties which might be better and more usefully employed than in the occupations of the life which he has chosen. But he looks round, and everything that meets his eye reminds him that the die is cast, and repentance out of place.

Most of all does it bring weariness to his spirit to feel himself deprived of the best helps to devotion, and to be cut off from all Christian communion. Perhaps there is not a church within fifty, or even a hundred miles; and he cannot help contrasting his present desolation with the punctual observances of his early life, the veneration for which, once felt, is seldom effaced from the heart.

The philosopher may boast that he can pray anywhere, and the Christian will try to do so; but even with the wisest and best religious feeling is too apt to decline when its outward forms are withdrawn from the sight.

Blame not the toiling and overworked colonist. Let him who is inclined to censure, rather learn the value of those helps of which he has never felt the want; and be stimulated to extend to others on every possible occasion, and by all possible means, those blessings which he himself has always enjoyed.

CHAPTER IX.

An Invitation—Expedition in Pursuit of Stray Cattle—Amos the Native—A day in the Gullies—Australian Night Scene—Tracking a Wild Herd—The Chase and Return.

BEYOND the undulating plains which formed our district, lay a vast expanse of broken country, consisting of dry creeks, gullies, wooded hills, and grassy flats, jumbled confusedly together, so as to produce the most remarkable scenery, and fit for nothing but to afford a secure retreat for hundreds of wild cattle, of which mention has been previously made as being wholly irreclaimable, and perfectly distinct in their habits from the half-wild herds. In these almost inaccessible regions they have long bred, and never voluntarily venture out on the open ground. There they remain unmolested, except when any of the branded or domesticated cattle, having strayed from the level country and joined them in their haunts, attract thither the settler and his men in their pursuit; for, if they are not speedily sought and reclaimed, they soon become as intractable as the rest, and eventually past all recovery. An occurrence of this sort, which usually takes place soon after the winter, the time when cattle are most apt to stray, would occasion a note something like the following:—

DEAR ——,

Some of our cattle have been seen among the wild ones in the gullies at the back of our station, and I am going to take a turn at them to-morrow. They have been missed several months, and it is high time that they were taught the way out again. Will you join us? I dare say there are some of your own astray too. Come over in the evening, and bring a stock-keeper with you. We can then arrange plans with "Amos," who will meet us here, and make one of the party.

In a case of this sort it is not neighbourly to refuse assistance;

so, on the occasion in question, as soon as we could catch our horses, we jogged down in the afternoon to answer the invitation in person.

Our arrangements were soon completed. It was decided that the most judicious, or, as Amos called it, the most "judgematical" plan, was to go into the gullies that very evening, and encamp there during the night, so as to have the whole of the following day for our work. Our party consisted of five horsemen, most of them well qualified for the expedition; and my friend, the author of the note, as he threw open his enclosures at starting, felt confident that we should require the use of them on our return.

But our most powerful ally, our sheet-anchor, was "Amos," a short description of whom, as a man "*sui generis*," will serve to beguile the way, as we ride onward to the gullies. He was a native-born white, and had been a stockowner all his life. His parents had given him a few cows and brood-mares at his birth, and he was now, by dint of time and industry, the owner of many thousands of cattle. But though fully possessed of the means, he had no wish to alter his style of living for the better, or to rest in any way from his hard and laborious employment. He was, in fact, a man who could not be wholly domesticated; his slab hut was all that he required at night, and his home was abroad in the saddle, an article which seldom lasted him more than a year. Sparing of his speech, and possessed of little curiosity upon any extraneous subject, it was his maxim—a most excellent one—"always to mind his own business;" and though he was ever most ready to assist, he never interfered with his neighbours. His whole ambition seemed to be what he was—an oracle upon all subjects connected with his own peculiar occupation, and the most fearless rider in the district, one who, let the animals pursued go where they might, had never yet failed to "head them," or refused to follow them down anything "short of a precipice." Every inch of plain, forest, and gully was known to him for miles round, and for months together he would pursue the same daily routine of life, mounting his horse at an early hour and sallying forth to all parts of his "run;" while his "hut-keeper" had one reply to all inquiries—"his master was out after stock."

An overdose of tea, the usual beverage on these expeditions,

drove sleep from my eyes, and it was midnight before I could follow the example of my companions, who, one after another, had sunk into a state of oblivion around me; but I could not envy them, for I was amply repaid for the want of rest by the wild and unreclaimed beauty of the scene.

We had encamped in a verdant gully, between two prettily wooded hills, skirted by a river, which, like most Australian streams, at times a roaring torrent, was now a series of placid lakes, across which the midsummer moon cast its gentle lane of light. Our horses were grazing on an adjacent flat, and the clink of their "hobble" chains grew fainter and fainter as they receded in the distance. The forest, so oppressively silent by day, now seemed replete with life: bats flitted around us on every side; the opossum and flying-squirrel darted from tree to tree, responding with their sharp cry to the croak of the bull-frog from the river-bank, and the call of the wild-drake as he alighted on the water. Above all, the deep rumbling note or shrill scream of a bull would every now and then be heard in the distance, as if assuring us that our chase on the morrow would not be unsuccessful.

I am no advocate for the advantages of savage life. After some experience, I am satisfied that a certain degree of restraint is most conducive to our improvement and happiness; but there is certainly a powerful charm in this free and wandering state, beneath the sunny skies and clear moonlight nights of Australia, lit up by the beautiful stars of the southern hemisphere; and as I rolled myself in my cloak upon my couch of grass, I felt that I could sympathize with those who are wedded to the wilder and less artificial existence of the settler, and pity the man who could only connect hardship with the idea of "a night in the Bush."

On the following morning we were stirring at dawn, and under weigh at sunrise, so as to have full time for tracking, of which I was informed we might expect two or three hours before we caught sight of the chase; and as it is usual on an expedition of this kind to appoint one to be the leader of the party, we unanimously elected to that office our able, though somewhat eccentric neighbour, "Amos the native."

After about an hour's search, during which we had scarcely ever removed our eyes from the ground, or raised our bodies

from a sloping position, a track was discovered on the side of a hill, but the long, wiry grass made it very indistinct, and we proceeded but slowly for some time, until in a dry creek we stumbled upon several other more "likely" footprints making for the low grounds, and probably for the water, where we expected to meet with cattle ; but no such thing. At last a flat in the vicinity of a narrow rill, rising out of some rich dark soil, known in Australia as a "black spring," showed us innumerable footprints, crossing and recrossing each other in every direction. Farther on we came to a spot which had recently been the scene of an encounter, so frequent in the wild state, between two of the bulls ; for the earth was torn up, and the grass levelled around it, but how long ago was the question, for the birds were flown.

"They were down here before daybreak this morning," said Amos ; "that track's as fresh as paint. The best thing we can do now is to separate, and ride round the spring on every side, until one of us hits it off again."

Wild cattle, I may mention, usually come to water by night, and not during the heat of midday, as is the habit of those herds which are in a more domesticated state.

After a delay of about ten minutes' duration, the track led us away down a gully so narrow, that two horsemen could not ride abreast ; so we jogged on in single file, expecting every moment to come upon the chase, with a feeling of subdued excitement that was very invigorating. At length we stopped again.

"Well, here's a pleasure to come," said our foremost man, as he pulled in his horse at the foot of a high range, and looked up dismally at its sides, bristling with rocks, and low, thick bushes, known in Australia as "scrub ;" "they're gone straight up here. I thought they'd lead us a dance when we didn't catch them near the water." There was no help for it ; we all did our best to make out something like a track beyond the fatal spot, but it would not do, and so up the hill we must needs go, dragging our horses after us.

It was my fate that day to have a horse that "would not lead," but regularly jerked me back two steps for every three that I advanced ; this, when one is climbing up a hill so steep that there is much ado to get on at all, is no slight trial to the temper, not

to mention the fatigue; and I remember that while I was thus struggling and "progressing backwards," I was heartily out of conceit with hunting wild cattle.

But I got on somehow; the track, after leading us up and up far beyond our first expectations, again became indistinct on a stony ridge, and we once more came to a stand.

"We are close upon them now," said our leader; "they were here not five minutes ago: one of them was basking *there*," (I looked at the place to which he pointed, but could see no difference between it and the adjacent spot); "and, if they've not heard us and made off the other way, we shall be up with them in the crack of a stockwhip."

He had scarcely said the words, when we heard a deep tramping sound close to us, and caught a momentary glimpse of a number of cattle stealing rapidly away on the other side of the ridge, above which their backs and the tips of their horns alone were visible, and in an instant we were after them, helter-skelter.

Unpractised as I then was—for it was my first attempt at "gully-raking," as it is called—I soon found myself completely thrown out; so, leaving my stock-keeper to do his master's share of the work as well as his own, I contented myself with keeping within a moderate distance of the scene of action, while I took a general view of the chase.

Cattle when pursued invariably make for falling ground, for which their formation peculiarly fits them; so much so, that, although an animal should be nearly exhausted on ascending a hill, yet if he can only just manage to surmount it, the weight of his own body carries him down on the other side as speedily as ever.

Down hill, therefore, went man and beast. At the foot of the range there was a dry creek, in which, at a little distance on the left, the bases of two precipitous hills, nearly meeting each other from opposite quarters, formed a narrow pass; for this, knowing it to be their nearest outlet, the wild cattle, some fifty in number, shaped their course: unluckily it happened to lead in the wrong direction, and the race was, therefore, whether pursuers or pursued would get first to the gap.

The range grew steeper and steeper towards the bottom, and it was very exciting to see the whole party going down it together, rattling the loose stones from under their horses' feet,

plunging into, and as suddenly emerging again, from the patches of "scrub," scrambling over the fallen timber, and lowering their heads with great precision, to avoid being swept from their saddles by the projecting branches that occasionally crossed their way; while the action of the stock-horses, owing to the declivity, was at times more like that of a kangaroo than anything else: somebody, thought I, must surely be damaged before long; but I was quite a stranger to the sort of thing, and had not then learnt, what I was assured of on my return home, that "it was only the way of the country."

It seemed that there was a sort of rivalry between my friend's stock-keeper and our invaluable partisan "Amos," and this was a fair field for their exertions. The open country was too easy for them. To get along fast in broken and falling ground is the criterion of horsemanship; so, from this emulation, the riding was perhaps rather more energetic than usual.

The tide of fortune hitherto seemed evenly balanced; but just as the wild herd neared the creek, a black bull, evidently no stranger to the locality, singled out, and, far ahead of the rest, made straight for the gap. He was a very noble beast, without a brand of any kind upon him, and his eye, full and round as a gazelle's, seemed to flash fire, as he pursued his mad career, dashing the foam from his lips. It was absolutely necessary to stop him at all hazards; for wheresoever one animal leads the way, the rest are sure to follow: but he had already gained a great deal of ground, and was now so near the gap, that his escape seemed inevitable.

One chance remained: a ledge of loose stones, so precipitous, that the bull, excited as he was, had turned aside from it in his course, opened a shorter cut. To this two men pushed their horses abreast, but one alone went down it, the other stopped and looked after him. The next minute a horseman stood in the gap; the black bull was seen making off in a contrary direction, and the report of a stockwhip, reverberating through the hills, warned the cattle that "Amos" (for he it was) had reached the goal before them.

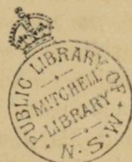
This was the grand event of the day, and our success had, in a great measure, hinged upon it. Thenceforth our work was comparatively easy. The cattle were "steadied" for a minute

upon a hill-side, and as soon as the stragglers, of which we were in pursuit, had been clearly distinguished among them, the whole were hunted or rather guided homewards, for they wanted no driving, being apparently bent upon running as long as their legs would carry them; while our business was to keep them together, and always to be beforehand with them in reaching any creek or gully that branched off from the right direction. Now and then an animal would become exhausted, and, standing at bay, threaten death to any one who approached it; or, being nearly blinded with hard running, would take a line of its own, and refuse to go any other; but with these few exceptions we succeeded in driving the whole herd before us.

"It's lucky we got them," said Amos; "there were 'no flies'* about that black bull."

In due time we regained the level country, where, having the advantage of good ground, we were enabled to single off our own cattle, and leave the wild ones to recover from their alarm at leisure, and to speed their way back again into their own silent haunts in "the gullies."

* This expression is very common in Australia, and is apparently borrowed from the American "no snakes." It denotes admiration or triumph. Anything particularly good is said by the class of men we are here describing to have "no flies" about it.



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CHAPTER X.

First Visit from the Aborigines—Portrait of an Australian Savage—Of a "Gin" or Female—Their Natural Character—A "Corrobory"—A "Pas seul"—Mental Powers of the Blacks—Language of Intercourse with the Settlers—Religion—Weapons—The Spear and Woomera—The Boomering—Its Construction and Peculiarities—The Shield and Club—Duel with the Spear—With the Club—Theft Detected—Departure of the Tribe.

Of the many novelties which meet the traveller's eye in strange countries, but especially in one so peculiar as Australia, there is perhaps none more striking, or to which he looks forward with greater interest, than his first sight of the aborigines; I allude of course to those in the interior, and not to the debased specimens that are to be met with in the streets of Sydney. These can create nothing in the mind of the beholder but repugnance at the state of demoralization into which they have fallen, and pity, mingled with shame, that their intercourse with the white man should have apparently served only to eradicate their natural good qualities, few as they were, and to engraft the vices of the European on their own.

Such is one of the least pleasing scenes of the capital of the antipodes. There is a crowd in the vicinity of a public-house; a black, usually very far advanced in a "state of rum," is settling his differences with his "gins," whom their ungallant lord is either "waddying," *i. e.* belabouring with his club, in which he naturally has it all his own way, or vociferously squabbling with, in which, as naturally, he is sure to be worsted. Without any disparagement to the soft sex of other countries, the most loquacious of them all would bear little comparison with an Australian "gin," when fairly moved to "yabber," and the veriest scold from Europe might receive a practical lesson of her inferiority from her sable sisters at the antipodes—"So apt and voluble is their discourse."

It is only in the inland districts, far apart from these scenes of

dissipation, that the New Hollander can now be seen in his natural state; and we had not long occupied our station before our wishes in this respect were fully gratified, for within a month from the time of our arrival we were not only introduced to the major part of the tribe inhabiting our district, but were additionally favoured by the sight of a "corrobory," or native dance, by night, which we were informed at the time was held in honour of our arrival, but which we discovered, when we knew more about the customs of the aborigines, was always celebrated at the time of the full moon.

The party that first presented itself consisted of two males with their "gins," or women, carrying their children on their backs, or occasionally perched up, higher still, above their shoulders, and accompanied by a countless host of dogs, which were in themselves as unlike any other varieties of the canine species as could be imagined, and evidently disliked the whole system of civilization not less than their owners.

One of the men was very old, and his scanty locks, grizzled upon a coal-black skin, had a particularly disagreeable effect; the other was in his prime, and, as a fair specimen of a New Hollander, his appearance may be described as follows:—His height was about five feet four inches, which was the average of our tribe; the chest was full, the arms and shoulders muscular; the body long in comparison with the legs, which were slight, and appeared more so than they actually were from the unnatural protuberance of the belly: this is a remarkable distinguishing point in all the race. The countenance was such as to be very repulsive at first sight, though much of its harshness wore off on further acquaintance. Each feature, however, was very bad if considered separately: the hair was coarse, matted, and reeking with oil, adding by its great luxuriance to the disproportionate size of the head; the forehead was round, and the brows overhanging; the eyes sunk deep into the head, small, and strongly expressive of cunning; the nose was flat, and very broad at the base; the mouth wide, and additionally disfigured (in our opinion) by the loss of the two front teeth, which after a certain age it seems are "not worn." That their loss is a matter of choice, a black, who had long been on our station in a sort of half-domesticated state, gave us a clear proof, telling us one morning with

a look of importance, that he must go away for a few days, as he had grown up to man's estate, and "it was high time that he should have his teeth knocked out!"

Some of the most startling sights that a traveller sees are produced, after all, by different ideas of the ornamental: how many a fair European, whose smile exposes the only spot on her beauty, might covet the pearly teeth of the Australian savage, which, though in our estimation they are the choicest gift he has received from nature, he yet prizes so lightly as to see a greater charm in the gap created by the absence of the very pair that are most conspicuous and important!

To return to our portrait: the whole of the breast and back, together with the arms from the shoulder nearly to the elbow, were marked in a manner peculiar to the New Hollanders, the flesh being raised in a series of parallel lines, interrupted at intervals, of the thickness of one's forefinger. This operation, which is entirely different from the tattooing of the New Zealander and other savage tribes, is performed at an early age by means of a sharp flint, and is a tedious and painful process, though considered no less a matter of course than the loss of the teeth. The skin which covers these mounds or wavelets of flesh has the glossy appearance of a scar, and the effect of the whole is very disagreeable in the eyes of an European.

The female or "gin" (the pronunciation of the *g* is soft, though perhaps the determined etymologist would choose to derive the word from γύνη) was shorter and thinner, and, to say the truth, even less prepossessing in appearance. Though not much past her prime, her cheeks were sunken, and there was a faded look upon her features and limbs as if she was suffering from premature old age. A piece of fish-bone, smooth and polished, was inserted in the gristle of her nose, projecting about an inch and a half on either side, and removable at will, being apparently a sort of full-dress appendage, not to be worn upon all occasions; and though anything but ornamental, it was at least preferable to the vacuum left by its absence, which rendered the profile most unsightly. Round her neck was an ornament which bore some resemblance to an European necklace; it was made of small pieces of reed, cut into equal lengths, and strung upon a sort of thread fabricated from the bark of trees. Her

cheeks were besmeared with pipeclay, a mark of mourning, and her matted hair was adorned with several feathers from the wings of the white cockatoo. Those of the party that had any covering (for some were perfectly naked) wore cloaks made of the skins of the opossum, about forty of which, stitched together with a strong thread made from the "stringy bark" tree, formed a kind of wrapper reaching nearly to the ground, and fastened at the neck by a crooked piece of bone.

The most interesting objects of the group were the children; viewed at that tender age, ere the wild blood ran strong in their veins, they seemed born for better things than their parents could teach them, and we seldom saw one of them without a wish to reclaim it from the hard and desultory life that was before it, in spite, it must be owned, of all known precedents, which have hitherto fully borne out old Horace's maxim that it is in vain to contend with nature—

> "Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret."

In fact there is something in the very constitution of an Australian savage which sets at defiance all attempts at domestication. Unlike a Scotchman, of whom, as Johnson has told us, "much may be made if he be caught young," he has, up to the present time, been proof against the ameliorating effects of early education. He can be reconciled to a temporary residence with the white man, he may laugh with him, smoke with him, and accompany him willingly on his excursions; but his stay can never be considered permanent, for even in this half-civilized state he will not long be contented. Suddenly a reaction takes place, and the settler who, on the previous evening, had left his black protégé comfortably sleeping in an adjacent "gunyio," or camp, with his two sheets of bark above his head, and a sparkling log-fire at his feet, awakes in the morning and finds him gone. The fugitive was perhaps to have accompanied him the very next day on some preconcerted expedition which had been discussed the last thing over night, but in the morning he is gone, whither no one can tell: ere the first signs of life appeared, even among the early risers on a stock-station, he has gathered up his spears, his boomerings, and 'possum cloak, and plunged into the boundless forest, whence he will some day re-

appear as suddenly, again to take a peep at the white man's home, and again to return to the superior attractions of absolute freedom.

On the evening subsequent to their arrival, the aborigines, who had been joined by many others during the course of the day, began to prepare for the celebration of their "corrobory," or general dance. A picturesque flat in the vicinity of the station had been fixed on as the scene of action, whither we repaired at about ten o'clock, anxious for the commencement of our Australian night's entertainments.

Round an enormous log-fire, the flames of which, continually fed by green boughs, crackled and rose to the height of many feet in the air, stood some twenty of the blacks, grasping each other by the hand, and forming a circle, within which there was no admittance.

With the exception of a narrow wrapper round the waist they were all naked, and the whole of their bodies from head to foot were streaked with the same white pigment with which, when in mourning, they besmear their faces only. The "gins" took no part in the dance, but sat on the ground at a short distance, scattered here and there in small groups, drawling out a monotonous sort of chorus, and with their short sticks beating on the ground an accompaniment which, when the whole scene before us and the dusky performers were taken into consideration, might well have been called the devil's tattoo. We stood on a bank slightly raised above the performers, and when the "corrobory" had fairly commenced, the extraordinary gestures and attitudes of the dancers, their coal-black bodies illuminated by the flames, their cries echoing through the forest and increasing with their excitement, produced an effect which exceeded our utmost expectations.

It was impossible, however, that such exertions could last long; and accordingly, while we were already beginning to wonder at their powers of endurance, the scene shifted, the circle of dancers stood still, and a black, advancing towards the fire in front of the others, volunteered a "pas seul."

He commenced by leaning forward, placing his hands upon his knees, and bending them outwardly, while he kept his eyes intently fixed on them, for an Australian savage, when dancing, is always the closest spectator of his own performances—he has

no idea of exhibiting solely for the amusement of his companions. The carriage of the upper part of the body was little regarded ; the step consisted in communicating to the legs, from the thigh downwards, a peculiar quivering movement, as if the lines of white pipeclay, with which they were streaked, were slowly revolving. There was nothing graceful, nor, on the other hand, was there anything licentious in the action ; and the only thing we could say of it was, that it was the most singular figure we had ever seen, and perfectly in keeping with the rest of the ceremony. It was midnight ere the corrobory drew to a close ; and while the flames were gradually dying away, and the shouts of the savage crew were echoing more and more faintly through the woods, we retired from the spectacle, to see it again in our dreams.

Mean as were the intellects of our sable friends, and much as they have been vilified on this point, their company was a constant source of interest, and it seemed to us that their mental capacities, if rightly understood, and judiciously drawn out, were at least better than they have been represented. They are frequently set down as too stupid to be taught, and barely raised above brutes, by those who either take no trouble, or are wanting in tact, to distinguish the good from the evil in their natural disposition. Their idleness is unquestionable, and their dislike to all restraint seems bred in the bone ; but they have at least their happy moments, the "mollia tempora fandi," and, when they see good reason to shake off their lethargy, they exhibit powers of mind by no means despicable, and some of their remarks are very much to the purpose.

The stock-keeper was one day taxing a black with having speared some of the cattle under his charge, and as the accused failed to exonerate himself, he was called, in conclusion, a "cabonn" (*i. e.* great) rascal. This roused him to a defence of his conduct, and after a hot argument and a good deal of excitement, he proved pretty forcibly that, in the natural course of things, he was not the aggressor, and that his tribe, the first occupiers of the district, had as much right to help themselves to a piece of beef, as the white man, by his intrusion and presence, to drive away the emus and kangaroos, which the black denominated *his* cattle.

On another occasion I observed one of the tribe watching with great attention a stranger, who was holding forth with much volubility upon some current topic. When, in conclusion, he was asked what he thought of the speaker, he answered directly, "I believe no good that one." It seemed that with them, as with us, the emptiest vessels make the greatest sound, and he persisted in his first opinion of one who, in his own phrase, had "too much yabber."

The language used in the interior of the country between the Europeans and aborigines is a most ridiculous jargon, being a mixture of the blacks' own language with English and nonsense. It is not easy to account for the invention of these absurdities, as the real word seems always simpler than its substitute. Accident and the accumulation of endless blunders seem to have composed them, and many years' use of them could never diminish in our ears the extent of their absurdity.

Thus, in talking to a black, a dray, cart, or vehicle of any sort, is expressed by a "wheelbarrow;" to see, or distinguish, is to "make a light;" anything white is "like a flour-bag;" to come, or appear, is to "jump up;" to be, or exist, is to "sit down;" a town is designated a "big smoke;" a quantity, or a number of anything that happens at the time to be more than was expected, is called a "thousand;" and so on *ad infinitum*. Epithets, and even long descriptions, are generally preferred to simple terms. The phrase used by our tribe to signify a handsaw was taken from its motion when in action; they never could be persuaded to call it anything but a "yan" (go) "and come back again."

Of these materials an ultra-comic grammar might be formed; and when a conversation is carried on in this dialect, the effect is highly ludicrous. A stockman is in quest of his saddle-horses, and meets some of the blacks, to whom his first question is, "You make a light yarraman belonging to me?" (*i. e.* Have you seen my horses?) To which the answer is, "Bale me make a light, but I believe you burra-burri find 'em; thousand track sit down all about;" (I have not seen them, but I believe you will soon find them; there are tracks in all directions): which "thousand," by the by, subsides upon examination into about a dozen prints of a hoof on the sand, and a few more, of dubious date, upon the grass. This mode of talking is of course used only

by those tribes which occupy the settled districts, where they have gradually laid aside the hostility which the first approach of the white man generally occasions, and have become as familiar with him as it is in their nature to be.

One thing was self-evident in our district, that, inferior as the aborigines were in intellect, they invariably used to learn more of our language than we acquired of theirs. Many of our tribe could speak English tolerably well, whereas it was unusual to meet with an Englishman who had any idea of their language, unmixed with his own, and with the jargon I have just mentioned.

Whether any belief in a Supreme Being existed among our tribe was a source of frequent speculation among us, but all attempts to gratify our curiosity by a sight of their religious ceremonies were baffled. I am unable even to affirm that they have any, or entertain the least notion of a Deity. Funeral rites and some other customs they certainly practised, but always with the strictest secrecy, and with the greatest jealousy of the white man's intrusion. It was remarkable that, while infanticide confessedly prevailed among them, yet the death of an adult was deeply felt. After burial the subject was never mentioned, and the slightest allusion to it would produce a look of mingled horror and remonstrance, which might cause even the most thoughtless inquirer to desist. Few attempts have been made to convert individuals to Christianity, from a generally prevailing opinion that there is little hope of success.

A never-failing source of interest and amusement to us, when any of the tribe were encamped at our station, arose from the exhibition of their weapons, which served to beguile many a summer's evening when the labours of the day had been concluded. They are few in number, consisting of two missiles, the spear and boomering; the "waddies," or clubs, of which they have a great variety; and the "heeloman," a kind of shield or weapon of defence.

Their mode of throwing the spear is peculiar to themselves; other savage nations hurl it from the hand alone, but to an Australian black it would be useless without the aid of his "woomera," or throwing-stick. This is a narrow slip of wood, about three feet in length, broad at one end, and furnished at the other with a

blunt barb, which fits into a nick at the head of the spear; and the hand of the thrower also grasps at the same time the other end of the woomera, and the spear about three feet from the butt. Upon launching the spear, the woomera is retained in the hand, and thus acts as a powerful lever, usually commanding a range of 90 or 100 yards, which is considerably more than it could be sent in the ordinary manner.

The spears are of two sorts: one perfectly solid, and about seven or eight feet in length; the other, which can be thrown to a greater distance, is made of light reeds, joined together with gum and fibres of the bark of trees, and terminating in a point of very hard and heavy wood.

The most curious missile is the boomering, which may unquestionably be considered the most extraordinary offensive weapon ever found in the possession of savages. It is a thin curved piece of wood, varying from two to three feet in length, and about two inches broad; one side is slightly rounded, the other is perfectly flat. When thrown, it must be held by that end which brings the flat side on the right hand, or outside; and the convex edge of the weapon must be nearest to the thrower, to whom, therefore, when he is in the act of dismissing it from the hand, the edge alone is visible. It is used in warfare, for killing game, and also for amusement; and the shape consequently varies a little with its intended application: a war boomering is the largest, and being merely constructed to fly in a straight direction, has less curve than the other kinds, and but little difference between its two sides. This is the most formidable weapon the blacks possess, as well from its power of inflicting a serious wound at a considerable distance, as from its extraordinary evolutions, which render it difficult to be avoided.

The shape of the other two varieties of this weapon is nearly the same. They are shorter, and usually of ruder construction, but far more curious in their action; they are also more serviceable to the black than the spear, whenever he is in pursuit of smaller game, from the ease with which they can be concealed in the folds of his blanket or opossum-cloak, while he steals on his prey.

But it is only when thrown for amusement that the wonders of the boomering are fully developed. Whenever there was a

camp of blacks near our station, it used to be our great delight to assemble a few of the most promising of its inmates, and offer a prize, some tobacco or flour, to the one who acquitted himself the best with his boomering; thus pitted against each other in friendly strife, they would go to work in earnest, and fairly astonish the white men. Doubtful as it may seem to those who have never witnessed the feat, an Australian black can throw this whimsical weapon so as to cause it to describe a complete circle in the air; or, to give the reader a better idea of what is meant, he would stand in front of a tolerably large house, on the grass plot before the door, and send his boomering completely round the building, from left to right; that is to say, it would, upon leaving his hand, vanish round the right corner, and, re-appearing at the left, eventually fall at his feet. The whole circumference of the circle thus described is frequently not less than 250 yards and upwards, when hurled by a strong arm; but the wonder lies wholly in its encircling properties, and not in the distance to which it may be sent.

When forcibly thrown, its course is very rapid, equalling the speed of an arrow for about 50 yards, until it arrives at the point where it first begins to alter its course; thence it continues its career at about half speed, and so gradually flies with diminishing impetus, until, as usual, it returns to the spot whence it started. Its flight is not unlike that of a bird; and occasionally, when great strength has been exerted, it hovers for a few moments before it falls to the ground, and, continuing its rotatory motion, remains in other respects quite stationary, much in the same way as a humming-top when it goes to sleep on the ground. A deep hurtling sound accompanies its course, during the whole of which it revolves with such rapidity as to appear like a wheel in the air.

By holding it at the opposite extremity, so as to bring the flat side on the left hand, a circle may be described in the other direction, *i. e.* from left to right, for the flat must always be the outer side. But the prettiest evolution it can be made to perform is the following:—It is thrown with a tendency downwards; upon which, after having gone some 20 yards, one point of it tips the ground, three times successively, at intervals of about the same distance, rebounding with a sound like the twang of a

harp-string: meanwhile it still continues its circular course, until, as before, it returns to the thrower. This feat is more difficult to accomplish than that of sending it through the air, and requires all the thrower's skill; there is one precise distance, and no other, at which it should first strike the ground, for, if it does so too forcibly, its progress is wholly arrested; and if, on the other hand, it is not sufficiently depressed, and fails to come in contact with the ground, its course is then completely altered, for, shortly after passing the place where it ought to have rebounded, it begins to rise, and towers up in the air to the height of about 50 feet, whence it falls down, almost perpendicularly.

There is considerable difficulty in acquiring the knack of using this weapon; few Europeans accomplish it, and those who succeed are at best poor imitators of the blacks, who practise it from childhood; and even at that tender age they may be seen disporting themselves around their "gunyios," or camps, with boomerings proportioned to their strength; as the young peons of South America show promise of future dexterity with the lasso, in its earlier use on the pigs and poultry.

We were never tired of witnessing the performances of the blacks; as they warmed with the exercise, and put forth their utmost strength and skill, several of the boomerings would be whizzing around us together; there was endless variety in their evolutions, and in the incomprehensible feats they occasionally performed; thus we used to gaze on them with undiminished interest, as they cut through the clear Australian air, until darkness put an end to the exhibition.

The principle of the boomering has never yet been satisfactorily explained; I never could understand it, and it has puzzled far wiser heads than mine. What is there in its shape that causes it to describe a circle? The rule of its construction the blacks themselves either cannot, or will not, explain. However, by merely grasping a boomering in the hand, and poizing it, they can tell at once, without throwing it, whether or not it will fly. I have often shaved some of the wood from one, thinking to improve it thereby, and a black, upon taking hold of it, has at once declared it to be "bale budgery" (no good), which, upon trial, always proved to be the case; the little that I had taken

from it, by destroying the balance, had completely deprived the weapon of its power of motion.

For a long time we used to puzzle over the matter, and once entertained thoughts of submitting it to some senior wrangler at Cambridge; but gradually ceased to cudgel our brains about it any more, on the plea that it must be inexplicable, and that, with the ornithorhynchus, the native cherry, and many other animal and vegetable productions of Australia, it was, and must remain, a paradox.

The heelŏman is a sort of shield, made of the toughest wood procurable, about three feet in length, and six inches in breadth at the centre, whence it gradually tapers off to a point at either extremity. The handle is in the middle, and is merely a small aperture, just large enough to admit the hand. It is chiefly used in the duels which frequently occur, both between individuals of hostile, and of the same tribes. For certain misdemeanours, such, for instance, as stealing a "gin," the offending party has to pay the penalty of standing within a moderate distance, thirty yards or so, of the bereaved husband, to whom a certain number of spears or boomerings are allotted, of which the ravisher has to bear the brunt, defended only by his heeloman. Several of these duels took place at different times in our neighbourhood; and on such occasions there would be a numerous muster of the tribe, and a great deal of speculation as to the issue of the contest, which, however, as if the Hottentot Venus herself had turned aside the darts, usually produced more noise than bloodshed.

The most singular duel is one that our tribe used to fight with the club. Everybody is aware of the superior thickness of skull possessed by the descendants of Ham, and it is nowhere put to a severer test than among the aborigines of Australia. The preliminaries having been arranged by the rest of the tribe, the combatants advance towards each other, one bearing his "waddy," the other wholly unarmed. There is no rush at the commencement, and little excitement on either side. He who is first destined to bear the fortune of war quietly puts down his head, and in due time his antagonist's blow comes down upon it "bang." The waddy then changes hands, and the receiver becomes the assailant. In some instances there is a limit assigned to the number of blows, but in others the duel is protracted; in which

case it may be supposed to terminate in the insensibility of one or both of the combatants, though, as with the spear and heelo-man, I seldom heard of a fatal result: but, in either case, fortune can hardly be said to favour the brave, for a stout heart would be of little service to a champion with a brittle head.

The majority of our tribe were very expert thieves, and on this account their first visit to us ended very abruptly. A large tobacco keg in the store was observed to be rapidly losing its contents, by what means we were at a loss to discover, as the building was perfectly secure. To prevent further loss, the keg was ordered to be removed elsewhere; and it was no sooner shifted out of its position than the secret was revealed. Through the wooden slab which formed part of the wall, and against which it had been placed, was discovered a hole, very small, but sufficiently large to admit an old "gin's" arm, which is the thinnest that could possibly belong to a human being. The hole was not visible from the outside, owing to a heap of firewood having been piled up against it. One of the tribe, who had been admitted inside the store, had noticed the exact situation of the keg containing their chief luxury, and had worked away stealthily from the exterior, carefully replacing the firewood when the hole had been completed, through which he had thus been enabled to act as a purveyor to the wants of his tribe.

An expedition to their encampment was the result of the detection of the theft, and we flattered ourselves that we should at least have the satisfaction of recovering part of the missing property; but they were gone, having again forestalled us, and did not reappear until many weeks afterwards, when sufficient time had elapsed to allow them to smoke their spoils in peace, and lay the blame, as usual, upon some hostile tribe, whom they represented as being "thousand saucy," and bad enough to steal anything.

CHAPTER XI.

Incidents of Daily Life—Ride to a Sheep-station—Sporting in the Bush—Native Dog Chase—Anecdote of a Tame Specimen—Business mingled with Pleasure—Emu and Kangaroo—Shooting—Angling—The Platypus or Watermole—Snakes—Man bitten—Effects of the Venom—First Sight of a new pastoral District — Picturesque Scene — Remarks upon the Climate of Australia.

A CONSIDERABLE portion of a settler's daily life is occupied in making visits to his sheep-stations, which are situated on every side of him, at a few miles' distance from that which he constitutes his own place of residence. He visits them for the purpose of overlooking his stock in person, and of guarding against negligence on the part of such of his men as may be suspected of yielding to the "vis inertiæ," or, as the phrase is, of "not doing justice to their flocks."

Everybody rises early in the interior, and the necessity of being in the saddle by sunrise soon becomes no hardship to the settler, who at least enjoys the cool morning air before the sun is up, and gets a famous appetite for breakfast before his return to the head station, even if he should fail in his primary object, which is to catch his shepherd "napping."

Those who are fond of sporting are usually accompanied on these occasions by one or two kangaroo dogs (a sort of large half-bred greyhound, much prized in the colony), for at this early hour the native dog has not yet returned to his daily retreat, and gives an excellent run. He is generally found lurking in long grass or rocky places, watching some cows and calves, or mares with their foals, with a strong design upon the young stock in both cases.

These dogs run very gallantly at starting, with as much speed as a fox, but with less endurance and courage, for, when hard pressed at first, it is not unusual for their running powers to desert them through fear. However, when attacked, they

always die very hard, giving bite for bite in silence to the last. Their speed varies greatly ; some that we killed were overtaken within a quarter of a mile, others would run four or five in capital style, and the last we ever hunted I well remember succeeded in getting clear off, on level ground, though we were mounted on fast horses. It is called dingo and "warragle" by the aborigines, and is an indigenous animal, being neither dog, fox, jackal, nor wolf, to each of which, however, it bears some resemblance, most perhaps to the latter. It usually hunts alone, though three or four are sometimes met with in company, and it preys indiscriminately upon everything it can master, from foals and calves down to the smallest animals and birds. Its prevailing colours are bright yellow and dusky brown, with the tip of the tail white: they are also found of a black colour, mixed in some instances with tan, but this probably arises from admixture with the European species, as an animal of this colour is never seen in any recently discovered district. Its most striking peculiarity is tenacity of life, in which it probably surpasses most other animals. For this reason, and not from any remarkable strength of its own, few dogs can kill one singly. Indeed, so many instances have been known of their recovering under the most improbable circumstances, that a native dog is never considered as left for dead unless some vital part is severed. As a last resource, when neither running nor fighting are of any further service, it has a remarkable trick of "shamming dead," when it may be dragged about by the heels and well belaboured without flinching, lolling its head listlessly down, as if quite lifeless, until a fair opportunity for crawling away presents itself.

A tame specimen, on our station, exhibited a striking instance of their natural cunning. He was chained in a small enclosure, into which a merino ram one day accidentally strayed, and not clearly seeing his way out again, prepared to attack his natural enemy, who being equally willing to do battle, stood out as far as his chain would permit, and awaited the attack. It was strength versus skill. The ram, who boasted a formidable pair of the spiral horns peculiar to his breed, after retreating backwards for some distance in the usual way, rushed forward upon his foe with sufficient impetus to have knocked down an ox, and victory seemed already within his reach. But the native dog

was far too wary to stand the brunt of such a blow; so, just when it seemed inevitable, he crouched suddenly down, and seized his antagonist firmly by the throat as he flew over. Thus he would speedily have despatched him, had we not come to the rescue.

The native dog seldom barks, but howls most dismally, and at night, when they frequently approach the stations, nothing can be conceived more dreary than their cry, which is composed of a series of wailing notes, into the last of which, as if by way of a climax, they throw the very essence of melancholy. To make the matter worse, all the curs about the place invariably join in chorus, and the whole sound, echoing through the lonely woods, produces an effect which might triumph over the equanimity of Zimmerman himself, or any other votary of solitude.

Not the least attractive part of life in the interior of these colonies is the way in which pleasure can be combined with business, without much interfering, as is usually the case elsewhere, with its proper performance. The settler seldom goes out merely for sporting purposes, but they fall in his way as he labours in his vocation. The roving habits of his half-wild horses and horned cattle alone afford occasion for a great variety of hunting, and the chase of the native dog, and sometimes, though less frequently, owing to their shy nature, of the emu and kangaroo, occurs during his visits to his flocks, or his rides across his pasture-grounds.

Vividly do these scenes recur to the mind of those who have known the mingled charms and hardships of "life in the bush." Though I am no keen sportsman, yet I have found the enthusiasm very catching. The early ride to the sheep-station, the counting out from the fold of its fleecy inmates, the quiet return homewards, until the sudden cry of a "warragle" changed the slow amble into a rush as if for very life; the bewilderment of the kangaroo dogs upon the sudden alteration in the aspect of affairs, before they caught sight of its cause, and, when they did, the splendid way in which they would pull down the quarry. And then the death, which might furnish a subject for Landseer, the body lying on the edge of some clear lake, the steeds panting upon the brink, the gaunt hounds plunging into the water to rid themselves of the nausea which is produced by con-

tact with the native dog, and the whole lighted up by the gorgeous morning sun just peering over the distant hills.

Besides the native dog, the kangaroo and the emu, or cassowary of New Holland, are objects of chase. They are animals of a shy and retiring disposition, and the settler's approach is the signal for their departure. They must now be sought in their own distant haunts, and it is very possible to reside in the colony for many years without having seen either. All that the sportsman, when in pursuit of them, requires, is a tolerably fast and sure-footed horse, a pair of good dogs, and a hunting-knife. The speed of both is very great, though neither can be said to run; for the kangaroo bounds, the emu half flies. The former is the fastest, the latter has more power of endurance. At first starting, a young male or female kangaroo, called in the colony "a flyer," can leave both horse and hound far behind. It seems to go with little exertion, but the vast space it can clear at each leap accounts for its swiftness. When it can go no farther, it wheels round, and if there should be a tree or rock at hand, places its back against it, so as to avoid being taken in the rear. A well-trained dog tries to seize it by the back, or side of the neck; if he succeeds, the kangaroo, which is rather a top-heavy animal, falls over, and seldom can rise again. If, however, the hound incautiously makes his attack in front, the kangaroo is apt to get him in his short fore-paws; he then brings up his hind-legs, which are a mass of sinews, and strikes with them like a game cock, aiming to tear his adversary to pieces with his toes or claws, which are very strong and pointed.

The emu has only one means of defence, his kick, which is sufficiently forcible to stun a hound.

The kangaroo is valuable on account of his skin, which makes the most comfortable leather that can be worn in a warm climate; and from the flesh of the emu an oil is extracted which is much prized in "the bush."

The settler who is fond of his gun can always have tolerable shooting. Several sorts of quail, pigeons, snipes, and wildfowl are found in most of the inland districts. The wonga-wonga, a large, dark-blue pigeon, with a white head, is a great delicacy, and the painted quail, which is found among the long grass in "open forest" land, flies not unlike a woodcock. Nor need the

angler forego his favourite diversion in "the bush." Many of the rivers, and especially the lakes, abound with fish, most of which take bait freely, and the paradoxical nature which pervades the animal kingdom in Australia renders a day's angling more than usually interesting—there is no saying what "delicate monster" may not be dragged reluctantly into day at the next bite.

This brings to my recollection our old favourite prodigy, the ornithorhynchus paradoxus, called also the platypus, duckbill, and watermole by the colonists, which might be seen, any evening, lying on the top of the water in the rivers and water-holes in our vicinity. It was shot sometimes for the sake of stuffing it and preserving it as a curiosity, though it was very quick at diving or "ducking the flash." Whether it is oviparous or viviparous still remains undecided among naturalists.

Snakes are met with in most parts of the colony. In some species the bite is harmless, in others it produces violent inflammation, and in a few the venom is so subtle as to cause death in a short time. The effect, in many instances, is much exaggerated, as well as the hostility of the reptile. The fact is, that the snake is always too glad to escape when he can, and is often the most frightened of the two parties meeting, but will infallibly attack any one who gets in his way, or cuts off his retreat to his hole.

Though I have heard innumerable stories of fatal results ensuing from the venom of snakes in Australia, many of which were certainly true, yet I never actually witnessed the effects of a bite, except on one occasion. The sufferer was a bullock-driver, who, on returning late one evening from a sheep-station with his team, was bitten in the ankle. On reaching home he came directly to report his accident, and said that he shortly expected great agony; but it was in vain to send for any medical man, as there was not one within twenty-five miles, and before he could possibly arrive the patient would either have recovered, or be beyond all human skill.

The venom first began to operate visibly in about twenty minutes after the bite. There was but little external swelling. A death-like chill came over the sufferer, which was so strong that although he was placed in front of a large fire, and covered

with blankets, the weather being then very sultry, his flesh was as cold as ice, and his teeth chattered in his head: the chill was in his blood. Soon a reaction took place, intense heat succeeded its opposite extreme, and the man ran out into the open air to cool himself, for he had suddenly become as hot as fire. Next came delirium, which after a time gave place to nausea and headache. The patient then slowly began to recover, and before daybreak, was out of danger, though he was so worn and haggard in the morning that it seemed as if the effects of the venom, in the course of a single night, had added five years to his age. It was a painful sight to witness, for we could do nothing to alleviate his sufferings, and looked on in constant expectation of his death.

The most spirit-stirring sight which the sportsman can witness is the first view of a new pastoral district; and to the lover of the picturesque perhaps this is the most beautiful scene that Australia can afford. Little does the resident in the vicinity of the capital, or the hasty traveller, who, as the case may be, lauds or abuses the scenery of Port Jackson, or the Paramatta River, dream of the fair spots that lie far in the interior. Plains and "open forest," untrodden by the foot of the white man, and, as far as the eye can reach, covered with grass so luxuriant that it brushes the horseman in his saddle; flocks of kangaroos quietly grazing, as yet untaught to fear the enemy that is invading their territory; the emu, playfully crossing and recrossing his route; the quail rising at every step; lagoons literally swarming with wildfowl—these are scenes reserved for the eye of the enterprising settler, or the still more enterprising "overlander." *

Then mark the change that follows hard upon discovery. Intelligence of the new country reaches the settled districts, and countless flocks and herds are poured into the land of promise. It is divided into stations, and "improvements" are everywhere erected upon it; disputes arise, and a commissioner is appointed to settle them; bushrangers are "out," and mounted police are sent to hunt them down; the wild blacks, indignant at the cool occupation of their territory, spear the cattle, and the settlers

* An overlander is one who makes long expeditions from one colony to another with stock, either for the purpose of finding new pasture land on which to establish himself, or to take advantage of a favourable market.

retaliate. The governor establishes a "protector of the aborigines," who perhaps has most need of protection himself. To some the new region brings wealth, to others disappointment, while Anglo-Saxon energy at last triumphs over every obstacle. But Nature, as if offended, withdraws half her beauty from the land; the pasture gradually loses its freshness; some of the rivers and lakes run low, others become wholly dry. The wild animals, the former peaceful denizens of the soil, are no more to be found, and the explorer, who has gazed on the district in its first luxuriance, has seen it as it never can be seen again.

The climate of Australia has been so frequently discussed that I should scarcely advert to the subject, did I not wish to protest against the soundness of the claim which is constantly set up for it in the colony, of superiority to that of Great Britain. Indeed, I have heard the climate at the antipodes extolled to such a degree, that I have begun to fear that the colonists would end by flattering themselves that there was no fine weather in any other part of the globe.

The majority of travellers who visit Australia declare its climate to be the best in the world. One of the very best it undoubtedly is: there are probably few countries where there are more fine days out of the 365, none where there is a more anti-consumptive atmosphere, or a purer expanse of sky: infantine diseases are unknown, and man can nowhere expect to enjoy more uninterrupted health. If he loses it, it is usually through his own fault.

If a perfect climate is to be found anywhere it is that of Sydney in the winter, where, for about three months, that is to say, during June, July, and August, it would be impossible for the veriest grumbler to say that the weather was too hot, too cold, too anything, unless he should adopt the complaint of Captain Hall's discontented friends, and call it "too temperate." The sky is without a cloud, the sun warm, without the excessive heat of summer, the air clear as crystal, and of a nature peculiarly buoyant and exhilarating.

But the only true criterion of the excellence of a climate is the growth and perfection of its animal and vegetable productions; and after a long residence in the country, and close attention to the subject, I am bound to say that, judged by this

test, the preference, upon the whole, must be awarded to the climate of Great Britain.

The question is not which is the most agreeable climate; this is a point which depends entirely upon each man's peculiar constitution and taste. The climate of Australia is delightfully dry, but this dryness amounts to a defect. Our English moisture is wanting to produce, as it does in this country, the great luxuriance and variety of scenery and verdure, and to bring the animal and vegetable kingdom to the highest perfection. Where there is scarcely any winter there is not the full enjoyment of summer, and where there is "perpetual spring" there is virtually none.

The climate of our own district, indeed, was one of the best in the colony, more temperate throughout the year than that of Sydney, and far more so than that of the northern settlements. The summers were tolerably cool, and the winters were varied with not a few mornings of frost, and even occasional falls of light snow. But in many parts of the colony the summer's heat is unpleasant and oppressive. The hot wind, which has been frequently described, is felt in the inland districts as well as in Sydney, but it is not, of course, called by the name of a "brick-fielder" anywhere but in the capital, where it acquired the name from the circumstance of its passing over a large brick-field, and thus filling every place with red dust. Wherever it comes, it is destructive to vegetation, prostrating the crops before it, and withering the beautiful gardens in a few hours: it does not, however, permanently affect the vegetable kingdom, nor is it injurious to man. It blows invariably from the interior, and this circumstance has led many to adopt the theory that the hitherto impenetrable centre of Australia is a vast sandy desert, over which this wind passes, and acquires its heat in its course.

The animal and vegetable productions of Australia, though decidedly of an excellent quality, yet rather degenerate from those of the mother country, whence most of them have been imported. Throughout the colony there is a forcing tendency in the climate, which causes the fruits of the soil to ripen too quickly, and hence they are inferior in quality to those of more temperate latitudes. This failing is also apparent to the breeder

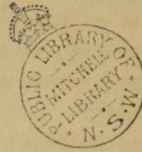
of stock, who constantly witnesses this degenerating tendency in his flocks and herds.

The native-born population (I allude, of course, only to the whites), though a remarkably fine race, and, it must be confessed, approaching very closely to their ancestors' heels in personal appearance, yet are not, upon the whole, equal in form to the parent stock. The average height of the Australians is probably more than that of the English, but when they exceed a certain standard they are apt to become loose made and weedy, thereby justifying their appellation of "cornstalks." When of moderate height they are remarkably well-shaped, broad, muscular, and active. In feature they are more like the English than any other of our descendants; in fact it would be very difficult to distinguish an Australian from an Englishman by his appearance, for the climate of New Holland does not produce in the sons of its soil that dark, foreign look which frequently characterises the Americans and other races originally sprung from British blood, and many of the native Australians retain the light complexion and blue eyes of the Anglo-Saxon race.

The native girls are for the most part tall, straight, and good-looking, their chief defects being want of colour and depth of chest; in these points only inferiority to their ancestors can be observed, though it is remarkable that the men have proportionably a finer development than the other sex.

A striking characteristic of the animal growth of the human race in Australia is the rapidity with which both sexes shoot up at an early stage of their youth. A native white, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, appears destined to attain the utmost perfection of form; but from that age to twenty there is not usually that expansion nor development which the previous growth had promised.

Sufficient time has not yet elapsed since the formation of the colony to admit of a fair calculation being made of the average duration of life among the native-born population; but, as the bloom of their youth soon passes away, and as their climate produces such rapid growth, it may be doubted whether they will prove remarkable for longevity.



CHAPTER XII.

Character of Australian Scenery—Conflicting Statements of Travellers—Trip to Lake Omio—My Companion—A Whimsical Reception—Colonial Idea of a Bad Road—Wild and Forlorn View—A Team in the Mountains—Colonial Drivers—Chapter of Accidents—Descent of "The Gulf" —The Snowy River—Road by its Banks—Wild Oats—Bark Canoe of the Aborigines—A Bush Ferry—The Nine-Mile "Pinch"—Route through the Mountains—Events of the Road—A Herd of Horses in the Mountains —Skill in Woodcraft—The "Freestone" Range—Striking Contrast—First Sight of Omio Plain—Picturesque Spot—Our Host at Omio—Colonial Pets—Native Companion—Kangaroos—White Cockatoos—Parrots—Story of the White Woman carried off by the Wild Blacks—A Cool Visitor—Return Home.

THE general character of Australian scenery, like that of its indigenous productions, is peculiar to itself. In many parts of the interior especially there is something in its wild singularity which defies the description of the traveller and the skill of the artist. Neither the note-book of the one, nor the pencil of the other, can convey it to the imagination; it must be seen to be understood.

Nor is it enough to study the different aspects of its scenery as it appears in the vicinity of the capital or inland townships, and along the sombre forest-girt coasts in the untrodden wilderness, and in the long-settled districts, where avarice has overstocked the pastures, and laid bare many a once blooming spot. It must be studied under every change of season and circumstance; and these vary so much that the traveller who visits the country after a long drought might justly be repelled by the uninviting aspect of a district the exuberant fertility of which, on another occasion, would call forth his warmest admiration. A very short time is sufficient to work these extraordinary changes, and the experienced colonist, who has long witnessed their progress and effects, has no reason to be surprised at the conflicting testimony of travellers on the subject of Australian scenery.

Among the many tours of business and pleasure which vary the routine of a settler's life, one in particular remains stamped on my memory, as having made me acquainted with the most striking and varied scenery which I ever beheld during my stay in the colony.

We had heard a great deal of a fine plain, or rather a series of small plains, and of a lake, which, not being more than a hundred miles distant, might be considered in our neighbourhood, for in Australia, owing to the vast size of the country and the erratic habits of bush life, one soon acquires a very comprehensive idea of space. Travellers who occasionally passed that way gave a glowing description of the beauty, fertility, and the richness of the soil and pasture in this favoured region. It became the lion of our district, and I felt as if I had never stirred from home because I had not seen Lake Omio.

Just at this time a friend and neighbour, who was on the eve of setting out on one of his periodical visits to his out-stations which lay in that direction, invited me to join him. The road, he gave me to understand, was bad, but it was the end of summer, the least busy season of the year, the weather was fine, and our horses had grown fat and lazy. I should not only obtain sight of a place which seemed to please everybody, but I should pass over a great variety of country, and, above all, should learn by experience what a bad road, in the colonial acceptation of the term, actually was.

Besides I liked my companion: E—— was the son of an officer, who had left the army and settled in Australia in the earliest days of the colony, and, having married, had brought up a numerous family, to whom he had given the best education that could be procured in the country of his adoption. He was frank and intelligent, and there was not a little originality in his ideas and remarks, or rather conjectures, on the subject of the land of his ancestors, of which he had heard much, and thought more, but which he had never seen. His mind was cultivated, and had not been narrowed by the narrowness of the sphere in which he had lived; our conversation was mutually interesting. He would beguile the way with many an amusing and characteristic anecdote of colonial life, and in turn was never weary of listening to descriptions of the high civilization of merry England,

her shady lanes, her sloping lawns and rich green meadows, and, above all, the wonders of her vast metropolis. I must own, too, that in a country where, as a new comer, I had to receive information from everybody, there might be some little charm in finding one to whom I had information to give. I therefore gladly availed myself of this opportunity, and on the appointed day I joined my companion, bringing with me, according to his pithy advice, a stout heart, a horse of similar "figure," and as little luggage as possible. E——, who was going to "muster" at his out-station, also took with him his stockkeeper, and a black from one of the "naturalized" tribes, who was very useful "after cattle."

For the first twelve or fifteen miles after we had left the open country, and plunged into the vast mass of forest through which our route lay, all went on smoothly enough; the hills were short and by no means precipitous, the woods occasionally opened, and a grassy flat or green "creek" would appear to relieve the eye. As we approached the end of our journey we came to one or two "pinches," which is the colonial term for steep hills: but as yet there was no indication of a very bad road, and I congratulated myself as I thought, "If we meet with no more broken country or thicker 'scrub' than we have passed in our first day's journey, our toils will be amply repaid by a sight of the fair lake Omio."

The first night we "made" an out-station, situated in a small open flat, in the midst of deep forest and thickly-wooded ranges. No sooner had we appeared in sight, than a crowd of dogs, starting up from all quarters, ran barking towards us, awakening the echoes far and wide. This disturbance brought out the proprietor, a small settler of the lower grade, who, by a dexterous use of such missiles as were supplied by sundry bullocks' horns and feet which were lying about the place, speedily constrained the noisy crew to draw off their forces and return towards "the hut," all but one luckless cur, who, having thereby drawn upon himself the indignation of his master, was summarily punished by having all the other dogs set upon him, and being hunted "down the creek." The mixed discourse of our host, as he alternately welcomed his guests, and urged his dogs upon the offender, had a very whimsical effect.

"Hie after him! hold him! hold him!—good evening to you; let me take off your saddles: I 'm sure you must be tired. The best thing you can do with your horse is to—Hold him! hold him! hold him!—I 'm afraid I 've but rough fare to offer you, nothing but beef and damper; but in a new country like this we must all learn to—Hold him there! hold him! ho—old him!" &c.

Perhaps I should have mentioned before that a creek, which in most other parts of the world signifies a small inlet or arm of the sea, is very differently understood in Australia, where it generally means a valley, or any open space in the forest, with or without water. The use of the word in the colony is in fact very vague, and might well mislead a stranger. "Which is the way?"—"*Down* the creek." "Is Mr. so and so at home?"—"No; he 's just gone *up* the creek." "How shall I find the station?"—"Oh, you can't miss it, it's *in* the creek."

On the second day we had not left the station of our entertainer more than a mile when the road divided into two branches, both leading to the point of our destination. Here my companion stopped to give some information to a stranger who was inquiring their comparative merits. I was all attention, and was not a little alarmed to hear of "Jacob's Point," "The Gulf," the "Snowy River," and, worst of all, the "Nine-mile Pinch."

But perhaps, thought I, they were talking of some other road, or perhaps they think to scare me; or, probably, knowing that it is my first trip in this direction, they wish to give me a little "colonial experience;" besides, the badness of a bad road is always exaggerated.

Thus reassured, I resumed my journey, and we had travelled on some six miles through the eternal forest, when my companion, who was then slightly in advance, stopped, and, on riding up to him, I found that the scene had suddenly shifted; the forest had opened, and for the first time there burst on me the full perception of what is called, in Australia, a bad road.

Immediately before us lay—nothing: beneath us, as far as the eye could stretch, appeared a dark mass of ranges, most of them covered with timber of great height, others showing here and there an open glade. These were intersected in all directions by narrow gullies and innumerable dry sandy creeks, forming

a landscape which seemed dislocated and disjointed, as if it once had been, or was intended to be, different from what it then was. Before us was the semblance of a vast chasm, as if the earth had formerly been rent by some frightful convulsion of nature. The position of many of the hills was very remarkable. Perhaps the best idea of the scene would be gathered from my friend E——'s descriptive remark, that "it looked as if it had been taken up in a table-cloth and shot out, hills, gullies, and all together, to find their own position, and to sink into shape by the mere force of gravity." In the lowest depths of the ravine all appeared a winding river, which, from the height on which we were then standing, seemed a narrow brook, though we subsequently found it was broad, deep, and rapid. There was something very striking in the landscape before us; it was grand in the extreme, but it was a wild and melancholy grandeur, such as perhaps few countries but Australia can show, bringing weariness to the soul and oppression to the eye, with a sense of infinite desolation.

"This," said my companion, "is the Gulf."

"A rough place for a stranger," I replied. "Should not we have done better if we had taken the other road?"

"Then our journey would have been much longer, and, besides, we must have gone down 'Jacob's Point.'"

"Well, even that, bad as it sounds, must surely have been better than this."

"Jacob's Point better than this? why, it's half as steep again, with no foothold for man or beast. It's quite a matter of taste, but, in my opinion, nobody that knows the road would go by Jacob's Point as long as there's such a place as 'the Gulf.'"

"Well, but I don't see any track on this side of the river; I suppose we shall have to cross it?"

"Twice," said my companion.

"And the bridge, I imagine, is like the rest of the bridges in the bush, such as the newspapers describe as 'temporary,' or, in plain truth, full of holes."

"Bridge!" said E——, with a look of unmixed astonishment; "I hope you did not expect a bridge; we shall be lucky if we can find a ford, for, now that I take a second glance at the river,

its waters look very muddy, which is a sure sign of its being high, not to say a 'banker.'"

I found my prospects did not improve by inquiry, but I was not yet quite dashed, and determined to find comfort at last.

"Well," said I, "I suppose, when we *do* get to the bottom of 'this Gulf,' and across the river, our troubles, for this day at least, will be at an end?"

"Not quite," said my companion, drily, though with something like a smile lurking about the corners of his mouth.

"Why, what more *can* we have to do? is there a second 'Gulf' to go down?"

"No, there's nothing more to go down; but do you see yonder range on our right?"

"Perfectly; it's the highest for miles round."

"Well, we must get up that by sundown. I told you it was a rough road, and so, to be sure, it is; but, come what may, to-night we must encamp at the top of the Nine-Mile Pinch."

I was by this time quite satisfied, and resolved to ask no more questions about the road to Omio.

It is not only horsemen that travel these distant roads: we noticed the tracks of drays, some of them quite fresh, leading down the mountain-path which lay before, or rather beneath us. It might well puzzle a stranger to understand how they got down, for the road, which, in addition to its great declivity, was filled with stumps of trees and fragments of loose granite rock, shelved off very rapidly towards the precipice, so as to afford little foot-hold for the cattle, and formed, what, in colonial phrase, is called a "side-line."

Occasionally, in the most critical parts of the road, the drays are assisted in their descent by ropes, which are fastened to the trees on the upper side; sometimes a smaller wheel is carried on the dray, which is substituted for the upper one in places of danger, thus bringing the vehicle more upon a level. But in spite of every precaution, and the wonderful skill and energy of the colonial drivers, one dray in three would upset in this almost impenetrable country. Great is the confusion on such occasions: the driver, who is on the lower side of his team, when he sees, after exhausting all his resources, and making such exertions as few besides a British colonist could make, that an upset is un-

avoidable, has barely time to slip on one side, when, with an impetus which causes a woful dispersion of its motley cargo, over goes the dray. Then follow the many minor accidents which, though no joke at the time, might well afford a laugh on some future day,—

"Hæc olim meminisse juvabit."

Everything gets out of place in an instant: the sugar becomes mixed with the tobacco, and the salt with the tea. Mark that cask, which, as if delighted at its sudden escape, is rolling down hill, in any direction but the right one, at a speed which defies pursuit. What are its contents? and when, in the name of vexation, *will* it stop? Now its pace slackens, now it resumes its career as merrily as ever; that black stump will surely stop it, or, as they say in the colony, "bring it up." Yes—no—yes. It *does* bring it up, and, in so doing, the hoops, whose fixity of tenure, like that of the waste lands beyond the boundaries of the colony, has for some time been very uncertain, are broken, and the contents, by all that's unlucky, prove to be—horseshoes, each of which keeps up the game, and is distinctly seen, by the agonized spectators, to take a separate course, some diving into the patches of "scrub" upon the mountain-side, others remaining buried in the long grass, while many more roll on, and on, and on, until they finally rest in the dry bed of the gully that yawns beneath.

But this is a digression. Behold us then once more advancing. There was little fear of a horse "not leading" down the Gulf, not the least difficult part of the descent being to advance oneself and keep back one's horse at the same time. The consequences of a fall would probably be that the animal would put his foot into his rider's pocket, or stamp him with the brow of a Redgauntlet. As we descended, the silence seemed to increase, save when it was broken, in a startling manner, by the loud note, ha! ha! ha! of the "laughing jackass" (a bird indigenous to Australia), as he sat upon the branch of some neighbouring gum-tree, seeming to mock our toils, and to claim us as his own kindred for having undertaken the labours of so precipitous a road. Arrived at the foot of the range, we found a vast heap of the blackened trunks of various species of the Eucalyptus, which had been dragged from the top of the "Gulf" behind the

drays which passed that way, in order to retard their progress; and as they thus lay piled one upon the other, they formed a barrier as strong as the pah, or native fortification, of a New Zealand chief.

We were now close to the river-bank, and soon the note of the bell-bird saluted our ears. The sound, in itself, is always pleasing; but when heard in the evening by the traveller who, during the heat of a long day, has been threading a long maze of dry creeks, or toiling over arid ranges, with parched lips and burning tongue, it seems the most welcome and musical upon earth; for it tells of cool streams and running waters, and never tells in vain.

At length we reached the Snowy River. It was high, but a "tea-tree" bush, which reared its head above the water, told us that we might venture to plunge in. E——, whose knowledge of the road was safely to be depended on, confirmed this opinion, and the stockkeeper vowed that it was "crossable."

The instructions given me for the ford were useful and to the point: "Make for yonder tea-tree bush; as long as your horse feels the bottom, keep his head well 'up the stream;' if he gets out of his depth, that instant give him every inch of rein, and he'll carry you over safe, if not dry."

Safe then, if not dry, we reached the opposite bank; and as nobody catches cold in the fine climate of Australia, we pursued our route unscathed, and, after journeying on along the river-banks for about two hours, we recrossed it, and stood at the foot of the Nine-Mile Pinch, or, as it was called, par excellence, *the* Pinch. Our road, while we were on the low ground, was comparatively good. Occasionally we passed large patches of wild oats, so luxuriant that we could not resist the temptation of dismounting, and letting our hungry steeds enjoy them for a short time. Horses are excessively fond of this plant, so much so, that in the early part of the spring, when it shoots up sooner than other vegetation, they will not hesitate to swim over the river in quest of it. The waters at that time are frequently so much swollen as to prevent any one from crossing, so that the stockkeeper, after losing the track of his saddle-horses upon the river's edge, has the mortification of seeing them quietly grazing upon the other side; and there they must necessarily remain, in

his despite, until the waters subsiding enable him to get across, or the runaways grow tired of wild oats and liberty.

Our sable companion pointed out to us one of the bark canoes of his tribe, as it lay upon the banks of the river. This is perhaps the most primitive boat in the world: like the "gunyio's," or huts, of the aborigines, it is built in a few minutes. An Australian black can always swim; but when the weather happens to be cold, or a ducking does not suit his purpose, he takes up his tomahawk, and searches the nearest part of the forest for a tree which has a boss, or protuberance, on its trunk. From this he strips off the bark, leaving about two feet on either side of the excrescence, and bringing both ends to a point. The sheet of bark, owing to the shape of the tree from which it has been taken, is sufficiently concave to exclude the water; to this frail conveyance he trusts himself, and, by dexterously balancing his body, he usually contrives to paddle across a river, and to gain the opposite bank in safety, leaving his funny little craft to float down the stream.

Bridges, as the foregoing account proves, are unknown upon the rivers far in the interior of Australia. There are none, and for some time will be none, for the best of all reasons in a young country—"it wouldn't pay." In some places, of more than usual traffic, a speculator sets up a punt, and makes a charge, varying with circumstances, for ferrying across the traveller and his luggage. This punt is usually nothing more than the trunk of a large tree, roughly hollowed out, and stopped up at each end. Having neither stem nor stern, it is unwieldy in the extreme, but, owing to its size and solidity, may be considered tolerably safe. When a dray is to be conveyed across, the wheels are usually taken off, and it is thus brought over "at twice."

The traveller on horseback has often a more troublesome task, and, if his steed be young or headstrong, sometimes meets with considerable delay. The assistance of the Charon of the bush is as necessary to the man with a horse as with a dray. On arriving at the river-bank, therefore, after shouting for the ferry-man, who somehow always happens to be on the wrong side, he proceeds to take off his saddle and bridle, and these he safely deposits in the punt. His next task is to make his horse go over before him; but here is the difficulty. Notwith-

standing his favourite axiom, that "all horses can swim," and his conviction that his own in particular will "take the water like a duck," he generally finds that the sagacious animal, when he sees the swift-flowing stream, and hears the gurgling of the current, would much sooner remain on land, and indicates as much, pretty plainly, by resolutely planting his fore-feet in a straight line before him, and refusing to budge an inch. This difference of opinion produces a violent struggle, which often lasts until both parties are pretty well exhausted. At length the unhappy steed, finding that he must needs leave his natural element, plunges in, and, having been guided during his passage by means of such missiles as the river-bank affords, which are hurled after him in order to prevent his facing about, and landing again on the same side, at last, scared and panting, gains the opposite bank. His owner then follows him in the punt as quickly as possible, catches him directly,—if he can,—and goes on his way rejoicing.

But I have detained the reader too long at the bottom of the Nine-Mile Pinch. In spite of its name, the ascent was only four miles, in some places circuitous, in others direct. A choice of road was not to be had, and so up and up we went, with little inclination, and less breath, for talking. Sometimes we stopped to rest upon the landing-places which lay between the steeper parts of the hill; at others, to watch some vast fragment of granite, which, loosened by our horses' feet, plunged headlong to the bottom, occasionally bounding so high in its career that a horseman might have passed under it unharmed. At length we fairly reached the top, and looked down in triumph upon the enormous masses of eucalyptus, now far beneath our feet, which, when we stood on the river-bank, had towered above us in sombre majesty.

Travelling on a mile or two farther, we encamped for the night on the edge of a pretty mountain-stream, in the vicinity of rich grass for our horses. The climate, however, was sensibly changed, and, as the stockman remarked, it was at least "two great-coats colder" than on the banks of the river.

Next morning we resumed our journey with renewed alacrity; for its worst toils were gone and past: there were but three or our more "pinches," and of these only one was allowed to

deserve the name; and, more than all, that very evening our eyes were to be gladdened by a sight of Omio plains.

Meanwhile the same scenery met our eyes—forest, nothing but forest. Occasionally a snake, basking upon the arid track, would be seen to glide away, swift as an arrow, upon hearing the tramp of our horses' hoofs. Now and then a drove of half-wild cattle, "making back" to some former pasture-grounds, would descry us from the side of an adjacent steep, and rush headlong down it, laying low many a blooming sapling in their course, and making a lane through the tangled underwood. Now and then, as we passed one of the small green flats or quiet gullies which are interspersed among these arid ranges, our approach would disturb some old bull, who, driven from the plains by his younger and more vigorous rivals, had retired, like a surly philosopher, to end his days amidst these gloomy solitudes.

Notwithstanding all that has been said of the great sagacity of savages in tracking, and of their quickness in catching a distant sound, I strongly suspect that the white man, when he has been accustomed to this kind of "bushmanship" at an early age, generally proves his superior. I have seen many instances of this in Australia, and our present trip furnished us with a strong one.

We had travelled nearly half our day's journey, and were within a few miles of the one acknowledged steep pinch, called the "Freestone," which our third day's journey was to set before us. Not a leaf was stirring, and all nature seemed asleep, when E——'s stockkeeper, who had been listening attentively for a moment or two, reined in his steed, and said—

"Hark! I hear a herd of horses."

"Ay, ay!" said the black, incredulously; "bale me hear em: stupid fellow myself—I believe bale sit down" (I don't hear them myself; it may be my stupidity, but I think you are mistaken).

Upon which they both dismounted, and, holding their horses by the bridle, put their ears to the ground, and listened.

"Budgery you" (clever fellow, you), said the black, when he had satisfied himself that his companion was right. "I believe 'jump up yarraman' directly."

So it proved; and in a few minutes the sound of many hoofs, gradually swelling upon the ear, became distinctly audible. Drawing aside into the "scrub" that grew close to the track, we

waited to let the drove go by; for, as they were probably on their way to the capital, and could hardly as yet be sobered by the fatigues of the road, our presence might have scattered them far and wide, and perhaps occasioned the loss of several. In a twinkling they were at hand; and in truth it was a very imposing sight, as, amidst that wild mountain scenery, the whole troop swept past us, bays, blacks, chesnuts, and greys, sleek and fresh from their pastures, while the mighty patriarch of the herd brought up the rear, as if disdaining to betray a nervous haste, and acting "under protest." They were closely followed by an overseer and his man, who, on seeing us, dismounted, and stopped for a few minutes, the one to make inquiries about the state of the markets, the other to light his pipe with his fellow stockman. Their greeting was, however, cut short prematurely by a sudden alarm that the horses were "splitting," upon which both master and man were fain to spring again into the saddle, and gallop after them; the former being apparently unwilling to deny them the usual colonial merit of being "quite quiet," while the latter, with a slight difference of opinion, was heard to declare, as he set spurs to his steed, that, though he had been among horses since he was a child, his present lot were a set of the veriest "Russians" (Anglicè, wild things) *he* ever had anything to do with.

We were quite disappointed at the abrupt departure of our new friends. How welcome amidst these vast solitudes is a specimen, any specimen, of the human form divine: its situation lends it a momentary charm; as the vessel which, when in port, amidst a hundred others, would hardly attract a second look, far in the Atlantic becomes an object of the deepest interest; we sweep the horizon for one glimpse of its loftiest spar, and watch it until our aching eyes can gaze no more.

We now reached "the Freestone," a shorter hill than most of those we had surmounted, but, if possible, still more precipitous. We climbed up it with difficulty. The tracks of drays were still visible beneath our feet, though how they got up such a place seemed inexplicable. Every class of men has its hero, and I was informed that the only driver who could safely be depended on to take a team up "the Freestone" without an accident was a man known as "the pretty boy," a name which, as my friend E——

remarked, must have been given him by the old rule of "lucus a non lucendo," as he was one of the ugliest scoundrels that ever wore a head. He must, however, be invaluable in his line.

The sun was declining, and the mid-day heat was beginning to abate, as we arrived at the foot of some gently rising ground, over which the track led us. I was on the point of ascending it, when my companion suddenly wheeled round his horse, and, looking back at the country through which we had been travelling for the last three days, asked me what I thought of the prospect.

I was growing hungry and tired, and was glad of the opportunity of abusing the road which had caused us such endless difficulties. In fact, I saw only a mighty expanse of forest-land, stretching its brown and sombre masses in unbroken monotony, some trees rearing their blackened trunks in dismal array, others shedding their bark in slatternly and forlorn profusion. One shady beech, one stately elm, I thought had more beauty and verdure than the whole scene. Let those that will give it the false name of evergreen: it may never fade, but, alas! it has never flourished. So it must remain for ages, useless to man and beast, to re-echo no sound but the cry of the wild dog, or the tomahawk of the savage.

Something of this kind I expressed as I turned and resumed my journey. But when we had gained the summit of the little hill before us (it was not more than a hundred yards in length), that short distance showed us one of the most remarkable contrasts of scenery that ever met the eye of a traveller.

The gloomy forest had opened, and about two miles before, or rather beneath us—for the ground, thinly dotted with trees, sloped gently downwards—lay a plain about seven miles in breadth. Its centre was occupied by a lagoon, in some parts thickly covered with sedge, in others showing a clear expanse of water. On either side of this the plain, for some distance, was as level as a bowling-green, until it was met by the forest, which shelved picturesquely down towards it, gradually decreasing in its vast masses until they ended in a single tree. In the vicinity of the forest the ground was varied by gentle undulations, which, as they intersected each other, formed innumerable grassy creeks and open flats, occasionally adorned with native honeysuckles

and acacias, and affording numberless retreats for the stately herds which occupied the plain. Two remarkable conical hills, perfectly free from timber, rose in the middle of the largest plain, dividing it about half way, and a clear and winding stream skirted it on our right. The whole, as far as the eye could reach, was clothed with a thick coat of grass, rich and luxuriant, as if the drought, so destructive elsewhere, had never reached this favoured spot.

It was Omio plain. But by what accident, or rather by what strange freak of nature, came it there? A mighty belt of forest, for the most part destitute of verdure, and forming as uninviting a region as could well be found, closed it in on every side for fifty miles; but there, isolated in the midst of a wilderness of desolation, lay this beautiful place, so fair, so smiling, that we could have forgotten hunger, thirst, and all the toils of the road, and been content to gaze on it while light remained.

After a long weary ride through the dismal forest, how delightful, how exhilarating, is a canter across this beautiful country! The very horses seem to catch the enthusiasm, and to forget their past toils, as they leave the odious gum-trees behind them. E—— was fully alive to the influence of the scene; not a group of half-wild horses or cattle crossed our track but he would dash in among them, and scatter them far and wide over the plain, under pretence of seeing whether any of his own were with them, but evidently from sheer delight. We felt as little fatigued as if we had but just then left our last night's encampment, though we were now close at our journey's end, and a thin white smoke, curling upwards in the clear evening air, showed us our resting-place for the night.

Arrived at the station, we proceeded to make ourselves at home in the usual cool way of travellers in the interior of New South Wales, while our horses rolled in front of the door, and then trooped off to the adjacent lake. We found that the owner was not resident, but left the charge of his affairs in this distant region to an overseer, who therefore was our host for the night. He was hospitable of course, hospitality being, as I have before said, almost universal in the bush of Australia; but his welcome was not cheery, it did not seem to come from the heart. He was a man who had met with many losses in the country, and, when little else was left him to lose, had apparently lost—his

temper, and turned grumbler and alarmist. Many such there are, in old countries as well as in new, who, not having succeeded according to their own estimate of their deserts, (though perhaps their deserts if duly weighed would hardly have saved them from Hamlet's sentence of a whipping,) are soured by disappointment, and make their company insufferable by invidious and unfair comparisons, and a long detail of grievances, which they have not sense enough to conceal, nor candour enough to impute to their own mismanagement.

But who could feel discontent at Omio? who that was alive to the beauties of scenery could become weary of this lovely spot? It was indeed beautiful as the day was long, ay, and the night too. At dawn, when the early breeze breathed buoyancy and hope—at noon, when the wild horse basked on the edge of its glassy lake, the platypus floated on its surface, and, in the midst of the heat, everything recalled to the mind only freshness and repose—again, in the evening, when the countless herds, sleek and contented, trooped off towards the lengthening shades of the forest—and, above all, at night, when the mild southern cross looked down upon the scene, and the moon, gradually rising from behind the dark mass of forest that lowered around, seemed to leave it with joy, and to shine for the plain alone.

At Omio we saw a tame "native companion," a large bird indigenous to Australia, of the adjutant species. Men living in these distant regions are very fond of "pets," and we occasionally met with some highly accomplished natives of the bush. With the exception of the wild dog, which, like the tiger, can never be thoroughly tamed, most Australian animals are easily domesticated. The kangaroo, if caught young, not only soon forgets its wild nature, but is apt to fall into the other extreme, and become intrusively familiar; and where there is a large white cockatoo, which is perhaps the best talking bird yet discovered, nothing is safe for a moment that is not as hard as iron. Like a monkey, he is never happy but when in mischief, and then, if the owner of the damaged property, perhaps a new English saddle, flies to its rescue, he sets up his fine flame-coloured crest, and opens his large eyes with an air of indignant remonstrance, as if he had been interrupted in the performance of a meritorious service.

The numerous family of the parrot tribe are, as may be supposed, universal favourites, though they soon cease to be prized highly in a country where they may be seen as commonly as sparrows in England, taking their short low flights in flocks of twenty or thirty together. The sorts which (unhappily for them) are most "fancied" are the green leek, the king parrot, the rosella, the blue mountain parrot, and, above all, the lorie, with his splendid livery of blue and green.

The beauties of the lorie, however, have been eclipsed by a most brilliant little parrot, found, I believe, on or near the river Lachlan. It is about the size of a bullfinch, and is called the budgery garr (budgery, in the blacks' language, meaning good or handsome). It is easily tamed, and bears confinement less uneasily than any other species. Its shape is very elegant, and on each side of its throat, which is of a bright yellow, are two deep blue spots, like the eyes on the peacock's tail.

It was at Omio that I first heard the shocking story, known, alas! to be too true, of the white woman who has for some time been detained among the wild blacks of the southern coast. She had been sent at an early age to England, for the purpose of completing her education, and was returning to her friends in the prime of youth, when the vessel in which she was a passenger was wrecked in Bass's Straits, within two days' sail of Sydney. Part of the crew had been drowned, and the few that reached the shore, with the exception of this ill-fated girl, were massacred by the blacks. Numerous parties, chiefly composed of residents in the adjacent districts, some induced by a large reward, others by a better feeling, have at various times set out to recapture her and restore her to her family, but as yet, I believe, without success. Vast tracts of the country in which she is known to be confined are thickly wooded and broken, and in many parts it is almost impenetrable. But there are other, and even greater difficulties to be surmounted by those who undertake the pursuit of the savages. They must not only traverse these almost inaccessible regions, at times without the bare satisfaction of knowing that they are on the right scent, but they must also use the utmost caution to conceal their intentions; for there is good reason to fear that, if the blacks found themselves unable to carry away their victim, they would, by a blow of a waddie, put

an end to her sufferings, and thus frustrate the exertions of her rescuers, when upon the point of meeting with success. The colonists have made great efforts towards her recovery, and ultimately it is to be hoped they will rescue the unfortunate sufferer. She has been seen now and then. It is said that she is always attended by a black, who watches her with great vigilance.

Her lot has indeed been dreadful. At a time of life when the faculties are most vigorous, and the sensibility is keenest, when education had given her all the accomplishments of civilized life, and cultivated her sense of its refinements, to be torn away from all she loved, at the moment when she hoped to be united to them for life, and to become the prey of the most barbarous race of men upon earth. Death, under any shape, would have been preferable—the club of the savage, or a virgin grave beneath the waters of the Pacific.

Our destination was far beyond Omio, and we resumed our journey after a day's rest. No sooner had we left the plain than the same gloomy forest rose around us. The distance of one mile from this paradise, on either side, effaced all vestiges of its scenery. On our return I turned aside, and lingered for a day or two in a beautiful station at the edge of the plain, unwilling to leave it too soon, and even wishing that the loss of our horses, the only acknowledged cause of detention to the traveller in the bush, might furnish a pretext for delay.

At this station, among several others, had recently occurred a strong instance of the annoyances to which her Majesty's subjects residing in these remote districts are occasionally liable. The neighbourhood had been infested by a gang of bushrangers, who, being well armed and mounted, had little cause to fear the mounted police, still less the few settlers occupying that part of the country, and did pretty much as they pleased. Their ringleader, it appears, had so much spare time upon his hands, that upon one occasion he had paid a visit to the station, during the absence of its proprietor, and had ordered dinner to be served up, quick and hot; then, sending for a "fig" of the best tobacco that the place afforded—none of your colonial trash, but right Virginian—had entertained the cook, while he tested its flavour, with his opinion of the various breeds of

horses in the neighbourhood, an opinion which, as he or some of his party had during their long career taken horses from nearly every station, and ridden them until they stood still from exhaustion, might be considered well worth having. Finally, before taking his departure, he had praised his absent entertainer as a "good sort of a man," and, "unkindest cut of all," had carved his name upon the dining-table.

Such was the last incident worthy of note during our expedition; and we shortly returned through the same toilsome road (with the difference that we had to go down the "Freestone" and the "Pinch," and up the "Gulf") until we once more found ourselves in the open country, where we long talked and looked back with pleasure upon my first and only trip to Omio.

A few years hence, amid the rapid progress of Australia, who shall say what change may fall upon the scene we have described? Of that fair spot, as it now is, who can say how few vestiges shall remain? Already, as the white man advances, the native features of the landscape are effaced, the dusky sons of the soil grow fewer and feebler still. Shall we not admire the energy that works this change in the land, and rejoice that its sleep has at length been broken? Yet must we not, on the other hand, feel pity for the helpless savage—whose territory we ruthlessly wrest from him—whose means of subsistence we destroy,—the very remnants of whose race, like some dream of youth, are doomed to pass away, and be seen no more?

CHAPTER XIII.

The Overlanders—Their Qualifications—Peculiar Life—Incidents of an Overland Journey—Crossing a River with Stock—Native Names—Beneficial Results of the Overlanders' Exertions—Industry and Idleness—A Contrast—The Settler's Grave—The Two Emigrants—The Haunted Station—The Reformed Convict.

AMONG the most remarkable characters to be met with in Australia are the "Overlanders," men who make long expeditions from one part of the country to another with stock, either for the purpose of seeking a good market, or of forming new stations in a land of greater promise than that which they had originally occupied. The toils they undergo, the perils they must surmount, the enterprising nature of their plans, while they cause the less energetic colonist to quail before them, have, at the same time, an air of wild adventure, which throws a powerful charm over the occupation of the overlanders. Theirs is, in fact, the romance of pastoral speculation—the poetry of life in the bush.

Individuals of classes and characters the most widely different are to be found among them. Some are men of good birth and education, others as rude as their own stockmen. Whatever be their qualifications in other respects, they must all, in common, be possessed of a tolerably large capital, a good knowledge of stock, considerable bodily strength, and, above all, coolness and determination, with ready wit to assist them in moments of emergency.

The expense of driving a large quantity of stock overland being considerably less in proportion than that required for a small number, it is only extensive stockowners who can embark with advantage in this kind of speculation. The overlander starts with property which must necessarily be of great value in his charge, consisting perhaps of six or seven thousand sheep, a thousand head of horned cattle, and eighty or a hundred horses,

besides drays, pack-bullocks, and other minor appurtenances. With these he has to penetrate a country he has never traversed before, to a distance of perhaps a thousand miles. He must run many serious risks, such as drought, the loss of his property from fatigue, the disaffection or desertion of his men in regions where no more are procurable, and he must be prepared to sustain the sudden and troublesome, though desultory, attacks of the hostile tribes of blacks through whose country he must unavoidably pass. Above all, he must run the risk of a fall in prices ere he can reach the distant market to which he is wending his way, with the greatest part, perhaps the whole, of his worldly wealth. But having once cast the die, he must stand its hazard, and he cares little for the difficulties and dangers of the road, well knowing that at its conclusion, should he meet with tolerable success, he may double his capital in the course of a few months.

If a life of this kind is beset with uncertainty and hardship, it has, on the other hand, many attractions, and I never met with an overlander who did not look back upon his long expeditions with pride and pleasure, even when their result, in point of profit, had fallen short of his expectations. At first starting the utmost care and vigilance are necessary to control, both by day and night, the numerous flocks and herds, ever seeking for an opportunity to escape; but after they have been on the road a week or two, they become much more docile, and their owner soon finds leisure to vary the tedious length of the journey by a little hunting or shooting, or, what is still more interesting, by exploring the country through which he is passing. The ever-varying scenery, too, through which the line of march leads him, tends greatly to lighten the monotony of the way. Sometimes the route takes him through a huge mass of forest, then across some pretty park-like plains; now he must toil over arid and stony ridges scorched with drought, or, again, he may forget his toils as he follows the windings of some deep-flowing stream, which rolls its waters towards the place of his destination. Should it, however, be necessary to cross it with horses or horned cattle, a very animated and remarkable scene ensues.

Shortly before the party arrives at the river's bank, a horseman gallops ahead to reconnoitre the ford and the nature of the ground on either side, and, as soon as he has satisfied himself on

these points, rejoins his party, who are by this time not more than a quarter of a mile off, awaiting his return. Every man now tightens his girths, settles himself firmly in his saddle, and examines the lash of his stockwhip, in readiness for the approaching struggle. The fear is lest the first attempt should fail, for, if it does, the animals are apt to be seized with a general panic, and refuse to go near the water in spite of every exertion, so that a delay of several days, and even weeks, may be the result. When, therefore, they are within some three hundred yards of the crossing-place, the herd, which has latterly been suffered to travel lazily along, is roused into sudden action by the united efforts of the drivers, the foremost animals being stimulated by shouts and screams, while the hindmost are well belaboured with the lash. They are now within sight of the water, and the leaders would certainly stop short—if they could, but it is then too late. The shouts of the men are redoubled, the whole herd is by this time at top speed, "vires acquirit eundo;" in they must plunge; the hindmost, glad to escape the discipline of the whip, rush in pell-mell upon the rest, and force them on; for a few minutes the broad stream shows the unwonted sight of innumerable vast heads and horns just peering above its surface, and the opposite bank is gained. In short, as an old overlander once remarked to me, "keep the leaders' heads straight, and the hindmost well up, the whole *must* go over; they can't help it."

But woe betide the luckless animal, whether horse or bullock, which, leaving its companions, starts back affrighted on the bank, and scours over the plains! In an instant he is detected, and a horseman, whip in hand, is alongside of him: let him go where he will, his pursuer follows as closely as his shadow; a crowd of dogs are at his heels, until he is glad to turn and spring into the water, convinced that the land, at least on the wrong side of the river, is too hot to hold him.

It is difficult to conceive the astonishment, the sort of supernatural terror, with which a tribe of blacks, as yet perhaps ignorant of the white man's existence, must regard, from some adjacent range or "scrub," the whole of these proceedings. Their fear at the first sight of a horse and his rider has always been intense, as they usually mistake the two for one animal;

in their eyes it appears a species of centaur. And then to encounter suddenly some dozen of these monsters, shouting and galloping over their hitherto undisturbed region, must strike them with a degree of alarm which no language can exaggerate.

Many of the rivers, mountains, remarkable spots, and tracts of country, have been named by the overlanders; and though the local government sometimes disapproves of these titles, and orders them to be subsequently changed, yet they are frequently retained from the force of early habit; hence, from his choice of names, it is easy to conjecture the country to which the first explorer of a district has belonged. Some of the native names are very pretty, and their meaning is often poetical; others, again, are equally cacophonous; in general the plurality of *o*'s is remarkable. Of those that I recollect, many, such as Bungōnia, Taralga, Ōmĭŏ, Illawarra, Wolumlah, and Marūlan, were sufficiently euphonous: on the other hand, there are numberless such queer-sounding ones as Wooloomooloo, Wollongong, Jemmĭcumbeen, Wolgullŏmŏrang, Sukenbŏka, Wog-Wog, and Bong-Bong, the latter a place about a hundred miles from Sydney, which the march of civilization (we will not call it improvement) has changed into Bung-Bung.

Upon the whole it appears far better taste to adopt the native names, wherever they exist. It is wearisome to hear of Windsor, Richmond, and other such familiar nominations at the antipodes; and perhaps not a little tantalizing when they are given to places which, as the York coachman is said to have remarked of New York, could only be recognised by being so totally *un*like their namesakes in England. As for such names as "Jerry's Plains," "Patrick's Plains," "Paddy's River," and many others not more dignified, it seems a cruelty to inflict them on a new country. In after-times, when the Sydney papers teem with "fashionable movements," how will it sound that Mr. So-and-so has arrived from his seat at "Gammon Plains"? Who will ever believe in the existence of such a place? How could such a property be offered for sale? What new comer to the colony, well primed with cautions against credulity and the tricks of auctioneers, would undertake a journey to look at it? He might as well (he will think) put to sea in search of the famous "Cape Flyaway" of hoaxing mariners. Such names, in

short, should be dropped at once, and others substituted more creditable to the taste of the inventors, and better suited to the future prospects of the country.

The enterprising spirit of the overlander is not only profitable to himself, but it is also indirectly beneficial to the colony at large. By transporting stock from a part of the country where its rapid increase has grievously thinned the pastures, and produced a ruinous deterioration in its value, to another where the supply is still insufficient, he promotes the advantage of the public not less than his own. He is also, in many cases, the pioneer of civilization: through his means many a fine tract of unoccupied land, the existence of which had been previously unknown, starts into newness of life, bringing wealth to some, and occupation to many more.

He is, moreover, a striking example of the aptitude of the Anglo-Saxon for the task of colonizing, and developing the resources of a new country. Let its nature and capabilities demand in its colonists what qualifications they will, immediately a race of men starts up both willing and able to supply the demand, whatever it may be, and however little in accordance with their previous habits. Some will fail no doubt, but many succeed, and by their success become the originators of an occupation, or branch of business, which thenceforth is peculiarly their own.

Visible as are the effects, in all places, of industry and economy on one hand, and of idleness and mismanagement on the other, perhaps nowhere is the contrast so striking as in a new country. It is difficult to overstate the degree of success which may attend the man who, full of energy and hope, admits no evil to be incurable till he has tried to cure it, or the degree of discomfort which may be accumulated about the dwelling of one who folds his arms in indolent despair, and trusts to some unknown agency (to which he gives the vague name of "better times") to bring about that which might quickly be effected by his own exertions.

About twenty miles from us dwelt two men, of that class usually known as small settlers. Neither was superior to the other in point of natural talent or education. Both had begun with a small capital, both were married and resided on their stations. The means of both were alike, yet nothing more different could be imagined than the results obtained.

The first occupied part of a fine open creek, skirted with forest, which, jutting out here and there, formed several sequestered nooks, in one of which, combining the usual requisites of wood and water, he had erected his improvements, the whole of them neatly constructed, and kept in excellent repair. Two large stacks of wheat, and another of hay, stood in an adjacent yard, and the sound of the flail might be heard until a late hour every day. It was a dairy station too, and sixty or seventy fine cows were milked at sunrise every morning, and brought home from the pastures in the evening to suckle their calves. The dairy itself was a pattern of cleanliness and good order, and several sleek porkers in a sty close at hand gave evident proofs that the skimmed milk had not been wasted. There was an excellent kitchen-garden, strongly fenced in, and containing nearly all kinds of vegetables used in England, and poultry swarmed at every turn and corner. At sunset a small but well-conditioned drove of horses came home, of their own accord, from their distant pasture-grounds, to pick up anything that might be given them, and attracted principally by the rock-salt, which was strewed about the place to encourage these visits, as they are so fond of it that they will continue to lick it for hours together. It was a pleasure to witness the regularity and well-ordered routine with which everything about the station was carried on. Nor was the internal economy less creditable to the mistress of the mansion. The four rooms of which it was composed were all clean and comfortable. In the one that served for dining-room and kitchen the ceiling was hung with divers articles indicative of good housekeeping—prime joints of dried beef and flitches of bacon, interspersed with pumpkins and melons, and "cobs" of Indian corn. The furniture, though rude, was well arranged, and the dresser, made of colonial pine, was as clean and white as snow. The family consisted of three or four girls, neatly dressed, and looking happy; the eldest was busily employed in making wheat-straw hats, which we were informed were so much prized in the neighbourhood that the demand far exceeded the supply; while several well-thumbed spelling and copybooks, on an adjacent shelf, shewed that the youngest were making the best of their time. The whole economy of the station, in its daily routine, resembled that of a prosperous farm in England.

We must now turn to the contrast. A ride of a few miles only, to the other end of the creek, brings us to a very different scene. Here, too, the site of the station is pretty, but, the stock having been carelessly allowed to graze too near the place, the herbage around is scanty, giving it a faded and untidy appearance. The owner is a thin, anxious-looking man, with a restless eye and manner. He is evidently aware of the unpromising aspect of his farm, but is unwilling to take the least part of the blame to himself, and lays it all on some other cause, chiefly the ways of the country, his own ill luck, and the badness of the times. The buildings are awkwardly patched and repaired in all directions, apparently at the cost of more labour than would have been required to restore them completely. The bark is falling off the roof of the house in several places, and is replaced by unseemly pieces of dry hide, which are kept down by large stones. "They are 'going' to get new bark—when the blacks come to strip it." The cattle have strayed away in great numbers, and are to be found on everybody's ground but their owner's, while his saddle-horses are all knocked up with hunting them. "It was then too late in the season to muster, but when spring came he'd make some of them come back faster than they went away—that he would." The wheat-paddock is filled with stray stock of all kinds, which never go in and out by the same gap. "Grain would be low next year, and it would be cheaper to buy than to cultivate." There are plenty of pigs "on the station," but they "run" two or three miles off, and are seen, on an average, not oftener than once a-month. However, "they 'do better' at large, in a warm country, than when pent up in a sty." Butter there is none—"In a country where there are no navigable rivers, it 'don't pay' at that distance from market." Two cows are kept for milk, or rather only one, for the other is being "broken in," and seldom comes home until she is fetched with horse and whip at her heels, and when she *is* in the yard no living soul could milk her. "But cows," he remarks, "are like working oxen; he liked them to be rather wild at first, they always turned out best in the long run: quiet ones are apt to grow sulky."

Towards evening the report of a stockwhip is heard in the distance, and presently the hopeful son and heir appears in sight,

—a well-looking and spirited youth, but utterly neglected, and wild as the horses he has been hunting. Of his day's sport he gives a graphic account, in his own desultory style:—How he has been out all day, not on his own business, but because he had been bent upon running down a certain black mare, the property of a neighbour, which had hitherto defied all pursuit, and was known (from a lagoon near which she was usually found) by the title of the "Lady of the Lake"—how they had started in chase of this intractable lady, determined to drive her into the enclosures at all risks—how they had got on her track, had found her in the ranges, had run her "breast-high," till she was forced to betake herself to the open country—how they had "stuck to her" for several hours, until at last they had brought her in, more dead than alive, to the enclosures, whence she was not to be liberated until she and the saddle had become well acquainted with each other. He winds up his discourse with an emphatic panegyric upon the horse he is riding, declaring that he improves in his galloping after the first four or five miles, and defying the colony to produce his equal.

The fond parent listens to this eventful story with intense interest, and at its conclusion expresses his entire approbation of the whole proceedings. As his son turns away he gazes after him with irrepressible satisfaction. He was "no scholar," he says, but for all that he "knew what o'clock it was," and for cracking a stockwhip, or sitting a buckjumper, he'd back him against any member of the legislative council. Whether some of this energy would not have been better employed in improving the aspect of affairs at home, never seemed to enter the heads of either father or son.

As might be expected, the domestic arrangements are not superior to the external. In Australia, where the necessaries of life are now so cheap, want is out of the question, but waste and negligence will produce an imitation of many of the evils of want. Books there are none; and a hot argument between father and son, as to whether centipede was spelt with an x! proves that the disputants are, indeed, "no scholars."

What a widely different account these two men, precisely similar in means and station, would give of the bush! One is living in greater comfort than he had previously known, and

continues to increase it year after year: the other meanwhile becomes daily more unsettled, while his energies grow rusty for want of play, and poverty gradually overtakes him as he neglects the present, and rests his hopes on "better times."

Exactly the same observations apply to settlers of the higher class. Among these it is not uncommon to meet one who is always at fault for some necessary article, who has apparently expunged the word comfort from his vocabulary since he left the mother country, and seems to care for nothing but how he may just rub on from one wool-season to another. His example spreads an enervating influence over all around him, and the unsettled appearance of such a station bespeaks the character of its owner. But how different is the picture of a well-managed establishment! On or about it nearly every necessary tradesman is to be found, attracted thither by the energy of their employer. There is a tailor, shoemaker, blacksmith, and carpenter; the stock-keepers are all butchers, and the cook or hut-keeper must also have a tolerable insight into the mysteries of baking. The owner's private store contains the groceries and haberdashery, and his medicine-chest is the apothecary's shop. Besides these there are various other articles, of minor importance, manufactured on the station, and, upon the whole, many a rising inland township is far worse provided with the conveniences of life.

Lastly, in some sequestered nook, hidden from view by clustering evergreens, lies the burial-ground of the far settler. Such a spot, unconsecrated though it be, has of itself an air of calm solemnity which commands respect, even from the rudest denizens of the bush. Ours, I remember, had five or six tenants, nearly all of whom had met with a violent death; for in the fine climate of Australia little is to be feared from disease. Its first occupant had been speared by the blacks, ere they had learned to fear the superior power of the firelock. Another must have died in great suffering, having mistaken corrosive sublimate for Epsom salts. A third had been killed by a fall from a horse. Its latest tenant, an Irish emigrant, had met with his death under very painful circumstances. He was one of two fellow-villagers, who had left their native country in the same ship, and reached Australia with their wives and families. They were both steady and industrious, had surmounted their worst hardships, and were beginning to

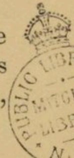
save money, and to rejoice in their dawning prosperity. But this happiness was not to last. Some trifling quarrel arose between them as they were shepherding together, the eternal shilelagh was at hand, and a single blow sent one of the emigrants to the convict's chain, and the other to his last home, in the land which they had sought and learned to love together.

A remarkable instance of the strange losses to which the stockowner in the interior of Australia is liable, occurred in our neighbourhood. The case was unique, and it was one that could neither have been anticipated nor prevented. At a few miles distance from us there was a fine station, which had hitherto been very prosperous, until one unlucky day two men, who were at work upon it, died somewhat suddenly near the same spot. From this cause rose an idle report, which rapidly gained belief, that the station was haunted! It was useless to remonstrate with the men, not one of them would engage to live on it; and the luckless owner was consequently forced to pull down the whole of his buildings, at a great loss, and erect them again in another place that was voted "more canny."

I have written thus far without having once touched upon what I have always thought one of the most remarkable sights, and the most gratifying, which Australia can boast—the reformed convict; the man who, having been rejected by the place of his birth, and of his early crime, has paid the penalty, has passed the period of his disgrace, and has returned to a better life in another land.

That the majority, or even a large number, of offenders thus sentenced reform, I will not undertake to affirm; that many do, few travellers in Australia will deny. Whether the criminal's repentance is in each case the result of that thorough spiritual conversion which the Christian would desire to see, might be hard to decide. It may be, or it may not. But is it a small matter that the outward behaviour of the penitent is decent, and his habits regular, that the vices of his youth are discontinued, his old intimacies dropped, and his thoughts and wishes taught to flow in a new channel?

Here at least the foundation is laid for a true and complete conversion. If more be needed, how easily might a zealous clergyman, or a kind and pious master, drop the good seed,



and how readily would it spring up in ground so well prepared!

When the eye opens on such a boundless field of usefulness, lighted up and cheered by such bright rays of hope, it is impossible not to wish to see greater exertions made. Australia has indeed dark shadows, as well as bright lights; few countries can show such fearful pictures of utter depravity, of self-consuming vice, which yields obedience to no law but that of physical force. But in no case should we despair; in general sudden conversions are the result only of unexpected and appalling circumstances. In ordinary cases men must be civilized before they can be Christianized; misery must be expelled from the sinner's abode before religion can be introduced: and hence it is that in Australia, where worldly success is so immediately and so visibly the result of any reform in conduct, and where want is scarcely known, the missionary of reformation may expect a degree of success beyond what the greatest zeal and ability could obtain for the preacher who labours among the vicious part of our poorer population at home.

CHAPTER XIV.

Female Society in the Bush—Matrimony—Feminine Occupations in the Far Districts—Education of Children—Hints to Emigrants and Capitalists of the present Day—Advisable Course to pursue on first engaging in Pastoral Pursuits—The best Way to gain Experience—General Remarks.

I MIGHT add much more; the recollections of many years would serve to swell out my volume with yet undescribed scenes of colonial life—scenes of industry and enterprise, of excitement and loneliness, of deep disappointment and unexpected success. But enough has been said to tell the young adventurer what he may hope, and what he must learn to forego, if he seeks to make himself a home in the bush of Australia.

Of one important omission I am still conscious—an omission which will go further with most readers to convey an idea of want of civilization in "the bush" than the most flattering descriptions can remove. I have hardly touched on the condition of women in those far regions, the state of female society, and its influence in polishing the manners and softening the hardships of a pastoral life.

It is true that though woman must, in every English home, play an important part, it is not in "the bush" a prominent one. Her domestic duties are so engrossing, that if she had the power she has scarcely the time to stir abroad; of society, as we understand the word, there is little or none. The management of her household affairs requires constant attention, and the difficulty of finding tolerable servants, especially female servants, and of keeping them when found, reduces her to perform offices to which she had previously been unaccustomed. But then (some reader may perhaps anxiously ask), are the hardships and privations such that no man of feeling could bear to expose his wife to them, and that no man, without culpable selfishness, could ask any woman to share them with him? Not to trifle with the impatience of such a questioner, I answer at once, certainly not.

It must be remembered that the sting of all such inconveniences in a civilized country lies in the mortification which they inflict on our pride; they are painful, not in themselves, but because they are considered degrading. When the performance of almost menial services meets applause instead of a sneer, when it is no proof of want of refinement, nor even of poverty, the hardship vanishes at once. Where is the great difference between watering a flower-bed and dusting a drawing-room, if we remove ourselves from the conventional influence of the notions which assign one task to the housemaid and the other to the lady of the mansion?

As long as the settler went to his station with the hope of returning to England in a few years with a competent fortune, it was natural that he should defer the intention of establishing himself till he had affluence and a more luxurious home to offer; but now that he must make "the bush" his home, his lot would indeed be hard if he were doomed to toil on in solitude and selfishness, uncheered by objects of affection, whose smile might repay his labours, with no other motive than to supply his own daily wants, or amass wealth for he cares not whom. To all who have not more than common resources in themselves, the solitude of "the bush" is at times very oppressive. To relieve this in some degree it is not unusual for settlers to enter into partnership and unite their establishments at the same station. But the difficulties of making any such arrangement, with a prospect of mutual satisfaction, are obviously great, and the difficulties of carrying it out are still greater. Even in the full tide of prosperity it is not easy to maintain harmony between the parties; in the ebb of adversity it is scarcely possible; and such agreements are generally of short duration.

It is usually remarked in the colony that single men are apt to neglect their affairs, being glad to avail themselves of every pretext for leaving home in quest of society, or, if they remain there, they are often driven to seek solace in intemperance; and the usual homely practical advice given to a young man, as soon as he has got a little settled and "sees his way before him," is to take a wife as speedily as possible. My own observation tends to confirm the wisdom of this advice. I have always remarked that the happiest homes in the interior of Australia were

those over which a lady presided, and the most contented, and usually the most prosperous settlers, must be looked for among those who in woman's love have found a balm for disappointment, and the noblest stimulus to exertion.

But is the prospect of the bush, after all, so very alarming? How much can taste and refinement do to dignify and embellish the settler's home! It is far from uncomfortable; it has not been improved perhaps so much as it might have been, for the frequent changes in the government regulations respecting the bush have shaken the settler's confidence in his tenure, and he is unwilling to lay out capital on improvements which promise no return: but it is not inconvenient, and woman's taste may make it elegant. As the nests of certain birds are distinguished by the delicacy of their texture and materials, so woman's home betrays itself, even in the bush of Australia. The garden, too, admits of improvement, and affords an agreeable out-of-doors occupation. At all stations there is an excellent kitchen-garden; the native fruits are few; the principal is a sort of currant, too acid to be generally popular, but the fruits of England and many other countries may be naturalized with ease: the vine will flourish in most parts of the colony. I have seen some good flower-gardens very far in the interior, and, as leisure increases, the cultivation of these may be more carefully attended to. The Flora of Australia is very beautiful and delicate, though truth compels me to own that Australian flowers have little perfume. The hours in the bush are early, but the wife will have no difficulty in keeping the hours of her husband; and what resident in Australia would not be amply repaid for the exertion of early rising by the beauty and delicious coolness of the dawn?

The evenings, after the business of the day is over, are sometimes rather long, for there is little or no twilight at the antipodes; but this time is precious in the bush, as it affords leisure for an important duty in the settler's life—the duty of keeping up whatever accomplishments and cultivated tastes he has brought with him, and most of all a taste for reading. Let a young married couple beware lest the novelty of bush life, its toils and cares, or the charms of each other's society, wean them from those habits of mental cultivation which are more easily lost

than acquired. The time will come when they will bitterly lament, for their own sakes, having neglected any means they once possessed of giving interest, variety, and even dignity to a pastoral life. This regret will be most severely felt for the sake of their family, when they have children of an age to be taught. The time will soon come when they must decide on the alternative of an early separation from their children (if indeed they have the means of sending them to school, and persons to whom they can entrust them), or, on the other hand, of seeing them grow up at home with hardly better manners and breeding than those of a shepherd or stock-keeper.

One great and painful difficulty is found in carrying on education in the bush—I mean that of preventing children from associating with, and learning the language and manners of those whom, from sheer necessity, the settler in the far districts is often forced to employ as house-servants. This is a source of much anxiety, and the evil can only be obviated by watchful care. But the subject suggests to me, naturally, what I conceive to be the true mission of woman in the bush of Australia—to civilize and Christianize its rising population by her influence, example, and gentle persuasion. With so noble a field for utility before her, no woman, such as I picture her to my imagination, would repine at some curtailment of the luxuries, or rather, shall I say, the feverish excitements of life; while her usefulness, thus employed, may, in its remote effects, last to the end of time.

Man is too much occupied in the active and toilsome cares of the day; he wants the delicate tact, the instinctive sympathy to touch and persuade. It is woman that must prepare the way, and aid the diffusion of religious instruction, or the clergyman will labour in vain. The persuasion that "the bush" must now be the settler's home, and the consequently increased frequency of marriage, will do more for the civilization of the interior of Australia in a few years than a century could have done, had it continued to be tenanted by a rapid succession of temporary residents.

Before I conclude I have yet a few words of advice to offer to those who, without any previous colonial experience, intend to

visit Australia for the purpose of engaging in pastoral pursuits, or who, feeling, from their own peculiar circumstances, the oppressive solitude of a crowd in a crowded land, may wish to leave it,

> "Perchance, beyond the waves to find
> Some happier home, some country less unkind."

It is a common saying in Australia that nobody makes, eventually, so good a settler as the man who has bought his experience, or who, as the phrase goes, has been well "victimized." No doubt in the colonies, as in most other parts of the world, knowledge purchased at such a cost is most deeply impressed and longest retained; but experience itself may be bought too dear, and surely it is always bought too dear if it might have been bought at a cheaper rate. The capitalist who could not gain an insight into his intended pursuits without greatly decreasing the money which he travelled so far to invest, is in no better plight than a vessel which, after outliving a severe gale, arrives in port, but at the cost of having thrown overboard the greater part of her cargo.

Among those who, a few years ago, visited the colony, a notion seemed to prevail that, although for other occupations some previous preparation might be necessary, a knowledge of the management of a stock establishment in the interior of New South Wales was to be gained by intuition. Whence this delusion arose it would perhaps be difficult to ascertain, but so it frequently happened, that young men, who had just left England, as ignorant of stock and farming in all its branches as a totally different education could make them, would take it for granted, when fairly landed in Sydney, that they were at once fully competent to be the managers of a large station in the interior. This notion, which has now fortunately become less frequent, cannot be too forcibly combated; for though no high order of intellect may be required to learn the routine of a settler's life, yet the new comer may be assured, that without the previous acquisition of knowledge, and the judicious application of it when acquired, it will be in vain to hope for success.

The first object of the young colonist when he lands in Australia should be to endeavour to see things as they are, not through the magnifying glass of his hopes and wishes. Many a

capitalist is so impatient to plunge at once into the full tide of business, that all reflection is laid aside; he has come out for the purpose of buying stock, and stock he must buy, reasonably if possible, but stock at any sacrifice: the consequence is, that when experience, the only monitor in such cases, brings home to him the consequences of his error, he blames the country, its ways, his bad fortune, in short anything but the real cause—his own rashness, and that ignorance "which finds not, till it feels."

There is something in the very atmosphere of Sydney which seems to inspire the new comer with rashness, and to hurry him on to inconsiderate purchases. The novelty of his situation, the recollection of his professed purpose on leaving England, and perhaps of all the castles in the air which he has built during his passage out, tend to augment his impetuosity. The passion for wealth, which his previous education has hitherto allowed to lie dormant, is roused into sudden and ungovernable activity. He looks around him and finds, in this his new sphere, that the love of gain reigns paramount and supreme. If he takes up a 'Sydney Herald,' he finds it full of advertisements "to capitalists and monied men," urging them "not to lose a moment in availing themselves of this excellent opportunity now offered," which the auctioneer "feels confident in stating may never occur again," of "making a fortune." An afternoon's walk through the streets shows him scarcely anything but the eager look and puckered mouth of the man of business; his acquaintances all talk to him about "investment," and at the dinner-table he still meets his friends with "speculation in their eyes." It is therefore very difficult for the stranger to resist the force of an example so constantly acting upon him; his coolness soon deserts him; he is carried away by the stream, and learns to think, and act, with the rest of the world around him.

Passion makes men credulous, and credulity has been the bane of many a new comer. When some promising bargain in stock, duly ushered forth in the daily papers, meets his eye, it must always be obvious to the reader who consults his reason, that the advertiser probably finds, owing to circumstances not mentioned in the catalogue, that the stock which he is offering for sale is not repaying him. The advantages set forth may very likely really exist, as far as they go, but are in all likelihood coun-

terbalanced by drawbacks which a stranger in the country will not have sufficient judgment to discover in time. Human nature is much the same everywhere, and greater candour cannot be reasonably expected from the Robinses of Sydney, than from him whose lively imagination has made him so famous at home.

The safest course, and indeed the only one likely to lead to good results, is to wait with patience. Let the newly-arrived capitalist give up all intention of purchasing stock for at least two years, during which time he should go into the interior and reside upon some large grazing establishment, where he may have facilities for learning the necessary routine of "bush life." By this mode of proceeding he will gain a twofold advantage: should the sort of life really not suit him, he will be able to withdraw in time; but if, on the other hand, he should wish, after his trial, to carry out his first intentions, he ought, after two years' experience, to have gained sufficient knowledge of the intrinsic value of colonial property to enable him to invest his capital with the prospect of a fair return. By this previous residence at a station he will acquire the necessary knowledge of the sort of business. A capital of experience is as indispensable to a settler as a capital of money: a stock establishment in the hands of a novice is little better than a spirited horse in the possession of a bad rider—it will only give him a fall.

Nor let it be supposed that time is lost by thus waiting to gain experience. Surely it is better to remain stationary than to be drifted in the wrong direction. It is cheaper to buy experience by giving up for a time all hope of gain, than by incurring immediately a positive and heavy loss. The capitalist who has been able to exert this forbearance, will find himself, after a few years, considerably in advance of those who have pursued the usual course. Many who have lost their time and their capital in Australia would, if they had followed the plan here recommended, have been comparatively rich; they would not perhaps have equalled their first expectations, but they would at least have added something to their capital, instead of seeing it dwindle away through their own mismanagement.

At the commencement of the settler's career it is of the greatest consequence to fix at once upon a part of the colony where the pasture is most favourable to the sort of stock which it is intended to put upon it, since inferior stock in a good coun-

try will be always found more profitable than that of a far better description if kept upon an indifferent station. Soil and pasture vary so much within a short distance of each other in Australia, both in quantity and quality, that he who purchases a station on the faith of having received a good account of the one adjacent to it, often finds to his cost that its capabilities for pastoral purposes are totally different and very inferior. Some "runs" lie too low for sheep, others too high for horned cattle; some are too much exposed, and some again are too heavily timbered and covered with "scrub," while many a station which appears highly desirable if seen after wet weather, loses almost its whole supply of water in a dry season. Sometimes a tract of country appears, to an unpractised eye, to be all that could be desired, abounding in grass, water, and "open forest" for shelter; but after having fixed upon it, and incurred the trouble and expense of getting up an establishment, the new comer finds his mistake too late; the pasture is "sour," and no live stock will thrive upon it. Horses and horned cattle, being unconfined, will roam away in search of more congenial spots, and though the sheep, being folded at night, cannot stray off, yet they soon indicate by their condition that the grass is unsuitable to them; abundant as it is, they eat little of it, and that little appears to afford them no nourishment, and thus they starve in the midst of plenty.

Even the facilities for taking the stock to a good market have often been overlooked by new comers, through their haste to commence business; and they have subsequently discovered that, having misjudged their distance, the expenses of getting the saleable stock to the capital deduct so much from its value as to take away nearly all the profit.

A really good station, having every requisite, viz. size, pasture of good quality, water, and vicinity to an advantageous market, is very valuable throughout the colony, and consequently is much sought after, and difficult to be obtained.

Theoretical calculations of the interest derivable from money invested in pastoral pursuits in Australia can seldom be depended on, the result of experience on this point having usually been that they are more apt to mislead than to benefit the young colonist, and he who trusts to them usually lives to see their fallacy. The fact is, that the colonial markets are so variable, and the annual expenses of a station so much influenced, not

only by good and bad management, but by other circumstances which cannot be controlled, that even a man of long experience is often greatly deceived in his judgment; that of a new comer to the colony must therefore be very fallible, being usually derived partly from the advice of interested individuals, partly from the small talk of the capital, or vague notions previously gathered at home.

In making a purchase, the stranger will do well to bear in mind that the nice sense of honour which, in the mother country, he has probably been accustomed to expect, must not be relied on too confidently at the antipodes. It is true that he will meet with many men in Australia possessed of as high notions of honour as are to be found in any part of the world; but it naturally happens in this colony, as in most new countries, that the insatiate thirst for wealth, as well as the great mixture of society, tends, in a considerable degree, to blunt the fine edge of principle.

It is to be hoped, and it is the general opinion, that the commercial and pastoral prosperity of Australia, though it received a severe shock, now stands on firmer ground than it has ever done before, and it is very improbable that the settler will ever again be harassed by such a fearful fluctuation of prices as has occurred within the last eight years; but that the young colonist may know what he has escaped, I may mention that during my residence in Australia merino ewes have been worth two guineas each, and they have also been sold for a shilling! Mixed cattle fell in price from five pounds to twelve shillings per head, and a brood mare, which in 1839 would have fetched sixty guineas, could be bought a year or two afterwards for fourteen pounds. These changes are never likely to occur again, as the actual value of each kind of stock is now more generally ascertained.

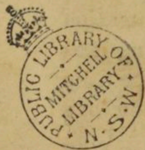
Once more I may warn the capitalist that he will do well to dismiss from his mind the idea of making a fortune by pastoral pursuits. If he now emigrates, he must do so with the intention of making a long residence in the country, or of adopting it as his permanent home, and must not look upon it as a place from which he is constantly struggling to get free. Many continue to cherish this wish to escape, and thus fail in deriving from

their situation the advantages it really holds out. Thus they struggle on, discontented and repining; and having begun by expecting too much from Australia as a land of promise, they end by blaming it unfairly (to use their own expression) as a land of little performance.

The best settler, and certainly the happiest man, is he who, having few ties in the mother country, can actually, and not nominally, adopt a new one. They who, in mind at least and in feeling, remain strangers and sojourners in the land, are the most sensibly touched by the reverses of fortune, and by the many disappointments, which must necessarily occur to lessen their chance of deliverance from what to them is thraldom, and of return to enjoy again the refinements, and share in the sympathies, which an old country can alone afford.

On the other hand, what lot is more enviable than his who, cherishing for the land of his birth an affectionate regard, unmingled with painful regrets, sees in the land of his adoption the scene of his honourable exertions, and of his future usefulness, a new home, gained by his own industry, where his family are growing up around him in health and independence?

Let us further suppose that such a man employs the whole weight of his character, of his wealth, and his newly-acquired influence, in promoting to the utmost the spread of morality and religious instruction, and thus purifying at its source the fountain of public prosperity. Such men there are, and many more who need but a little increase of zeal to become altogether such. What a noble opportunity is thus offered to the colonist of serving the best interests of the land of his birth, and of showing his gratitude to the land of his adoption! Not a little, let us acknowledge with thankfulness, has been done to correct the evils inseparable from the organization of an infant colony, but more remains to do, and in such a cause the most forward can never do too much.



THE END.

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Recollections of bush life in Australia, during a residence of eight years in the interior

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