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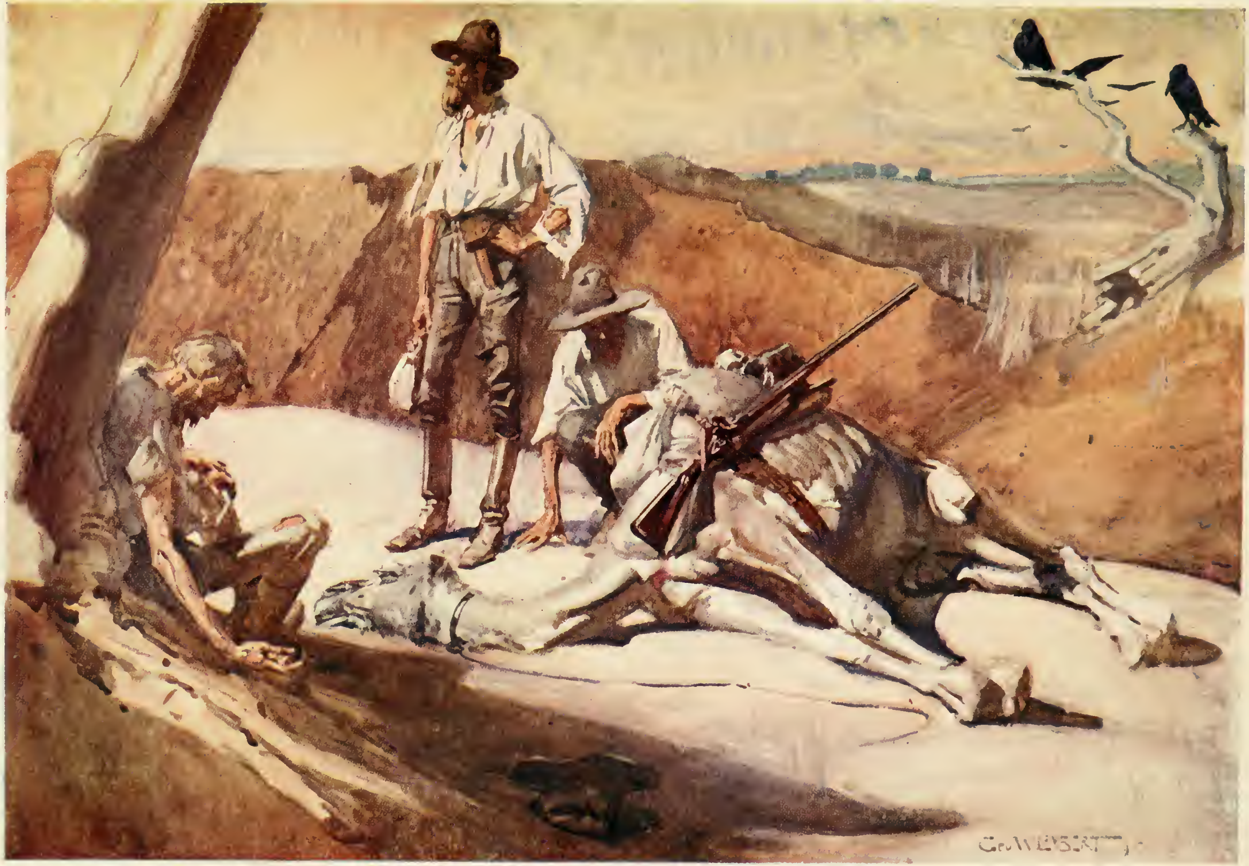

On the way to Mount Hopeless (page 182)

ROMANCE OF EMPIRE

AUSTRALIA

BY

W. H. LANG

WITH TWELVE REPRODUCTIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS
IN COLOUR BY
G. W. LAMBERT

LONDON: T. C. & E. C. JACK
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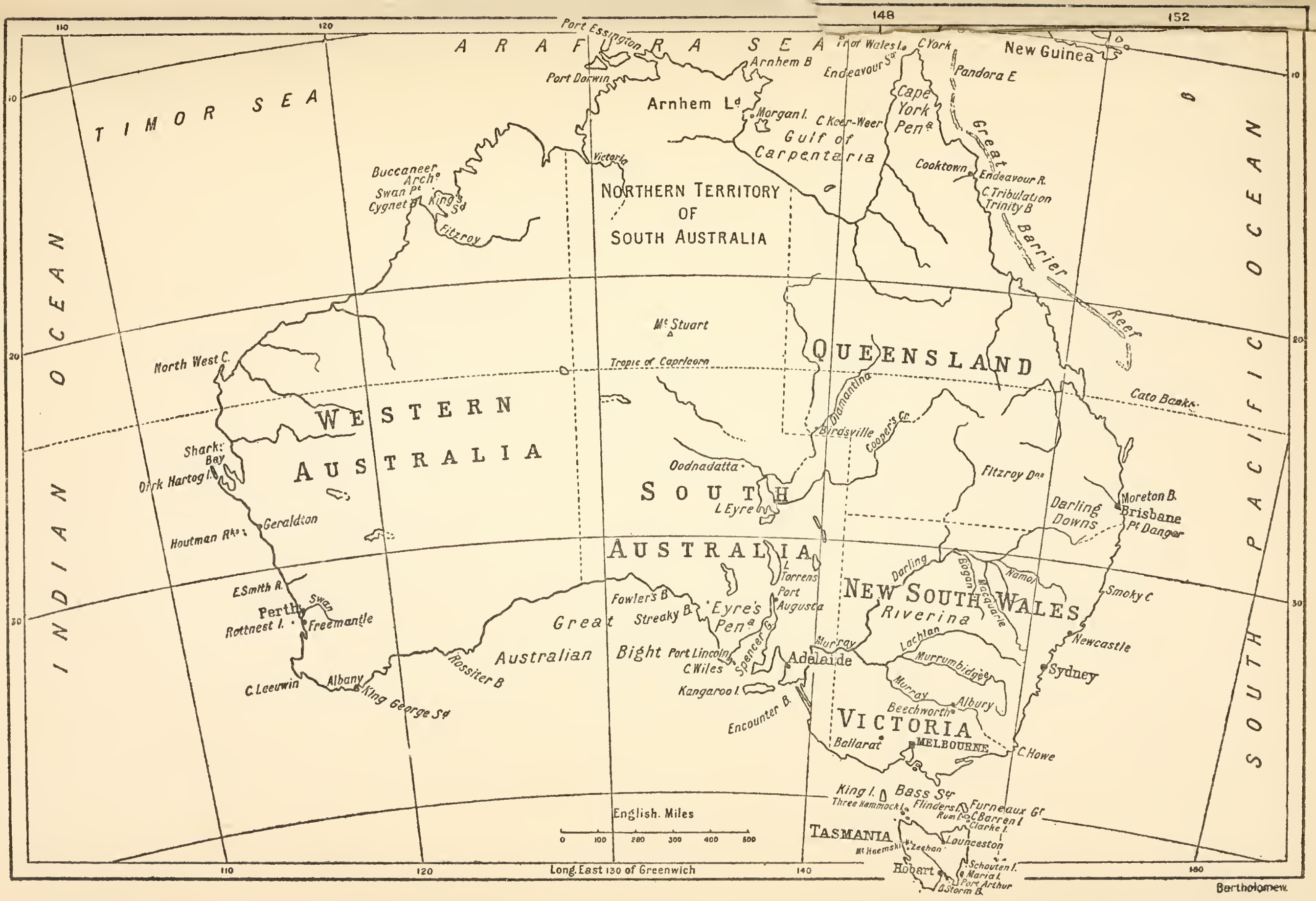
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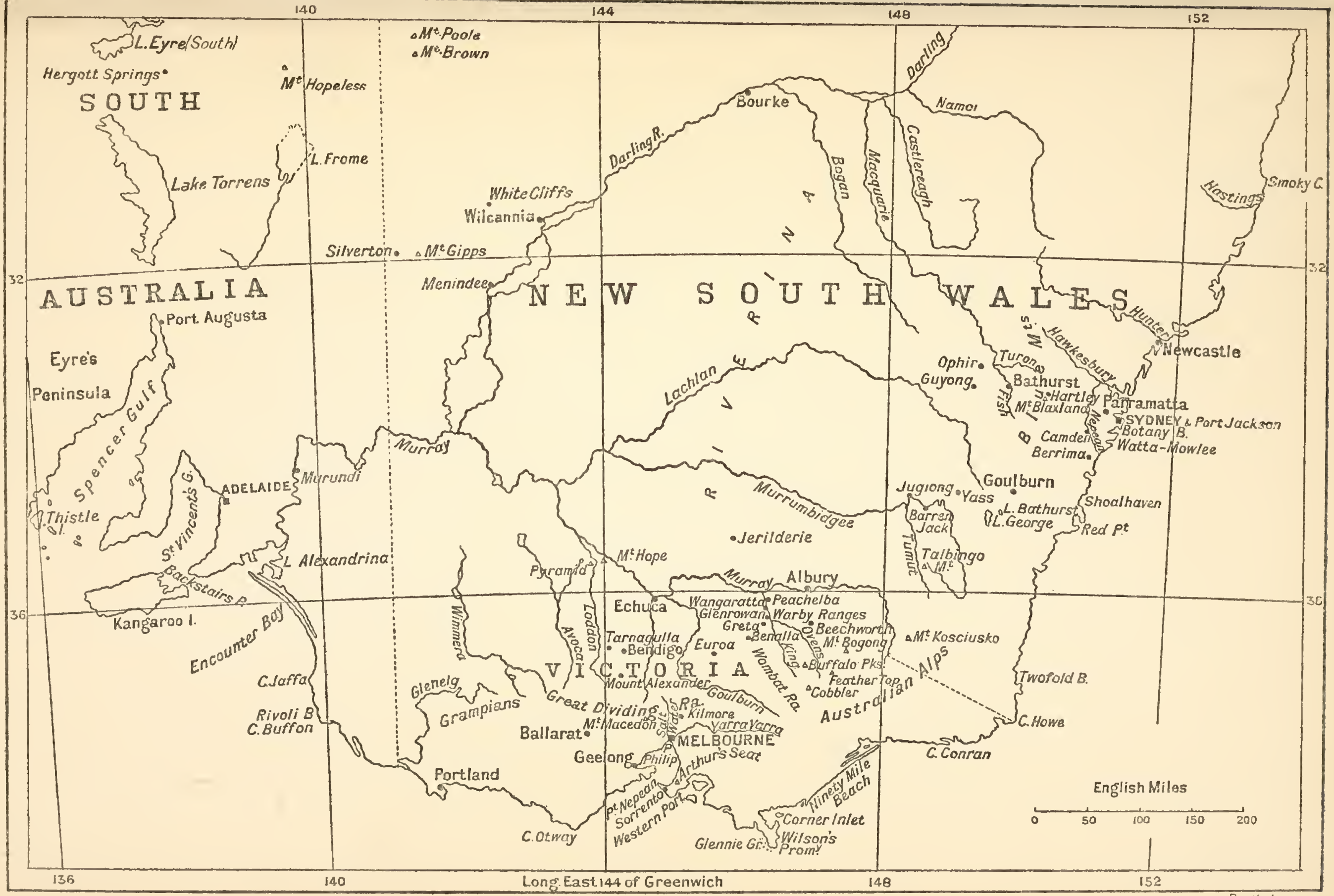
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THE ROMANCE OF AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER I

AUSTRALIA'S GEOLOGICAL ROMANCE

For you in England, or in any of the older countries of the world, there need never be any lack of material for romance. It is at your very doors. Your house itself may be built upon some spot of earth hallowed by remembrances of the past, sacred to some brave deed. All over England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales there are few places that are not made familiar by the pages of history, and endeared by what we now call romance. To those who first used it, the old word "romance" did not convey the same meaning that it does to us. Behind the words "a knight," "a horse," "a fairy," "a girl," long ago there lay romance; and those were the days of brave deeds and stout blows. Nowadays it is a different thing. There are no fairies, I fear. It is even possible to have the romance without the girl, although the horse may still be there, certainly the deeds and the blows.

Go and stand on the shore of your own North

Sea. You can quickly people it with figures of romance. By no great effort of imagination the beach becomes alive with hardy Norsemen in their shining armour, their beaked ships rising and falling on the waves, their shouts and cries mingling with the roar of breakers, the scream of sea-fowl, and the wallowing gurgle and splash of heaving boats. Shut your eyes, and the whole air breathes and rings to you of romance.

Or go to Melrose Abbey, and stand beside the tomb of the heart of Robert the Bruce, or of Douglas, that "dark knight of Liddesdale." "But go alone the while" to places such as this. A curious feeling comes over you there—a feeling difficult to describe. It is a love of the past, very deep—a painful yearning to see those that have gone before, a yearning so great that it almost seems to bring them to you. Then there comes a strange feeling of emptiness and sorrow, in the full knowledge that the old peoples, their blows and their bravery, seeming to be all the greater because so far away, have passed for ever. Nothing can bring them back. The grey walls and the pillars of the Abbey remain, and the winds sigh through them, but you still almost seem to hear the clash of armour as the mail-clad figures move up the aisle to prayer, "while the pealing organ rung." All are gone, all gone.

But the romance of Australia is different. When the first white man landed there, Australia had had no human history, and that in itself is a part of its own peculiar romance. There is a romance in its geological story, in the tale of the peopling of the great continent, in the early discovery by the old Dutch voyagers, in the manner in which the English re-found and took this jewel, solitary in the beginning and apart from all others still. It is romance how we found it and kept it, cut it and polished it, until to-day it stands, a great gem, flashing in the crown of the King.

But it is not perfect yet. It has already passed through the fire of troubles, and is the better for it. In the future there will be trouble still, but all to do good. We are destined to grow to be a great nation in our solitary giant ocean isle, strong and self-reliant from having had to fight our way through much tribulation. And the memory of it all will go towards building up and perfecting our own romance. Such of it as is already made I shall try to tell you in these pages.

All know what an immense country is the United States of America. Well, Australia, that island in the Southern Seas, is almost as large. Take Australia and Tasmania together; add another Tasmania to the bulk of it, and the whole will cover the United States, nor leave one inch to be seen.

In the very very long ago, before man walked upon the earth, Australia was standing exposed above the raging waters when many countries of what we call "the old world" were still beneath the waves.

You know the song—of course you do—

> When Britain first, at Heaven's command,
> Arose from out the azure main.

Long before that, Australia, isolated and alone, without one human inhabitant, was lying sleeping, like the princess in the enchanted palace, waiting for some prince to come and kiss her awake.

But although a thousand years are but as yesterday, and pass like a watch in the night, yet she had long to wait. Men differ as to her history in that far-off time. Some think that there were two continents, or two big islands divided from each other by a narrow sea, or that some time or another she was part of the still greater mass of land in Asia.

It is probable that she was a large country united to the lands to the north of her, and containing tremendous lakes, rivers, and hills. From the countries to the northward the people had wandered down—those black people that we found there long ago. Long ago to us, nearly three hundred years, but such a short space in the history of time. For æon upon æon, for century upon century, the land lay without a human inhabitant, and all the while Nature, with her patient fingers, was moulding it, even as she is moulding it still. In those days the earth heaved and cracked, rose and fell, and rose again during the three great geological ages. In the first of these, perhaps many millions of years ago, Australia stretched away westward towards South Africa, eastward beyond the shore on the Sydney side, northward and to the south. The east coast, and the fringe of land inside of it, remain still as a monument to the first period, and great portions of it tell of the second period as well. Then an immense space of time passed during which many changes took place. Land sank beneath the waves, and during hundreds of centuries the sea roared and surged, washing away earth and rocks. You still hear of her doing this near your own homes in England. But you can see how little she has done since the day Julius Cæsar landed in Britain, nineteen, aye, nearly twenty centuries ago. And the wind howled, and swept away with its unceasing breath mountain after mountain into the valleys beneath, crumbled into dust. And some time during these periods it was that Australia became separated from the rest of the world, and a wandering, child-like black people from the north were cut off, surrounded by the water, and never returned.

Nor did any man, as the thousands of years rolled away and as civilisation spread, venture across the seas that had risen, to greet the child-like folk and teach them new ways and higher things.

If you look at a good map, you can see how a great chain of islands still links us to the northern shores. You can see the depths of the ocean in its various parts. There is comparatively shallow water, with deeper valleys here and there, up to New Guinea, Celebes, Borneo, and the Philippine Islands, to China and to Timor, Flores, Java, and the Malay Peninsula, to Burma, and to India itself.

On the east coast the shallow water runs, south and east, away to beyond New Zealand. There is a great deep valley in the Australian Bight, but there are suggestive little knolls rising across the great Southern Ocean towards South Africa—New Amsterdam, St. Paul's, Kerguelenland, and the Crozet Isles, Prince Edward's Isle,—and then the Cape. "Shallow" is a queer word to use when the depths vary from 110 to 1100 fathoms. But it *is* shallow compared to other deeps. Look at the sea between Japan and San Francisco. It is known as the Great Tuscarora Deep. It ranges from 2050 to over 3300 fathoms. The greatest depth is 27,930 feet of water. Why, it would nearly cover Mount Everest! Compare it with the 2000, 4000, and even 7000 feet around our shores here in Australia, and you will see that "shallow," after all, is the word to use.

So Australia, from having been a very great continent indeed, was reduced, during the ages, to her present size. It was reduced by the sinking of the land and the rising of the water, and by the action of the winds and tides, those mills of God that grind so slowly and so sure.

Geologists tell us that during a vast time the central parts of Australia have stood above the sea—since the early days of the third great geological era, at least. It is probable that at this time the central region was a land of lakes and mountains, rivers and inland seas—a fertile land, well watered, and with much vegetation. Then a curious thing took place, slowly, very very slowly. By the upheaval of the land, helped, perhaps, by the outbursts of volcanoes which raised great barriers, the waters could no longer reach the sea, and the lakes became greater and greater in size as the rivers continued to pour into them. Ages rolled away, and the wind, with his never-ceasing broom, swept the mountains into the waters, filling up the basins in which they lay. As they grew less deep they widened out, and at last found a path to the ocean again. Then the basins began to be drained, and beneath the burning sun much water was evaporated. The land, whilst drying, sank again, and so left the Great Central Australian Plain.

Yet in the middle of this mighty plain there were still lakes of great size, though insignificant as compared to what they had been. Into these many rivers still poured their waters, sadly shrunken it is true, and the mountains, which had been high, had been brushed away by the wind, until they were but little hills. Then with all these changes the climate became different altogether. The rainfall became very small, for there were no mountains to attract the moisture from the sea.

So the rivers became smaller and yet more small, until at length, a feeble trickle, they ran out into the waste of land. The hills were levelled to the plain, but every here and there you will still come upon the more durable part, the core, as it were, of a mountain standing unconquered, a mighty pillar, but only a pillar, in the wilderness. There is one such remnant in the very heart of the land, and it is called the Central Pillar. The winds still blow round it, and the sun still pours upon it his fierce rays. And still, in winter-time, the nights are cold. So it shrinks and swells alternately, cracking here, and chipping away there. And as the rocks fall the noise of them joins in chorus with the deep sound which wakes you in the desert, booming away to the stars—"The Desert Sound." It is the groaning of the earth still travailing. Some day this pillar, and others like it, will have disappeared. But when? We have known it for nigh upon a hundred years, and if Stuart, the explorer, who was the first to behold it, were to see it now, he would perhaps say that it was just the same to-day as it had been in his time. And in yet another hundred years it will still be the same, to human eyes, as it is to-day. But the wheels are grinding on, nevertheless, as they have been moving during the countless ages. This pillar was the core of a mountain, you say. How long ago? Yes, how long ago? If you cry the question out aloud beneath its rugged sides, for answer you may get the echo back of "long ago." And that is all we know.

Well, that which I have told you is something of the fashion in which Australia was made, and I have tried to tell this very short piece of the early history, for it is part and parcel of its own romance. But it was not until the time of King James the First of England that any white man in his ship saw the loom of its land, and it was not until the time of Robert Burns, and after Sir Walter Scott was born, that an Englishman set permanent foot there, and it became our own.

CHAPTER II

THE NATIVES

It is impossible to say from whence the peoples came that lived in Australia before the white men landed there. They are in no way like the natives that dwell on the islands to the north of them, nor are they in the least like those living in the islands to the east, nor yet have they anything in common with the New Zealanders. The natives of Tasmania, an island only a short steamer's trip away from Port Phillip, 156 miles or so, were a race quite distinct from the Australians. They are now all dead; the white man has only been there for a little over a hundred years, but he has eaten them out, even as the brown Norway rat has eaten out the old English black rat.

It seems strange that the Australian black-fellow should be of so distinct a race, apart from all others, Everything appears to tell us that long, long ago he found his way down here by the land, not by the sea, perhaps one of the earliest races of men that lived upon the earth. Here, amongst animals that were also of what we now call a primitive kind, he lived, and knew not that he was cut off from the rest of the globe by the risen waters, nor did he care.

As time went on the natives in the land which he had left became more clever. From necessity, and from striving against each other, they learned new things and better ways of living. But the Australian cared for none of these, and no one passed over there to teach him. Or if stray parties from the north did win so far, perhaps they were killed, and possibly eaten. So it was that for centuries the primitive people remained as they had been in the beginning. And they never became very great in numbers. There were not enough animals for them to eat, and the country, as it was then, could not support a very great population. All that the people seemed to have learnt was to make spears of wood, wherewith to kill beasts and their enemies. They could also make rude wooden shields with very great labour (for they had no knives except of flint), and axe-heads made of stones. But they invented a simple instrument called a throwing-stick, whereby they could poise their spears and throw them farther and more accurately than before. Then they had boomerangs, hard curved pieces of wood, flattened out, with sharp edges. These they threw at one another whilst they fought, and they could fling them with great force. They used them, too, to kill birds, and on the rivers they sent them over the flocks of duck flying between the steep banks, causing the birds to swoop down in their flight, and to fall into a kind of net stretched across to receive them. Even now the black-fellows in the more settled districts, degenerate, drunken men, are skilful in throwing this weapon. They will send a boomerang hurtling far into the air, and it will twist and curl, and then come turning and swooping gracefully back to him who cast it, and he will catch it in his hand without moving. The only other people, I believe, that are known to have possessed a weapon like this were the very ancient Egyptians, and it is possible that the Australian black may have been an early offshoot of that very ancient race.

Of pots and pans, or razors, or drinking-cups, or anything else useful, the Australian had none, but he had stones, between two of which he used to grind the seeds of a few plants, with which, when ground, he made a kind of meal.

They had sticks also which they used for digging, and bone needles for making nets out of fibre and kangaroo tendon. On the rivers the tribes had canoes, just long strips of bark curved up a very little at the end and sides, and on the north coast they made boats of rather a superior build from logs. They did not know how to boil water, and they ate their food either raw or after having been thrown upon the fire for only a few minutes.

The native Australian was the most wonderfully ignorant of the arts of any race in the whole world. And he is therefore the most interesting to us, as through him we see what man was so long ago that there is no record of him or of his ways. He has handed down a few legends, but wonderfully few for such an ancient folk, and even some of these we cannot but suspect were learned from white men.

As an instance of this there is a story known to the remnants of the tribes that used to inhabit the

Lake Eyre district in the centre of Australia. They tell that, once upon a time, a girl of a certain tribe was pestered by a lover whom she disliked. She ran away, as her parents, too, wished her to marry this man. And she ran, and she ran for quite a long distance. The place where she started from is 150 miles from the cave where they tell you that she at length found rest. Here she lived, all by herself, for many years, and she never saw the face of one of her fellows. Then she bore a man child. She was very fond of her boy, and as he grew up he, too, was fond of his mother, and they were happy. Then suddenly he became ill, and he died. But on the third day he rose again. After that they travelled away to the north, and he became a chief over many people. What does this story remind you of? Is it not the birth and death of Christ, retold, and garbled in the telling? But those who know the blacks best will tell you that they have treasured this story from out of the very long ago, since before the coming of the white men. I do not know, but they might have first heard it three hundred years since from a strayed Dutchman, and it has not been altered so much as to make this impossible.

They have a curious legend, too, of how their land was first inhabited. Up in the nearly desert regions around Lake Eyre, along the course of the Diamantina and Coopers Creek, are to be found to this day great bones of an extinct Marsupial animal. These, the natives say, are the bones of the Kadimakara. Now in the days of this giant race the sky was covered by a huge canopy or roof of forest leaves, and the Kadimakara dwelt on this. Three great tree trunks formed the pillars that held up the roof. By these they found their way down to the earth to play and in search of food, always returning at night. But one evening a party of them did not return. The pillars had been destroyed, and they went to and fro upon the earth for ever after, until their bones are all that is left of them. Then a little hole appeared in the roof, and it grew bigger and bigger, until it was nothing but a hole. So that the natives there now call the sky "Puri Wilpanina," or "the great hole."

If you search in the bed of the dry Diamantina to-day you will find plenty of Kadimakara bones, but scientists call them Diprotodon and other names, words as curious to the blacks as "Kadimakara" is to us. So that you see how the first arrival of man on the great inland continent is still wrapped in gloom, and before a very long time has flown the Australian black man will be more than ever a mystery, for he will have passed away, and the earth will know him no more. And the grey-beard will be looked upon with some reverence who can say "yes" when children ask him: "Did you ever see a black-fellow, grandfather?"

To-day there are only some half-dozen of the poor things in all this country-side where the writer lives. They go about dressed like Europeans, always with a pack of dogs at their heels, and always glad to be given something intoxicating to drink. They know of none of the legends of their race. If they kill a crow, or an iguana, or any other disgusting animal, they throw it on a fire for a few minutes and then eat it with much pleasure, tearing it in pieces like wild beasts. One of them used to climb the highest trees, even though there were no branches until a great height was reached. He simply did it by the aid of a tomahawk, cutting little steps for himself as he climbed. It was fascinating to watch him, and the writer often employed him in lopping trees just for the pleasure of seeing him at work. He would do as many trees as you liked for a shilling, which he would spend upon whisky or beer. He is dead now, and none of the others have the nerve to follow in his footsteps.

But in my mind's eye I can still see old "Wellington" far up a big branchless gum-tree trunk, with his black eyes gleaming from beneath his snow-white eyebrows, and his white hair a contrast to his black skin as he looked down smiling when you called out to him, "Take care and don't fall, Wellington."

"No fear," he would call in a rich musical voice, and with a perfect English accent. Well, good-bye, old "Wellington," and with you good-bye to your ancient, simple race for ever, and for ever, and for ever. Fare thee well!

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST VOYAGE TO AUSTRALIA

So, then, during all that long space of time when Rome and Greece were flourishing, and perhaps even from before the Sack of Troy, our great half-naked continent was only peopled by tribes of wandering black men, handfuls in our eyes, accustomed as we are to thronging millions. Undisturbed and making no advance whatever in mind and thought, they lived their days out, while the Roman Empire advanced, halted, tottered and fell, and Christ had come and died, and the Picts and the Scots, and the ancient Britons, with their woad-painted bodies, became a thing of the past. So the centuries glided away with all the stirring times that we read about, and all its heroes, Theodoric and Charlemagne and his great empire, and the Saxons and Danes, and the making of England by the coming of the Norman race to its shores. All during this time the great island lay basking in the sunshine, sleeping, surrounded by its many seas, the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean, the Arafura Sea, and the big waves rolled up with the fresh south-westerlies in the winter-time from the Antarctic. There was not an eye over all the great waste to see it, and not a sail to catch the eye, if eye there had been, only a mighty desert of waters with the great waves leaping on the horizon. The desolation makes one feel sick and lonesome, knowing that there is nothing but the wild wan waters between us and the ice. It is just as it was when the Spirit of God first moved on its face.

But at last in the centre of the world of the white men a great stir and buzzing was going on, as in a hive of bees awakening in spring.

Population was growing fast throughout all the old countries, and wars and rumours of wars followed one another thick and fast. The Spaniards had become a great power, and England was beginning to feel her biceps and to think how strong she was. There were battles by land and battles by sea, and the spirit of adventure and the desire to see new countries, and the mad thirst for gold easily won was stirring the nations of the earth.

The Spaniard, with his enterprises to the west, had grown rich and over luxurious; and the Englishman, still poor and full of "go," must needs try to pluck the bones from the big dog's jaws as he carried them home across the seas. It was ever to the west that the Spaniard sailed, and the English followed him, until it became a "chanty" amongst the men as they hoisted sail or hove the anchor—

Oh! it's Westward Ho! with a rumbelow,
And hurra for the Spanish main, O.

These two nations, with their fightings and strivings over their religion, and over their gold, which was their real god, were forcing out the feelers of civilisation into unknown western lands, and when their quarrel was at its height, another brave people began to take a hand. That was the Dutch. For thirty years they had been fighting the Spaniards, not for yellow gold, but for a more refined gold—Liberty. They had won. They had founded a Republic, and were searching for country wherewith to enrich their growing nation. But they sailed east in their search. Eastward Ho! round the Cape of Good Hope was the course they shaped. Westward Ho! and round the Horn was the Spaniard's goal. Year by year the tentacles of each reached farther and farther out into the unknown seas. Some day they were destined to meet, and a girdle would thus be thrown round the earth.

The Spaniards had rounded the Horn and were firmly established in Peru, and their chief port was Lima.

The Dutchmen had swept past the Cape, and had sailed through the great Indian Ocean until they found and colonised Java and other islands in those seas.

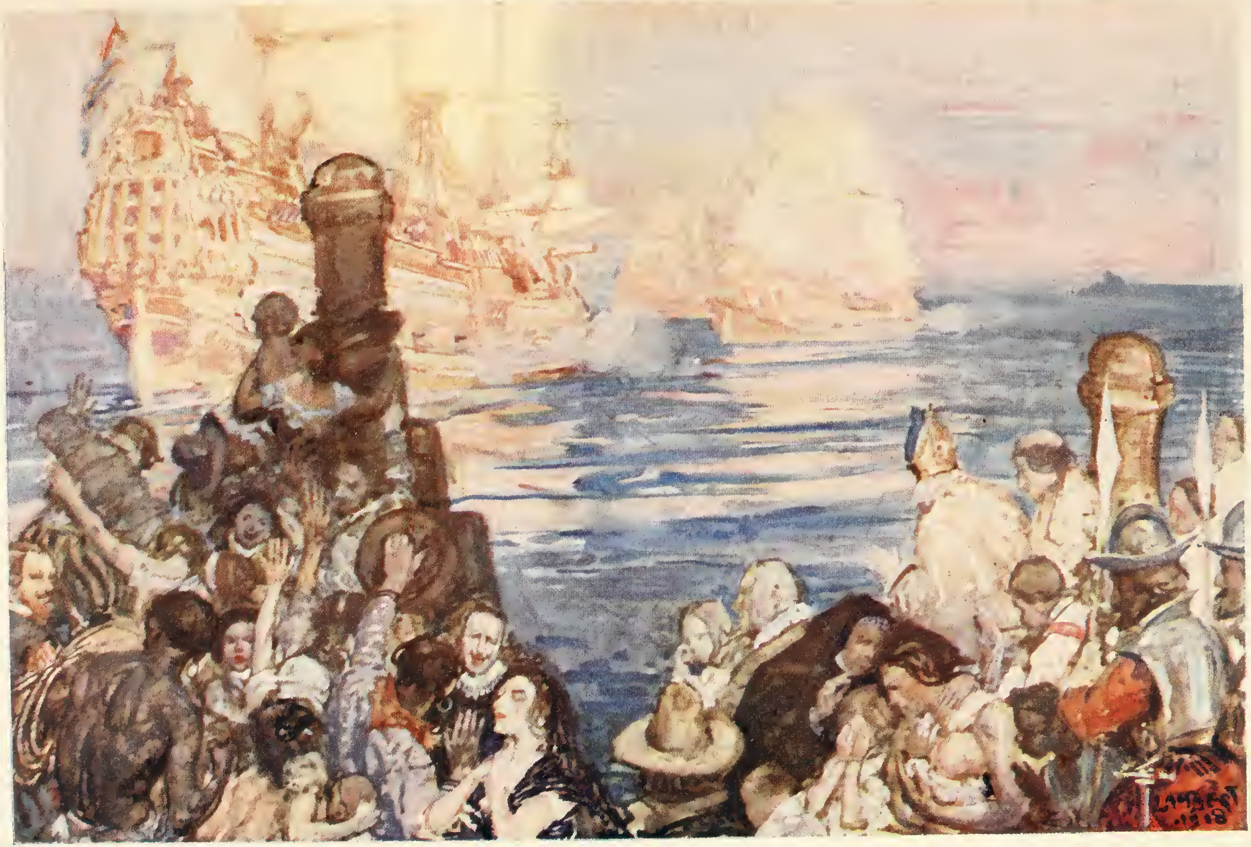
But then Spanish power began to wane, for the Dutch Republic was free, and four years after the death of their great deliverer, William the Silent of Orange, Spain, which had been crippled and harassed by Drake and Hawkins, Grenfell, Oxenham, Gilbert, Raleigh, and Amyas Leigh and their bull-dogs, fell with a crash when the Great Armada melted away.

But still they were urged westward, and seven years after the Armada had been swept from the sea, a gallant captain, Mendana, sailed away from Chili into the Pacific Ocean.

Much hardship he and his men endured, until, worn out, the tyranny of death overtook him, and he died, whilst his crew only just managed to struggle home again under the Portuguese pilot, Fernandez de Quiros.

For years Fernandez had believed that there was a great southern continent to be won for the seeking, even as Columbus had won America. And this man, De Quiros, was a genius too, like his great forerunner, but he failed in the matter of luck. He hastened home from Lima to Spain, and prayed the King, Philip, for men, money, and ships. But the Court of Spain required some working in those days, and it was eight long dreary years, during which this ancient mariner grew no younger, before he obtained his desire and sailed away, still Westward Ho! for Lima round the Horn. Yet another fleeting year was passed at Lima in preparation, and then, and not till then, did the first flotilla leave the shore on the search for Australia. For twenty-nine years De Quiros had been dreaming of this great southern land. When he was first dreaming, the tocsin bell was ringing the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew to begin. Much had come and gone since that day. I do not know whether or not De Quiros sailed and fought with the Armada, but in the meantime, in England, Elizabeth had died, and James the First sat on her throne slobbering and spouting his Latin and his Hebrew.

Three vessels weighed anchor from Lima on that


LAMBERT 1918

'Three vessels weighed anchor from Lima on that memorable day'

memorable day in the year 1603. They were three little clumsy craft, high in the poop but broad of beam, and, if we can trust the pictures, sitting high in the water like ducks. None of them were of more than 60 tons burden, and their names were *El Capitana*, *Almarinta*, and *Zabra*. De Quiros commanded *El Capitana* himself, and a soldier-sailor, Luis Paez de Torres, was captain of the *Almarinta*.

It was a great holiday in Lima.

The whole town—men, women, children, and dogs—hurried to the wharves, the priests held solemn Mass, and everybody knelt and prayed for the success and safe return of the fleet.

The church bells rang, and with much clamour and shouting the sails at last caught the land breeze, and away they went into the west. Slowly, oh! very slowly did they steal along, and till darkness fell, sweethearts and wives, daughters and mothers, aye, and fathers too, stood and followed them with eyes moist with tears, until in the night they melted away, and the unknown swallowed them up.

CHAPTER IV

DE QUIROS AND TORRES

It was a little strange that whilst the spirit of enterprise was thus urging De Quiros and the Spaniards westward, their old enemy, the Dutch, were creeping away to the east.

While De Quiros and Torres were making preparations to sail from Lima, a little band of Hollanders were busy getting ready to seek the sleeping Princess in her enchanted castle, starting from Batavia in Java.

The Dutch, after the route round the Cape of Good Hope had been discovered, were very busy colonising in the rich East Indies. It was a terribly long voyage for them, and their methods of navigation were simple and crude. Even two hundred years later their altitudes were taken in a primitive fashion, and their manner of "heaving the log" was no heaving of a log at all. Instead of calculating their rate of speed by our plan, they had two places marked upon the bulwarks of the ship. Then, fixing their eyes upon some spot of foam on the waves, they watched how long it took for the two marks to pass this, and so calculated it out into Dutch miles. But in spite of these crude ideas of navigation their hearts were in the right place, and they "got there" all the same. And thus it came about that while the *Almarinta* and *El Capitana* were struggling along through the islands in the Pacific, a little ship called the *Deuyphen,* the Dutch word for the Dove, had sailed from Bantam in November of the same year to explore the coast of New Guinea. But although these two great sea powers were on the search at one and the same time, this Princess was going to be hard to win. And this is the short story of the two earliest adventures in her quest.

We have seen how De Quiros and Torres sailed into the west from Lima. For many months they ploughed along, touching at many islands, their course at first lying a point or two north of west, and then, after some weeks, nearly due west. They have left their stamp-mark in the names which they gave to the islands on their charts. These are long mouthfuls of pompous Spanish, breathing of their ancient faith.

Thus we have Incarnation Island, San Juan Bautiste, Sant Elmo, Conversion de San Pablo, La Sagittaria, and De la Gente Hermosa. This last lies in the Samoan group. A neighbouring island is the everlasting earthly home of Louis Stevenson. The author of that best of boys' books, *Treasure Island,* is buried there.

After leaving De la Gente Hermosa, De Quiros bore away south, and then he believed that the goal was won. He reached a fertile land, and for two days sailed along its shores. But the poor old fellow never had a chance of proving his discovery to be the true continent of which he was in search. He and the other ships cast anchor in a lovely bay with a beach of pure white sand, and with tropical trees growing luxuriantly right down to its very edge. He landed, and at once his men had a skirmish with the natives. The Spaniards had no compunction in shedding blood. Indeed they seem to have rather liked it. They themselves were clad in armour. The natives of course were nearly naked. A chief drew a line upon the ground, and by signs made it understood that no one was to pass that boundary. Torres himself at once stepped over, and the natives fired a shower of arrows. These were harmless to the armour-clad white men, but on their part a rattling volley of musketry followed, and many of the poor black-fellows were killed. The Spaniards returned to their ships, and here ended the dreams of De Quiros. Provisions were running short, and bad weather was encountered. The sailors on the *Zabra* and *El Capitana* became mutinous, and during one night they silently rose against the officers, seized the ships, and forced their commanders to navigate them homewards. They had a fearful voyage, and only a handful of survivors reached the American coast. In Mexico, however, De Quiros himself announced that he had discovered the continent of which he was in search, and he named it after his usual Spanish fashion, Terra Australia del Espiritu Santo — the Southern Land of the Holy Ghost. Dotted all over the seas are those Espiritu Santos of the Spanish.

But Torres in the *Almarinta* had a happier fate than that of his commander. He was a right gallant man, and must have had his crew under splendid control. He cruised about the seas amongst the islands, hunting for his lost commander, until he discovered that this continent of De Quiros was after all but an island like the rest they had fallen in with, and then once more he plunged away into the unknown seas of the west. And now an almost incredible thing happened to him. Stretching away in front was a coast-line of nearly three thousand miles in length, and in this there was but one small gap of about one hundred miles. Providence, or his evil genius, led him straight to this little rift in the line, and although he undoubtedly sighted the mainland at Cape York, he has described it as only one of a series of islands. Had De Quiros been with him then, I question much if the old sailor would have thus passed it by. So after a tedious struggle, lasting nearly three months, he wound his way through the tortuosities of the Arafura Sea and the Sea of Celebes, and finally landed from his weather-beaten, rotten, old barnacled ship at Manilla in the Philippines. We should have known nothing of this had not our fleet in 1792, nearly two hundred years after, bombarded the place. Then there was discovered a copy of the letter which Torres wrote to the King of Spain, giving him an account of his voyage. Just fancy that to yourselves! A lapse of nearly two centuries, and then, while Australia was still almost an unknown land, to be discovered thus, by accident as it were.

It is pleasant to think that the strait through which Torres found his way, and from which he sighted the mainland, was at once called after him, and thus his name, which was so nearly lost, will endure for ever.

This is the end of Torres as an explorer, so far as I know, and poor old De Quiros, for whom, somehow, one has a great affection, died some years afterwards, just when he was ready to leave Panama at the head of another expedition on his favourite quest. While Torres was battling his way through the Straits, the little yacht, the *Deuyphen*, was creeping along the coast of New Guinea. Then she steered away south and glided into the Gulf of Carpentaria, and it was whilst she was there that Torres most probably passed, unseen by the Dutchmen, on his way to Manilla. Her crew finally landed on the east coast of the Gulf, and were the first known white men to set foot on Australian soil. It is three hundred years ago.

But no electric thrill at their touch awoke the sleeping Princess within. Her sentinels were on the alert, and some savage black men attacked the sailors, slew several of them, and drove the others to their ship. The survivors named the spot Point Keer-Weer, which means "Turn again." When they returned home they reported that "this extensive country was found for the greater part desert, but in some places inhabited by wild, cruel black savages, by whom some of the crew were murdered." Northward from Keer-Weer, where there is actually no point at all, is a cape. Matthew Flinders, who first surveyed the coast, and whose romantic story we will tell presently, named it Point Deuyphen, and it is well that the little vessel's name is thus saved from oblivion. She did her part in the destiny of Australia, although she returned without the olive branch, and said that she had found no rest for the sole of her foot.

CHAPTER V

EARLY DUTCH EXPLORERS

We are done now with the Spaniard as an explorer in our Australian seas. By a chance, or the guiding hand of Providence, in their last cruise they missed winning a continent. The Dutch, for the time being, took their place, and for fifty years or so they kept knocking at the gate, but never succeeded in opening it in earnest. Often by accident more than by design their ships were carried out of their course towards the western and northern coasts of Australia.

It was this which happened to one Dirk Hartog in his ship the *Endragt* in the October of 1616, outward bound for India. He landed on an island which forms a natural barrier to the entrance of a large inlet called Shark's Bay, on the west coast of West Australia. The place is still called Dirk Hartog's Island, and on a post which he put up he nailed an iron plate, and cut therein the following inscription:—

> Anno 1616, the 20th of October arrived here the ship *Endragt* of Amsterdam, the first merchant, Gillis Miebais of Luik, Dirk Hartog of Amsterdam, Captain. They sailed from hence for Bantam the 27th do.

The post and plate were found by Flaming, a Dutchman, in the ship *Geelvink* in 1697, and he saw on the lower portion, roughly scratched with a knife :—

The under merchant, Jan Stins; chief mate, Pieter Dookus of Bill. Ao 1616.

No one read it again until 1801. We know nothing more concerning Dirk, but when I think of the tin plate nailed to the post, I fancy I can see a bluff, solemn, God-fearing man, in the old Dutch dress, with the curious far-away look in his blue eyes that sailors acquire through long straining towards the distant horizon. We might have known more of him and of those who succeeded him in discoveries had the Dutch not been so strange in their methods. They have recorded nothing of old Dirk, and but little of the other men who visited the great, barren, unfriendly coast in the years that came after him, so jealous were they lest any foreigners should reap the benefit of their enterprise. So there is but little of romance in the voyages of those that follow, but their very names are a romance. Thus J. de Edel in 1619 by accident fell in with the west coast north of Dirk Hartog's land. The great reef called Houtman's Rocks, off the present town of Geraldton, was discovered by him. Then in 1622 a ship, the name of whose commander even is lost, has left an imperishable name on the maps. And this is not from any great feat that she accomplished, but simply because she gave her name to the point of land which was for many years to the home-coming Australian what the Lizard or the Eddystone is to the Englishman, the first land seen belonging to home after a weary voyage. This little ship was called the *Leeuwin*, or *Lioness*. I always think of her when I see that great stretch of sandy barren land running out into the ocean. It is very solitary, with its few rocks still farther out, throwing up the white spray as the big rollers dash upon them from out of the west. It can be very stormy here, but I myself have never seen it except under a bright blue Australian sky with a gentle breeze from off the shore. But always there is the swell rolling up from the far away, beating and grinding at the shore. But in the wild weather of winter, or in the fair summer days, it always calls an Australian to the deck with a quickened pulse and a brightened eye when he hears that the Leeuwin lies ahead. Nor does he know that the place is called after this little ship that found it three hundred years ago.

Other names that are left to us are Zeachen's in 1618, who found the land of Arnhem on the northern coast. Then came Jean Carstens in 1623 with the yachts *Pera* and *Arnhem*. He and many of the crew were murdered in New Guinea, but the survivors once more reached Keer-Weer and turned again.

The first discovery of the south coast was in 1627, and the short record says:—

"In the year 1627 the south coast of the Great South Land was accidentally discovered by the ship *Guldene Zeepaard*, outward bound from Fatherland, for the space of a thousand miles."

The only other reference to this discovery by the Dutch is in a memoir published at Amsterdam ninety years afterwards. This memoir states that "Nuyts land, being in the fifth climate, ought to be, like all other countries so situated, one of the most habitable, most rich, and most fertile of the world." This land was called Nuyts Land in honour of the chief merchant on board the *Guldene Zeepaard*, and of this memorable voyage we know absolutely nothing more. Oh, you Dutchmen!

Then the long line of south coast was left untouched for one hundred and sixty-seven years. But although the south remained thus long virgin, the west coast was still being visited now and again. In 1629 Francis Pelsert, in the ship *Batavia*, struck a reef at the Houtman Rocks, and the crew took refuge on two islands there. Pelsert himself sailed away in a boat, which he had decked, on a search for water. Finding none, and only a barren coast with savage inhabitants, he sailed boldly for Batavia, and returned in the yacht *Sardam*, to find that water had been discovered by the shipwrecked sailors, and that although they had suffered much they were alive. But there had been fearful goings on whilst he was away. More than half the crew had mutinied, and had seized the treasure in the ship, and had forced the women passengers to be their wives. When Pelsert returned the mutineers were roystering, decked out in all the sumptuous clothing found in the wrecked vessel, and they were at open warfare with the loyal seamen, who were living on a separate island. The rebels had meant to seize Pelsert unawares on his arrival, and convert his ship into a pirate vessel, but he received warning from the true men, overawed the wretches with his cannon, hanged several, but two, who had forfeited more than their lives, he marooned upon the mainland to take their chance. How long they lived, or how quickly they may have died, we do not know, nor do we even know the names of these castaways. But they were the first white settlers in Australia, forerunners of the convicts who landed with Governor Phillip at Botany Bay in 1788. It is unlikely that their lives were spared for many days. No water was to be found except by digging. There was nothing to eat but shell-fish on the beach. We may say that they perished miserably, and "may God pardon them out of His Grace."

Other voyagers there may have been, but their records are of little value. They all leave the same tale behind them: "A foul and barren shore, and very wild, black, barbarous inhabitants." Such is the story briefly put by Vians, the captain of the *Vianen*, who became separated from the rest of the fleet under the command of Carpentier in 1628. This Carpentier was the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, and it is from him that the gulf on our northern shores is called Carpentaria. Thus his name is, perhaps, the most familiar to Australians of any of the old discoverers, except one, and that is Captain Abel Jans Tasman. His voyage was the real beginning of discovery, and he shall have a chapter all to himself.

CHAPTER VI

ABEL JANS TASMAN

So far then, until well into the sixteen-hundreds, the Dutch had only explored the west coast by means of vessels drifted from their course; the north, and north-west imperfectly; and Pieter Nuyts, against his will, had seen the southern shores. There was nothing seen by them in the way of possible trade to bring them any more to these hideous and unprofitable shores. Yet the Dutch East India Company were very anxious to discover how far this, what they called the Great South Land, might extend towards the Antarctic circle. The Governor at this time was Anthony Van Diemen, and it was by his orders that an expedition was fitted out. He chose as captain one Abel Tasman. Tasman sailed away from Batavia on August 14, 1642, with the "yacht" *Heemskirk* and the fly-boat *Zeehan.* He sailed across to the Mauritius first, and then, with the westerly winds behind him, he steered south and east until, on 24th November, east and by north of him forty miles, he saw the loom of the land.

He traced this coast, which was wild and rugged, with high mountains far inland, southwards and east, and prepared to venture into a large bay on the south coast. But a great storm with thick weather came on, and the little ships were carried out to sea, and for three days battled with the tempest, during which they almost lost the sight of land. Then the storm abated, and very cautiously and shyly Tasman once more sought the bay. Here, in an arm of it, "in a good port, in 22 fathoms, with a good holding land," they cast anchor. "Wherefore, we ought to praise God Almighty." This bay they named Storm Bay. If you look at the map you will see that the river Derwent runs into it, and at its mouth stands the fine town of Hobart. Upon another branch of Storm Bay much dark history has been made and written. Port Arthur and Eagle Hawk Neck are full of horrible memories. If you wish to recall them, read a book called *For the Term of His Natural Life*, by Marcus Clark. But no thought of what was to follow oppressed these early voyagers. Yet in spite of their boldness as seamen, they appear to have been very timid as explorers on the land. They disembarked and found water for the ship, but with difficulty and in small quantities. They heard voices in the woods, and a sound as of a little gong. Then they came upon some trees whose branches were sixty feet from the ground, and up to which, apparently, great steps had been cut. These must be a race of giants, they thought, who took such monstrous steps. And through the fog or smoke they saw what seemed to be giant forms of men, and they saw scratches on the soil as though made by a tiger. The people were evidently signalling to each other by means of smoke. "Without doubt," says Tasman, "here must be exceedingly tall people." So they embarked to leave this grizzly island with its tigers, and its folk who climbed tall trees with half a dozen giant strides. But they first took possession of the land in the name of their Prince. A picturesque undertaking it was. The surf was too great to admit of the landing of a boat. Therefore Pieter Jacobsz, the carpenter, swam ashore with a post and a flag. On the post was marked a compass, and this the carpenter set up beside some tall trees in the middle of the bay, and beside it he planted his flag, and then plunging into the surf again he was taken aboard, and the land named Anthony Van Diemen's Land.

Then the ships sailed out again from Storm Bay, and shortly afterwards ventured still farther east and discovered New Zealand. And in Van Diemen's Land they left behind them their old Dutch names. There is Mount Heemskirk, and Zeehan, where they first sighted land. At Zeehan now there is a great mine known all the wide world round. But not many of the shareholders could tell you how it received its name. Then there are De Witt Island, Slopen Island, Schouten Island, and the large Maria Island, off the east coast. And after naming these places, the sailors, so bold by sea, so timorous apparently of giants and such-like bogies by land, once more adventured into the waste of waters ahead of them. Here Tasman accomplished much, and put off no time about it either. For he left Van Diemen's Land on December 8, 1642, in summer weather, and touching the north-west coast of the

South Island of New Zealand, he skirted along to North Cape, which he finally left on January 6, 1643. This done, he steered for home, discovering many islands on his way, and their names smack strongly of the Dutch. These are Rotterdam and Amsterdam in the Friendlies, Gerrit Denys, Schouten, and so on. You can track him on his way as easily as a black-fellow could follow you by your footsteps in the bush. He arrived at Batavia in June 1643, ten months after he had sailed away.

A myth has been handed down concerning Tasman which only lately has been cleared up by the prying sacrilegious hand of inquisitive historians. It has always been written that Van Diemen chose Tasman as his captain because the seaman was in love with the Governor's daughter Maria, and that he named islands and headlands after his absent love. This was a very pretty idea. But Van Diemen never had a daughter. His wife's name was Maria, and we can only hope that Abel was not in love with *her*. Tasman himself was well over forty when he sailed for Batavia. He had married very young one Claesjie Heyndricks, and at the early age of twenty-eight had consoled himself, after Claesjie's death, by taking to wife Jannetie Tjercks, of the Tarkettle Lane, Amsterdam. Jannetie was unable to read or write, and could not sign her name on the register. So the pretty story of Maria Van Diemen goes by the board. With it, too, goes the story that Tasman headed another expedition, from which no one ever returned. Quite on the contrary, he became rich, and lived in a fine house in the Belgravia of Batavia.

He died in his bed there, leaving a will, which commences with the old formula, " In the name of God. Amen." Jannetie survived him, and a daughter, Claesjie, by his first marriage. His fame rests entirely on that first great voyage of his. Other expeditions he had led, but they were more or less failures. After his last voyage he was tried for his life, and only escaped hanging by the payment of a heavy fine, for having unjustifiably, and without trial, caused a soldier to be executed for some small breach of discipline. Nevertheless he was a great man, and his name lives for ever.

The voyages of Tasman were never published entire, and the Dutch East India Company never intended that they should be published at all.

"However, Dirk Rembrantz, moved by the excellency and accuracy of the work, published in Low Dutch an extract of Captain Tasman's journal, which has ever since been considered as a great curiosity, and as such has been translated into many languages."

But for that historian with such a beautiful and romantic name, we should know little or nothing of this gallant navigator. Nevertheless, that the Dutch took a great pride in the sailor we know, because in the Town Hall at Amsterdam they laid a floor with a chart of his voyages traced in mosaic. I believe it is there still.

We are done, then, with the history of the Dutch navigators in these waters. Only one other is worth mentioning. A Captain de Vlaming was sent by the Government in 1696, whilst on his voyage to India with the ships *Geelvink*, *Nyptang*, and *Wezel*, to search for a missing vessel called the *Ridderschap*, which had left the Cape ten or twelve years before. Vlaming surveyed the coast accurately from Rottnest Island to the North-West Cape, and found no traces of the missing vessel. But he found Dirk Hartog's iron plate, and he took home a number of wild black swans, birds which are now the national arms of the West Australians.

In the next chapter we will talk of the first Englishman who explored these barren shores, and who first left an open, detailed account of what he saw and found. This man was Captain William Dampier. But before we entirely leave these grand old Dutch, I would have you remember that, while Tasman was making his discoveries in 1643, Edgehill had just been lost by our King in England, and whilst the sailor man was wondering at the giants in Van Diemen's Land, Hampden died on Chalgrove field, and the battle of Newbury was fought and won. We English had no time for travel, nor wind to spare for aught but cutting each other's throats. We wanted all our breath to cool our own porridge. Charles the First's head fell; Cromwell domineered over us, and fought the Dutch and Van Tromp at sea; Charles the Second raced at Newmarket; and Australia during these times again lay sleeping, undisturbed by prying man, until, in the last year of the short reign of James the Second, this man Dampier again disturbed her with rude hand.

CHAPTER VII

DAMPIER

These were wild times in which William Dampier lived, and he himself probably led a wild life in them. He made many voyages to the Spanish Main, the West Indies, and elsewhere, and in 1688, while on the Brazilian coast, he joined the ship of an old friend. This man's name was Swan, and his ship was neatly called the *Cygnet.* She belonged to some London merchants, and was meant for the South American trade.

Voyages were long in those days, and some parts of the sea seemed to be a safe home for pirates and buccaneers. Captain Swan's crew became disgusted with dawdling about trying to trade when they heard of ships like themselves, with the "Jolly Roger" hoisted, plundering and winning sacks of bullion very nearly for the asking. They mutinied, and Captain Swan agreed to navigate them for a share in the spoil. Dampier had nothing for it but to go too. For some time they prospered well enough, but Dampier and Swan were not pirates by nature, and the company of men like Billy Bones, Captain Flint, old Pugh, Black-Dog, and John Silver became distasteful to them beyond all bearing. Therefore, when the ship in her plundering career cast anchor in the Philippines, Swan and a number of the crew left her. But Dampier preferred the company of English devils whom he knew to that of Spanish devils whom he knew not, and hung on for a more favourable opportunity to escape. The *Cygnet* was now barnacle-covered, leaking badly, and unfit to continue her voyage. Something had to be done, and it was of no use beaching her in Spanish waters. The enemy would have been down upon them like a swarm of flies on a dead carcass. So they steered through the islands, and finally beached the ship in an inlet on the Australian north-west coast, probably near to where the Fitzroy River runs into King's Sound. Across the mouth of the inlet there is a chain of islands called the Buccaneer Archipelago, and there is Swan Point and Cygnet Bay. They remained here for several weeks, digging wells to find water, and cutting timber enough for their ship's use. At length Dampier and one or two others escaped to the Nicobar Islands, and he, reaching home after many adventures, published a book of his travels, a volume which created much interest. So much so indeed was this the case, that in 1698 the Government, and King William of Orange—for Mary his wife was now dead—fitted him out with a ship and men for the purpose of continuing his explorations.

He sailed from the Downs on January 14, 1699. After a voyage of a hundred and ninety-eight days, he touched the land he looked for. His book lies against my hand as I write; an old brown leather-bound volume, with a musty, deliciously old smell.

It was printed in 1703, for James Knapton, at the Crown in St. Paul's Church Yard. The poor man, in his preface, states that he has been accused of being dry in his description of things, and "jejune." People have told him, he says, that he has stolen from other men's books. But we know now that everybody does that more or less. So we read all Dampier's writings with much interest, what though portions be dry and "jejune." He sailed in the *Roebuck*, and called, on his way, at the Canaries and Cape Verde, and then at Bahia in Brazil, where he narrowly escaped being haled before the Inquisition. His crew were inclined to be mutinous, and were a cause of anxiety to the captain from start to finish. Even his officers were not above suspicion.

"But by the little care my officers took for fresh provisions one might conclude they did not think of going any farther. Besides, I had like to have been imbroiled with the clergy here (of the Inquisition, as I suppose). What was said to them of me, by some of my company that went ashore, I know not. But I was assured that if they got me into their clutches (and it seems that when I was put ashore they narrowly watched me), the Governor himself could not release me." So, having watered, he sailed away with the intention of not touching land again until New Holland was reached. To amuse himself on the voyage he made quaint little observations on the birds and fishes which they saw and caught, and from him we learn that the Stormy Petrel was so called in allusion to St. Peter walking upon the Lake of Gennesareth. They saw but one sail between Bahia and the longitude of the Cape, and that was all. We can imagine the importance of the event. She was the *Antelope* of London, bound for the Bay of Bengal, in the service of the new East India Company. There were many passengers on board under Sir Edward Littleton, who was going thither as chief. The ships remained in sight of one another for two days, and then a storm drove each on her course. "The night before, the sun set in a black Cloud, which appeared just like Land, and the Clouds above it were gilded of a dark red Colour . . . as the Sun drew near the Horizon the Clouds were gilded very prettily to the Eye, tho' at the same time my Mind dreaded the Consequences of it. When the Sun was now not above 2 deg. high it entered into a dark Smoaky coloured Cloud that lay parallel with the Horizon, from whence presently seemed to issue blackish Beams. The Sky was at this time covered with small hard Clouds, . . . and such of them as lay next to the Bank of Clouds at the Horizon were of a pale Gold colour. . . . From these to about 10 deg. high they were redder, and very bright; above them they were of a darker Colour still to about 60 or 70 deg. high where the Clouds began to be of their common Colour." Michael Scott, the author of *Tom Cringle's Log*, might have taken some of his descriptions of coming storms from that.

They survived the gale, happily, "the ship being very governable and steered incomparably well," and they sighted land on August 1, 1699. This land first touched by Dampier was one of the islands at the seaward side of the large inlet which he called

Shark's Bay, the name by which it is now known. After this the interest of his voyage wanes for us. He hunted for water and found none, coasting up towards the old anchoring-place of the buccaneers. He describes many of the birds and fishes, opossums and dingoes, and had one encounter with the blacks. But for some reason or other he soon grew tired of this fruitless survey of the coast, and sailed away for Timor, to clean his ship and take in water. I cannot help thinking, from the tone of his book, that the man drank too much. At any rate, he sailed for Timor, and from hence, after coasting round the north of New Guinea, he took a departure for home. Off the island of Ascension the poor *Roebuck* sprang a leak, and foundering, left Dampier and his crew to pass through many trials, living upon turtle and shell-fish until rescued by a passing ship. There were more Robinson Crusoes then than now. And this ends Dampier's career as an explorer. He fell out of favour with the Government and the King, and received the command of no more King's ships. But we know that he was again captain of a merchant-man, for it was from his vessel that Alexander Selkirk (Robinson Crusoe) was marooned on Juan Fernandez. Then Dampier passed from sight, although he wrote his book, and tried once more to gain grace with the King. But we know that he died in want, sank at his moorings, as the old *Cygnet* had done off Madagascar years before, "rat-riddled, bilge-bestank, slime-slobbered, horrible." Poor old Dampier!

CHAPTER VIII

CAPTAIN COOK

Dampier's account of New Holland had been so discouraging, and so gruesome were the descriptions of the place by the Dutch, that after 1699 no white men are known to have set foot, or even eyes, upon the land, until seventy years had sped away. But now at length the key to this enchanted sleeping palace was to be put in the lock and the door to be opened. Between the time of Dampier and then, however, the world, somehow, began to move faster, and Englishmen began to spread farther and farther round the globe. During these seventy years Anne and George the First and George the Second had reigned, and the young and the old Pretenders had striven for the crown and had lost it. We fought the French, and we fought the Spaniards, and the great South Sea Bubble swelled and burst. The Black Hole of Calcutta gaped and took into its horrid maw our countrymen and women. Then Clive saved India and Wolfe won the Heights of Abraham.

Yes, the world was beginning to jog along faster. It is now that we first particularly hear of the prince who was to awaken the sleeping palace. This prince's name was James Cook. Not a very royal-sounding one in those days, but immortal in our ears now. Cook took the soundings that allowed the British ships to navigate the St. Lawrence, and so helped Wolfe to win his great victory. He had been once a draper's apprentice in Yorkshire, until, driven by his own nature, he took to the sea. Cook gained much notice by his skill and bravery, and in 1768 was appointed to command an expedition to the South Seas in order to observe the Transit of Venus. This being successfully done, he continued his voyage in his ship *Endeavour*, a barque of 320 tons burden that had once been a collier, in order to circumnavigate the globe. He beat about in the South Seas looking for the Great South Land of the Dutch, and fell upon New Zealand, which had been discovered by Tasman, as we have seen, a hundred and twenty years before. He thoroughly surveyed the coasts there, and sailed again west early in April 1770.

Of all months in the year April is the most pleasant in our Australian climate. The autumn rains have fallen, and have awakened all Nature from her long summer sleep. You can almost see the herbage grow then, and the warm summer days are followed by cool starry nights which have not yet grown bitterly cold. It must have been a happy time, for they were a goodly company on board the barque. There was the great man himself, and if his pictures and his handwriting tell the truth, he was quiet, shrewd, with a touch of humour, brave, and a disciplinarian. You can warrant from the set of his eyes and the cut of his mouth and chin that there was no nonsense on board his ship. Then there was Banks, the botanist, a grand man, a little more bluff and genial than the commander, to judge from the portrait. And there was Solander, after whom the well-known rocks on the South New Zealand coast are named, and Mr. Green the astronomer. There were eighty-four of a crew. The main part of their work appeared to be done, and well done, and they were sailing for home with the chance of famous fresh discoveries on their cruise. One would have liked to have sat at table with this gallant band and listened to their talk. And then, on April 17, 1770, white men for the first time in the world's history sighted the east coast of Australia. Cook described the place as a cape, and called it, after the lieutenant of the *Endeavour*, Point Hicks. But no one has found the same spot since then, and it may be that what was seen that day was but a sandhill on the Ninety Mile Beach. It must have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of what is now marked as Cape Conran. They coasted along north-east, rounding Cape Howe and naming the points as they slipped by, and on April 28 they entered Botany Bay. It was a magnificent contrast to the first impressions of the early voyagers whom we have followed. Then it was "a black, wild, savage people, sterile shores, no water, a useless land." Now the first place touched at was named "Botany Bay," because of the multitude of plants, numbers of them new even to Banks and Solander. And they found birds in thousands, parrots, parraquets, and cockatoos. They explored the country in a mild sort of a way while they remained anchored here, for they were more seamen than landlubbers, and in their wanderings they must have been nearly within a stone's-throw of the finest harbour perhaps in the world, Port Jackson. I have heard ships' captains describe it as *the* very finest—as good as Rio. I do not know, but Sydney-siders are very proud of this harbour of theirs, which Cook just failed to find. In Botany Bay they remained for a week endeavouring to make friends with the natives, but without much success. Indeed, so hostile did they become at one time, and so bold were they, that a charge of shot was fired round their thin legs. They ran away at this, but returned armed with shields. The dying race was very brave. When the ship had just anchored and her boats put off for shore they showed no signs of fear, but ran along the beach, menacing the new-comers with their spears. And it must have been a strange, and even an awful sight to them, who had never seen a ship before, with her great white sails. They must have fancied that she was some living thing, and yet they were not afraid. The *Endeavour* sailed from Botany Bay on May 6, and steered north along the coast. The names she left are on our maps and so will ever remain. Smoky Cape was thus called because of the native fires which were seen there. Point Danger, where now Queensland borders with New South Wales, was immortalised because at that spot the vessel was nearly lost. Entering the tropics, they were now within that fringe of rocks which guards and yet is a menace to our eastern shores, the Great Barrier Reef. All went well with them until abreast of a cape which Cook called Tribulation. It is not far south of the present important settlement of Cooktown. The ship had passed through innumerable perils from grounding on hidden rocks ere this, but all seemed plain sailing on the evening of June 10. There was a bright moon, a comparatively smooth sea, and a fair wind. She had left Trinity Bay and was standing off and on, sounding carefully and finding her water deepening from fourteen to twenty-one fathoms. Whilst the officers were at supper, however, it shoaled in a few minutes to twelve, ten, eight, and everybody flew to their stations ready to cast anchor. Then the water deepened as rapidly as it had shoaled, and it was believed that the ship had passed the tail of a bank, thus explaining a ripple which had been seen at sunset. Those officers not on duty turned in. At eleven the water suddenly shoaled from twenty-one to seventeen, and before the lead could be cast again she struck with a crash, and lay hard and fast. The swell had lifted her over a ledge and had left her in a hollow beyond. The ship was badly damaged. In the moonlight the crew could see the sheathing-boards floating away, and parts of her false keel. They lightened her all they knew by throwing overboard guns, iron and stone ballast, and everything which was of little or no use to them. At eleven in the morning the tide rose, and still she lay immovable. The tide was not nearly so high as it had been on the evening before. They lightened her still more, and the water commenced to pour into the hold very fast. Their boats were insufficient to carry the whole crew should she sink after being floated off, and there was no land nearer than twenty miles. It was a bad look-out. At ten at night came the crisis in their fate. She floated, was heaved off the rocks, and did not sink. Sail was set and a course laid for the mainland in the hopes of beaching her. But the leak gained rapidly, in spite of such incessant labour at the pumps that all the crew were utterly exhausted. Then it was that a midshipman suggested the plan of running a sail, lined with oakum and wool, round the bottom of the ship over the injury. He had seen it done before, he said. I fancy the expedient was once used, many hundred years ago, on a vessel carrying a certain man named Paul, of the town of Tarsus in Cilicia.

The attempt succeeded beyond their hopes, and the leak was kept under by one pump until the ship was run into the mouth of a little river and beached. This river is still named the Endeavour. Here they quickly discovered the cause of their salvation. A great piece of coral rock had pierced the vessel's side when she struck. It had broken off and remained in its place, acting as a most effective plug when combined with the sail, the oakum, and the wool. Without this mass of coral the ship must have foundered immediately on floating off, and who knows for how many more years the settlement of the continent might have been delayed, and the whole course of her history changed. Here in the mouth of the Endeavour River they repaired the damage, and recovered some of the health lost during such a long period at sea. They caught fish and shot birds, "but the crows, which were exactly like those in England, were so shy that they never came within reach of their guns." Cunning old beggars! They are the same still, and where they get their knowledge from no one knows. Perhaps, like Captain Flint's parrot, they live for hundreds of years.

A kangaroo was seen, and believed to be a new species of animal. It was described as being as large as a greyhound, of a slender make, of a mouse colour, and extremely swift. Mr. Banks only caught a glimpse of it; but a few days after a Mr. Gore shot one, and it was discovered that the natives called it a "kanguroo."

After many days, the ship having at length been sufficiently repaired, they once more set sail, and their story for some time was one of continual hair's-breadth escapes. They could find no channel through the reef, and at last having found one they were blown back and through it again. At one time only the distance of the trough of one wave separated them from being crashed into the rocks and dashed to pieces by the terrific surf. Yet they weathered it all, and stealing through the Endeavour Straits, between the mainland and Prince of Wales Island, they emerged into the open sea, having, all unknown to themselves, made the same passage as that which Torres had crept through a hundred and sixty-five years before. The record of Torres' voyage, however, was not discovered until several years later, and Cook had the immense satisfaction of believing that he was the first navigator to complete this most difficult and dangerous passage. His voyage after this point is a thing apart from the history of the romance of Australia, but it is full of a very sad interest. The ship was docked at Batavia for repairs, and it was found that in many parts her bottom was no thicker than the sole of a boot. The pumps were absolutely rotten, and altogether it was almost a miracle how she had held together during so many buffetings.

At Batavia the whole ship's crew took fever, with one exception. An old sail-maker, who was between seventy and eighty years of age, and who on shore was never sober, was the only one that escaped. Seven of the crew died, including Surgeon Monkhouse, and a South Sea islander, Tupia, who had followed their fortunes all the way, and his boy. Banks and Solander lay at death's door, and their recovery was unexpected. At length, however, the *Endeavour* was ready to sail, and away they went homeward bound once more. But a few days from Batavia the fever broke out on board worse than ever, and this time even the ancient sail-maker was attacked and died. Twenty-three of the crew died at sea in six weeks, and when only a fortnight's sail from home, Hicks, after whom Cook had named the first land seen in Australia, was buried at sea. Mr. Green, the astronomer, had died, as well as Mr. Parkinson, the artist, and Mr. Monkhouse, the midshipman who had suggested stopping the leak with the sail. Bad luck, bad luck indeed! From the 30th of July 1768 until the 10th of June 1771 the *Endeavour* had been battling along, and now, at long and at last, the same boy who had first called "Land ho!" when New Zealand loomed ahead, shouted it aloud, you may be sure, with a beating heart and a choke in his throat, when the Lizard hove in sight. His name was Nicholas Young. On June 11 Cook stepped ashore at Deal. Can you imagine his feelings? Can you see the whole scene?

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST SETTLERS

Captain Cook undertook two more famous voyages, but neither of these was so full of results to Australia as this one, which was known as Cook's "first voyage." During the course of his second adventure, he and his consort, the *Adventure*, under Captain Furneaux, became separated, and Furneaux explored some of the coast of Tasmania, as we can tell from the names which he left upon the chart—Adventure Bay, Furneaux Islands, and others. A year before his arrival there, however, the coast of Tasmania had been visited by two French ships, the *Mascarin* and the *Marquis de Castries,* under a Captain Marion. This was in 1772, and Furneaux followed in 1773.

Marion called the country "wild and inhospitable," and not finding water, which was his object in calling, he sailed for New Zealand.

Cook, in the course of his third and last voyage with the *Resolution* and *Discovery,* also touched at the same landing-place as Furneaux had done, and then sailed north, never to return. He was killed, as you know, by the natives of Otaheite, and such of his remains as were recovered were buried at sea off that island.

But the result of his first voyage was the colonising of Australia. This mighty work began in a very humble way. Until 1775, you must know that the convicted prisoners in England were transported to North America, where they were employed as labourers by the colonists there. In this year, however, the American War broke out, and in 1783 the treaty was signed granting independence. America could no longer be a dumping-ground for our criminals, and the Government was looking out for some place to which they could transport this undesirable population. Cook's report of Botany Bay suggested possibilities in this direction, and it was finally agreed to make the experiment on a large scale. Anything was better than a return to the old indiscriminate executions, when a string of prisoners would be hanged, before thousands of spectators, every Monday morning in London alone. So an expedition was prepared which was to convey a little army of felons across almost unknown seas, to the land at the very other side of the world. If you come to think of it, it was rather a grizzly undertaking. There were six ship-loads of convicts, three vessels full of stores for their use, an armed tender, and His Majesty's frigate *Sirius*. The whole expedition was under the command of Governor Arthur Phillip, a sailor, while the *Sirius* herself had for her captain one John Hunter.

There were in all six hundred and twenty male and two hundred and fifty female convicts. A detachment of two hundred and eight marines was also to be shipped, to keep the convicts in order, and with them forty of their wives and a few children.

I have here an old book with the names and some particulars of each convict embarked. What a motley crew they must have been, to be sure! Some so old that they could not work, some very young. Take them as a whole, no doubt they were a shockingly bad lot. Most of them were both born and educated to crime, a few, perhaps—and God help them!—innocent. Smith, of course, is the most common name on the list. There were actually nineteen Smiths, and many Browns, Robinsons, Allens, Johnsons, and Richardsons. After Smith, Davis is the most common name. There were eleven of this family, mostly from London. You could almost weave a romance from some of their names alone, such as Nancy Yates, Mary Love, and Susan Garth, for instance. One wonders if they were neat, tidy, not ill-looking girls, or dirty, old, sour, and hardened viragos, full of strange oaths, and perhaps bearded like Macbeth's witches. With such pretty names I paint them to myself as unfortunates, neat and trim, almost pretty and penitent. They each of them had only the minimum punishment of seven years. Perhaps their crime was the stealing of a handkerchief from a clothes-line.

With this strange company around him, Governor Phillip, as Commander of the Fleet, hoisted his flag on the *Sirius*, and on the 13th of May 1787, in the early morning, they weighed anchor from the Mother Bank in the Isle of Wight. Even as they sailed a free pardon arrived for two of the prisoners, and you can imagine their feelings as they stepped on shore into England, on a fine May morning, instead of sailing away across the barren seas, hopeless of any return, to a sterile and, in their eyes, a hideous land, at the very ends of the earth, to be eaten, perhaps, by black savages. You may be sure every horrible possibility was magnified many times in the thoughts and talk of those first unwilling passengers to these lands.

I have often, in imagination, stood on one of the ships as the fleet sailed away that morning. A fresh breeze was blowing down the Channel, and although it was summer-time it was cold and bracing. There was a clear, cold horizon with sails gleaming white in the morning sun, but no smoke, as we see it now, from steamers plying to and fro. Watt was only just evolving the steam engine at that time. You can hear the bosun's whistle, the clank of the capstan as the anchor was weighed, the "chanty" of the men as they hauled on the topsail halyards. Then each ship fluttered her white wings, the water whitened to foam at the bows, the land began to drop astern, and many had said good-bye to Old England for ever and a day. You can see, too, what was going on below. Before you reach the hatchway you know that there is a seething mass of humanity in the ship's carcass—over two hundred men, criminals, many with a life sentence, a collection of the greatest blackguards unhung. The ship is beginning to toss and to feel the uneasiness of a brisk breeze in the Channel. Most of these passengers have never been to sea before, and some are cursing, while some are groaning; the timbers are creaking, and the water is thumping and splashing at the bows. As I think of it all, somehow I can always see the figure of one man. He is in convict's dress, and is holding on by a hammock, peering through the little slit which serves as the only port-hole to light and ventilate the space occupied by two hundred men. Here the hammocks are slung with only a foot and a half between each. He has a bad face. The black hair is close-cropped, the chin clean-shaven, but the moustache, beard, and whiskers are showing blue against his sallow skin. He has grey eyes set wide apart, a straight nose with delicate nostrils, upper lip long and the lower undershot, and his teeth are white and strong. The hand that steadies him is the hand of a gentleman. As he looks at the shore slipping away behind, the eyes for one moment soften and gleam with tears, and then with an oath and a hard laugh they relapse into the cruel, devil-may-care look, tinged with cunning when a warder or parson appears. I always see this fellow, and wonder who he is. One who has had opportunities and passed them by, no doubt. The mother who bore him would not know him now. Let us hope that she may never know his fate. As the mind travels ahead, I can see him with a dull, sulky, dazed face, taking his place beneath a beam from which a rope is hanging down, in the new land to which they are all travelling, and soon it is all over. Pugh! a horrid subject—but true.

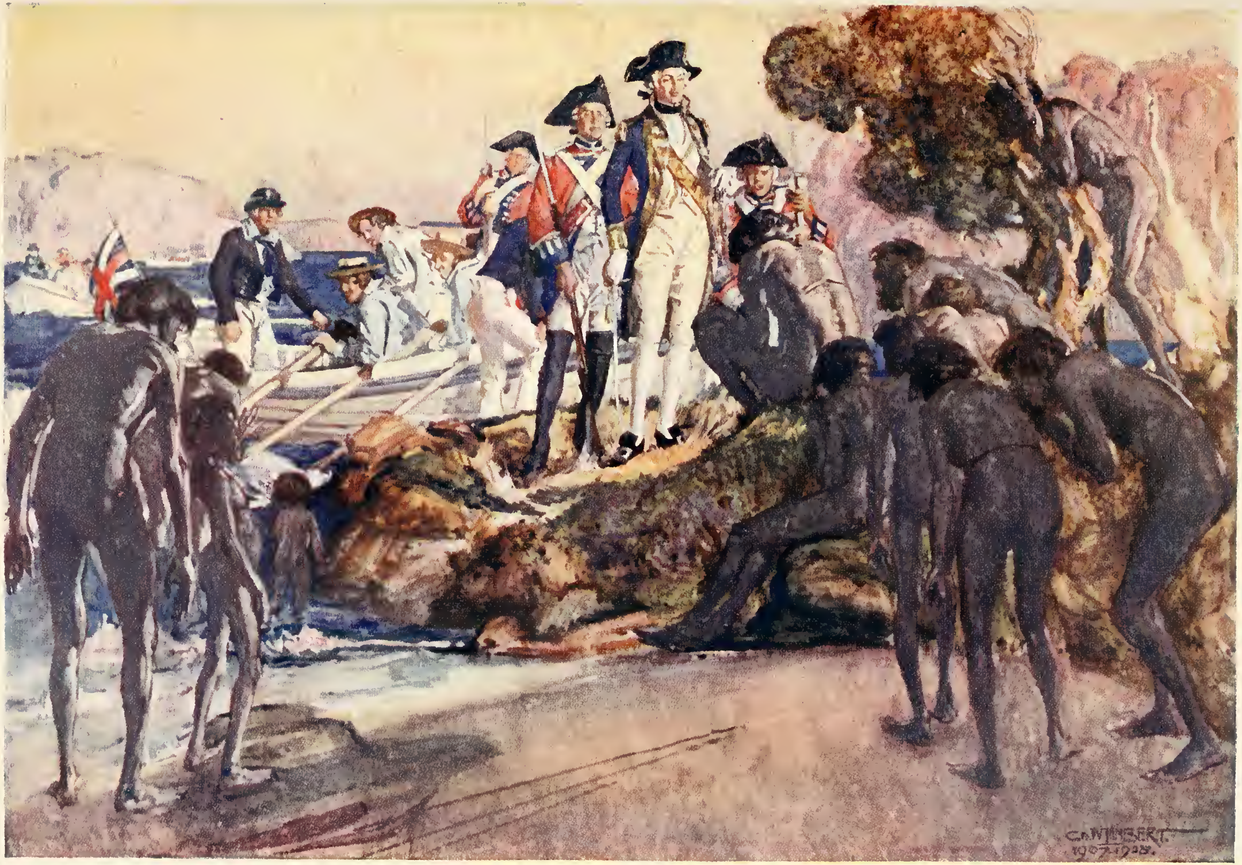
So away sailed the first settlers, and the breeze grew to a favourable gale and they made fair weather of it, until in three days they were on the broad Atlantic, and their escort, the *Hyena*, left them, and returned to Portsmouth with the news that all was well. But so boisterous was it that Governor Phillip could write no despatches to take home. Nor could they have been transhipped if he had written. The only ill news that the *Hyena* brought was that a mutiny had broken out in the *Scarborough* amongst the convicts, but it had been quelled, and the ringleaders (the chief of whom was the man whom I have described to you) punished. They made a comparatively uneventful voyage of it, calling at Rio and the Cape. We would think the voyage an insufferably long one now. From May 13 to June 3 they were between the Isle of Wight and Teneriffe. At this island they remained a week, watering and laying in fresh food, and here a miserable man, a convict, escaped in a small boat, but was quickly captured. Poor devil! His back smarted, you may be sure, for this last throw for liberty. Up to this time twenty-one convicts and three children had died, and we wonder from what cause. From June 10 to August 6 the fleet were sailing between Teneriffe and Rio. During a similar period we could now almost accomplish the voyage from London to Melbourne *and back*. They again weighed anchor on September 4, and had a prosperous and quite rapid passage to the Cape of Good Hope, which was reached on October 13. After laying in a stock of provisions and five hundred head of live stock, on November 12 they once more set sail. For thirteen days they made such little headway—only two hundred and forty miles—that Governor Phillip transhipped from the frigate *Sirius* into the tender *Supply*, in order that he might push ahead and make preparations for landing. But from this date favourable breezes blew with such force that in forty days the land of New South Wales was sighted, and on the 10th of January 1788 the *Supply* cast anchor in Botany Bay. Before three days had passed the remainder of the fleet had arrived and had all anchored within the bay. Since embarkation at Spithead they had lost by death on board the fleet one marine, one marine's wife and child, thirty-six male, four female convicts, and five children. On landing, an epidemic of dysentery broke out, and by June 20 the total deaths among the convicts had run up to eighty-one since leaving England, and there were fifty-two unfit for labour on account of old age and infirmities. One wonders how on earth old men like that were sent so far away to found a colony. But such as they were, here they are at last, every ship of the fleet, the *Sirius*, *Supply*, the *Golden Grove*, *Fishburn*, the *Borrowdale*, *Charlotte*, *Alexander*, *Scarborough*, *Friendship*, *Lady Penrhyn*, and *Prince of Wales*, all anchored in Botany Bay, with a wonderfully clean bill of health, two hundred and fifty-two days from Spithead. It was a fine accomplishment in those days, and Governor Phillip doubtless slept sound that night, when the last cable had rattled out, and the last anchor had fallen with a splash into the shallow waters of Botany Bay. It was a hundred and twenty years ago.

CHAPTER X

SYDNEY COVE

There were some names amongst those in this first fleet that have been made immortal. There was Phillip himself, from whom Port Phillip is named. There was his lieutenant, John Gidley King, and *his* monument is King Street in Sydney. Collins was the judge-advocate, and the street of that name in Melbourne keeps his memory green. It ought to, at least, but I wonder as I walk down "the block" how many of the busy thousands could tell you why the street they are now walking in received its name. Hunter, too, who was captain of the *Sirius*, is remembered through the Hunter River and the district so called, as also by a fine square in Sydney.

But at present, where we left the ships, they are thinking but little of naming streets or districts. Botany Bay has proved a disappointing place to land at. What was a fine harbour for Cook's little ship is but a poor refuge for a dozen. The country round was very bare and barren, and looked swampy and unhealthy, while the water-supply was limited. Phillip, however, was not a man to sit still. The last of his transports had arrived on January 20,



Governor Philip in Sydney Cove

and by the 22nd he was off with three boats, northward, to find some better landing-place. He had not far to go. Three leagues along the coast was a "boat harbour," so marked by Captain Cook, but which the great explorer had not had time to visit. He had only seen its entrance from the *Endeavour's* deck whilst sailing past. Through the narrow heads, with their steep rocks on either hand, Phillip and his three boats glided on the forenoon of January 24. And you know now what he saw. A deep winding harbour and innumerable coves, all with water enough to hold quite easily the fleet awaiting it in Botany Bay. Well-wooded shores there were, and water for the drawing, birds innumerable, herbage and flowers. It was very beautiful, and to one particular cove where the water was deepest, and where a little brook ran down, Phillip determined to fetch his fleet and disembark his crews. For two days he explored the windings of the harbour and found no spot more favourable than this his first love. So he named it Sydney Cove, after the minister, Viscount Sydney, and in his despatch he remarked that "here a thousand ships could ride at anchor with ease."

So was founded and named the town of Sydney, the eighth largest city of the Empire, and such of you as land there, when stepping off the big 10,000-ton liner at Circular Quay, may remember that here it was that Governor Phillip came with his three little ships' boats in 1788, and that we owe a very great deal to him. Here we know that he made the acquaintance of the natives and treated them kindly, and over at Manly there, to which little ferry steamers are now running every few minutes, he found the inhabitants so open and brave in their dealings with the white men that he called the place "Manly," and so it has remained to this day.

Then the governor bustled back to put a stop to the disembarkation at Botany, and to bring the transports to this haven of peace. And an incident marks this time. In the morning, outside the bay, and flying the French colours, were two ships of war. They were struggling, against wind and tide, to make an entrance, and in the excitement of the moment drums beat to quarters on the *Sirius* and *Supply*, and thoughts of an immediate fight filled the minds of the sailors and marines, while hopes of escape, even into the hands of foreigners, stirred the convicts to the depths. But the ships dropped away southward, and then the governor remembered that two vessels for exploration had been sent out some time before by the French, and that it was probably these that had caused all this flutter in the nest. So when they reappeared in the evening again, sailing with the tide and a sea breeze, boats were sent out to show them in hospitably, and it was proved that Phillip was right. It was La Perouse, a famous French admiral, who had been cruising in the South Seas. He had left France in 1785, and was now on his homeward voyage. He was a fine fellow, but his men bullied the natives and fired upon them, and it was a good job when, our fleet being now snug in Sydney Cove, the *Boussole* and the *Astrolabe* hoisted sail again.

But for years, as in the old ballad of "Sir Patrick Spens," the French maidens sat by the shore "with gold combs in their hair," waiting the return of these sailor-men. It was not until thirty-five years later that the remains of the two vessels were discovered on one of the Santa Cruz islands away to the north-west, and their relics are now in the museum in Paris. A monument on the shores of Botany Bay, and a grave, commemorate the visit. Perouse's naturalist, M. Le Receveur, had been landed, stricken to death by the spear of a native in one of the northern islands. Here he died, and was buried, and his tomb still remains to be seen by us.

And now the first start was actually made in founding a permanent colony in the great unknown land. But much trouble, toil, and discomfort had to be gone through before anything was achieved. Through it all, Phillip kept a placid and a brave face, ever steadfast in his belief that great things were in store for those who were to come. Conversely despairing and hopeless were the feelings of the lieutenant-governor, Major Ross. Had the future of Australia depended on him we should not have remained in the place for more than six months. Everything seemed to go wrong at once. The stores were scanty and everybody was placed upon an allowance. The first crops, badly put in with unskilled labour, were making but a poor show. To lessen the strain a number of convicts were sent to Norfolk Island. They were wrecked, and their stores, though not their lives, were lost. The food on the island had been destroyed by floods and hurricane. A transport with supplies had struck an iceberg down in "the roaring forties," and to save herself had thrown the stores overboard. On the top of this a fresh batch of convicts turned up. In the meantime Phillip had sent two ships to Batavia to procure stores, but that meant a delay of six months, and starvation stared the colonists in the very eyes. Then another transport arrived, and even when in sight of them was driven off the coast and nearly wrecked. After many days, however, she turned up safe, but along with her came more shiploads of mouths to feed.

In the meantime the convicts were ill to manage. Idle, profligate, improvident, their hereditary tendencies caused them continually to break the law. Even in that first February six of them were convicted of stealing stores on the very day that their allowances had been given out. They were condemned to death, and one was hanged next day. This one was the man whom we saw that morning when they first sailed from Spithead.

But at length food arrived from Batavia, the harvest turned out not so badly after all, and the situation was saved. All began to go more merrily under the very wise rule of Phillip, and things were prosperous enough when, in 1792, he left for England, worn out by his five years of constant work and pressing anxiety. Only seven years ago, in 1900, a relic of the great man was brought to light, after having been buried beneath the earth for one hundred and twelve years. Some workmen were digging a tunnel for telephone wires, when they came upon the foundations of a house. Imbedded in a stone was a copper plate on which was inscribed this—

> His Excellency
> Arthur Phillip Esq.
> Governor in Chief
> and
> Captain General
> in and over the Territory of
> New South Wales etc. etc.
> landed in this Cove
> with the first settlers of this Country
> the 24th day of January 1788
> and on the 15th day of May
> in the same year being the 20th
> of the Reign of his present Majesty
> George the Third
> the first of these stones was laid.

These stones were the foundation of the first Government House.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN BLIGH AND THE 'BOUNTY'

But if the outer works of the castle were now at length won, the main fortifications were still to take a deal of hammering at before the whole continent lay open at our feet.

While Phillip and his little colony were fighting against famine, building their houses, and making the first endeavours to till the virgin soil and clear the timber, other explorers came like stray bees to a bank of choice flowers, sipped a little honey, and flew away again. I should like to mention these, for each one did his little part, and played his little piece before he left the stage, and each one deserves that his name should live. There was first of all Captain William Bligh. He had sailed from England in a ship, the *Bounty*, whose name will probably live when Bligh's is forgotten. Her mission was to find that hospitable isle from whence Cook had witnessed the transit of Venus, and to obtain there a collection of bread-fruit trees for exportation to the West Indies, the bread-fruit being unknown there. The course of the *Bounty* was supposed to have been round the Horn, Westward Ho! but the captain's instructions were, that if the season was too late and the winds persistently contrary, he was to 'bout ship and double the Cape of Good Hope instead. Bligh's journal is irritating to read. One day he would make progress, and the next he would be beaten back. One day he would be nearly into favourable latitudes, and the next be blown farther away than ever, until, with his crew sick with rheumatism, fordone with toil, and his ship leaking, he at length gave it up and was blown by favourable gales to the Cape, whence, after repairs, through the "roaring forties" he reached Tasmania. For a whole month he had fought the adverse winds round the Horn. One feels that, like the Flying Dutchman, he might have been there yet, had he not ceased to persevere. The approach to land, when nearing Tasmania, was made in most boisterous weather, and nothing was seen through squalls of driving rain and hail until the great tall rock on the southern coast, the Mewstone, was picked up, and then, in smoother waters, they ran into Adventure Bay. Bligh had been here in 1777 with Cook on the third and last voyage, and he found shoots from trees that they had lopped rising as high as twenty-five feet and measuring fourteen inches in circumference. There were also discovered the figures "A.D. 1773" cut in the dead limb of a tree, probably executed by one of Furneaux's men on the *Adventure*. "These marks were as fresh as though done yesterday." After watering and taking in wood and making many interesting notes, Bligh sailed again, and arrived safely on Sunday, October 26, at Otaheite. For six months the *Bounty* lay moored here, and while the cargo of bread-fruit was being collected, potted, and put aboard, the crew had every chance of becoming friendly with the islanders. So intimate indeed did they become that many of the sailors fell in love with the women, and would fain have remained there all their days and have married their sweethearts, and settled down as savages. Even before sailing there was evidence that all was not well with the crew, for during one night the cable was cut and the vessel all but cast ashore on the rocks. Bligh accused the natives, and it was not until afterwards that he realised that this low trick was played upon him by one of his own men. He weighed anchor on April 4, 1789, with over a thousand bread-fruits on board, besides many other valuable plants. The voyage was a prosperous and happy one until April 28, when suddenly, just before sunrise, the discontented members of the ship's company rose, overpowered Bligh, his officers and men who were loyal to him, bundled them all into the ship's launch, with 28 gallons of water, 158 lbs. of bread, 38 lbs. of pork, 6 quarts of rum, 6 bottles of wine, and for arms 4 cutlasses, and cast them adrift. There were nineteen men to share this tiny store, on a voyage of unknown length, guided only by a quadrant and compass, and with no maps, charts, sextant, or timekeeper. Twenty-one men, three midshipmen, and the master's mate, Fletcher Christian, who was the ringleader, remained on board. The names of the midshipmen deserve to be handed down and hooted at for all time. They were Peter Haywood from the North of England, Edward Young, and George Stewart from the Orkneys.

The *Bounty* then sailed away, with shouts from the men of "Hurrah for Otaheite." We know their fate. They settled with their wives on a small island, and their descendants dwell there still. They are said to have been a God-fearing people. We cannot but regard them as a sad set of blackguards.

And now in the little open boat commenced a voyage of the most adventurous kind ever accomplished. The captain's first idea was to return to one of the large islands to obtain food and assistance to build a ship. But on calling at Tofoa, in the Friendly Group, they were savagely attacked by the natives, and only just escaped with their lives. Indeed, they lost one man named John Norton, who, when the attack had commenced and every one had safely embarked, nobly, if foolishly, ran up the beach to cast loose the rope which held the boat fast to the shore. He was instantly killed, and his reward must be hereafter.

From this time forward, day after day, they fought along westward. Drenched with spray, with a high wind and a deeply laden boat, so cramped in their limbs that they could scarcely move, they held on right manfully for the northern coast of New Holland. They did not know of the arrival of Governor Phillip's first fleet, otherwise they would have skirted the coast inside the Barrier Reef, and have probably reached a haven of safety long ere they actually did. As it was, with provisions reduced to a very low ebb, at length they touched the northern shore. They were actually reduced to the one twenty-fifth of a pound of bread, and two or three teaspoonfuls of water three times a day, and occasionally, as a great treat, a tiny morsel of salt pork. Just try to realise it. Half a loaf per diem amongst eighteen starving men. "At length they caught a booby and a noddy," two birds familiar to sailors whilst nearing land, and I think Lord Byron must have been reading Captain Bligh's journal when he was composing the shipwreck cantos in *Don Juan.* Each bird was divided into eighteen portions, and then one man, with his eyes shut and his back to the feast, was asked, "Who shall have this?" as each portion was indicated. Bligh, in his quaint way, writes in his journal, "I divided the usual food, and then performed prayers." One thought himself lucky enough if he received as his share a piece of the entrails, which, of course, was eaten raw. At length, on an island in Torres Straits, they landed and found turtle, and more boobies and noddies and some fresh water. And then, after dangers without end, they sailed unharmed, but reduced to skeletons, all through the Arafura Sea to the island of Timor, where they were most hospitably treated, forwarded to Batavia, and hence to the Cape of Good Hope and home. Although the launch only just touched our shores, this voyage should rank amongst the romances of Australia, and more especially so as soon again the commander's name reappears in the history of the young colony.

CHAPTER XII

BASS AND FLINDERS

Bligh, in the *Bounty's* launch, had passed through the Straits to the north of Prince of Wales Island; Cook had navigated the channel to the south, so that, in spite of famine and distress of every sort, the former seaman had added much to the geography of these regions. Both he and Cook had lost no lives in their passage, but in 1791 a melancholy disaster occurred. The King's ship *Pandora*, cruising for the passage through Torres Straits, struck a reef, now named after her, and, shifting over to the other side, sank in deep water with the loss of thirty-nine men. The survivors, however, reached Timor in a little over a fortnight, and they too added to our knowledge of the Straits, although their voyage was comparatively without any stirring incidents. Bligh, three years after his eventful voyage, returned again with a cargo of bread-fruit in the King's ships the *Providence* and *Assistant*, and in nineteen days successfully made a passage through the Straits. On this occasion much was done for geography, and Bligh's circumstances were a contrast to his former experiences. He was unaware, at the time, of the disaster which had overtaken the *Pandora* and that some who perished with her were *Bounty* mutineers, being conveyed home for trial. Then in 1793 two commanders, William Bampton and Matthew Alt, navigated the Straits in the ships *Horonuzeer* and the *Chesterfield*, but they took over ninety days to their passage. They lost several men, including a Captain Hill, a passenger, and a member of the New South Wales Corps then stationed in the new colony at Sydney Cove. After this disastrous passage Torres Strait was left alone for several years as being too dangerous for navigation. But in the meantime the great island continent was beginning to rouse herself from her sleep, and the buzz of civilisation was to be heard upon her shores. Not long did she lie lingering half awake when the new adventurers, like bees free from all fear, busily crept in and out of all the inlets on her coasts and probed the interior with unceasing and restless activity.

But the hinterland was still to prove hard to win. Phillip had returned home from his anxious charge in 1790, and in 1795 Hunter returned as Governor in his stead, with the vessels *Reliance* and *Supply*. On board the *Reliance* was a surgeon named George Bass and a midshipman Matthew Flinders. Although but a midshipman, Flinders was not one "of the young gentlemen," as Mesty, in Marryat's *Midshipman Easy*, used to call these picturesque officers. He was a mature man of thirty-five, with an unquenchable ardour for exploration, and with boundless courage. Surgeon Bass was a man after his own heart. They had scarce anchored in the new colony when their active career began. For seven years the settlement had been struggling along, and was gaining in numbers and prosperity; but no one had had the time or the enterprise to add to the knowledge of the country at the back of the sea-board, or of the coast-line itself. A great chain of mountains hemmed in the little territory on all its sides that were not washed by the sea. This state of affairs, as far as the sea-board was concerned, was not long destined so to remain. Bass and Flinders had sailed from England early in 1795. Ere the year was out they, for want of a better vessel, had, in a little boat eight feet in length, the immortal *Tom Thumb*, re-explored Botany Bay and the rivers which fall into it. Their only crew was a boy, and I wish we knew his name. A year's duty at Norfolk Island broke the sequence of their voyaging, but in 1796 they returned, and, burning with ardour, they at once rechartered the gallant *Tom Thumb*, and were off again to the south. There was no room for cargo nor stores of provisions in the cockleshell. They could not even carry water beyond what was required daily, and in trying to make the shore of an island in order to refill their little cask, the surf swamped them, and the crew, along with their boat, barely escaped with their lives.

To the landlubber this voyage seems the height of daring, not to say of foolishness. But to those two men in a boat, not counting the boy, winds and waters seemed to have had no terrors. They explored a river falling into a bay a few miles south of Hat Hill and Cook's Red Point. And here they had a narrow escape from the blacks. They had spoken to two natives at the Red Point, who had offered to guide them to water, fish, and wild duck. For amusement, Flinders trimmed the beards of these two men with a pair of scissors, a very wonderful performance in the eyes of the aborigines. Accordingly they guided the white men to the bay and river as they had promised, and here the explorers were surrounded by a crowd of natives, very savage, as report said, and cannibals. All the powder had been spoilt by the upsetting of the *Tom Thumb* in the surf, and the three Englishmen were absolutely powerless amongst such a mob. Yet they were as fearless as the sailor-men of fiction. They laid their powder out to dry in the hot sun, and in the meantime found employment in shearing the beards of as many natives as presented themselves.

"I was almost tempted," says Bass, "to try what effect a little snip on the nose would produce, but our situation was too critical to admit of such experiments."

At length, by a good deal of cunning and dodging, they managed to regain their boat, which had been beached, and slipped down the stream. It was shortly afterwards that this tribe and their chief, Dilba, murdered and ate some of the crew of a wrecked vessel, the *Sydney Cove*, who were making their way overland to Port Jackson. No doubt, whilst Bass and Flinders were playing at being barbers, the black-fellows were anticipating such a feast, and were even then licking their chops behind those flowing beards.

On the return journey of this first exploring expedition Flinders gives such a capital description of their escape from a fierce gale of wind that I transcribe it in his own words :—

> *March* 29.—By rowing hard we got four leagues nearer home; and at night dropped our stone anchor under another range of cliffs. At ten o'clock the wind, which had been unsettled and driving electric clouds in all directions, burst out in a gale at south, and obliged us to get up the anchor immediately and run before it. In a few minutes the waves began to break; and the extreme danger to which this exposed our little bark was increased by the darkness of the night. The shades of the cliffs over our heads, and the noise of the surf breaking at their feet, were the directions by which our course was steered parallel to the coast. Mr. Bass kept the sheet of the sail in his hand, drawing in a few inches occasionally, when he saw a particularly heavy sea following. I was steering with an oar, and it required the utmost exertion and care to prevent broaching-to; a single wrong movement or a moment's inattention would have sent us to the bottom. The task of the boy was to bail out the water. After running near an hour in this critical manner, some high breakers were distinguished ahead, and behind them there appeared no shade of cliff. It was necessary to determine, on the instant, what was to be done, for our bark could not live ten minutes longer. On coming to what appeared to be the extremity of the breakers, the boat's head was brought to the wind in a favourable moment, the mast and sail taken down, and the oars got out. Pulling then towards the reef during the intervals of the heaviest seas, we found it to terminate in a point; and in three minutes we were in smooth water under its lee. A white appearance farther back kept us a short time in suspense, but a nearer approach showed it to be the beach of a well-sheltered cove, in which we anchored for the rest of the night.

They called it Providential Cove, which was apt, and fitted in with the explorers' feelings, but Watta-

Mowlee was the native name, which is pretty and decidedly uncommon. On April 2, in the evening, the little *Tom Thumb* was secured alongside the *Reliance* in Port Jackson, and so ended the exploration of the coast as far as this tiny little craft was concerned.

And now the march of events began to hurry on in the colony, and once started, enterprise and the force of circumstances quickly urged things ahead, and more especially in the probing of the secrets of the shores of the new land. One of these circumstances was the wreck of the *Sydney Cove* on one of Furneaux's islands. A portion of the crew under Mr. Clarke, the supercargo, took boat to sail to Port Jackson, but were cast ashore on Cape Howe, three hundred miles from their destination. There was nothing for it but to walk, and only three men survived the disastrous attempt. Mr. Clarke, one sailor, and a lascar alone arrived at Watta-Mowlee, and were luckily seen by a fishing-boat and carried to Sydney utterly exhausted. The chief mate and the carpenter had been killed and eaten by Dilba and his tribe close by where Bass and Flinders had shaved their beards. Another circumstance was the finding of the Hunter River and the present Port of Newcastle and its coals by Mr. John Shortland, lieutenant of the *Reliance,* whilst hunting for a boatload of escaped convicts, the first, perhaps, of the race of bushrangers.

CHAPTER XIII

BASS AND FLINDERS—*continued*

Flinders was now confined to his duty on the *Reliance*, as that vessel was being repaired from stem to stern, but Bass, with time hanging heavy on his hands, organised a little expedition in order to find a pass through the Blue Mountains. The settlement had now been nearly nine years in existence, and no communication had been held with the back country, no human foot had ever trod the tops of the towering hills. Bass was not such a successful explorer by land as he had proved himself by sea, and he returned thoroughly beaten, declaring, it is said, that no one ever would cross this precipitous barrier. But, beaten by land, he was unconquerable at sea. The Governor, John Hunter, knowing of his gallant voyage in the *Tom Thumb*, and realising the value of such exploits, gave him leave in October 1797 to sail away south in a whale-boat for a six weeks' cruise along the coast. After the *Tom Thumb* the whale-boat, with six jolly bluejackets, was a luxury indeed. They had six weeks' provisions, and with a favourable breeze were soon beyond the sphere of the *Tom Thumb*, and after exploring Shoalhaven and Twofold

Bay they rounded Cape Howe. All along what we call Ninety-mile Beach they crept, making it, however, one hundred and forty miles, which is the correct distance, and then they steered away south-west for the islands discovered by Captain Furneaux some twenty years before.

There was a stiff gale blowing, and no islands were in sight, when suddenly the water began to rush through a leak on the leeward side of the boat in such fashion that there was no hesitation in deciding that upon that tack she would soon fill and sink. So they whipped her round and sailed with the wind on their other quarter, and thus kept the leak out of the water when the boat lay over to the breeze. Nevertheless they had a perilous night of it, and were glad when morning rose to see that they were near an island off the mainland. And here they saw smoke rising. They rowed up to this land, and, to their surprise, found, not natives, as they had expected, but seven convicts. A gang had seized a boat some time before, and had sailed away with the intention of plundering the *Sydney Cove*. These seven men had been treacherously left, whilst sleeping, by the rest of their gang, as their provisions were running short. For five weeks the seven castaways had lived on petrels and seals, and now Bass had neither room in his boat nor yet provisions to spare. However, he promised to do what he could for them when he came back, and meantime sailed off on his cruise. This was now to be of no long duration, as his food was nearly at an end, though he was determined to hang on to the very last. He actually succeeded in entering and exploring Western Port, and as we read his account of it we cannot but wish that he had sailed only a little way farther, and gained the undying honour of being the first to enter what we now know as Port Phillip. But that was not to be, and he retraced his steps to the convicts' island, one of the Glennie Group, lying to the west of Wilson's Promontory. He put them ashore on the mainland and gave them a musket and such provisions as he could spare, with directions how to proceed to Port Jackson. Two of the seven, however, were taken on board the whale-boat, one a very old man and the other diseased. He picked up the wanderers a few days afterwards in Corner Inlet, and ferried them across to the Ninety-mile Beach. They were never heard of again, and we can only think of what their sufferings may have been, or wonder where their white bones are lying with the winds sighing over them for evermore. Bass and his boat's crew, with the two rescued convicts, safely completed their voyage and reached Port Jackson after a cruise of eleven weeks, the most important expedition that had yet taken place in New Holland. He had practically ascertained that Van Diemen's Land was separated from the mainland, he had surveyed six hundred miles of coast in a boisterous climate, in an open boat, and this was a feat, as his comrade Flinders says, "not perhaps to be equalled in the annals of maritime history." And while Bass was away on this voyage of discovery, Flinders too had an opportunity of returning to his old work. A schooner was to be sent to the wreck of the *Sydney Cove*. which we have noticed once or twice already, and the midshipman obtained leave to accompany the captain, and to take such observations and surveys as were possible.

The wreck lay in a bay between Preservation and Rum Islands in Furneaux's Group, between the larger islands of Cape Barren and Clarke. Just look them up in the map and see what a stretch of barren, stormy sea lay ahead of Bass when his boat sprang her leak before he could reach the wreck, and what a frenzy for gain must have impelled the convicts to venture from Sydney into these unknown seas. One does not know whether to admire their courage or to wonder at their foolhardiness.

In his schooner Flinders made a very accurate survey of all the islands in the Straits, and sailed for Sydney again, arriving just a fortnight after his friend, on March 9.

A voyage of duty to Norfolk Island had then to be undertaken, but in September of the same year, 1798, the two comrades set sail together for the last time, in the sloop *Norfolk*, to circumnavigate the Island of Tasmania, if an island it were discovered to be. This was the crowning work as far as the two friends were concerned, but there is nothing in the voyage particularly to draw our attention. It was as yet by far the most important exploration undertaken, and its results were satisfactory in the extreme, but it obtains much more the character of an utility voyage than one of romance, romantic though, no doubt, it was to those who took part in it. The comrades sailed in the *Norfolk* sloop from Port Jackson on October 7, 1798, in company with the snow *Nautilus*, the commander of which, Mr. Bishop, had determined on a sealing expedition to Furneaux's Islands, and the two vessels kept together until the *Nautilus* took up her quarters for the season in Kent's Bay. Then the *Norfolk* steered south-west and discovered and surveyed that estuary at the head of which now stands the town of Launceston. Baffled by persistent contrary winds for a time, the *Norfolk* returned to the islands to give letters to the *Nautilus* for the Governor, and then returned to the charge. They skirted the northern shores, surveying as they crept along, but without much incident, save the shooting of swans, of which there were vast numbers, until on December 9 they rounded a sloping rocky point of Three Hammock Island. "As soon as we had passed the north sloping point, a long swell was perceived to come from the south-west, such as we had not been accustomed to for some time. It broke heavily upon a small reef some mile and a half from the point, and upon all the western shore. But although it was likely to prove troublesome, and even dangerous, Mr. Bass and myself hailed it with joy and mutual congratulation, as announcing the completion of our long-wished-for discovery of a passage into the Southern Indian Ocean."

On that same day they observed, coming from a bight in the south of the island of Three Hammocks, the most prodigious flight of sooty petrels perhaps ever seen by the eye of man. Flinders took the trouble to estimate their numbers roughly. He says that the flight must have been fifty yards deep, and three hundred broad, and that their wings had only just space enough for full action, so close together were they. He calculated that they were travelling at the rate of thirty miles an hour, and the passage of the throng occupied an hour and a half. Here is a pretty sum for you. Just try it and see if you make the same answer as our friend Flinders. His arithmetic makes it come to one hundred and fifty millions of sooty petrels, the nests of which he believed would cover some eighteen geographical square miles of land. They are called mutton birds now, and still migrate in immense flocks at a certain time of the year.

From this onwards until they had successfully circumnavigated the little continent, nothing of any note took place, though every mile of their course was full of interest. If you trace their journey on a map you will find that all the headlands are now named as Flinders left them, Bluff Point, Point Hibbs, Black Rock, and Rocky Point, and so on, and he took care that the two first peaks spied by Tasman two hundred years before should be for ever known as Mounts Zeehan and Heemskirk, the names, you will remember, of Tasman's vessels. Flinders had scarcely any intercourse with the natives on this voyage, finding them very shy. But he wonders how, without canoes, they evidently had communication with the islands two and three miles from the main.

Finally, with favouring gales the *Norfolk* finished her voyage and anchored in Port Jackson on January 11, 1799, after an absence of thirteen weeks. It was a wonderful piece of work, and is ever memorable in that, by Flinders' generous advice, the Governor named the straits between Tasmania and Australia after the brave surgeon Bass, whose labours as regards these countries were now over. This chapter will complete his tale. He sailed shortly after this for England by way of Valparaiso. The captain of the vessel was very incompetent, and appears also to have gone out of his mind. At the request of the crew Bass took over the command. On arrival at Valparaiso he sought to trade with the Spaniards, but the authorities refused to deal with him. He at once threatened to bombard the place, and the permission to trade was granted. But the wretched Spaniards were too cunning for the sailor-surgeon. He was enticed ashore, captured, and it is believed that he was sent to the quicksilver mines as a slave, where doubtless his life would not be a long one. But with a knowledge of Bass's character we can make a tale which would outdo any romance ever conceived by man.

In the next chapter we will also finish the career of Flinders, which was scarcely more happy than that of his friend.

CHAPTER XIV

FLINDERS' SURVEY OF THE COAST

After the departure of Bass, Flinders was commissioned to make one more voyage of discovery on the coast in the *Norfolk* sloop, and then he too returned to England. This little affair, however, only occupied six weeks, and he sailed no farther than Moreton Bay, where he suspected but failed to find the entrance to a river of some size. To chance and to other men was left the honour of discovering the Brisbane River, into which large steamers can now find their way.

After this Flinders returned in the *Reliance* to England, landing at the latter end of 1800, and his discoveries were at once published. The result of this was that, at the urgent entreaty of Sir Joseph Banks, who, you may remember, accompanied Cook in his first voyage, another expedition was immediately set on foot for the thorough investigation and survey of all the coasts of Terra Australia, now no longer altogether "incognita." Flinders, greatly to his joy, received his commission as Commander on February 19, 1801, and on the 26th of May, in his Majesty's sloop *Investigator*, a north-country-built ship of

340 tons burden, he dropped down the Thames and sailed round to Spithead, from whence he finally set out on July 19.

We were at war with France, and our fleet was patrolling the Channel without ceasing, in order to checkmate Bonaparte, if he should attempt to land in England, and the *Investigator* fell in with Sir Andrew Mitchell, cruising off Brest with four great three-deckers. They had not dropped an anchor for seventeen weeks whilst attending to this business, but Flinders was to have no art nor part in this portion of a Royal Navy officer's duty. He had a passport from the French giving him immunity from the usages of war, and he himself was pledged to "act in all respects towards French ships as if the two countries were not at war." And so began his long, interesting journey. It is far too long a story for us to follow in any way minutely, but it is teeming with great results inasmuch as our accurate knowledge of the coasts of Australia is concerned. But there are one or two picturesque incidents which are worth your hearing. The *Investigator* arrived safely at King George's Sound after surveying the coast from Cape Leeuwin onward. She arrived safely enough, but even before leaving the Channel she was found to be leaking dreadfully, and required the constant use of the pumps. So busy were all our available men of war that no better vessel could be found, and Flinders could only make the best of it, and thoroughly recaulk her, both within and without, at the Cape, in Simon's Bay.

He had made a survey of the long, uninteresting coast along the Great Australian Bight, leaving the now familiar names behind him, and had just rounded Cape Wiles into Spencer's Gulf when the first incident occurred to which I referred. Unfortunately it was a very sad one. The master of the *Investigator* was a Mr. Thistle, an able man, of great use to Flinders from his wide experience and fine character. He had been with Surgeon Bass in the whale-boat when he discovered the Straits and Western Port. He had sailed with the inseparables round Van Diemen's Land, and had accompanied Flinders to Moreton Bay. He had been promoted from before the mast to be a midshipman, and had only been three weeks in England when the opportunity came to him of accompanying his old officer on his voyage. He had a passion for discovery, and he jumped at the chance. When the ship was lying at Spithead preparatory to sailing, having some idle moments, Thistle went to have his fortune told by a certain old man called Pine. There was the usual story of a long voyage, and no doubt money, and a dark girl dressed in blue, and all that rubbish which we have all been told so often. But he added that the ship that Thistle was sailing in would be joined by another vessel, and that before joining her Thistle himself would be lost.

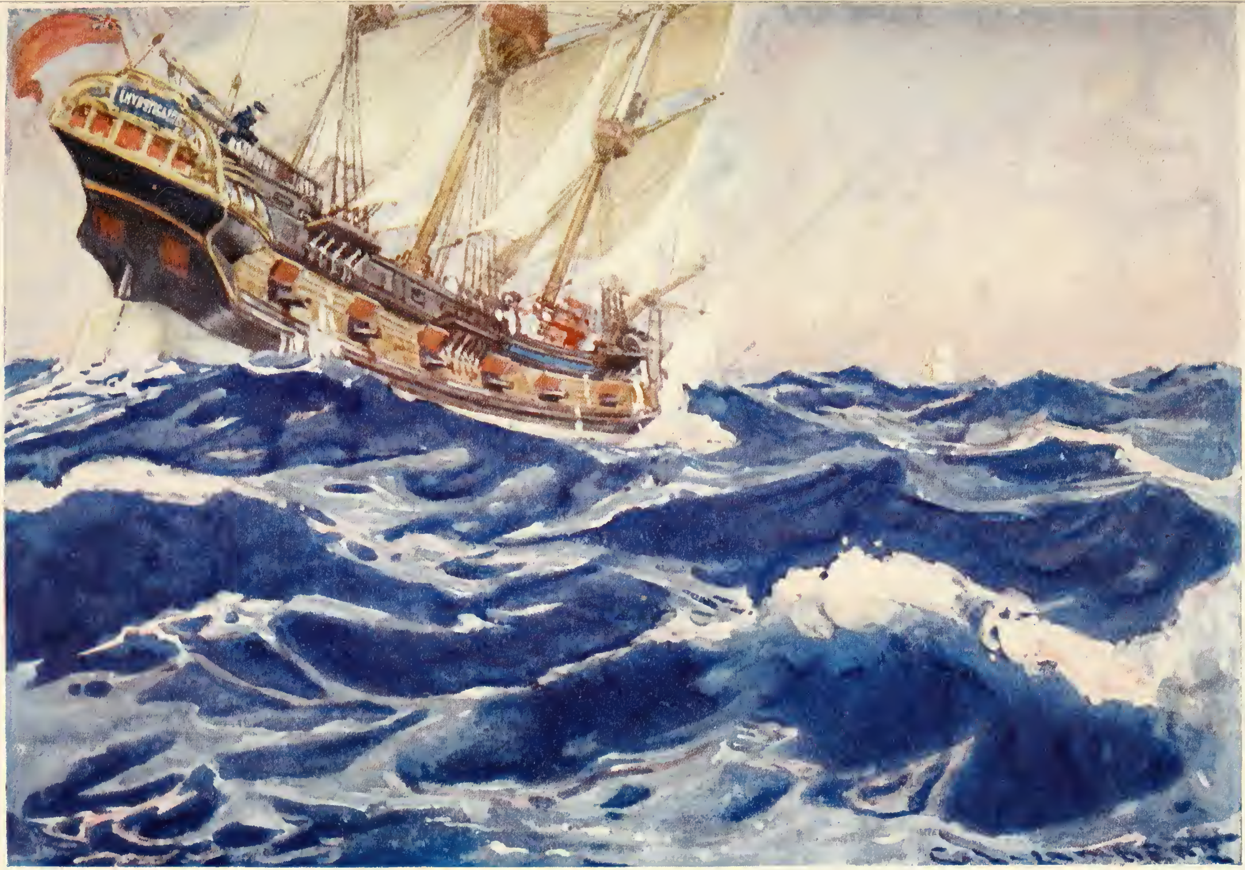
Flinders' boat's crew, hearing what was foretold of Thistle, went to consult the same old seer. They were told that they would be shipwrecked, but not in the ship in which they were going out. But whether they would escape or not it was not permitted to him to reveal. The first portion of the prophecy came true while the *Investigator* was anchored off Thistle Island, which you can see in the map. They were running short of water, and being very busy taking observations in the ship, Mr. Flinders sent off Thistle to the mainland in the cutter in search of an anchoring place near water. At dusk she was noticed returning, was suddenly lost sight of, and never seen again. A strong tide was running seaward, and only two out of the eight of the boat's crew could swim. Sharks were very numerous, and all that was ever found of the lost expedition was a small keg and some pieces of the broken boat. Thistle Island Flinders named in memory of the master, and he also called another island after Taylor, a midshipman who was lost, and six small islets received their names from the seamen who perished.

After this disaster the ship's company had a pleasant sojourn off Kangaroo Island, a place now very familiar to travellers arriving in Australia by the mail boats.

On this island the kangaroos were so numerous and so tame that it was evident they had never before been disturbed by man. Thirty-one were killed, either by shooting in the eyes with small shot, or knocking on the head with sticks, and half a hundred-weight of heads, forequarters, and tails were stewed down into soup for dinner. "In gratitude for so seasonable a supply I named this southern land Kangaroo Island." The *Investigator* then sailed through and named the Backstairs Passage, and next day another picturesque little incident took place.

At four in the afternoon a white rock was reported from aloft to be seen ahead. "On approaching nearer it proved to be a ship standing towards us; *and we cleared for action.*" You can understand the excitement. We can also reflect curiously upon what strange beings we are. Here, thousands of miles away from civilisation, beneath a peaceful coast, where no boom of hostile gun ever before shook the cliffs and reverberated, the two white-winged ships drove at one another, ready at a signal to grapple in deadly and useless strife.

"The stranger was a heavy-looking ship, without any top-gallant masts up; and our colours being hoisted, she showed a French ensign, and afterwards an English jack forward, as we did a white flag. At half-past five, the land being then five miles distant, I hove to, and learned, as the stranger passed to leeward with a free wind, that it was the French national ship *Le Géographe*, under the command of Captain Nicolas Baudin. We veered round as *Le Géographe* was passing, so as to keep our broadside to her, *lest the flag of truce should be a deception.*" Oh! the two bulldogs, with their bristles up and their fangs showing beneath their curling lips. And we can hear a snarl through the whole interview. Afterwards M. Baudin claimed to be the first discoverer of all the southern coast, from Western Port to the western side of the Australian Bight, and we have, by Flinders' lucky arrival a few days in advance, escaped such names as "Terre Napoléon" for a portion of Victoria, "L'Isle Decrés" for Kangaroo Island, "Golfe Bonaparte" for Spencer's Gulf, and "Golfe Joséphine" for Gulf of St. Vincent.



‘A ship standing towards us. We cleared for action’

"Ah! Captain," as M. Freycinet, Baudin's first lieutenant, said, "if we had not been kept so long picking up shells and catching butterflies at Van Diemen's Land, you would not have discovered the south coast before us."

But although Baudin thus tried to pirate Flinders' discoveries, Flinders himself, like a gentleman, retained scrupulously Baudin's nomenclature from Encounter Bay to Western Port. We read this now in Cape Jaffa, Rivoli Bay, Cape Buffon, and so on.

But now Flinders had to hurry along in his survey in order to reach Port Jackson before the wintry weather broke upon the coast. It was April, and there was no time to lose. He roughly surveyed King's Island in Bass Strait, the existence of which Captain Baudin pooh-poohed, and he then entered Port Phillip, which at first he mistook for the Western Port of Bass. But he quickly found that this was not the case, and imagined that he had made altogether a fresh discovery, as Captain Baudin had unaccountably missed the inlet. But unfortunately, only ten weeks before, Lieutenant John Murray in the *Lady Nelson* had found and explored the great port. To him we owe the name of Arthur's Seat, which he gave to that high hill, such a prominent landmark there, and which indeed does faintly resemble the lion couchant frowning above "mine own romantic town." Point Nepean, too, was named by Murray; and now, whilst lying on the white beach, or sitting on the rocky points watching one's children fishing for crabs or playing on the sands, it is strange to see how every rock and shoal described by Flinders a century ago still show their heads and shapes above the waves, an everlasting memorial to a brave and a steadfast Englishman.

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF FLINDERS

FLINDERS did not remain long in Port Jackson, where, however, he found *Le Naturaliste*, the companion vessel of *Le Géographe*, from which he had not long parted in Encounter Bay. The crew was being hospitably treated, and a boat's crew of *Le Géographe* which was lost in Bass Straits had been picked up by an English vessel, and was now at home on *Le Naturaliste*. Although we were at war with France, all the wants of these vessels were cordially supplied and her men treated as friends. They were on a purely scientific expedition, and were therefore free to come and go, exempt from the usages of war. I mention this particularly as a contrast to the treatment by the French, at a later date, of Flinders himself. As quickly as possible, then, the *Investigator*, now accompanied by the brig *Lady Nelson*, set sail to accomplish the survey of the east, north, and west coasts, just exactly a year after her original departure from Spithead. The voyage was a most useful one, but requires little notice here. The *Lady Nelson* was found to be clumsy and useless for the work, and was sent back to Port Jackson whilst still to the east of Torres Straits. Here, too, the *Investigator* was discovered to be in a fearfully leaky condition, although Flinders, in spite of that, determined to hold on. He successfully passed through the dreaded Straits in three days, and completed his work as far as Arnhem Bay, losing on the way one seaman from sunstroke, and after this man he named Morgan's Island.

The *Investigator* was now in sore need of fresh food, and as she had been driven well out into the Timor Sea, Flinders continued his course to that island. Here he shipped his fresh supplies, but unfortunately with them he also took on board an infectious dysentery, and he hastily completed his voyage to Cape Leeuwin, from whence, you remember, he had taken his original departure. And thence he coasted round to Port Jackson. He lost many men on this last portion of the cruise, and, as he says, the disease seemed invariably to seize upon and prove fatal to all the most valuable and best behaved part of the crew.

And now we are nearing the end of the career of Captain Matthew Flinders. The *Investigator* was pronounced, on arrival at Port Jackson, to be perfectly unseaworthy, and of several alternatives offered to him by the Governor, Philip King, Flinders chose that of returning to England, and procuring a better vessel in which to continue his surveys. H.M.S. *Porpoise* was about to sail, and Flinders was received on board as a passenger, but with power to complete any survey which he desired to undertake on the way. Two ships accompanied the *Porpoise*, and, as she was destined to try once more the passage through Torres Straits, their commanders rejoiced in the opportunity of reaching Batavia and India by the quickest route then known. These ships were the *Bridgewater*, East Indiaman, 740 tons, and the *Cato*, 450 tons, of London.

On August 10, 1803, the three slipped out of Port Jackson together, and had a favourable voyage until the 17th. In the afternoon the *Cato* signalled "land ahead." This was found to be a low sandbank covered with birds, and with great breakers beating on it. You will see it on a good map as the Cato Bank. There was deep water all round, and the voyage was continued, the precaution being taken of double-reefing the topsails after dark, and an extra careful watch was kept.

At eight there came the cry of "breakers ahead," and when Flinders reached the deck from the cabin, where he and the officers had been talking after dinner, the *Porpoise* was within half a cable's length of a reef, and broadside on both to wind and waves. In a few moments, with a crash, she landed on the rock and stuck fast. At once the attempt was made to fire a gun to warn the other vessels, but the ship had such a list over that it was found to be impossible, and in a short time the *Cato* and *Bridgewater* were seen through the darkness, each upon different tacks, each endeavouring to avoid the reef, and in their efforts approaching one another at a fearful rate. The whole safety of the crew of the *Porpoise* depended on these two, and as they neared one another a dead silence fell upon the men. Every moment they expected to hear the crash of the two vessels meeting. Then suddenly the two began to open out from one another, and it was seen that they had passed without touching. In another minute, however, the *Cato* struck the reef with a smashing noise, the masts went overboard, every light went out, and those on the *Porpoise* believed that she had totally perished. Then the *Bridgewater's* light went dipping and bobbing away into the darkness. She never returned. All night long the miserable shipwrecked seamen waited for her lights to show again. Flinders himself, by swimming, reached a small boat which was lying in the lee of the rocks, and on board of which were several men, bent upon fetching the *Bridgewater* and guiding her to their rescue. But both wind and waves defeated even him. When morning broke the *Cato* was seen lying dismasted two cables' lengths away, the men huddled about the bows of the ship, most of them nearly naked. Nothing of the *Bridgewater* was visible. A sandbank was seen to be lying about a mile from the wreck, and this Flinders at once examined in a boat and found to be above high-water mark. Here all the men of the *Porpoise* were safely landed, and then the crew of the *Cato,* who, by throwing themselves into the sea, were saved by the boats of the *Porpoise,* were taken to the bank. Three young lads were drowned, however, and one of these unfortunate boys had continued all morning to bewail that he himself was the Jonah who had brought the disaster. This was his fourth voyage and his fourth wreck.

Flinders was no man to sit down and lament his loss. By the 19th everything upon the bank was as comfortable as possible; there was an abundance of stores, a flagstaff had been erected, and the British flag hoisted, Union down, as a signal of distress; and on the 26th, a Friday, the unlucky day, as he says, of the seaman's calendar, he sailed in the cutter of the *Porpoise*, with fourteen men, to bring help from Sydney. Every one was in the highest spirits. They had named the cutter the *Hope*; a seaman scrambled up the mast as the little boat got under way and reversed the flag to Union up instead of down, and three grand cheers were given as she cleared the bank and stood for Port Jackson, nearly 800 miles away. On September 8, after a trying voyage, heroically carried out, Sydney Heads were sighted, and with a fresh north-east wind the *Hope* dashed through, to the inexpressible satisfaction of her commander. Thin, worn, and quite unshaven, he surprised at dinner Governor King, who believed him to be thousands of miles away. It was a Sunday afternoon. Help could not be despatched in an instant, but preparations were hurried on as swiftly as possible, and by the 21st day of the month the *Rolla*, a ship bound for China, the *Francis*, a colonial schooner, and the *Cumberland*, a schooner of 29 tons burden, set sail on their mission. Exactly six weeks from the day the *Hope* had left the bank the flagstaff there was again sighted. When the rescue vessels drew near they saw two boats sailing off the bank, and one returned, while the other gained the *Rolla*. It was the seamen testing a new boat, which they had built in case anything had happened to the *Hope*, and you can believe that the joy was great both for rescuers and rescued. Yet in these exciting circumstances young Flinders, the captain's brother, showed that same coolness and self-control which under all circumstances were possessed by the great man himself. When the relieving ships were first sighted a midshipman ran to the tent in which young Flinders was calculating some distances, crying, "Sir, sir, a ship and two schooners in sight!"

"Ah!" said Flinders, after consideration, "that will be my brother back again. Have the ships anchored?"

"No, sir, not yet."

"Well, come and tell me when they have," and he went on with his calculations.

All was now well. The *Rolla*, with the salvage on board and most of the crew, sailed for China, the *Francis* returned to Sydney, and Flinders and his gallant men once more faced the intricacies of Torres Strait and the dangers of a voyage hence to the Cape and England in the leaky little *Cumberland*. The *Bridgewater*, whose captain was named Palmer, and who had so basely deserted the shipwrecked men, reached Bombay in safety, and reported the total loss of the *Cato* and *Porpoise* with all hands. He then sailed for London, and was never seen again. As Flinders says, "What must have been Palmer's feelings when he found himself going down?"

After a long but interesting voyage the *Cumberland* arrived in the neighbourhood of the Mauritius, which was occupied by the French. The schooner was at the time in such a condition that it seemed useless to attempt to sail her any farther without undergoing extensive repairs. Flinders, therefore, made the island, and was at once seized as a prisoner of war by the Governor, General de Caen. This governor was a sour, disappointed, ill-tempered man, and he treated Flinders in a most shameful manner. All his papers and log-books were taken from him, and the books were never returned. For three months he was kept in secluded confinement as a spy, and was in poor quarters, "devoured by mosquitoes above, and bugs below." For twenty more months he was held as a prisoner of war along with the other English unfortunates, but was then permitted to walk in certain parts of the island on parole. Finally, after six years and a half of captivity, during which the gallant soul was fretting his heart out in his desire to be at his work again, he was released and landed in England after an absence of nearly ten years. His first care there was characteristic of his great heart. He obtained the freedom of five young men, prisoners of war in England, and sent them back to their friends in Mauritius. They belonged to families that had shown kindness to English prisoners in that island. During his years of captivity Flinders had lost his health so entirely that he never again recovered it, and on the very day upon which his book was published he died. His fame will never fade in Australia, but few, very few, know what a grand fellow he was, cool, brave, self-reliant, a "stickler" at his duty, the finest type of British naval officer.

After him is called that long unlovely street by the wharfs in Melbourne, and the busy commercial lane running parallel to it. After him, too, is named one of the islands in the Straits which he christened after his great comrade Bass, and many are reminded of him when they repair in summer to the picturesque little township on the shores of Western Port, where their children bathe and fish, and the game of golf is in full swing, on the very spot, perhaps, where Bass first landed from the whale-boat in 1799. Times change, and we change with them, and the years fly by in endless round.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EARLY EXPLORERS BY LAND

The Dutch had called the great south land New Holland, and the English had named the eastern portion with which they were now familiar, New South Wales, but Flinders in his book termed it Terra Australia, and says, "Had I permitted myself any innovation upon the original term, it would have been to convert it into *Australia.*" And such it was called, and such has it been ever since. But the working part of Australia in his day was a little strip of land forty miles by eighty, bounded by the inhospitable sea on the one hand, by impassable mountains on the other. These mountains looked very beautiful and peaceful, sleeping, blue and hazy in the distance, and the first settlers thought nothing of them except that they were pretty, and that they gave a feeling of hope and homeliness. Beyond blue hills, somehow, there is always hope.

Only a few months after the colony had shaken down into everyday life the Governor announced that "he was going to explore the summits." Alas! poor man, he did but fossick about in the gullies at their feet, and he himself never returned again to the charge. Then the population began to grow, and flocks and herds to wander off from the town, and food became scarce wherewith to support the folk. But yet no one could penetrate the great rocky barrier. Terra Australia, to all intents and purposes, was forty miles wide by eighty long. One man after another headed expeditions to "unlock the land," a cry which we hear again, now in 1907, with, however, a very different meaning. But no one could turn the key of the rocky gate. Bass, the intrepid by sea, beat his wings like a caged bird for fifteen days against the barriers, and all in vain. He had hooks made for his feet in order to enable him to scale precipices like a fly, and he had ropes wherewith his sailor-men lowered him into the deep dark gullies and hauled him up again, but it was all of no avail. It is said that when he returned to the town he was heard to offer the opinion that "the mountains never would be crossed." I doubt if a man like Bass thought so, let alone said so. However, it was becoming a very serious matter for the inhabitants as the years flew by, and as both men and flocks increased to such an extent that this little riviera could no longer support them.

To heighten the state of crisis into which the colony was passing, a great drought occurred, and in the year following the drought—1802—heavy floods swept down the Hawkesbury River, destroying vast quantities of feed. Droughts, if one only knew it, are always a blessing in disguise, and they were so on this occasion.

Something *had* to be done to discover new country, and somebody *must* do it. All sorts of reports were going about amongst the people as to what lay beyond the blue line of hills. Escaped convicts had penetrated the scrub and the ranges, it was said, and had found an El Dorado there. They had discovered a white people living in plenty, rich in flocks, in a lovely land flowing with milk and honey. Others said that there was a great inland sea, and the country was inhabited by friendly blacks, and was passing rich. There were great rivers and hippopotami and deer, and there were heaps of gold in the sand of the rivers. But no one had ever seen it, or if any one had, then nobody had ever returned to tell the tale. It was all talk and imagination. We can understand what a tantalising bait it was that lay behind the bars of this cage. And then came the drought, and the flood, and the inexorable case of men's stomachs asking to be fed. Food must be won at all costs. So it fell to one named George Blaxland, a native of Kent, to lead a little band to triumph and to plenty. With Blaxland went William Lawson, a lieutenant in the 102nd Regiment, and a young fellow who afterwards carved his name deep in his country's records — William Charles Wentworth. Blaxland was in the prime of his strength and knew the country well. He was a farmer, and had already penetrated as far into the barrier as any one, for his holding lay only a short day's march from the foot of the hills, and the sight of them was his daily portion. It was early in May that they started, and they left the farm with the determination to win or to die. They did win, but it was only after a

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fierce struggle. Their plan was to head every watercourse, hoping that the highest ground would be continuous. Thus they zigzagged along, somewhere to the north of the present Zigzag railway, but gradually rising every day, and each day having to cut their way through the densest of scrub. The explorers had pack-horses with them carrying supplies. For these the travellers returned after each day's journey had been cut out, and the same process was repeated next day. Water was scarce, and on one occasion a member of the expedition was lowered 600 feet in order to bring up enough for the men. The horses went without water on that evening. The party was on a narrow ridge with deep chasms on either hand, and this ridge was only 20 feet wide. Above them towered a huge rock, and it seemed as though all their toil had been in vain, and that they must now turn back again upon their tracks. Try to imagine the situation. There were cliffs on either hand, higher by far than those at the suspension bridge at Clifton (if you have ever been there), and a great rock was barring the way. "But by good hap and our lady's grace" they just managed to round the rock, and then the country, bad as it was, became more passable. After nine days' hard striving, but with hope again in their hearts, they arrived one evening at a spot where the country plainly began to slope to the west. They were over the highest ridge, and the day was won. The downward descent was nearly as perilous as the upward climb, but they were playing a winning game now, and victory was theirs. They finally left the mountains, and found themselves in a well-watered valley, close to where the town of Hartley now stands. For two days more, however, they pushed ahead, and then from the top of a hill, called Blaxland's to this day, they saw a grand stretch of pastoral land sloping to the west, "capable" said the leader, "of supporting the wants of the colony for thirty years."

The journey had taken twenty days. You can accomplish it all now in an hour or two. But it was a great work done, and it marked an era in our history never to be forgotten. There is still standing an old tree marked by the axes of the adventurous band. Long may it stand! But its days are numbered, and stonework and masonry must take the place of this living monument. And indeed a perpetual memorial of the successful expedition was made in the very year which followed, when Governor Macquarie, with his convict labour, hewed out and formed the old road to Bathurst, now a large and very prosperous town. We read that the travellers themselves returned to Sydney in very poor health, utterly worn out, with their clothes torn to rags. And so ended the first successful journey of the early Australian explorers.

CHAPTER XVII

WILLIAM BUCKLEY

But if events had been shaping themselves slowly during the twenty-five years' infancy of New South Wales, there had been all sorts of happenings by sea. The country at their backs was found to be far too small for the growing population. It was supposed too that the French were about to occupy the southern portion of the country, and therefore Governor King sent a vessel round to Port Phillip with instructions to occupy the land there and to report upon the harbour. Surveyor Grimes and Lieutenant Robbins walked round the entire port, passing the mouth of the Yarra, the Salt Water River, Corio Bay, where Geelong was afterwards built, and all the other places we now know so well, and Grimes's report was so unfavourable that the Governor gave up the project. However, the British Government insisted on persevering with the place, and Lieutenant-Governor Collins was despatched from England with a shipload of convicts to open a settlement in April 1803. A year before this a handful of convicts had been transhipped from Port Jackson to Van Diemen's Land partly as a relief to the overflowing settlement, and partly as a counterfoil to the French, who had completed a careful survey of the island under Commander Baudin, who, you will remember, had met Flinders in Encounter Bay. Collins landed at the neck of land which connects the ocean with the bay just where the watering-place of Sorrento now lies, and he found the country extremely unpromising for his purpose. He said in his letter to the Government that "no speculative men would ever resort to this harbour." This first band of settlers only remained in possession for about fifteen weeks, and then, under instructions from Lord Howard, the Secretary for the Colonies, they broke up the camp and sailed over to Tasmania, where the first shiploads from Port Jackson had already established themselves.

So the great harbour was destined to lie gleaming in the sun, unused, for some thirty years more, during all of which time, however, one white man continued to live beside its shores. The convicts under Collins had a bitter hatred for the place. And you can hardly wonder at it. The shores on the opposite side of the bay from their camp were flat, muddy, and treeless. The land on which they settled was either in rocky promontories or barren sandy dunes, thickly covered with an almost impenetrable ti-tree scrub. The ocean beach was wild, barren, and uninteresting. Their work was a drudgery, and many made the attempt to escape. Such of those that were not recaptured were never heard of again, with the exception of one man named William Buckley. He was a huge fellow about six feet five inches in height, and with wonderfully few brains. He had originally been a bricklayer in Cheshire, and had then enlisted in the army. He had received stolen goods when his regiment was stationed at Gibraltar. For this offence he was condemned to transportation. He escaped from Sorrento along with two fellow-convicts, the name of one being Marmon and the other Pye. They knew of nowhere to which they could possibly escape, and proceeded to round the bay to the north. But Pye and Marmon disappear quickly from Buckley's narrative, and no one knows what happened to them. Some people had a suspicion that Buckley killed, and perhaps ate them. For nearly a year we know that the big bearded fellow wandered about by himself, living on shell-fish and whatever he could pick up. Then he fell in with the blacks. They believed that he was what they called "Muurnong guurk," a chief who had been killed in battle, and who had returned to them as a white man. Baarwon was his name, and the natives welcomed him accordingly. Buckley lived with these black men for thirty-two long years, during all of which time he taught them absolutely nothing. He has not even left us any information about his friends, nor their customs, and he might as well have been a strayed horse or dog for all the interest he took in their customs or manners. You would have thought that he would have shown them how to make bricks, at least, or have taught them how to cook food; but not a bit of it. He lived with a wife, or wives, just like one of the aborigines themselves, learned their language, conformed to their customs, and forgot his own. It is said that he had several daughters, but nothing is known for certain, and if he had children all trace of them has been lost. He dwelt on the west coast of the bay somewhere near Indented Head, and a cave is pointed out near Queenscliff which, it is said, he used as a habitation. If he only had had a moderate amount of brains, he could have left us a valuable record of the natives and their ways, but we know nothing from this uninteresting human vegetable. He was finally found by a party of settlers from Tasmania in 1835, and when spoken to was discovered to have quite lost the power of speaking English. It gradually came back to him as time went on, but for the remainder of his life he was a silent, retiring man. He was finally killed by a fall from a buggy at the age of seventy-six. He had married a white woman, the widow of an emigrant in Tasmania, but had no children. Buckley was much disliked by many of those with whom he lived after his rescue from the blacks, and I only mention him because every book concerning the early days gives him a considerable place, although he certainly deserves to be forgotten. The party which found him and rescued him was the first band of immigrants from Tasmania to Port Phillip, an offshoot from that little isle which, only seventy-two years ago, founded the city now named "marvellous" Melbourne. We shall talk of this afterwards, perhaps.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOOL TRADE AND GOVERNOR BLIGH

MEANWHILE, as we have seen, the flocks of the colony were increasing, and indeed from almost the earliest days after the landing of Governor Phillip it was apparent to one man, at least, that the country was suited to what has now become its staple industry, the growth of wool.

Phillip had a flock of twenty-nine sheep in 1788, and in 1792 these had increased to one hundred and five. The little "mob" had been brought from the Cape of Good Hope, along with a small herd of cattle, all of which had, however, been lost in the wilds, through the neglect of the convict herdsman. The growth of the flock of sheep had been but slow, but in 1794 a number of both sheep and cattle were brought from the Cape in the *Reliance*, the vessel which also carried our old friends Flinders and Bass. An officer called Captain John M'Arthur had already obtained a few head of hairy sheep from India, and to these he added many of the Cape importations. M'Arthur's father and grandfather had fought at Culloden for Prince Charlie, and probably at Prestonpans as well. He was a fiery Highlander, impatient of rebuke, unable to brook contradiction or delay. He had fought more than one duel in the colony. But at this time he seems to have been the only member of the community who took an intelligent interest in the wool business, and for many years he struggled along, trying to improve the quality of his flock. He was the father of our whole trade. He imported a few pure merinoes in 1796, and at once perceived what a wonderful improvement was effected in the quality of the wool, and shortly afterwards he imported twelve hundred Cape sheep, which he crossed carefully with merinoes. Then he took a voyage all the way to England in order to lay before the Government the advantages which Australia possessed for furthering his industry, and he at the same time attempted to form a company for the carrying out of his designs. He failed in this, but returned with a recommendation from the English Government to the Governor to help him as much as possible. But the Governor at this time was William Bligh, he whom we saw on the *Bounty* some years before, and whose temper does not seem to have been improved by his hardships. To us it is almost comical to read of the struggle which took place between Bligh and M'Arthur. Things were in a very bad state in the government of the colony. The military officers monopolised the management of all affairs, and had fallen into a very slipshod, if not immoral, method of administering justice and everything else. They had been making vast sums of money by the sale of liquor, and although the previous Governor, Philip King, had introduced vigorous reforms, Bligh had been unable to follow them up. Doubtless he was much worried over the matter, and doubtless too he had a "down" on the military. At all events when M'Arthur approached him with his recommendation from home, he rounded upon him in the most vigorous manner.

"What have I to do with your sheep, sir, or your cattle, sir? Are you to have such flocks of sheep and herds of cattle as have never been heard of before? I have heard of your concerns, sir. You have 5000 acres of the best land in the country, but you shan't keep it."

Bligh was an old tartar, and he had become so used to people either knuckling under to him on board ship, or being seized up and receiving six dozen lashes, that he could not make it out at all when M'Arthur simply stood and looked at him with an amused smile. Then he got very red in the face and blew his nose like a trumpet, just as Billy Bones used to do, and looked at his enemy again. But even that did not frighten him. So he went into breakfast muttering and looking thunder, and abused M'Arthur in such a manner that Governor King, who was his guest at table, is said to have burst into tears of indignation. But Bligh was not like many peppery old sea captains who explode in a violent manner and then blow away their temper like smoke and calm down. He was a vindictive fellow, and he set about bullying this military enthusiast on sheep-breeding. There was a law at this time that made any one employing convict labour responsible for the safe custody of these servants. M'Arthur owned a small ship, and one of his men was a convict. He absconded, and this fact gave Bligh a fine chance. M'Arthur had rendered himself liable to have a bond for £900 forfeited through the escape of this convict, and Bligh at once declared the bond as forfeited, arrested the captain, and cast him into prison. Then it became open war between the Governor and the soldiers. M'Arthur was at once released by his comrades, and his regiment marched in the morning, with colours flying and the band playing a defiant tune, to Government House, which they searched, and it is said that Bligh was found hiding in a closet off his bedroom. I do not credit that. One who could dauntlessly navigate his crew through an infinity of dangers after the mutiny on the *Bounty*, was no man to shrink from a row. There was probably a simple explanation of the circumstances which was garbled and exaggerated in the heat and ill-feeling of the moment. At all events he was taken prisoner, and given to understand that he no longer had the power of Governor, and the commander of the regiment reigned in his stead. Bligh was given a bond to sign whereby he abdicated his post, and pledged himself to sail for England in a man-of-war at once. He actually did sail, but he did not go home. He cruised up and down Australian waters until advice came from the home Government, upon which he was reinstated as Governor for twenty-four hours, and then finally retired. The whole affair was one of the most curious that our colony has ever gone through, and at the time caused very great excitement and bad feeling. But, like everything else, it soon blew over and was forgotten. Bligh's pretty daughter, a widow, who had faced the troops with her drawn parasol on that "unhallowed morn" when they captured her father, married the commander of the military then in Sydney, and M'Arthur received his grant of land at a place called the Cowpastures, near Camden, on the Nepean River. It was the very spot to which the cattle from the first ships had strayed when they were lost by their herdsman, and the country was very sweet there.

Here M'Arthur lived to see the merino-wool industry grow to be a very big affair indeed. When he commenced to turn his attention to the breeding of sheep, there were only a few coarse-bred animals in the colony. Indeed, Governor Phillip wrote that he himself once lost all his flock except a single ewe. In 1807 only 245 pounds of Australian wool passed the English Customs-House. In 1818 nearly 90,000 pounds passed, and in 1834, when the pioneer of the business was gathered to his fathers, over 2,250,000 pounds. It is just a little over seventy years ago, and now there are somewhere about 100,000,000 sheep grazing in Australia. There is plenty of romance in the wool trade if you study it from its commencement until to-day.

CHAPTER XIX

HAMILTON HUME

The life of the early settlers had in it a very great charm, although it had its drawbacks. The climate was a glorious one. In most seasons there was a plentiful enough rainfall, with an occasional year of drought, followed by heavy floods; but these only occurred now and again, and in the meantime life was very pleasant. There was little to fear from the blacks, or at least very little to fear as compared with the savages of other lands, and as people acquired live stock they gradually pushed farther and farther out from the town until, after twenty-five years of settlement, the sheep in the little strip of known habitable land amounted to between 60,000 and 70,000. Then came Blaxland's great victory over the Blue Mountains, and year by year men kept creeping farther and farther out in the hunt for grass.

Thus it was that "squatting" was developed. In the earliest days the term was one rather of reproach. The large areas of land which men required for their growing flocks were outside the regions suitable for agriculture, and as these large spaces were now far away from Sydney, they were taken up for men with some capital by their convict servants. These servants would go and "squat" down, as it were, and watch their masters' flocks in the wilds, and so it came about that the outskirts of civilisation were inhabited by pretty well the scum of the colony. There was but little law in those far-away parts, and there was a very great deal of sheep-stealing, and of what was known as cattle and horse "duffing." And thus it was that the term "squatter" was not altogether sweet in the ears of the people. This class had been a trouble while still the Blue Mountains were a barrier to the west, but now that the ranges were crossed, and an unlimited amount of country thrown open at their feet, these men became a perfect curse, stealing as they did from their distant neighbours, selling the produce of their thefts with altered brands, and sheltering runaway convicts and those adullamites who had fled from civilisation. But while the squatters were slowly encroaching into the vast region west of the mountains, some there were who, filled with the spirit of enterprise and a burning thirst for exploration, pushed rapidly out into the great unknown.

The earliest of these adventurers was George Evans, a surveyor. He crossed the mountains by the same track as Blaxland had used, and completed that part of the journey in six days. He then followed the track until the turning-point of the early pioneers was reached, when he persevered onwards for another hundred miles, and discovered much good country as well as the Fish River and the Macquarie, which he named after the Governor. He then returned to Sydney for fresh supplies, and thereafter found the upper waters of the Lachlan. John Oxley, the Surveyor-General, then took up the thread of exploration, and he did an immense amount of good work, following the Macquarie and Lachlan, and discovering the Namoi and Castlereagh, the Hastings, and many other rivers of smaller size. But Oxley's narrative is poor reading. It is simply "the accurate, faithful diary of a conscientious man performing his daily task." The only interesting part of his journal is that which tells us how the Macquarie was lost in a gigantic swamp covered with long reeds, where the current had ceased to flow, and it seemed hopeless and impossible to persevere any farther. Oxley imagined that this was the beginning of a great inland sea, and he summed up the result of his labours in a report to the Government in these words:—

> We had demonstrated beyond a doubt that no river could fall into the sea between Cape Otway and Spencer's Gulf, at least none deriving its waters from the eastern coast, and that the country south of the parallel of 34 deg. 30 min. was uninhabitable and useless for all the purposes of civilised man.

These boundaries laid down by Oxley embrace the cream of the Southern Riverina and the very heart of Australia. This was in the year 1818, and in spite of Oxley's verdict, neither the Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, nor the people themselves, quite believed it to be true.

And at this time arose the first really romantic figure in Australian land exploration. This was a boy, born in Parramatta in 1797, called Hamilton

Hume. He and his brother lived the life of regular young bushmen. From their very earliest days these little men had an amount of liberty that would have fairly frightened most English mothers out of their senses. As soon as they could crawl they began to explore. There was the wood-heap at the back to begin with, and you could see the two when their father was absent all day long, as he usually was, finding their way down there, and with a deep delight splitting firewood with an axe they could hardly raise to their shoulders. I did not see Hume and his brother at this job, but I do now see little bush children with a sad, solemn earnestness pursuing the same business nearly every day of my life. Then the water-hole, where the horses drank, was only a quarter of a mile away; but you could not see it from the house, and by the time the children were four and five they had found that in it they could catch "yabbies." And from there it was only a step into the pathless bush, where there were hundreds of lovely parrots and young possums to be had for the catching; there were snakes and butterflies and every imaginable delight. And they never were lost. Hamilton had that quiet, curious look in his eyes that the bushman is born with, eyes which somehow tell you that the owner sees everything, hears everything, and even smells everything, and they read the face of Nature like an open printed book. You cannot lose men like these, and they grow up the same from their very boyhood. Turn them adrift anywhere you please, and, like a bee, they will wing their way home. So it was with Hamilton Hume.

Before he was fifteen he and his brother had discovered a new district called Berrima, and when he was nineteen he had passed beyond the southern limit of known country and found Lake Bathurst. A year or two later he penetrated out as far as Yass. During these years he was, as it were, qualifying to take his degree as a bushman, but all the book-learning that came his way he found at his mother's knee. With his degree taken, it was not long before Hume showed his metal. In spite of the dismal ideas of Oxley, Sir Thomas Brisbane, the Governor, determined upon exploring the country from the limits of settlement even to Western Port Bay. Hume was recommended to him as a first-class bushman, and the young fellow jumped at the chance. The Governor wished to land the exploring party on the shore in Bass' Straits and let them find their way, like homing pigeons, to the colony again; but Hume held out for the other plan. "Let them start from Lake George," he said, "and find their way to the sea." It was soon arranged, and Hume had his way. You can quite understand the fascination of the undertaking. People now knew the outline of the immense land in which they were living, but, save for the little fringe near Sydney, and for the lines of discovery of Blaxland, Evans, Oxley, and a botanist named Allan Cunningham, they were in total ignorance of the interior. There were such huge possibilities ahead in the way of the discovery of fertile grazing and agricultural land, rivers, mountains, and plains. But the finding of gold had not yet disturbed the minds of the settlers.

CHAPTER XX

THE MURRAY RIVER

So Hume started with energy to organise his expedition, and sacrificed much of his own goods, for money he had little, in the interests of the venture. It is recorded that he even parted with a favourite plough in order to obtain some necessary for the journey. Unfortunately, when preparations were now well advanced, it was proposed to allow a certain Captain Hovell, an old sailor, to accompany the party as joint leader. He had a knowledge of navigation and could reckon the latitude and longitude. So it was thought that he would be of help to Hume, who knew nothing of these things. With six servants the party set out from Lake George, a sheet of water a little south of where the big town of Goulburn has since risen. It was in October, and our climate is very lovely then, especially in the higher-lying lands. The heat of summer has not yet come, but the days are bright and warm, the nights clear and cool, and rain showers and thunder plumps freshen the growing grass, and in the mornings everything is hanging with sparkling jewels of dew-drops. The bush is full of the voices of birds, the male parrots have put on their very gayest coat in order to captivate their mates, and they flit shrieking through the chequered shade. Then, if you leave the timber and come upon a swamp, the whole air is filled with wild birds and their plaintive cries. Perhaps you have been marching through a dead level country for hours, and have seen nothing but gum-trees and pines, and the grass grows but scantily beneath their shade. Then the eye is relieved by seeing a clear space with no trees growing, and presently you are on the edge of a swamp. It may be a couple of miles long and a quarter of a mile or more in width, and it winds through the timber like a lake or a wide river. The grass grows close up two feet high here, and the water is a foot in depth, and warm to the feet as you step into it. All round you there is a tinge of pink, violet, and mauve amongst the herbage. It is the swamp pea, growing thickly, and loading the air with its delicate smell. Mixed with the green and pink are specks of yellow. These are tall plants throwing out long stalks higher than your head in a good season, and on the summit of each stalk there is a yellow fluffy ball. The swamp all around is encircled by dark gums and pines, and the sky above is a glorious blue, with white woolly spring clouds sailing gently across it, now and then giving a little grateful shade. For the sun is hot. As you splash into the water up rise a multitude of water birds,—black duck and great fawn-breasted, grey-backed wood duck, white cranes and spoonbills, ibex and blue cranes, spur-wing plover, and innumerable stilts with their long pink legs hanging gracefully behind. The whole air is quivering with their cries, and as you listen, from out of the swamp comes the hollow boom of a bittern. In the shadow of the trees at the water's edge, where there is a peculiar muddy, warm, heavy smell, you will startle wisps of snipe that glide off with their "schaap, schaap," and pitch suddenly again within a couple of hundred yards of where you flushed them. It is a glorious scene, and nowadays, as you wend your way, you will come upon the bones of sheep and cattle picked clean by the crows. But as Hume and his men wandered along they would see kangaroos coming to drink, or standing in the shelter of shady pines, and these would bound off as he drew near, flapping the ground with their great tails. Hume marched through a great deal of country like this before he reached his goal, but two days after starting from Lake George he arrived at the banks of quite a big river, heavy in flood, raging and rolling along, an impassable barrier surely. But this was child's play to Hume. He himself and one of his men, taking a light rope in their teeth, plunged into the torrent, cold from the melting snows, snows of which they were still ignorant, and safely gained the other side. Then they took the wheels off their cart and converted its body into a punt, and soon everybody and everything was safely across the Murrumbidgee.

It must have been somewhere up near Barren Jack where they forded the stream, and Barren Jack is becoming famous to-day as the spot where the first big locking of the rivers is about to be undertaken. Perhaps the handiness of Hovell as a sailor-man came into play here at the crossing, but it is the only conceivable time during their travels in which it did. His navigation was as much use to Hume as it would have been to a carrier pigeon, to a wild fox, or to a black-fellow, and he would have been better at home, for he and the bushman were always at war. They both wished to have their own way, and neither would give in. A few days after crossing the Murrumbidgee they hit upon another lovely stream. It is called the Tumut River, and is not pronounced as it is spelt. It is not Tumut or Too-mut, but the more euphonious Tew-mut; the "Tew" is long and the "mut" very short. There is a town on the river now, and the people there wish it to become the capital of the Federated States.

From Tumut you see big hills rising, and thirty miles away is the rough wooded mountain called Talbingo. But so deep in the hollow does the Tumut River flow that you do not see the great mountains till you gain the rises a long way from its brink. So it was not until a couple of days after leaving the Tumut that they saw something unknown to them before. The party had been toiling up a steep wooded ridge since sunrise, and they knew that they would camp on the sky-line, for they had plenty of water with them, and breakfast-time was at hand. On the summit the trees had been stunted or blasted by a whirlwind, and offered no interruption to their view. Beneath their feet lay a little valley with the hills rising again beyond, and mounting gradually until, far away, their blue outlines were etched clear against the pure white, gleaming, snow-covered Alps. There was Kosciusko to the south-east, and Bogong, Feather Top, and the

Cobbler raising their giant hoary heads in front, and you may be sure the explorers could scarce prepare their breakfast for gazing at the strange scene. The leaders had been wrangling ever since the start from Lake George, and now Hume declared that they should shape their course west of south to avoid the Alps, and Hovell differed. So opposite were their views that Hovell declared that he would go his own way with half the men, while Hume, equally determined, took his. Then came a division of property, and with much wrangling the goods were divided, till at length there was only a frying-pan left. Each leader had had an equal number of lots, and now each seized the poor frying-pan simultaneously. They were both strong, and the cause of their quarrel was soon in pieces. And surely they must have felt very much ashamed of themselves when each found himself with a useless portion of a useless encumbrance in his hand. Next day each pursued his own path; but before many hours had passed Hovell found that it was a hopeless business. He lost himself, and was glad once more to join forces

A few days brought them to the banks of even a larger river than the Murrumbidgee. They struck it above the present town of Albury, where the great river gushes from its mountain home, and where it is still running over pebbles before it settles down into the grey sluggish stream which glides for hundreds of miles over a muddy bottom between muddy, gum-clad banks. They followed the river down, trying to avoid the deep winding lagoons which stayed their march, and here, just where Albury stands to-day, some of the men wished to return. The water was rapid and broad from the flood waters rushing down laden with melted snow, and they had marched a weary way. "Why not return?" they said, and Hovell encouraged them. But Hume was a grand fellow. To the ringleader of the discontented ones he simply said: "If you don't do what I tell you and cross, I'll *throw* you in." And he would have done it too, but the argument was such a sound one that it prevailed.

While they were camped by the river-side the two leaders each carved his initials and the date in a couple of big gum-trees close by the bank. If Hume's name has survived the lapse of time more vigorously than that of Hovell, the latter's tree has been the more lucky of the two. That of Hume has long disappeared. In 1858 a number of bullock-drivers were resting beneath its shade, and they heaped the wood of their fire against its dry trunk. It was soon in a blaze, and not one vestige remains. Hovell's is still standing, but is in sore straits. He had cut away a piece of bark in order to carve his tablet on the heart-wood itself. Some silly fools had made this square a mark for their rifle bullets, and all that remains of the inscription are the two ll's of Hovell and the 24 of 1824.

They punted over as they had done on the Murrumbidgee, and the river was named the Hume, after the leader's father. By an unlucky chance the great stream afterwards received the name of the Murray in its lower reaches, and by the name of Murray it is known to this day from mouth to source.

And this is a pity. But Hume did enough to keep his name very much alive in the memory of Australians, and the electoral district for the Federal Parliament is now named the Hume.

After the Murray had been crossed, Hume's travels lose their interest for a time. The way was rough and hilly, but not really hard. He passed near to where the town of Beechworth nestles upon hills, amongst hills higher still. Then the party crossed the Ovens River and kept a straight course for Melbourne nearly parallel and to the east of where the Sydney express now runs along daily. The only difficulty was with the men, who had had enough of exploring and wished to return home. When they began the ascent of the Dividing Range their grumblings once more nearly rose to mutiny, and it required all Hume's strength of character and body to force them on. At length even his persuasions were scarcely strong enough, and he compromised. His unfailing bushman's instinct told him that they were near the summit of the Great Divide. "If in two days," he said, "they did not reach the point where the mountains sloped away to the south, he would consent to return." Hume, though he had been badly hurt some days before, marched on far ahead of the rest of the band. On the afternoon of the second day he gained the highest point, and far away in front of him the country sloped downwards to the great plain, dotted here and there with old volcanoes, leading to the sea. Hume, for he was very young still, stood and cheered until his men came hurrying along and joined him, and they cheered too. A few days afterwards they camped near the sea, close to where the town of Geelong has grown, but Hovell, the navigator, thought they had touched Western Port and not Port Phillip. The bushman knew better than that. But this mistake was of little consequence, and they returned to Sydney with light hearts, a great work accomplished, and an undying fame earned. Of all the explorers, Hume's lines lay during this expedition in the happiest places. The time of year was the most favourable, the season was good, the country easy, and water lay ever ready to the travellers' lips. The only drawbacks were the wrangling of the leaders and the discontent of the men. The enmity of Hume and Hovell never died. Each wrote letters and pamphlets abusing the adversary and claiming all the credit for himself, and until death quitted all scores they knew no peace. Like Dacre and Home in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*:—

> . . . Ne'er again the Border side
> Did these two lords in friendship ride.

CHAPTER XXI

CAPTAIN STURT

If Hume was a born bushman, and so in that way well fitted to prove the interior of the new land, his successor, Captain Sturt, was a born commander and leader of men. He was a captain in the 30th Regiment, which was stationed in Sydney during that period in which exploration was taking hold of the minds of men, and Sturt, like many others, was overwhelmed by the desire to strike out into the dark continent. You will remember that it was in 1813 that George Blaxland crossed the Blue Mountains, and since that date until 1828 the only further advance had been through Oxley's journeys out west as far as he could follow the Macquarie, while Allan Cunningham had reached the Darling to the north, and Hume had touched Port Phillip Bay. As you can see, only a narrow fringe had been entered, and there were still persistent rumours of what mysteries and treasures the interior held in the hollow of its hand. One very favourite idea was that there was a vast inland sea. Oxley had held that theory. Sturt, too, was captivated by the thought. And now, during a period of great drought, in 1828, when things were again looking bad for the colony, Governor Darling determined to push out again into the unknown. He chose Sturt as his leader, and Sturt asked Hume to join him as second in command. There was to be no fighting over frying-pans on this journey, you may be sure. There was no nonsense about the Captain, with all his benevolent face and kindly ways. If he ordered anything to be done, done it was and no grumbling. He had in him that curious power called magnetism, whereby men command other men and draw them into the net of their influence unwittingly and not unwillingly.

Sturt's instructions from the Governor were to strike out west and trace the Macquarie, if possible to its mouth, wherever that might be. Oxley had lost the river in swamps and reed-beds, and believed that here was the margin of the great inland sea. Just a week before Sturt started off upon this journey Oxley died, and so his mantle as an explorer fell without dispute on the shoulders of Sturt.

The expedition left Sydney in September, and soon reached the most westerly point of Oxley's journey, and, like him, Sturt soon lost the Macquarie in its reed-beds. Baffled in the search, the party split into two, and while one section, commanded by Hume, steered south, the other, under Sturt, struck out to the north. But they each endured much hardship without finding anything more important than the Bogan River. Then reuniting their forces, they steered due west again, heedless of the Macquarie. The drought was very intense, and the heat of that nature which makes you long to drink all the time, a drying, parching heat. The gum-trees were withering, the emus which they saw were running about with outstretched necks, gasping for water; the dingoes were thin and starving, scarcely able to crawl, and how the few natives lived it was impossible to say. Yet Sturt held bravely forward, and one day his determination met with its reward. They were crossing endless plains, lightly timbered, and their water had for some hours come to an end; where they were to get the next drink for themselves and their cattle was a mystery, when, quite suddenly and without warning, they reached the bank of a large river. Through the long ages it had cut, with its sluggish stream, a deep channel across the plains, and its waters lay some forty-five feet below the travellers at the foot of a very steep bank. It was about eighty yards in width, and you would not suspect that there was a stream there until you reached the very brink. I have seen the same effect upon the Murray. Except for the thick timber on the flats there has been no sign of a stream, and suddenly beneath you, you see the noble river, its banks worn like those of a great ditch, or like the Suez Canal.

So when Sturt's party saw this grand water at their feet, down the steep banks they rushed, licking their parched lips as they ran, and each one lay down to drink his fill; Sturt remained upon the bank, exulting over the scene, and watching the water-fowl rising in their thousands from the long gleaming reaches. Then he heard a cry of dismay from his men. The river was salt. They could not drink a drop. Even the cattle would not drink, but they waded in until their heads only could be seen, and so cooled themselves and reduced the extremity of their thirst. Then Hume, who of course was not to be beat, found a pool of fresh water some distance from the banks, and they all were satisfied.

After this they followed the river, which Sturt christened the Darling, down for sixty miles, and found that it was not rendered salt by any communication with the sea, and in fact that it was not salt at all. There were salt springs bubbling into it at the spot where it had first been struck. But if you were to ask a Darling man now if his river were salt, he would stare at you, and would turn away with a smile, and would probably spit upon the ground and mutter to himself that you were mad.

The expedition now returned to a depot which they had left on the Macquarie in order to obtain a fresh supply of provisions, and then they continued their journey north. They explored the Castlereagh and again struck the Darling, and then they returned home, very weary and footsore, but without the loss of a man. They had been absent from September to May.

Sturt was an enthusiast. You would have thought that after nine months' hard work he would take a spell and recruit his strength and energies. But not a bit of it. He required no recuperation, and his enthusiasm never wavered. By the following September he was off again. The question of course had arisen, Where did the Darling River run to? The Macquarie was a failure, and so, it was thought, was the Lachlan. They both ended in swamps, apparently. Sturt's object was to reach the mouth of the Darling by following some other watercourse. Hume, you remember, had struck the Murrumbidgee on his journey to Port Phillip. Two officers, Ovens and Currie, also reported that they had been upon its banks. Sturt's object on this occasion was to follow the stream downwards as far as possible with drays, one of which carried a whale-boat and a still or condenser across to the Murrumbidgee at Jugiong. It was in November 1829. Hamilton Hume was not with the party. One almost suspects that he, like Achilles, was sulking in his tent, but he said that he could not leave his harvest.

The river was struck near where Jugiong now lies, and the contrast between its swift waters flowing over boulders and pebbles was very pleasing to Sturt after his journeys on the Macquarie, the Lachlan, the Castlereagh, and Darling. The stream grew larger and larger as they followed its banks, toiling along in their drays. The natives told them that there was a big river farther on, but just at the same latitude as that in which the Macquarie and Lachlan had lost themselves in swamps, the Murrumbidgee, too, began to wander out amongst vast swampy reed-beds. The country became very dreary, but they found a creek running into the river, and Sturt believed this to be the long-lost Lachlan. And now it was no longer possible to follow the course of the stream in the drays, and after much consideration they determined to launch the whale-boat and send the carts back to a depot at Jugiong.

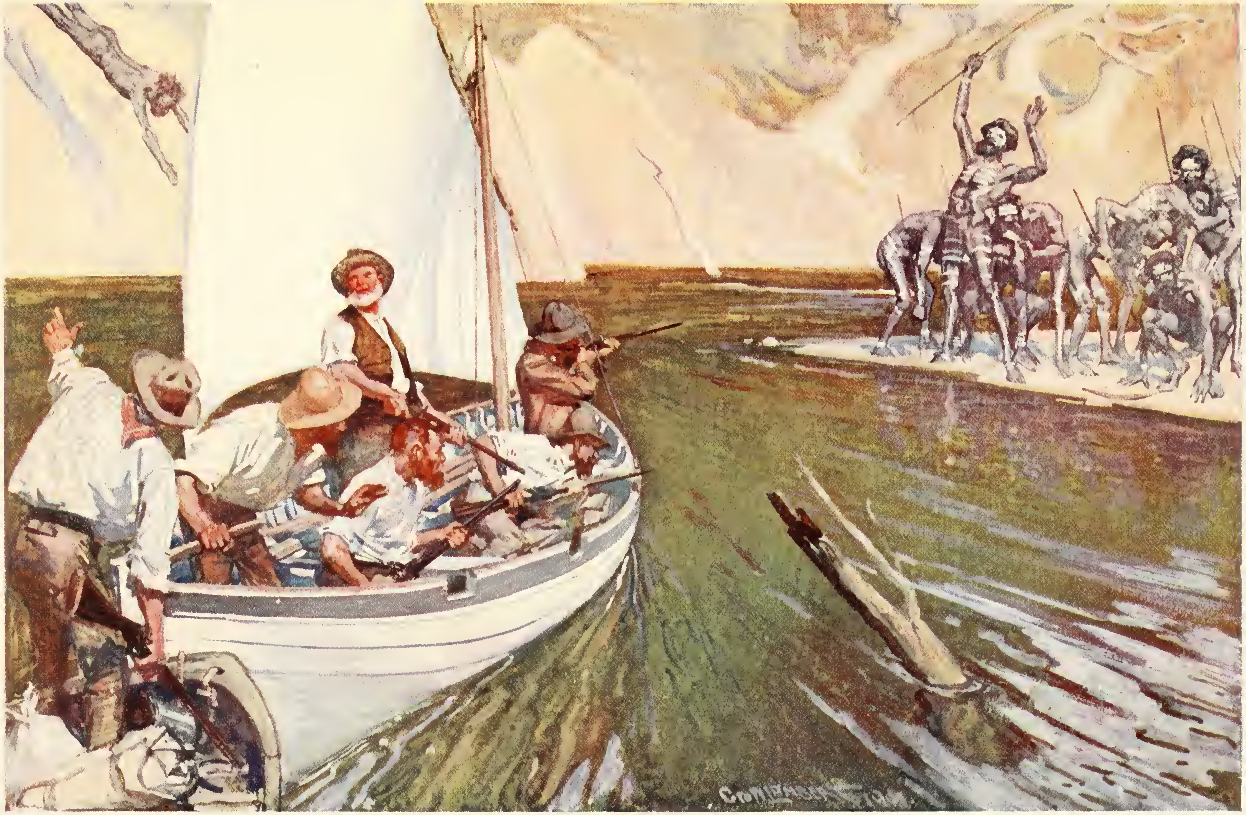
So they built a shed, and in a week had the boat ready and fresh painted, and then they felled trees and built a second boat, in order to carry their condenser and other heavy baggage. In ten days, with a crew of eight, the two boats were packed and shot out into the open stream, and were off down the unknown watery way. On the second day, however, disaster overtook them. The river is full of fallen trees, branches of which stick up, some being above the water, while some are hidden inches below the surface. Into one of these the new boat with the baggage crashed. A huge hole was ripped in her side, and in a few minutes down she went, baggage and all, in twelve feet of water. The boat itself was soon fished up, but a portion of the condenser had fallen overboard, and some valuable provisions as well, and Sturt dared not proceed without his condenser. Such a fright had the salt springs of the Darling given him that he was not going to be caught in the same way again, and the condenser was for the purpose of distilling fresh water. So the men dived for the lost goods.

Twelve feet of water is a long way to burrow downwards in flowing water, as you will find if you try, but they managed it in this way. They sounded with a long oar, and wherever they struck anything suggestive, two men would hold the oar tight to the bottom of the river while a third climbed down and groped for whatever was there. By this means at length everything was rescued, and after patching up the boat, away they went again in their easy descent down the broad river, between wide reed-beds and broad flats.

Then suddenly one day they found themselves beneath narrow and high banks. The current flowed with a dangerous force, and the bed of the stream was choked by fallen trees—snags we call them—the sharp broken branches of which, sticking up, threatened every moment to pierce the boat's side and again sink her. Then the river began to twist in all directions. They were carried along at a fearful rate between gloomy, narrow, and contracted banks, and it seemed to the men that they were approaching some climax on their journey or some adventure. At three in the afternoon the man on the look-out at the bows called out that they were nearing a junction, and in a minute more the boats shot out on to the surface of "a broad and noble river." Unknown to Sturt, it was the identical stream which Hume had crossed four years before in its upper reaches, and it was now christened the Murray. It had been joined by the Ovens, the Goulburn, and the Murrumbidgee, and made a magnificent waterway, a hundred yards and more in width, and from twelve to twenty feet deep. The water was beautifully clear, and it flowed at a rate of two and a half knots an hour over a sandy bottom. The banks were high, and they could see, far up, the marks of floods. As they sailed down the newly discovered river they could see many natives, and by their hospitality and gifts they made friends with one party of them. Thus they had cast their bread upon the waters, and it was returned to them after not many days.

Only a week after entering the Murray, when they were speeding along under sail, they saw, far ahead of them, six or seven hundred blacks assembled under a clump of fine trees. As the boat drew near they heard them chanting what seemed to be a war song, and it was seen that they were painted and carried spears in their hands. The river shoaled very much here, and a sand-bank filled up nearly a third of the channel. To the point of this spit of sand ran the whole crowd, bent upon the destruction of the little band, and there seemed small hope of the boat getting through the narrow gap of deep water without the crew being massacred.

So hopeless then did it seem that Sturt, who was a very humane and brave man, determined that he must fire at the chief who was most forward in his hostile actions. The other men were to reserve their fire until the captain gave the word. They were only separated by a few yards from the enemy now. Sturt's gun was levelled, and he glanced along the barrel ; his finger was already on the trigger. One moment more and the wild man had been dead, and possibly all the white lives sacrificed, when one of Sturt's men called out that another party of blacks was coming from the other side of the river. Their leader, shouting aloud, dived from the high bank, swam across, and, on landing, stamped his foot and shook his fist at the great army of savages. At this point, as the boats kept gliding down, they had discovered, in the meantime, that another river joined the Murray. On the farther bank of this new stream a number of natives were assembled, the tribe of the friendly black who had swum to the rescue. Sturt allowed the boats to float over to these people, and he confidently landed amongst them. In a moment the whole scene was changed. The entire hostile army, with friendly cries, bundled into the stream like a herd of seals and swam over, and in a quarter of an hour from the moment that Sturt's gun was levelled with deadly aim, they were haranguing away in the most friendly manner, six white men with six or seven hundred armed savages. It was a strange transformation scene. The friendly native who had stopped the fray was one whom they had hospitably entertained some days before, and the new river at whose junction with the Murray there had been so nearly a bloody fray was the Darling.



‘There seemed little hope of the boat getting through the narrow gap of deep water’

CHAPTER XXII

STURT ON THE MURRAY

The happy romantic part of Sturt's voyage was now over, and he had a time of hard work and much privation ahead of him. They found the natives lower down the river to be a miserable race of diseased, ignorant, but friendly enough people; the country was monotonous and dreary, and provisions were running short. It was not until thirty-three days after leaving the depot upon the Murrumbidgee that they reached Lake Alexandrina, a large shallow sheet of water, into which the Murray pours its waters before reaching the sea. They sailed across this with the expectation of course of soon finding themselves upon the sea, where, in St. Vincent's Gulf, a ship was to be in waiting for them. But the lake shoaled so rapidly that they could discover no passage through to Encounter Bay. The journey by land to St. Vincent's Gulf was too long and trying for the party in the reduced and weakened state in which they were, and the leader at length made up his mind to return by the river. But it was a very different story from what it had been coming down. More than half the food had been used, the men were very weak, and the current was strong. It was certain that they would take much longer to pull up than they had taken to glide down.

To read the story of their struggles makes one ache. Perhaps I am unduly sympathetic, having had a very slender experience of their trials in this way, and on the same old river. Some few miles down the Murray from where I live there is an annual regatta on a big horseshoe-shaped lagoon. It is always held upon New Year's Day, when the weather is piping hot. A party of us, men, women, and children, upon more than one anniversary have chartered a boat, and, with our luncheons and tea, have sailed away in the morning very gaily down stream. And the more rapid the stream the gayer were we, as we watched the foliage flitting past us on the banks, the wattles and the willows and the gums. We never permitted ourselves to think of the return in the evening. But the sports would end at last, and wearily we would pull up against the heavy current, tired, but very manfully. The boat had become really wonderfully heavy, the oarsmen were only half skilled, and the stream was prodigiously strong. There was one place, I remember, where the water shoaled over a gravel bed, and where the river ran like a mill-race, and where we many times have gone aground, while the women, half in fun and part in earnest, screamed. We used to look now and then at some landmark on the bank as we struggled against the water here, and felt a sinking at the heart when, after a few minutes' desperate tugging, we could see that we had only gained a foot or two. At last, however, tired out and rather sick of the whole business, we would, after a spell or two, gain the landing-place near home, and then one could realise what must have been Sturt's and his men's feelings.

They were indeed in a weary plight. Day after day they sat pulling at the oars, with none of the "life" and "snap" with which they had shot that day from the Murrumbidgee on to the broad bosom of the Murray. They were harassed by the blacks, too, and once, when stuck in some rapids, the party was only saved again by the interference of the friendly chief who had proved such a true friend when they were menaced on the banks of the Darling at its junction with the main stream. But perseverance and pluck at length won the day, and without a death amongst them they reached the depot on the Murrumbidgee. One man had gone temporarily silly, from fatigue and privation, and all were reduced to skeletons, but their courage always remained the same. Sturt tells how, at their darkest hour, he would be lying awake in his tent and would hear the men talking. He constantly heard one or another groan out the remark, "I'm done. I shall tell Captain Sturt to-morrow that I can pull no more." But the day never came when the complaint was made, and only the man who had gone silly was relieved from his work at the oars.

Even when they reached the depot, however, their labours were far from being over. There was nobody there. Sturt had left instructions to the depot party to fall back to a place called Pondebadgery, some eighty miles higher up the river; and to make things worse a heavy flood was coming tumbling down. So, after many days' useless striving with the current, the leader sent two of the strongest men, one a soldier and the other a convict, overland to Pondebadgery to bring help. They were due to return on the eighth day, and by this time the very last ounce of provisions had been distributed. Such of the party as had strength were separating to crawl off into the bush to try to shoot a bird, when a loud shout stopped them. It was Mulholland and Hopkinson, the messengers, in a state of complete exhaustion, but successful. Their troubles were over, and their exertions triumphantly crowned by the result. The great waterway of the continent had been discovered and opened up. Perhaps it was the most momentous achievement of the early explorations. But one is tempted to go a-hunting with these early heroes, step by step through their career, and if we were to do this together we would end up with a book of some dozen large and thick volumes. You would not read it, for much of it is distressing, and some parts of it very dry. A great deal of it, however, is intensely interesting. I should like you, nevertheless, to keep the hang of events as they took place, and the order in which the great unknown land was gradually being won from the waste, year by year.

It was in 1829 that Sturt completed his voyage by the river, and so deeply had privation and labour affected him, that he became quite blind, his book was written to his dictation, and he was led about, a blind man, by a servant. It was not until 1844 that he was well enough, and with restored eyesight, to tackle the wilderness again. And meanwhile, during his enforced idleness, much took place in the way of exploration. Scarcely had Captain Sturt's successful party returned, when Major Mitchell ventured out upon what proved a wild-goose chase, but an interesting one. Mitchell was Surveyor-General to the colony, and he had been an army officer during the Peninsular War. He had had a hand in the laying out of the famous lines of Torres Vedras, a skilful man and a brave, and he was in every way fitted as a leader and an explorer. The wild-goose chase was this. People were still talking of the rich unknown land lying beyond the confines of civilisation some 300 miles north-west of Sydney. Sturt had opened up that tremendous tract of country watered by the Murray, Murrumbidgee, and Darling, and men's minds were ready to swallow any tale of a similar waterway to Carpentaria and the north.

At this time a convict called George Clerk, or "George the Barber," had been captured on a charge of cattle "duffing." He was condemned to be hanged. But George, being a 'cute man, gave such an account of country that he had traversed in his bush wanderings, and of just such a river as was required by the public imagination, that his life was spared, provided his information proved correct. George said the natives called this river the "Kindur." The Major, however, was taking too long over the business for George, and the convict managed to saw off his irons and escape. Before many days had passed he was recaptured, and was just about to be strung up when news arrived from Mitchell giving some confirmation of the condemned man's story. The expedition had crossed a river called by the natives the Namoi—the "Euphonious Namoi" Mitchell calls it — and this river had been mentioned by George in his story. But this was the nearest that any party ever attained to the fabled flood of "Kindur." The whole story was a complete fraud, and Mitchell returned beaten, and after losing several of his men, who had been murdered by the natives. What happened to George the Barber I do not know. But a man who had led the life that he had done, thieving, murdering, and consorting with the blacks, and who was so bad that even these gave him up to the authorities, was unlikely to die in his bed with an easy and an unstretched neck.

CHAPTER XXIII

MITCHELL—SIR GEORGE GREY

Sturt's expeditions were accomplished, after privation and heavy toil, almost always through dreary, inhospitable desert lands, but he died at a great age, in Cheltenham, England, in 1869, thanking God that he had never spilt the blood of a black man. Mitchell's journeys, on the contrary, seemed ever to lead him through rich pasture-lands, where rivers of water flowed, and where glorious prospects cheered the eye. But he and his followers were not free from the reproach of having been forced to kill men. I do not think that these two leaders were quite good friends. In Mitchell's great expedition from the Lachlan to Glenelg and home through the richest part of what is now Victoria, he passed the junction of the Darling and Murray.

"I recognised it at once," he wrote, "from Captain Sturt's excellent drawing."

"That," Sturt said, "is the only praise Major Mitchell ever gave me; and for the drawing, it was made by a clergyman in Edinburgh who never saw the place."

But Sturt was laid up at the time with what threatened to be permanent blindness, and perhaps he was captious. And no doubt there was jealousy. I like Mitchell's face : broad, brave, honest, and not unkindly, yet stern when occasion called for it ; with the cut of whiskers and lines with which we are familiar when reading of the Peninsular War. Mitchell had succeeded Oxley as Surveyor-General upon his death in 1829, and I often wonder if Sturt had not also coveted the post, and hence the occasional rising of the bristles and the showing of the teeth. That may very well be. Sturt had set out on his long voyage down the Murray in that same year, and in 1831 Mitchell searched unsuccessfully for the "Kindur." In 1825 the Major headed a large expedition down the Bogan to the Darling, and from thence followed its banks to Menindie to within measurable distance of its junction with the Murray. At Menindie a row with the blacks was followed by bloodshed, and the expedition returned to Fort Bourke, where the Darling and the Bogan meet. Bourke is now a large town, connected by rail with Sydney, and although it is intensely hot out there it is a flourishing place.

Only another year passed when the Major was off again. His object was to explore the Murray from the Darling upwards, country which had not yet been touched by the foot of white man from Hume's crossing-place. But Mitchell's original intention was abandoned after a severe encounter with the natives at the Darling junction. Many of the natives were killed, and we can only hope that Sturt's old friend was not among the number. After the affray the party commenced their journey up the river, but were soon stopped by a large tributary which was named the Loddon, and the country was so rich and so beautiful that they abandoned the Murray and its banks altogether.

In their wanderings they also discovered the Avoca, and from Mount Hope and the Pyramid the most glorious prospects lay at their feet. All the plains were covered with kangaroo grass, which bent before the breeze like a field of corn. Then their feet led them away out west to the Grampians, still westward ho! and they turned the ranges and saw still a rich land stretching away to the Southern Ocean. Here they found the Wimmera with its many feeders, and later on the Glenelg, upon which at last they launched their boats, and so gained the sea.

Mitchell's expedition had opened up the largest and most fertile district yet discovered in Australia, and so bright did its prospects seem to him that he named it "Australia Felix."

> Of this Eden it seemed I was the only Adam, and it was indeed a sort of Paradise to me, permitted thus to be the first to explore its mountains and streams, to behold its scenery, to investigate its geological character, and finally to develop by my survey these natural advantages all still unknown to the civilised world.

Happy Mitchell! And thereafter he was known as Sir Thomas Mitchell.

Instead of returning home on the track by which he came, Sir Thomas followed the coast as far as Portland, and here a great surprise awaited him. A white settler and his family were established there. His name is known now through the whole of Australia, and the last of those who met Mitchell that day passed away only a year ago. It was Edward Henty and his family, who had, as they thought, been crowded out of Tasmania, and who had shipped their flocks and herds, and, like patriarchs of old, had boldly struck out to conquer new lands and subdue unknown deserts.

After leaving the Hentys, Mitchell made pretty well a bee-line for Sydney, crossing the Dividing Range not far from Ballarat, and it was from a point north of this that he explored Mount Macedon whilst some repairs were being effected to his gear. From this high hill, where now a sanatorium for delicate-lunged patients stands, he could see, gleaming far below him, the waters of Port Phillip Bay, unvisited, until a month or two before, since the day that Hume and Hovell camped near Geelong. But Mitchell thought he saw sails or tents glancing in the sun, and had he pressed on to the bay he would have found that they were indeed tents that he had seen, and that Fawkner, a Tasmanian, had, like Edward Henty, been "eaten out," and had bravely sought new fields. He had pitched his camp where the mighty city of Melbourne now lies on the river and the bay.

It seems like ancient history to us, but in the daily papers only yesterday I read of the death of an old woman over ninety years of age at Kilmore, a township no great distance from this Mount Macedon. This old lady, it was said, remembered

Mitchell well, and had been actually a follower of this very expedition. From this point onwards Mitchell was nearly on the tracks of Hume and Hovell, or at least he was parallel with them and to the north. He discovered the Campaspe River, which reaches the Murray at Echuca, and rediscovered Hume's streams of the Goulburn and others, and finally reached Sydney without further trouble. But we are drawing very near to-day when a member of the expedition died but yesterday.

The 'thirties and early 'forties of the last century were the golden age of Australian exploration. We have seen how Hume, Sturt, and Mitchell advanced the cause of civilisation in unknown wilds, and whilst the two latter were still engaged in their work, a very bold and fearless man was doing his share thousands of miles off in the west. This was a Lieutenant George Grey. Of all the early travellers he strikes me always as having had the hardest time. His task was to explore the country inland from the coast in West Australia, from the Swan River to the Buccaneer's Archipelago. He was quite ignorant of the country, its ways, its climate, and its inhabitants, and his headquarters were at the Cape of Good Hope. With all these disadvantages it is not surprising that he failed. But the courage and endurance that the man and his followers showed were almost superhuman. Yet a second expedition he led, even more rash, and showing less knowledge than the first. He and his men were landed in boats on a group of barren islands off the West Australian coast. They lost all their provisions by storms, their boats were battered to pieces, and they finally sought to reach Perth, where there was now a settlement, on foot. Through the heroism of Grey the whole party finally did gain the settlement, with the exception of one. He was such a jolly boy, too, only eighteen years old, and his name was Smith. Grey writes thus :—

> He was the most youthful of the party, and thence less capable than the others of bearing up against long-continued want and fatigue and the extreme heat of the climate. The poor fellow's last bed appeared to have been selected by himself, and at the distance of three or four yards from him lay all the trifling articles which had constituted his travelling equipage. These were his wooden canteen, his brown felt hat and haversack, containing his journal, shoes, tinder, steel, gun-screw, a few small canvas bags, which he had used for carrying shell-fish, and a small bag with thread, needles, and buttons. With the help of the soldier and Warrup we made a grave with our hands and buried poor Smith deep in a sand-hill near the shore about seventy-six miles to the north of the Swan River. When aroused by danger or stimulated by a sense of duty, he was as bold as a lion, whilst his manner to me was ever gentleness itself, as indeed it was to all.

Some colonists urged Grey to bring the body into Perth for burial, but he preferred to leave the remains of his friend to rest close by the spot where he had died. Grey named the river after the boy who died there, a creek which hides itself in the sandy plains, "near where he fell so early a sacrifice to his gallant and enterprising spirit." The leader of this expedition afterwards became Governor of South Australia, and then of New Zealand. In 1854 he was made Governor of Cape Colony, whence, during the great Mutiny in 1857, he sent to India every available soldier at the Cape of Good Hope. A second time, in 1861, during the Maori War, he was appointed Governor of New Zealand. As Sir George Grey he was a very great man in Maoriland, and he died in London only a year or two ago.

CHAPTER XXIV

EYRE

But while men like Oxley, Hume, Sturt, and Mitchell were thus employed in penetrating the wilderness, the bold and enterprising squatters quickly followed in their footsteps and made the land their own. There also arose at this time a class of men who perhaps did as much as any other to open the desert places and make them familiar and no longer to be feared. This was the "Overlander." A new colony had been opened at Port Phillip, which promised to be exceedingly prosperous and to carry a large population. A settlement had also sprung up in South Australia, and at King George's Sound and Perth in Western Australia. Cattle, sheep, and horses were required for all these new populations, and the cheapest way of transporting the herds from the old colony to Port Phillip and Adelaide was by land.

It was a most profitable, if risky, trade. A large amount of capital was invested in each venture, the journey was long, losses were severe, and the blacks were often very troublesome, spearing and driving off any straying beasts, and sometimes even attacking the camp.

There was one young fellow in particular who succeeded in this overlanding business, and who soon gained more knowledge of the different routes than any one else. This was Edward John Eyre. He was the son of a parson in England, and having been unsuccessful in attempting to enter the Army, he emigrated to Sydney. He had only a little capital of some four hundred pounds, and some of this was expended in acquiring experience. Then it was that he saw the advantages of an overland stock route to Adelaide and Port Phillip, and he invested all he had in a single venture. He succeeded, and "overlanding" became the most paying game in Australia until the markets were glutted. But the pioneer had done well at the game, and had sufficient funds to buy a place of his own, which he called Murundi. It is upon the lower portion of the Murray, and here he lived for several years, employed in sheep and cattle farming.

During these early days, too, he had "overlanded" between King George's Sound and Perth, and had made several exploratory excursions into the desert north of Adelaide, and his name was known all through the country as a capable bushman, bold and experienced.

In 1840, when Eyre was twenty-five years old, the new community of South Australia, and its town, Adelaide, in particular, was beginning to feel its wings, and the desire for expansion of its markets was stirring the minds of men. Already they could travel stock to Sydney and Port Phillip. Why not overland to King George's Sound in the west? The Governor, and indeed the whole population, were ignorant of the enormous difficulties that lay in the road, and the expedition was undertaken with a very light heart and the complete assurance of success. Eyre thought differently, and on his earnest advice the project was abandoned and plans made for an expedition to explore the country out back and north from Adelaide. Eyre himself took the leadership and supplied one-third of the funds required from his own pocket. Never did an expedition leave the centres of civilisation under more happy auspices. The party was feasted by the Governor and the citizens in the morning, and was accompanied out of the town by a band of men and women on horseback, full of high spirits and confident expectations. There is a quaint old print in Eyre's book of the cavalcade caracolling along, upon the most impossible-looking horses, scattering the ducks and geese in a wholesale fashion, while boys on ponies, women on thoroughbreds, officers in uniform and on chargers, canter away, all looking exceedingly pleased with themselves.

I read Eyre's account of his journey alongside of Professor Gregory's book, *The Dead Heart of Australia.* It is a capital way in which to read the two books. They are as great a contrast as black is to white.

Eyre, with his party of eight, his three-horse drays, his forty sheep, and thirteen horses, pushed painfully and slowly along, making depots here and there, until the leader had proved the country ahead of him. After weeks of hard labour and privation they found themselves apparently surrounded on all sides except on the rear by a huge horseshoe-shaped lake. There was little water in its basin, but the mud was soft, the horses floundered, and the farther they advanced the deeper they sank, and the more hopeless did it appear that they ever could do any good by persevering in this direction.

One more attempt Eyre made. He headed for a peak away to the north-east, but having also abandoned this attempt, he, in a fit of intense depression, named it Mount Hopeless, and turned his face southwards again, filled with despair. This was in 1840, and Eyre had started north in June, that is midwinter.

Professor Gregory and his happy band of students started from Adelaide "by the early morning train on Friday, December 13, 1901. Our camels, with the camel-driver, Steer, were to meet us at Hergott Springs, four hundred and forty miles north of Adelaide." Hergott Springs is as far north as Mount Hopeless, but lies more to the west. The ground which Eyre had laboured over with suffering and apprehension for the future, the barren rocks which looked so hopeless and sterile in 1840 are now cheerily and picturesquely drawn like this :—

> To the west we could see the old Willouran Range, its irregular outline standing up dark against the yellow glow of the twilight, and its blunt, rounded hummocks showing that they were hills, worn down to mere stumps by ages of denudation and decay. We watched them closely, and were half sorry to see them gradually fading from our view, for they were rocks of a type familiar to us in Victoria. We lost sight of them in the deepening gloom, as the train in its dust-cloud rushed across the sand-strewn plain.

Eyre struggled back, beaten, to the head of Spencer's Gulf, where a boat with stores awaited him. Gregory, after happy wanderings far far north of Eyre's farthest, amongst the fossil bones of the Kadimakara, in places with long desert-sounding names, Kilalpanina, Wuntimoorina, Pinura Kinkanina, caught the fortnightly train from Oodnadatta and landed safe and fresh in Adelaide again. His progress reminded one of the march of the Guards to Omdurman — not a march at all, but a rapid, comparatively comfortable railway journey and picnic. But Eyre only retired to gather his forces again, and having been discomfited by the route east of Lake Torrens, he desired to attempt to gain the same end in a north-westerly direction. Half of his party were sent across from where Port Augusta now stands, while he himself circumscribed that tongue of land which forms the eastern boundary of the Great Australian Bight, and which is now called Eyre's Peninsula. But circumstances developed which caused the north-western journey to be abandoned, and Eyre was disappointed. He was a man hard to beat, and when he found that he could no longer look forward to finding a track across the desert to the north, he at once made up his mind to attempt the passage by land round the Great Bight to King George's Sound. But I wish to tell you of a tragedy that took place whilst Eyre was making his journey round the Peninsula, the story of which will let you see what sort of a life was led by boys at that time and in those parts.

CHAPTER XXV

A LITTLE WHITE HERO

When Eyre arrived at Port Lincoln, a little seaport at the southern end of the Peninsula and close to Thistle Island, where Mr. Thistle, the master of Flinders' ship, was drowned, news had just come in that the blacks had murdered a little English boy. Some eighteen miles from the township there was a cattle station owned by a Mr. Hawson, and he had two sons, the eldest about sixteen and the youngest eleven years old. It was a lonely enough sort of life for these two, with so few white people about, but there was a great charm about it—wonderful freedom, a broad expanse of country to roam over on horseback minding the cattle, kangaroos to chase, parrots and duck to shoot, and nearly everything which a boy could wish to make life delightful. There were plenty of black-fellows round about, and although these had been very friendly at first, of late they had become impudent and inclined to steal, and even to bully. The two boys spent a great deal of their time at an outlying hut on the station a good many miles from home, and the natives had become so cheeky and importunate there that one day the elder boy had fired a gun over their heads to frighten them. These little fellows in their wild life had learned scarcely to be boys, so self-reliant and resourceful does necessity make even children. One morning Jim, the elder, said: "Harry, I must ride into the station to-day to bring out stores. I'll be back before it's dark. You won't mind, will you?"

"Not I," said Harry; "I'll be all right."

So off Jim rode with the pack-horse, and left the poor little mite of eleven out in the wilderness all by himself.

But he was not afraid; his blue eyes were as fearless, shining there beneath his sun-blanched curls, as if he had a regiment of soldiers at his back. His eyes were blue and his curls flaxen, but his skin was burnt brown by sun and wind, and he had a very earnest, serious look for one so young. His expression was more like that of a man of five-and-twenty than of a little innocent child. After Jim had disappeared round the sand-hills, Harry, taking his gun, made for the scrub to see if he could get a bandicoot or a wallaby, ready to cook for Jim's supper when he got home at night. It was dinner-time when he came in sight of the hut again, and he saw that there were a dozen blacks round the building, some looking in at the little windows, some trying to open the door, and there were two children about Jim's age with them. They all had spears and throwing-sticks, and one man had a red handkerchief round his head, which made him look very fierce.

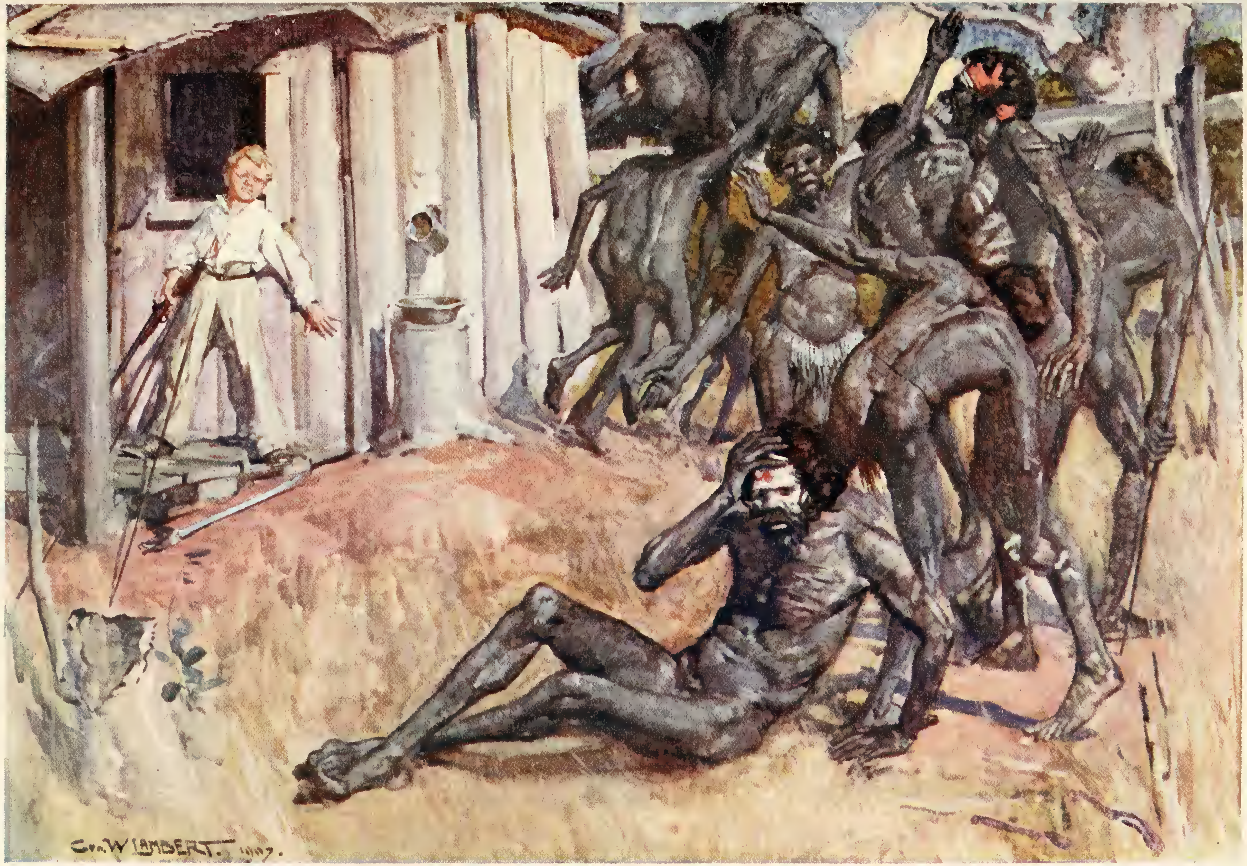
Harry recognised it as one which they had missed a few days before.

For a moment he hesitated whether to go to the hut or to hide in the scrub until Jim arrived, but before he had made up his mind a shout from red handkerchief told him that he was seen. So he marched boldly forward. Besides, there was nothing to fear. They had come like that before, and had gone away when told or when threatened with a gun. So Harry reached the group near the hut, and they all crowded round him clamouring for meat. The boy had never seen them quite so bold before, and he opened the door with a key which had been hidden in a crack of one of the slabs beside the post. You can see the poor little man marching in like a prince when he threw open the door, the bright sunshine streaming in with him, and playing on the cloud of dust raised by the naked feet of the men

He turned at the meat safe, and seeing that the natives were following him into the hut, he cried in a lordly way, "Now you, keep out there. Keep out of this, d'ye hear?" and he raised his gun to enforce his treble voice. And at this they turned and scuttled out of sight round the corner, but before he had got the smoked ham out of the safe, the head with the red handkerchief had peeped round the door-post with savage eyes.

He went to the door, and with gun still in hand he laid the meat down on a log and stepped back into the building. In a moment it was pounced upon, and before five minutes were over the ham had disappeared, all except the bone, and the mob came chattering round the door, with tongue and gesture clamouring for more. There was only one other piece of food in the hut, for Harry had been unsuccessful in his hunt, and that was a loaf of "brownie." He ate a piece of this himself, for he was hungry, but the rest he laid down outside, and it was quickly "wolfed" by the hungry blacks. Then when he could give them no more they became very impudent. They crowded round the door while he stood at the table in the centre of the simple room menacing them with his gun, and they in answer shook their spears and yelled at him in a way he had never heard before. Yet his brave little heart never gave in, although he wished his brother could come to his help. But the sun was very high still, Jim could not possibly be back for three hours yet, and meantime the hut must be defended at all risks. So he took down his father's sword which hung above the mantel-shelf, and raised his gun as if about to fire. Again the black-fellows scuttled away, and now Harry ran to the door, his sword in one hand and his gun in the other, and, standing outside, beneath the dark verandah, he locked the door at his back.

Here, like a young Horatius, he took his stand, the sword propped against the verandah post, the old muzzle-loader at the "ready" in his hand. The miserable wretches kept out of sight for some time, cowed by the bearing of this one little fair-haired white boy. But they picked up courage again at last, and began to creep up on every side, waving their spears and shouting. Yet he never quailed. And then the two black boys came forward


Geo. W LAMBERT. 1907.

'A little white hero'

and gave him two wooden spears, and, grinning, signed to him to throw them. Still holding his gun in his left hand, he drew himself up into the attitude to throw. Whether in this position he offered such a tempting target or not I do not know, but red handkerchief and a hideous fellow with his face painted white together hurled their spears, and one pierced the boy's right breast and the other his thigh. He staggered against the wall, but he did not fall, and, raising his gun, he fired at him with the white face, who fell at the shot, and all the others ran away. Then little Harry stood leaning against the wall, gasping for breath, sore stricken but unconquered still. And as the afternoon crept on he still stood, the spears hanging in his wounds. And the wounded black rose and crawled away. Presently the others returned, but when the child raised his gun and the blue eyes glanced along the barrel they all fled again; nor did they come back. Then Harry, in mortal agony, strove to draw the spears out from their places in his flesh. But they were barbed, and the agony was too awful. He tried to saw them off, but even that caused the pain to be beyond bearing. So, carrying the spears in his hands, he set out to walk to the station. But it was soon borne in upon him that this too was beyond his strength, and he returned to the hut. As evening was falling he managed to get some wood on the fire, and he sat there trying to burn the spears away among the embers. Then at ten at night, while the wind moaned through the shingles and the rustle of every leaf was to him the stealthy tread of a black-fellow, he heard far away the thud of a horse's foot. It was Jim at last. Oh! I wish I could say that the poor little man was saved. This is no story. It is all as true as Gospel. Jim sawed off the spears near the wound, and, catching a fresh horse, carried the little fellow straight to Port Lincoln to Dr. Harvey. But it was of no use. Without a murmur, and only saying, "I'm not afraid to die," this dear, brave little soul passed away.

CHAPTER XXVI

ROUND THE BIGHT

After Eyre had inquired into this pathetic tragedy—for he was a magistrate and the Government protector of the blacks—he pushed on to join the others of his little company who were waiting for him at Streaky Bay, and from Streaky Bay they advanced along the coast to Fowler's Bay. But before leaving Port Lincoln, Eyre had sent his second in command—Mr. Scott—to Adelaide in a small open boat with a request for more stores, and these turned up in due course in the cutter *Waterwitch* off Streaky Bay. Scott's voyage was undertaken along a tempestuous and exposed coast, and the distance was as far as from Land's End to the Bay of Biscay—all in a small open boat. Truly this was the heroic age of exploration. With the help of the *Waterwitch,* which landed water at intervals along the coast, the whole party reached Fowler's Bay. From here Eyre made several attempts to round the head of the Great Bight, and after three heroic efforts, in which the sufferings both of men and horses were enough to make you shudder, he succeeded.

And now he made up his mind to essay the boldest deed that man had ever conceived. In his attempts to round the Bight he had proved that the country was quite unfit for the passage of drays. Even with the lightest load the horses were unable to pull them through the hot, dry, shifting sand and the thick, short scrub, and this was the class of country which had to be faced. Sometimes it was a little better, sometimes a little worse. Water could only be obtained by digging in sand-hills, and these water-bearing hills lay a long distance apart. So Eyre sent the cutter back to Adelaide with a request to the Governor that the *Waterwitch* should accompany them round the coast as far as possible, and land stores and water wherever practicable. But the answer came back that they must not attempt anything so foolhardy, and that the *Waterwitch* could not go outside the boundary lines of the colony of South Australia. Whether this was a piece of awful red-tapeism, or whether the Governor thought thus to deter Eyre from making his attempt, I do not know, but this explorer was a man whom nothing could daunt. He now made up his mind that he would accomplish his design without risking the life of any European except his own and that of one other. And this he finally did. Every member of the expedition was ordered home in the cutter except three native boys and Baxter, the overseer, who refused to leave his master, and in the end set out along with him. Two of the native boys had been for some two years with Eyre, and the third, a Western Australian, Wylie by name, had known Eyre before, and was most attached to him. So the cutter sailed for Adelaide, leaving the little band preparing for their fearful task.

Eyre had made up his mind to wait until the horses had recruited their strength by rest and by eating the supplies of bran and oats which had been left by the cutter. But at length the day arrived when the men were about to enter the wilderness for life or for death, and they had actually broken up camp and were on the move when they heard a shout from the beach. It was the cutter returned with a note from the Governor begging Eyre to give up the expedition. But this was only calculated to strengthen this determined man's resolve. He sent a note back with Mr. Scott, and, with a countenance resembling that of Regulus when he returned to Carthage, he set his face for the desert.

From the very first day's march the difficulties encountered were enough to appal the bravest. They were leading five horses, and were driving a little "mob" of fourteen sheep in front of them, and until they rounded the Bight they knew, at least, that there was water ahead of them, for it had been buried in casks in the previous expeditions undertaken from the depot. They buried, too, before setting out, a good supply of provisions in case they were beaten back, and these stores were found again twenty years later. Each day's journey recorded in Eyre's journal was one of exhausting toil and pain. As you read it you feel the thirst of the men as well as that of the panting sheep and horses to be almost unbearable. You can see the sweat-covered skin of the horses tightening over bones which daily became more prominent, and you can see the timid, patient faces of the poor sheep, and hear their hoarse bleat as they almost ask their masters to find them food and drink. I do not think I ever read anything more painful. And through it all they were constantly covered with fine sand, which a blustering wind blew in clouds, and the flies were irritating beyond all belief.

Then when the Bight was rounded all was uncertainty as to where water would be found, and huge cliffs—that high, rocky barrier seen by Flinders—rose up from the beach. Their only chance of finding water for the next many hundred miles was by digging in the sand-hills at the foot of these cliffs. The distance between the first two watering-places was 135 miles, and they camped at the second, beside a little well, for six days. Then they had a fearful struggle over 160 miles with not a drop of water except what was collected from the dew by means of a sponge and bundles of dried grass. They had only enough food now to last three weeks. The sheep were reduced to two, the horses were skeletons, and able only to carry the lightest of loads, and King George's Sound was *600 miles ahead.*

The dreary cliffs, 400 and even 600 feet high, still ran along the coast, beetling down to the water's edge, at places undermined by the winds and the roaring waves, and the great surf dashed in hoarse monotone on the beach. Yet still Eyre refused to think of returning, and no man ever more unshrinkingly kept his face to the foe. Baxter wished to go back, and the black boys clamoured for more food, stole it, and were punished by a still further shrinkage of their allowance. The weather was wild and stormy and always threatened rain, but none ever fell, and their day's journeys were small. They were on the top of the cliffs now, and the country was wonderfully barren and rocky, with only a little herbage here and there in little valleys or gullies. To these, at nights, the hobbled horses strayed, searching for food, and either Baxter or his master was compelled to be on the watch till day-dawn. The black boys were very discontented.

On the 29th of April they made nineteen miles, but the day was so stormy that they could scarcely stagger along the cliff's edge. So they camped, and made what "breaks" they could for shelter from the bitterly cold south-westerly wind. Eyre took the first turn in watching the horses, and with the few clothes he had left to wear he found it piercingly cold. The horses rambled about amongst the gullies, but he could follow them in the flitting moonlight. As it drew near eleven he peered through the scrub to catch the glow of the camp fire, for Baxter's watch began at that hour. Then suddenly, about a quarter of a mile away, there was a flash and the loud report of a gun. "It must have been Baxter mistaking the hour," Eyre thought, "and firing to direct me to the camp." So he shouted, but got no answer, and he began to have a feeling of dread that all was not well. He left the horses and hurried towards the camp, and, when nearing it, he heard the voice of Wylie calling, "Oh, massa! oh, massa! come here!"

He hurried to the spot. The baggage was all in disorder and broken open, their little store of food ransacked, and poor Baxter, with a rifle-bullet through his left breast, was just breathing his last. In another moment he was gone, and Eyre found himself in this awful desert, at midnight, with a fierce gale blowing, the moon, hurrying along amongst the scud, shining only in fitful glimpses, unarmed, with little food, and only a single native, whose fidelity he mistrusted, for a companion. The other two black boys had disappeared; they had carried off with them the guns and the stores, and there was little doubt but that they were hiding in the scrub close at hand. For a moment Eyre felt in abject despair, and wished that he himself had been the victim instead of the faithful Baxter. But he was not one to sit down and cry over spilt milk. The blacks had left him a single rifle, but this was useless. A bullet had become impacted in the barrel, and all the long night, with a bitterly cold wind blowing, and covered only by a thin shirt and trousers, he sat beside Baxter's body, waiting for dawn. In the morning he lit the fire and tried to melt the bullet out of the rifle-barrel, after having thoroughly soaked the charge of powder with water. He was holding the barrel carelessly in his hand with the muzzle towards him, when the charge exploded with a tremendous "bang" and the bullet whistled past his head. There was still some ammunition left, and in a minute or two he had reloaded the rifle, and felt once more secure from the murderers, whom he knew to be in hiding very near to the camp.

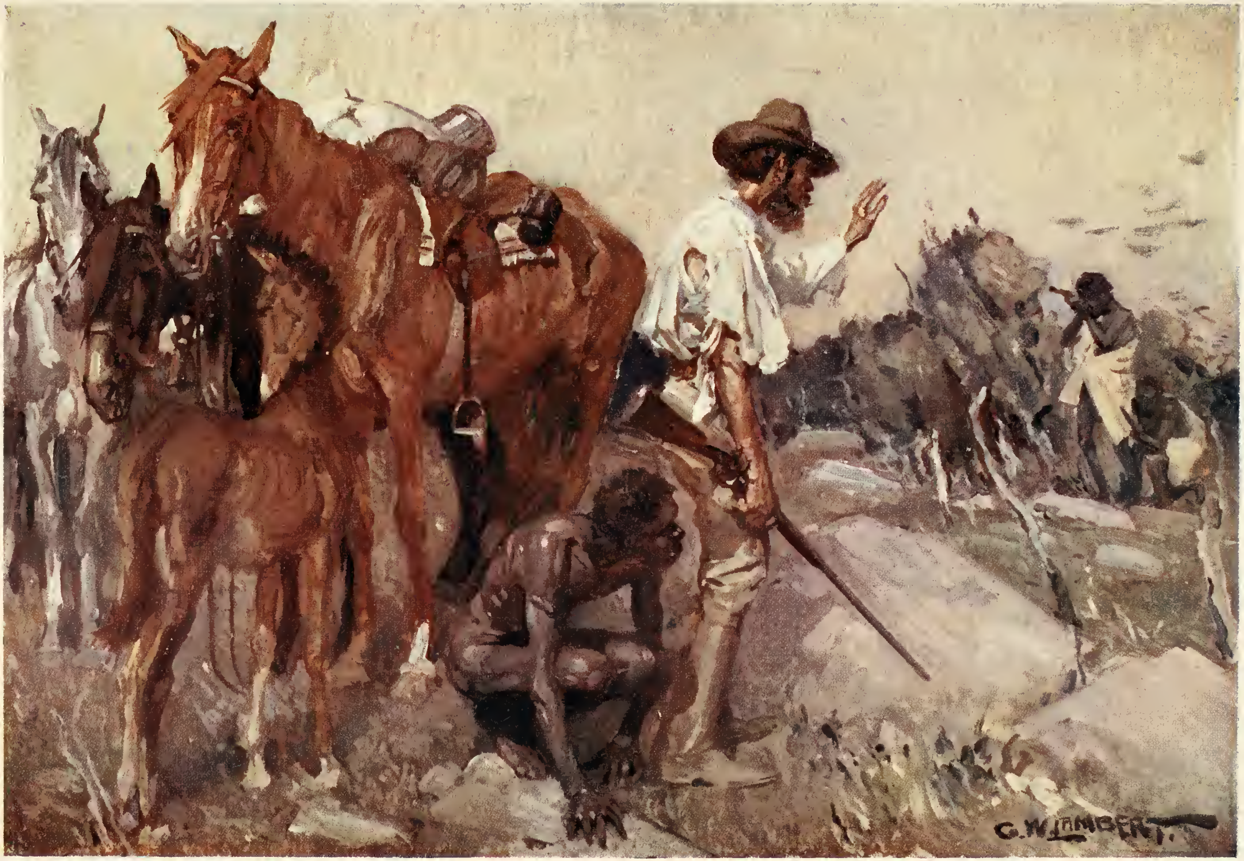
With daylight, too, he discovered that forty pounds of flour had been left by the thieves, a little tea and sugar, and four gallons of water. With this he and Wylie had to face 600 miles of desert, and even now both he and the remaining horses were all but exhausted. There was one mercy. There was no time to delay or to sit down and brood over their fate.

Eyre wrapped Baxter's body in the poor fellow's blanket, and, covering it with leaves, left it, for the wind had blown all the earth away and had left nothing but bare rock. The body was found sometime during the 'eighties by a mailman who had lost his track. For forty years it had lain there, untouched and unseen, mummified by wind and sun. It is a desolate spot indeed. Then away trudged Eyre, with Wylie at his side, and their sufferings for a time were almost beyond belief. The fear of the lurking murderers, however, left them after the first three or four days' marches. For two days the wretches had continued to follow, constantly calling to Wylie to come to them, and Eyre endeavoured unsuccessfully to capture them. His wonderful boldness was shown when he actually laid down his rifle and advanced upon them empty-handed, determined, if he came within grips, to spring upon them suddenly and wrest away their guns. But at his advance they disappeared into the scrub and were seen no more. They must have perished miserably, for there were no natives in this barren region whom they could join, and they probably ate their stores as quickly as possible. Natives know no economy of food.

For the first seven days after Baxter's death the travellers found no water, and covered 150 miles of fearful country. But at length they came upon a little native well, and here they rested and killed one of the horses, a poor, miserable, diseased animal, for food. But the meat made both Eyre and Wylie very ill, and for days they could only crawl along. Then the country began to improve a little. The cliffs were left behind, and water was more easily found. They caught fish now and again, too, in the sea, and little crabs, but the easiest kind of fish to catch, or rather to spear—the stingaree—made them very sick. The turn of their fortunes began when they shot a kangaroo, and we find some satisfaction at last in reading about Wylie's supper that night.

"You see, massa, me pta (eat) all night."

He began with a pound and a half of diseased horse-flesh, and a little bread which they could still bake from the flour. Then he ate up the entrails, paunch, liver, lights, tail, and two hind legs of the kangaroo. It was, however, a young one and small. Wylie had picked up a dead penguin upon the beach that day, and this followed the kangaroo. Then he singed off the hair from the kangaroo hide and stowed that away too, and wound up his feast by swallowing the tough skin of the penguin. After that he slept! A few days afterwards their flour ran out, but on the very day that this occurred luck again gave them a helping, if not a saving, hand. As the wanderers



Eyre and Wylie threatened by the murderers of Baxter

rounded a sand-hill and caught a glimpse of the sea, they saw boats on the water. They could hardly believe their eyes, and they shouted and fired their rifle to draw the sailors' attention, but without success. The boats rowed away. But as the view opened up they could see the topmasts of a vessel lying at anchor in a sheltered bay near the shore.

Eyre hurried on, whilst Wylie crept slowly behind with the horses, both men fearful lest, even now, the vessel should shake out her sails and leave them. When they were quite evidently safe from this catastrophe, Eyre sat down and feasted his eyes on the scene and waited for Wylie to come up. Then they called aloud, were seen, and taken on board, and as you read the journal you almost feel, with Eyre, the perfect satisfaction of getting into clean clothes, of sitting in a chair, sleeping in a bunk with enough of blankets over you, and of having ample food brought to you without cooking it yourself. Wylie, you may be sure, did not fail to clean up his plate and ask for more. The ship was the *Mississippi*, a French whaler, Captain Rossiter in command, and the cove where she lay is now marked on the maps with his name, "Rossiter Bay."

The explorers were most hospitably entertained for a fortnight, and there is little doubt that the fresh food and the complete rest saved their lives, for they were all but done when they found the *Mississippi*. They left the ship on June 14, and although the country at first was very sterile, yet they had plenty of water, for it rained heavily nearly every day. And this was nearly as trying to their strength and comfort as the drought had been. The cold was intense, and but for the clothes supplied by the Frenchmen they would have perished. Then a better vegetation began to appear, and Eyre's joy was great when he saw growing, one morning, a stunted species of Banksia with which he had been familiar at King George's Sound. Their journey, you must know, was still no picnic party, but on June 30 they sighted the hills around the Sound. Yet four more days of heavy toil, for the country was now flooded by the incessant rains, brought them to one day's march from Albany. Here they left everything except their charts, and started in the pouring wet early in the morning. I happened to read this portion of Eyre's journal on a wet, dull, lowering day, and the whole scene came before me. They arrived at mid-day on the heights above the town, and the great land-locked bay, like a Highland sea-loch, lay sleeping at their feet. The water was leaden-coloured, and the rain stung its quiet surface as you see it on a brooding day when the trout rise well to the fly at home. The hills were all blurred by the mists, but the flat rocks on the surface, between where the travellers stood and the town, gleamed in the wet like the backs of great whales heaving above the waters. So wet was it that not a soul was stirring, and the smoke hung lazily over the town in the heavy air. They had picked up a native in the morning, one of Wylie's tribe, and he was with them. As they stood looking down, this fellow called out, a wild, joyful cry, letting his friends know that Wylie, who they all thought had perished, was with them again. In a moment the township awoke, and was filled with hurrying, pattering feet rushing to welcome those who they had thought were dead.

So we leave Eyre with friends, in a comfortable house, with a warm fire, dry clothes on his back, a glass of hot grog at his hand, and a comfortable bed to go to when he felt inclined. Economically, perhaps, his tremendous journey was of little use, but it had to be done by some one. He accomplished it, and I do not think that there were many men alive at the time who would have carried the adventure through to a successful ending. He had left Fowler's Bay on February 29, 1841, and he sat down in the Governor's house in Albany on July 4, and during this time he had been undergoing immense toil, never-ending anxiety, extreme privation, and had covered on foot some 1300 miles of the most barren country under the sun. He was the stuff indeed of which heroes are made.

CHAPTER XXVII

STURT, LEICHHARDT, AND MITCHELL

This was the golden age, then, of Australian exploration, and you can well understand what sort of feelings kept urging men like Eyre and Sturt and Mitchell on out into the dark continent. I think it is Nansen who tells us in his book about his great journey in the *Fram* in search of the North Pole, that when you are away up amongst the lonely ice-floes you wonder why on earth you ever came there, but that when you are back again amongst civilised people the call of the wild is for ever dragging at your heart. So it was with those who were adventuring out into our desert places. I have felt the feeling myself in a very mild way. When an Englishman — a new chum—first arrives in Australia, a great charm for him is the vast extent of the fields. You cannot for long call them "fields," but quickly you lapse into the colonial word "paddock." You have been accustomed to think of a hundred-acre enclosure as a big one, a large clear space in which, when you are hunting, you can let your horse sail along for a few delicious moments, with no anxiety as to what lies in front of you at the far end. You are more used to fields of between twenty and fifty acres. Then you suddenly arrive in a country where a 640-acre paddock is only a flea-bite, and where, perhaps, your horse-paddock is ten miles long. In such a country as this the spirit of the explorer is constantly within you, and you realise in a small way the feelings of those early heroes who drew aside the veil that wrapped our continent in mystery and gloom.

"They could not rest from travel," but their desire, like that of Ulysses, was always to "follow knowledge like a sinking star, beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

Scarcely had Eyre returned from his terrible walk round the Bight than Sturt, with eyesight restored and in health again, proposed an expedition across the very centre of the land. There was still an alluring uncertainty as to what lay there. Sturt still clung to the hopes of a great inland lake or sea, a fertile country of many waters, and in 1844 he set out from Adelaide, following up the Murray River to its junction with the Darling. He stayed some days with Eyre at Murundi, his cattle station, and you may be sure that these two friends enjoyed this opportunity for a talk.

Then he followed up the Darling River to Menindie, and from there struck out once more into the unknown. It is familiar country enough now. To Sturt it seemed very desert-like, broken here and there by rugged, curious-looking ranges. Little did he think of the wealth that lay beneath his weary feet and those of his men, as they tramped courageously onwards to the north. He was crossing the great silver mines of to-day, near Silverton and Mount Gipps. And they struggled on, always fighting against desert and drought, until they reached a well, a little oasis between Mount Brown and Mount Poole, and here the expedition came to an utter standstill. They could find no more water ahead of them, the heavens were parched, and it *could* not rain. The waters had dried up behind them in the scorching heat, leaving but surfaces of glazed mud, and there was nothing for it but to sit down where they were and wait for the fountains of heaven to be opened.

They found it fearfully hot. We who are used to it, and have every comfort, do not now think it is so bad. We have ice, even in remote townships, to cool the tips of our tongues. We have electric light to render night no longer hideous in unknown lonely places, and we have punkahs if we wish, or even electric fans, and, above everything, we are *at home,* and have plenty of fresh food to eat. Sturt and his gallant band felt themselves to be in a horrible parched desert. They had only a limited supply of salt provisions, tea, sugar, and flour, and not very much water. The average temperature was 104 degrees in the shade. Their finger nails became so brittle that they split, their hair dropped off, all the bolts and screws in the waggons and boxes came off or fell out. It has been said by some that the lead in their pencils melted away. Of course this last is nonsense. Graphite, the stuff in lead pencils, will not melt. But the wood round it shrank, and the lead dropped out when the pencil was pointed downwards. That has often happened to others when the heat was not so very unbearable.

"The thermometers burst." I doubt this. One of the men must have broken them.

"The cattle had to keep shifting their feet constantly, so hot was the earth on which they stood." One can quite sympathise with the cattle. But indeed Sturt's sufferings, and those of his men and animals, were very great, and after being shut up at the well for many months, one of the finest of them all, Mr. Poole, died of scurvy. The poor fellow had become so ill that Sturt determined to send him home at all risks, but he died on the second day out. They brought him back to the camp, and he was buried with Mount Poole for his headstone. Sturt himself, with a follower or two, during this term of imprisonment continued to make expeditions into the desert, and penetrated far beyond Lake Eyre, and up into Queensland many miles farther north than where now is the township of Birdesville. But his fate seemed ever to take him into stony, inhospitable places. The heavens never smiled upon him and his efforts, and he returned, after being away for nearly two years, beaten and worn out with toil. His wife, it is said, scarcely knew him on his return, and his appearance gave her such a shock that her hair turned grey in a single night.

Sturt's great contemporary, Sir Thomas Mitchell, was at this very selfsame time continuing his explorations to the north of the Darling Downs; and another adventurer, a picturesque figure in the romance of Australia, was also doing what he could in the cause of science and geography. This was Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt. It is interesting to note that the fortune, good or bad, with which these three commenced their careers never seemed to leave them. Sturt's fate, as we have seen, took him to deserts, stony, barren, waterless, and hard to cross. Mitchell's feet were directed to fertile, well-watered plains, repetitions of Australia Felix. It might have been that these two saw through different spectacles, and what was barren and bad found less room in Mitchell's diary, and yet made the keynote of Sturt's thoughts. But this could not altogether account for the difference between the fortunes of the rivals. Both were brave, steadfast men. Both are said to have been kindly to the aborigines. But Sturt's career was never tarnished by the spilling of the blood of blacks. In nearly all his expeditions Mitchell's followers came into collision with the natives, to the effusion of blood.

This last expedition of Mitchell's was through the well-watered country to the north of the Darling Downs, and it was in search of a waterway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. But he found all the streams, and very many of them too, trending south or east, and none flowing north. And so he came home, beaten in the main object of his search, but after opening up a very large amount of splendid pastoral land.

Leichhardt was the picturesque figure of these three who were simultaneously at work. He was a German, a man of science, but no bushman, and a foreigner unused to stock, and but little acquainted with Englishmen and their ways. Nevertheless one, at least, of his expeditions was a success. He led a party from Brisbane right up to the Peninsula, and hence, after losing one of his best men, Gilbert, at the hands of the natives, along the Gulf to Port Essington. This was a great feat. He travelled over 3000 miles of unknown country, and made for himself an imperishable name. But his succeeding efforts were complete failures. Indeed, on one of the expeditions he was constantly disturbed by the crack of the stockman's whip, and was really travelling over country opened out by some enterprising squatters.

But an everlasting halo hangs over his last journey. The object of this was to cross the continent from east to west, to start somewhere west of Brisbane, and to make for Shark Bay or Freemantle. Everything was carefully planned. There were eight good men and true, a fine herd of cattle, sheep, and goats, with drays and waggons, and everything that was then thought necessary to ensure success. They started in the highest spirits, in the loveliest of autumn weather, over interesting fertile country. The last letter despatched by the leader was full of confidence and hope. Everything was going smoothly. So far, the loss of a spade was their only misfortune. Even the mosquitoes had ceased from troubling. This letter was written from the Fitzroy Downs. A railroad runs there to-day, and there are large and prosperous towns.

Then it was as if the earth had swallowed them, their cattle and horses, drays, and everything else. Not a single trace of them has ever been seen again. Expeditions have gone in search of them, and the natives have told all sorts of lies about them, but there is simply nothing known of their fate. Trees have been found at old camps marked with the letter L, which might have meant Leichhardt. But they are more likely to have been cut by a man called Luff, a follower of M'Dowell Stuart, who traversed this same piece of country. This Luff had a sort of mania for carving his initials on trees at the camping-places, and Leichhardt had other things to do than that. One would have hoped, as the people spread over these western wilds, that an old rifle, a waggon wheel, a grisly skeleton, or at least something would have been found pointing to where Leichhardt was at rest. But nothing has returned out of that mysterious silence. A Queensland bushman a few days ago told me that it was nearly certain that the whole party had been swallowed up by a flood. Most men who know the Queensland bush hold the same opinion. There are very many watercourses there, dry in the hot weather, deep floods, far-spreading, after heavy rain. No bushman as he was, Leichhardt probably camped in one of these watercourses, and in the night the floods came down and swallowed him and his men. Then when the water dried, the wind blew the dust over them and covered them, and succeeding floods heaped the silt upon their bones, and even the watercourse may now have disappeared. So, somewhere out there, the sun beats in summer-time over their unknown graves, and in the spring the long grasses wave, and their sleep is sound enough. Perhaps even "the sturdy station children twine the wild flowers overhead," all unconscious of what lies at their feet. But we cannot help having a lingering hope that some day traces and relics may be found. Yet it is almost impossible, for "'tis sixty years since."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE FIRST CROSSING OF AUSTRALIA

Every expedition, successful or not, is gradually laying the whole of the big continent bare before the eyes of man, and I would like to follow every one of the explorers along with you. But that is quite impossible. Some were lucky, and some found disaster, but the most unlucky leader of them all was Kennedy. He had served his apprenticeship as an explorer with Sturt, and in 1848 was placed at the head of a party to open up the Cape York Peninsula. Nearly every man was lost. Kennedy himself, with one native boy, fought his way on through wastes and hostile blacks until a day or two's march from the coast, where a vessel awaited him. And then he fell, pierced by many spears. He was one of the bravest of the brave. He died in the same year as that in which Leichhardt vanished away.

And then there came a lull in Australian exploration, and for ten years little was done, with the exception that the squatters kept pushing out, farther and yet farther, making the desert smile and become fertile, supporting their flocks and herds.

Then late in the 'fifties the thirst and fever for travel again broke out. Gregory followed Leichhardt's footsteps across from the York Peninsula to what is now known as the Northern Territory, or what is affectionately called by its inhabitants "The Territory." Here he followed up the Victorian River, and penetrated away far into the south-west. He did good work.

It was in 1861, coming nearly down to our own times, that at length the continent was crossed from north to south, and that by two parties, nearly simultaneously. And then you may say that at long and at last the palace was won, the inner works surrendered, and the British flag thrown out fluttering in the breeze in the very centre of the fortifications. It was John M'Dowell Stuart who won the final victory, and he richly deserved to win. He left Adelaide in March 1860, after having trained himself, as it were, during 1858 and 1859, by examining all the Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens districts. By the 23rd of April he had reached central Mount Stuart, which is, however, really far west of the true centre of the continent. Yet farther north of this he was beaten back by hostile natives and came back to Adelaide. In a few months he again returned to the charge, only again to be beaten by an impenetrable scrub. But one month's rest was enough to refresh this most irresistible of all the explorers, and so for the third time in the space of eighteen months he "up and at it" again. The third attempt was more lucky, and in July 1862 he and his men touched the shores of the Indian Ocean some distance to the east of Port Darwin. He deserved success, did he not? And it makes one laugh with pleasure when we read that, as he neared the sea, he did not tell his followers how close they were to their goal, and when at length he stood gazing his fill, one after another of the men came straggling up, and as it met their eyes each one called out, "The sea!" It was like the old Greeks in Xenophon, who, after all their wanderings, at length surmounted a ridge, and there before them was the great ocean ruffled by a breeze. The brine was salt on their lips, and they knew that they were saved. And each one as he saw the water called out, "Thalassa! Thalassa!"

Stuart did not lose a man, but he himself, foredone with toil and broken in health, did not live many more years. But his laurel crown is perhaps the brightest and freshest of them all.

The other expedition which was at work simultaneously with Stuart's was one which somehow has sunk deep into the memories of Australians. One is not quite sure why this is so, except that many members of it sealed their devotion to their country's cause with their blood. Yet many others had done the same. Kennedy's party, for instance, lost many more lives than did that of Burke and Wills. Yet innumerable young Australians could not tell you a word about Kennedy, although they will one and all give you plenty of information concerning Burke and Wills. Perhaps it is only a freak that the public mind was so attracted by them and a glamour cast over their names. A statue, too, has been set up to their memory in one of the principal thoroughfares of Melbourne, and this itself must influence men's minds. But there is a certain amount of fickleness in the people's memories. Stuart's name is nearly forgotten, Sturt's will always live. Yet Stuart did infinitely greater work than Sturt, and that with only a few followers at his command, while both Sturt and Mitchell had a little regiment at their back, drays, waggons, and mobs of cattle and horses. However, it has so come about that there is more of romance floating around the names of Burke and Wills than round all the other explorers put together. There was little of romance in the business for them, poor fellows, and this is their brief story.

While the South Australian Government were despatching Stuart to cross the continent north of Adelaide, the Victorians, with plenty of money behind them, were preparing an expedition to attack the desert in a straight line between Melbourne and the Gulf. Nothing was left undone that money could do. But one cannot buy brains, and this very necessary element of success was left out upon this occasion. A big committee managed the affair, and too many cooks helped to spoil the broth. This committee began its blundering career by choosing a leader who had taken no degree in bushmanship. The test of a senior wrangler in this branch of learning is to cross a continent with only a "swag" on his back, and a swag will contain a blanket, a billy-can, some tea, sugar, flour, and a pair of stockings. Burke, the chosen captain, knew nothing of these things. He was a fine man, imperious, fiery, full of courage, but no bushman. Wills, the second in command, was a jolly fellow, and only twenty-eight years old. He had come out from Devonshire a few years before. Clever he was in his own line, a surveyor and astronomer, a man with a most scientific turn of mind, but also no bushman. You might as well have turned a stock-rider on to passing an examination in algebra as put these two men, Burke and Wills, at the head of an expedition of this sort. Nothing was to be left undone which wealth could do. A number of camels were imported from India. Much store of food was prepared, and waggons and horses got ready, and then, after feasting and speech-making, the procession left Melbourne one afternoon amid the cheering of the mob.

From the start, mismanagement and misrule reigned. In a few days the camel-driver returned, having quarrelled with Burke. He was an unamiable character, but his luck served him upon that day of the misunderstanding between him and his chief. At Menindie Burke picked up a new member for his force, a man called Wright, a station-manager, and to him he injudiciously and impetuously gave the position of third in command. Then he himself, with a portion of his men and camels, pushed on from the Darling to Cooper's Creek, leaving the main body to follow. At Cooper's Creek a depot was formed, but Burke did not wait for the others to catch him up. He again subdivided his party, and leaving four at the Cooper under one Brahe, he himself, with Wills and two men called King and Grey, six camels, and a couple of horses, scrambled on through the heart of the continent.

In two months they actually did touch the Gulf, after a monotonous journey as far as one can judge by the scanty notes kept by Burke.

And then they started on their disastrous retreat. They had only a month's provisions left now. The camels and horses, such of them as were left, were worn out. Burke had no thought for anything but to struggle on. Camel after camel died or was left behind. The two horses gave in. Then the food gave out, and Grey became very ill. The others thought he was shamming. Burke believed that he was eating some of their slender stores on the sly, and horsewhipped him. In a couple of days he died, and then his commander knew that he had not been shamming after all.

At length on April 21—they had left Melbourne in August—they reached the neighbourhood of the depot, and they made the gum-trees resound with their joyous "Coo-ees," greeting their companions whom they had left there with an ample store of provisions. But the bush was silent in answer. They found a deserted camp, and on a tree there was a note to Burke. It told them that the camp had been broken up *that morning*, and that Brahe and his men were returning to the Darling. A small quantity of food was buried beneath a tree, but no clothes nor blankets, and the three survivors were dying as much from cold as from want of food.

Then Burke completely lost his head. Instead of following up the tracks of the men who had only left the depot a few hours before, he determined that the quickest way to find help was to follow down the

Cooper to Mount Hopeless, somewhere near which there were supposed to be a few outlying settlers. Was ever any scheme more mad than this? One of Wills's greatest virtues was a most lovable loyalty to his chief, and he, sorely against his will, followed him for weal or woe. King had no other choice.

There now remained but two very weak camels, and the three men could scarcely walk, so wasted were they. In a few days one camel died, and then the creek lost itself in the sand, and the situation became hopeless. The last camel now died, and the provisions ran out entirely. Then they commenced to struggle back to the depot. They knew that the natives ate a kind of meal made from a grass-seed called "nardoo," and they spent their remaining energies in finding the plant on which it grew. They found it at length, but they obtained little nutriment from eating it. It was nice enough to chew, but poor Wills in his journal says, "It is rather pleasant starving upon this nardoo." On June 26 Wills died, wasted to a skeleton, after having reached the depot once more and carried back a little food for his friends. Two days later Burke also slipped away, and left King in the wilderness all alone.

In the meantime Brahe had led his men back to the Darling, where he joined Wright. Brahe's men had been very sick while camped at the depot, and he found that Wright, on the Darling, had lost four of his followers from scurvy. Nevertheless, as soon as the two parties were united Wright and Brahe at once set out for the depot in case Burke had meanwhile returned. As we know, they had already been there and left again for Mount Hopeless, and Brahe was not observant enough to see that the casks of provisions which he had buried beneath a tree had been disturbed. He in turn returned to Menindie, leaving no sign that he had ever been there, so that poor Wills, crawling back to gather a few scraps for Burke and King, had no means of knowing that help was so near at hand. Did anybody ever hear of such a muddle? It makes one quite sick to read about it. Ignorance, incompetence, and carelessness to a criminal extent were all here at work together.

Then word was sent to Melbourne that Burke was lost, no one knew where, and enthusiasm burst forth in a desire to rescue him. Four expeditions were hastily equipped and sent on the quest, one from South Australia, two from Queensland, and one from Victoria. It was the Victorian party, under Howitt, that found the survivor, King, existing amongst the blacks in the neighbourhood of the graves of Burke and Wills. After the death of his friends he had dragged on a weary existence on nardoo seeds and an occasional crow, until at length he joined a party of natives. These tried to get rid of him, but he stuck to them like a leech, as giving him his only chance of life. After Howitt found him he was brought back to Melbourne, where he was met by the multitudes, and feasted, stared at, and lionised by the people, as is ever the people's way.

Then the bodies of Burke and Wills were brought down and given an immense public funeral, but many of the fickle crowd called out in mockery, "Where is poor Grey?" And after this the public fought and wrangled for some years over their dry bones. Some strove over the reputation of Wright, and others fought for Landels, the camel-driver, some for Brahe, and many were for or against according praise to Burke. And much bad feeling was stirred up throughout the land, but mostly in the cities, and one cannot help feeling that, after all, the fate of Leichhardt was a happier one than that of Burke and Wills.

Things are all changed now. No one would be likely to starve to-day where Burke died, and although his death, and that of Wills and Grey and the others, were needless, yet we cannot say that they died altogether in vain.

CHAPTER XXIX

GOLD

OTHER brave men there have been since those days that have faced deserts, thirst, hunger, fatigue, but their wanderings have not yet been gilded enough by the hand of time to be raised into the regions of romance. These were Giles and Warburton, Landsborough, M'Inley, and Howell, and many more, most of whom have "gone home and ta'en their wages." And there were the two Forrests, who perhaps more than any others unlocked the desolate parts of Western Australia. There is nothing romantic to-day in the appearance of Sir John Forrest as you see him walking to the House, but doubtless, if it were necessary, his spirit would still be as willing as ever to traverse the wilds of his well-beloved west. As this is being written, the main object of his life is to see passed a Bill providing for the construction of a desert railway, whereby the west may be linked to the east by the iron rails and the iron horse. It is only a matter of time, and you yourselves may perhaps be carried, in comfort and at a high speed, past those awful spots where Eyre, sixty years ago, found the body of his murdered friend, and where he and Wylie, the black boy, found food and salvation in the French whaling ship. And there are many more who have done much for Australia, and who have gone and "have left no name behind them, but are as though they had never been born."

But the time came when there was suddenly found another stimulus urging men in crowds to the lonely places, an impulse that took no denying and was altogether irresistible. It was gold. Australia had been having a bad time of it in the 'forties. What with droughts, the low price of stock, the slow growth of population, and the fact that the market for her produce lay so very, very far away from the thickly populated countries of the old world, things were not looking very bright.

And in 1849, by the merest chance, gold was found in California, and found, too, by a New South Wales man. He was deepening a mill-race, when he saw in the water glowing particles large enough to pick up with his fingers. He knew that it was gold, but he did not know how to win it, and had not an old Georgian miner been there, the discovery might even have lapsed into obscurity.

Before 1849 there were only a few thousand inhabitants in the great state of California. Then all the riff-raff of the old countries turned their faces to the west, and a great crowd streamed away, their eyes burning and glowing in the desire for the wealth which they believed would lie at their feet when they reached the new land. From Australia, too, a crowd rushed away to the east to join that which was rolling to the west from Europe, and our population became even thinner than it had been before.

And amongst those emigrants from Sydney was one man called Edward Hammond Hargraves. He shipped with many others in a vessel called the *Elizabeth Archer*, and arrived in San Francisco to find the whole of the great bay beside the town a forest of masts. The whole world seemed to be flocking there, and Hargraves joined the crowd. But if for twenty years fortune had not smiled upon him in New South Wales, neither yet did she seem to be any more kind in California. Yet although he won no more gold than was sufficient to keep him going, he was an observant fellow, a practical geologist in a rough way, and a man of character, industrious and determined. As he worked away in the Californian gullies and saw the nature of the country, it began to take possession of his mind that he had seen exactly like formations in the land which he had just left, the same geological strata, and the same combination of deposits which lead the experienced to say "here is gold."

His companions laughed at his theories, but he was deeply in earnest, and he hankered day and night to be home again. He had arrived in San Francisco in 1849. He sailed in the barque *Emma* in January 1851, and, like all true Australians, who think there is no country in the world like their own, was glad to be home again. Hargraves made no secret of his theories either on the voyage or on his arrival in Sydney, but he was laughed at as a crank. "Gold in Australia! Pooh, pooh! The man was mad." And yet gold had already been won there. Away far back in the time of Governor Phillip a convict had produced a piece of gold which he said he had found. He could discover no more, and got a flogging for his pains, as an impostor and a liar.

Sir Roderick Murchison, the geologist, had written papers showing that in geological formation portions of Australia resembled the diggings in the Urals. Count Strezlecki, who pioneered Gippsland, had found an auriferous iron ore, but not likely to be payable, and it was known that a man had picked up a nugget several ounces in weight on the Fish River in 1830.

Then there were all sorts of rumours of how convict shepherds had made themselves rich by selling gold to the Jews in Sydney, and there was no doubt that one old fellow called M'Gregor from time to time took parcels of gold to the city and sold them there.

Hargraves knew all these things, and he could not rest for a moment after landing in Sydney. He hired a horse and set out early in February across the Blue Mountains. It was a lonesome, desolate ride through a barren, sterile country, but after being lost once he arrived on the fourth day at a little inn, kept by a widow woman named Lister, at Guyong. He was nearly in the country now which he had had in his mind's eye all through his Californian wanderings, and he was in a high state of excitement, you may be sure. He took Mrs. Lister into his confidence, and she, as most women would have been, was fairly bitten by the scheme and the prospects that

Hargraves held out to her. When asked to find a black boy as a guide she at once offered the services of her own son, who knew every inch of the country all round for many miles.

They started away from the inn on the 12th of February, in bright, early autumn weather, after a dry summer, and in a very few miles Hargraves recognised the old spots on the banks of a creek. It was here that his mind had always pictured for him the discovery of untold treasures of gold. But the creek was dry at the place, and, while his guide searched for water, Hargraves unwillingly sat down to take a hasty meal. Then the boy returned with the news that he had found a water-hole in the creek bed. The horses were hobbled and allowed to stray away, and the grand experiment was begun.

Hargraves scratched the gravel off a schistose dyke which ran across the creek at right angles, and then with a trowel he dug a panful of the earth which lay upon the rock, and ran with it to the water so as to wash it in his dish.

You have never washed a dishful of earth, I suppose. It is a most exciting sport, I assure you. You have a tin dish with a little rim looking inwards, and there are two or three rings running round the body of the basin. You put your spadeful of earth into this, and then, sitting on your haunches by the water side, you dip the earth and the dish into the water and quickly wash away all the light soil. Then there is left, after some time, only the gravel. And this you gradually get rid of by swaying the basin backwards and forwards, causing the water contained in it to go round and round like a little maelstrom, until there is left only the larger, heavier portions, and some heavy mineralised sand. Then you pick out the big pieces of quartzy gravel, making them to rasp pleasantly on the tin, and you throw them to one side. And as you wash, the water grows clearer and clearer, and the sand leaves a tail behind it as the water sweeps it round your dish. And then in the tail you see *gleaming*, dull and warm, not glittering, but *glowing* rather, the unmistakable, unspeakable, soul-stirring virgin gold.

So it was with Hargraves.

Down there in the lonely gullies by the creek side he washed dish after dish of soil, and in each lay the little particles, those treasures which had been hidden from the eyes of man ever since the beginning of time. It was enough to make a man lose his head, and for a moment indeed, as he tells us himself, he did go mad.

"I shall be made a baronet," he called out to his guide. "You will be knighted, and the old horse stuffed and put in the British Museum." And his innocent companion believed him. It is curious that Hargraves' mind did not seem to run on acquiring untold wealth by his discovery. I think I should have liked to go and dig and wash, and wash and dig, until I had acquired enough of the stuff to buy a principality, and *then* have gone and told the authorities all about it. What do you think you would have done? But Hargraves wished to be made a baronet, of all things, and have his horse stuffed.

And so what did he do? He proved about

seventy miles of country to be gold-bearing, he saw £10,000 raised in a week to the surface, and he called the place Ophir. Then he hastened back to Sydney and bargained that Government should give him £10,000 down as a reward for his great discovery. This was agreed to, and they also made him Commissioner on the goldfields, a not very lucrative post. And with this he was contented. But, as he himself tells, had he asked for ten shillings from every hundred pounds' worth of gold won for the first three years, it would not have been considered excessive. But by the bargain he would have become the possessor of several hundred thousands of pounds.

And that is the story of how gold was first found in Australia. It is romantic, after its own fashion, is it not?

CHAPTER XXX

TONS OF GOLD

THE Australian diggings became the magnet which seemed to be attracting the whole earth. Even her own towns were deserted. Servants were not to be had at any wage. Doctors, lawyers, shoeblacks, coachbuilders, butchers and bakers — everybody — rushed away to the diggings, eager to be rich. The newspapers were full of nothing else but gold, news-sheets and advertisements. Parramatta, a suburb of Sydney, was absolutely depopulated. It was a mad time. When Hargraves had completed his bargain with Government he again started out on horseback for the fields. He found a stream of people going both ways, out to the diggings and back again. Those going out were full of hope and fire, their faces shining like those travellers in the *Pilgrim's Progress* who were going up to the Golden City. Those coming back were moving along slowly, sullen and sulky—beaten. It was like the two streams of fighters which eye-witnesses described as going up and down Spion Kop in the Boer War. Those disappointed ones were vowing a terrible vengeance on him who had deceived them, as they called it.

Hargraves did not tell them who he was. But at a ferry, where numbers had to wait their turn to be taken over, having first mounted his horse, he made a speech to the discontented, pointing out how and why they had failed. It was as well that he had been wise enough to mount his horse before he disclosed his name. The crowd would have lynched him. They were a motley crew, both coming and going. There was even a blind man being led by a lame one. The cripple extended his hand over his crutch, and the blind one held it, and so they went off with the best of them, all athirst for gold.

There was no difficulty in finding your way. The roads were full of passengers of every kind, on foot, on horseback, in drays and waggons—all sorts. And when you at length reached the land of promise it was a picturesque sight.

As you topped the last hill in the ranges, the mining township lay at your feet, all made of canvas tents or of wood huts. The creek, on which the gold was being won, wound at the feet of thickly timbered hills, and every here and there was joined by a gully from the mountains. The smoke was rising blue in the distance, and from far down beneath you arose a constant rumble and hum like distant thunder. It was the noise of the "cradles" rocking to and fro as they washed the dirt for gold. Then as evening fell the lights of innumerable fires began to twinkle through the darkness, the rumble of the cradles ceased, and after a while the township slept.

All over the country, towns like this sprang up, and not only at the site of the first rush, but away down in Victoria, where the wealth of gold soon eclipsed that found in New South Wales. In a few months there were collected at Ballarat and Mount Alexander alone between twenty and thirty thousand men. And the total population of the colony only came to a scant two hundred thousand, and it took months before the news reached the old world and the thronging thousands began to arrive by the shipload. One writer at the time, in reference to this distance from home, says: "The clipper *Phaenacian*, one of the most beautiful ships I ever saw, reached Plymouth on the 3rd, having made the unprecedentedly quick passage of *eighty-three days.*" There was no cable girdling the earth in forty seconds then, and letters took eighty-three days, at the quickest, in transit. Now they are delivered punctually to the hour in thirty, and the wickets, as they fall in an international cricket match in London, are printed in the next morning's *Argus* in Melbourne, 12,000 miles away.

And then the gold came pouring in to the great towns on the sea-board for shipment home. There were tons of it. And I mean it, literally, when I write "tons of it."

Hargraves had washed his little spadefuls of earth in February. The "rush" had begun in April. From November the 2nd to the 30th of that month the gold carried from Ballarat to Melbourne and Geelong by the Government escort alone weighed two tons and a half, and this was believed to be only about one-third of the whole amount raised in this district alone. Try to figure it to yourself. In one month, from one locality, seven tons of pure virgin native gold. It was worth at the lowest three pounds ten an ounce. I leave you to do the sum for yourselves, finding out how much in sovereigns this seven tons was worth.

When you look at it in this way you can have but little wonder that the whole country went mad. And in those days it was so easily found. In many places the precious stuff simply lay on the surface in what are called nuggets. There are plenty of these yet, if only we had eyes to see, and knew where to look for them. As I write there are big nuggets again being found quite close to the sunlight at a place called Tarnagulla, about thirty miles from Bendigo. You would have thought that around Bendigo, at least, every inch of ground had been "fossicked" out long ago. But fifty years ago these nuggets were comparatively common. Here, for instance, is the story of one particularly big find.

It was a few months after the first discovery had taken place at Ophir, in the Bathurst district. The first tremendous excitement had died out, and then there one morning appeared in the Bathurst newspaper the big headlines of—

"BATHURST GONE MAD AGAIN."

And it was little wonder.

A Dr. Ker had a station at a place called Wallawaugh. He and his wife had been very kind to the blacks, and they had several of them employed as shepherds and workers on the run. One afternoon a black-fellow, who had been shepherding sheep, came in and told the doctor that he had found a big lump of gold far out on the place. Gold was of no use to him, but he had heard much talk about it, and knew how the white men valued the dross. The doctor mounted his horse and took a hammer and a saddle-bag. There it lay, open to the view of any man who might pass that way. No wonder if the sheep's teeth that had nibbled round it had been "filled" with gold. At his feet the doctor saw a mass of gold and quartz which weighed over a hundredweight. Four thousand eight hundred and sixty pounds' worth was his for the trouble of the day's ride.

It is told that on the journey home the doctor had to stop at some outlying house, and he had no wish that the nature of the packet in his saddle-bag should be known. He flung it carelessly down beside the fence as he dismounted from his horse.

"That's heavy," said the owner of the house.

"Ah! my word," replied the doctor, "it might be gold." And the curious part of this discovery was that nowhere near the spot where the hundredweight had lain could any more gold be found. Even the earth from the vicinity, when washed, yielded not one grain, not a tiny speck.

But with gold to be won by the ton, and with hundredweights lying on the surface, so that you might make them your pillow as you lay back and smoked your after-dinner pipe whilst you were watching the sheep, it is no wonder that the gold-fever spread like the measles or influenza, and that the whole community lost their heads. As ship after ship came sailing in and discharged its load of immigrants, the sailors used to bolt away as the anchor fell, leaving their officers in despair to work their vessels as they might.

What wild, strange times they were! They have gone now, and the like will never be seen again, in our country, at least, and almost all of those who took part in the first mad rushes are now lying peacefully in their graves. But I have here a relic of the old days. I have an old friend—old Bob, we will call him—who came out as a sailor in 1851, and who did what every other sailor did at that time, "bolted for the diggin's and a fortune." He was only a boy, and in the next chapter I shall tell you something of what happened to Bob.

CHAPTER XXXI

A BOY AT THE DIGGINGS

Bob was eighteen when he sailed gaily into Sydney Heads in 1851. He was small for his age, very blue-eyed and innocent-looking, with fair hair blowing about his eyes. Every sailor in the *Dudbrook* had determined, long before the Heads were reached, on bolting at the very first opportunity. Bob already in imagination was rolling in gold. But somehow, after the anchor fell, no opportunity came to "boy Bob." Every day they became a hand or two shorter, and he never could make up his mind to make a run for it. Then the *Dudbrook* was hauled to the jetty and her cargo discharged. In a few weeks she was laden again, but was to call at Newcastle for a shipload of horses for Calcutta. Not one of the old crew remained except boy Bob, and he still lingered on, letting his "dare not wait upon his would." The vessel was manned entirely by officers and apprentices. Not a sailor-man was to be picked up either for money or for love. The day for departure came, and still Bob scuttled about the ship with his cheery "Ay, ay, sir," whenever he was called, and that seemed to be every minute.

The sails were being shook slowly out by the few available hands, the little tug had the big ship by the bows, and, puffing and churning the water to a foam, was hauling her off. There was left but a single connecting link with Australia. "Here," roared the skipper, "Bob, boy Bob, scramble ashore and cast off that hawser."

Then, and not till then, did courage come to Bob's palpitating heart. No sooner did his feet touch the quay than he slipped across it to the other side, and, with no thought of hawsers, he ran along, hidden by the jetty, till he reached the shore. He could hear, as he ran, the captain's roar of, "Bob; where the deuce is that boy Bob?" But it was death or glory this time. With the tug at the bows there was no time to come hunting after runaway boys. Bob slipped into the house of a woman whom he knew on shore, the *Dudbrook* went sailing away through the Heads for India, and next day Bob, with his "bluey" on his back, was off to the Turon.

On the way up he fell in with a shipmate, one of the *Dudbrook's* runaways, and these two, when they arrived at the diggings, pegged out a claim. They had very little money. They had never thought that they would want money where gold was so easy to win, and they had only a pound or two between them. It took them a good few days' sinking before they even reached bottom in this their first venture, and then they found that they had "bottomed a duffer."

Never mind, try again. Meantime, however, their little money was all gone. They were in a dreadful plight. They could get no credit, and they were fearfully hungry. But they worked on, hoping every minute to "strike it," and what do you think these two lived on for four days? Four bottles of hop beer, neither more nor less. Then they could hold out no longer, and they each sold a quarter share for a small sum. But it was enough to buy them meat and bread, and they sat down and ate a whole leg of mutton, and they didn't chew it much either. The consequence of that was that they both nearly died, and Bob swelled out like a poisoned puppy, and became quite black across his poor little stomach. But they "had struck it" this time, and Bob became, in his own eyes, tremendously rich. In a couple of months he had actually laid by a hundred and twenty pounds. He had never handled such wealth before in all his life, and he determined to run down, as so many of his mates did, to Sydney for a holiday and a spree. And it was on his way there that a very curious thing happened to him and his money. Although so dreadfully rich, Bob still had notions of economy, and he made up his mind to walk down as he had walked up, and trust to stray lifts on the road. He had all his gold turned into pound notes, and he had them tied up in two bundles in his trousers pockets when he set out early one summer's morning. He had covered a good five-and-twenty miles by the afternoon, and he rested for a while in a shady hollow by a creek side, thinking that he would be soon overtaken by a bullock waggon which he had passed at mid-day farther back on the road.

The water of the creek looked beautifully clear and cool. Bob was very hot and dusty, and he thought suddenly, "By George, I'll have a bathe!" So he off with his clothes, put them down beside the fallen tree-trunk on which he had been sitting, took out his bundles of notes from his pocket and laid them beside his boots. Why he did this he never knew, except that the bundles bulged his pockets and made it uncomfortable for him to take his trousers off. There was not a single soul in sight. Not a sound in the bush except the chorus of chirping cicalas. Far away up the hill was a cloud of dust, probably from the waggon as it lumbered along. So Bob had his bathe, the sun soon dried him, and he dressed and put on his boots.

"Hulloa! where the deuce is that bundle of notes?" He felt his trousers pockets; then his coat pockets. He looked all round the log where he had sat; then he dodged about among the trees, thinking the thief might be hiding. But not a soul was there. The notes were gone.

When the waggon came up, Jim, the bullock-driver, joined in the search too. Still not a sign. Bob had a stray tenner left, and he would not turn back. He was bent on his spree. So he mounted the waggon, and, with a sinking at the heart and a rather sorrowful face, rolled on his way to Sydney.

That evening they camped outside a wayside inn—the Digger's Rest. The whole countryside to this day bristles with Digger's Rests, Digger's Points, Digger's Arms, and such-like names.

Of course the travellers went into the bar, and, of course, the talk turned on Bob's lost notes. And he told the story a score of times or more. Now there was an old crone sitting in the corner who never spoke during the whole night, but sat solitary and apart. When Bob finally rose to go to his camp under the waggon, it was then that she opened her lips for the first time.

"And what will ye gie me if I find yer money for ye, ma bonny bairn?" she asked, as she looked comically over the black bowl of her pipe at him with a solemn face, but a laugh in her blue eyes.

"What will I give ye, mother?" cried Bob. "Why, I'll give ye a silk dress and a ten-pound note."

"It's a bargain!" she said. And then she told him what to do. He was to be ready at four in the morning with a horse and trap that the landlord of the inn would lend. He was to bring a newspaper, an axe, and a roll of string, and she would find his money for him. Bob thought it was all great nonsense. But still anything was better than losing his money without making every effort to get it back, so next morning he was up at four, with everything ready as old Maggie had told him. It felt like something that might have happened in a fairy story long, long ago.

They drove quickly back the ten miles to the creek and the hollow log, Maggie sitting smoking all the way. She seldom took her little black "cutty" pipe from her lips, and she scarcely ever spoke.

"Now show me the bit," said she, "where you put the money down"; and she looked carefully all round the log, giving little satisfied grunts to herself every now and then.

"Now gie me the paper and the twine." And she tied a piece of the newspaper to a long bit of string, and laid it down where Bob had left his swag on the previous day.

"And now come awa' frae here," Maggie said. And she led the way to a shady spot in the creek bank some hundred yards away, where she sat down.

"And now I'll play ye at cribbage," she said as she drew out a pack of very dirty cards and a bar of soap with holes punched up the sides. This was the cribbage board, and these two sat gravely down and played two games of crib, both of which Maggie won with grunts of pleasure, and Bob thought it was all foolishness and waste of time.

At the end of the second game she bundled the cards and the soap back again into the long pocket of her skirt, and, rising, she said, "Now come wi' me," and she hobbled back to the log by the creek.

The paper had gone, but at the mouth of the hollow which ran up the centre of the fallen tree was the loose end of the string, and Maggie chuckled as she saw it, and, pointing to the log, cried, "Now rip it up wi' the axe."

It did not take Bob many minutes (for you may be sure he worked with a will) before he had a good big hole chipped out, and, lo and behold, there, with the newspaper and the bank-notes beside them, helping to form their cosy nest, was a litter of dear, speckled, furry native cats, squalling and calling out for their breakfast, and, looking farther into the darkness of the hollow, they could see two specks of fire, the mother cat's eyes.

She had run off with Bob's money in order to line her nest with it. Surely as costly a cradle as was ever pressed by the heir to the greatest empire on earth.

So Maggie got her ten-pound note, but she would not touch the dress.

"What's the use of a silk dress tae an' auld body like me?" she said. "And I like ye, laddie," she would say. "And I like yer Scotch tongue. And ye're like ma ain bairn that's been wi' his Maker thae thirty year."

So Bob had his spree and his holiday, and came back to the "diggin's." But he never made much of a rise at that work. Still, he is a fairly substantial man now is old Bob. Not rich, but warm enough. And comfortable and happy. It all seems to him but yesterday, that gold-digging, rollicking, glorious time in the brave days before he was twenty-one. But time has slipped by since then. Everything has changed. To us it seems as though these events had taken place in a previous age. So I treasure old Bob and his stories, relics of what has been, memories almost sacred. Romance!

CHAPTER XXXII

DIGGING FOR GOLD TO-DAY

With the old figures that took a hand in these first wild rushes have disappeared, too, the quaint, picturesque canvas and hut mining townships of those days. Writers, even at the time of the earliest surface discoveries, prophesied that that style of mining had but a brief day to live. It has been so all the world over ever since the lust for gold awoke in men's hearts. I constantly pass through a place that used to be a canvas town with some 10,000 inhabitants. Twenty years ago, even in the very streets, you would see heaps of red earth and mounds of pipeclay, and you would be told that so many parties had made fortunes there and had gone home to England. They were Lancashire folk, and it is called the "Lanky Lead" to this day. They were Scotsmen, and it received the name of "Bobbie Burns." You can trace these leads for a mile or more by the continuous heaps of earth dotted down the little valley, on each side of which to-day lie the dark green vineyards, with their rich clusters, which hang ripe and mellow in the autumn time, waiting to be picked and crushed into wine.

But mining is still going on and giving work to a vast number of hands. The little heaps of earth that we see in the valleys were laboriously raised to the surface by the winding of a windlass turned by weary hands, or at the best were "whipped" up by a quiet, staid old draught horse. To-day there is a very different story to tell and picture to see.

As you drive through the same country-side now you come upon little wooden townships, in the midst of which stand the huge surface works, like giants surrounded by pigmies. Here there are tall structures, wooden frameworks, reaching up into the sky, higher than the tallest gum-trees of the place used to be. There are platforms, one above the other, and wheels on which run smooth steel cables. And there are engine-houses and offices, and blacksmiths' and joiners' shops. And there are great mountains of quartz stone, lying all orderly beside the poppet heads, and mounds of earth that are Himalayas when compared to the little mole-hills raised by hand some fifty years ago. As you draw near, you hear the ceaseless throb and cough of pumps as they raise and belch out, some six times in a minute, volumes of water from the underground river out of which the gold is being won, 300 feet or more beneath where we stand. That is the present-day mining for alluvial gold, and it is a costly business, far beyond the reach of the enterprise of individual men. It is all done by companies, with big capitals at their backs. Take it as a whole, and you find that far more gold is spent than is ever won in this form of mining. But still men are for ever urged forward by knowing that rivers full of gold are flowing in the bowels of the earth.

And the winning of the gold from the quartz rock is an even more complicated and costly process. At Bendigo and Ballarat, where such rich finds were made within a few feet of the air in the old days, they are now hewing away through solid rock 3000 and 4000 feet below—nearly a mile down. Here there is gallery after gallery lit by electric light, and pure air is pumped all that way down to the perspiring men. It is very hot; it is as though, in their burrowings, men are approaching to the nether fires. I question whether Odysseus travelled so far in his search for Hades and the spirits of the dead.

I went down one of these quartz mines the other day—not one of the great Bendigo concerns, but a small business not far from where I live. The place was in the middle of wild ranges densely clad with trees, and the "poppet heads" stood on the top of one of the tallest of the hills. It was in the midst of the country through which Hume had travelled in his overland journey from Sydney to Port Phillip, and I could not help thinking of him as I stood on a little platform up in the sky and looked at all the scene below. But for the workings and the men, the rest of the view might have been as Hume himself saw it, within measurable distance of a hundred years ago. You looked away south and west over uncountable hills, all thickly clad with gums and pine. You could see not one trace of human life or dwelling. It was a glorious day in spring; the trees, a dull grey-green, close at hand, faded away in the distance into a hazy, restful blue, and the waves of shadow went sailing over them solemnly and slowly, making grateful contrast to the bright sunshine.

Then, looking north, you saw the great plains of New South Wales, wheat-covered, even now ripening beneath the warm spring sun, and here and there a little blue hill rose from the dead flat, like an island at sea. And between us and them, and at the feet of the ranges, wound the Murray among the giant gums. I wish it were called the Hume. Then suddenly, out of the bright sunshine, free fresh air, and glorious expanse we stepped into "the cage," a narrow little prison-house holding four or five men. A signal flew to the engine-house; in a moment, noiselessly and smoothly, we sank down, down, down into the earth. It seemed only a few seconds when we pulled up, as silently and smoothly, 400 feet below, and walked out of our cage into a chamber cut from out of the solid rock. We might have been gnomes of the mountains, old dwarfs who mined in the hills, that we used to read about long ago in the German fairy-book. We had all old slouch hats upon our heads, and miners' overalls on our bodies, to save our clothes, and as we stood, with lighted candle in our hands flickering on silver beards, we were a picturesque-looking lot. Then we enter the long galleries carved from stone, down which run little railways carrying waggon-loads of quartz, and we cannot help looking backwards now and then to the open chamber, and to our lifeboat, the cage. Suddenly, far ahead of us through the earth, we hear a noise like a rapid rifle-fire, and one of our party shouts in my ear, "Ah! they are at it."

"At what?" I roar in reply.

"Rock drill," comes faintly to my ear through the din.

In the old days the miner used laboriously and slowly to bore holes in the rock with chisel and mallet, not many inches in an hour. Now we see two men with an implement not unlike a small Maxim gun. When all is ready and in place "she" begins spluttering and banging like the Mauser rifle fire we heard, and in a few minutes a hole is bored inches deep into the solid face of rock. When many of these have thus been drilled, they are loaded with dynamite, exploded with a terrific roar, and a great mass of broken-up rock falls into the gallery, to be carted up to the surface in the trucks. You eagerly pick up some of these shattered portions expecting to see gold glowing on its grey surface. But you search in vain. The knowing ones look at it wisely and mutter, "Good-looking stone," but to me it differed not at all from the stuff I saw quarried from the hillsides by the Ettrick and the Tweed years ago when I was a boy.

On the whole one is not sorry when the cage is reached again, and we rise like a cork to the bright sun and the clear fresh air, and in the daylight see the quartz put through every process to extract the unseen gold from its grey-blue depths. It is hammered by "stampers" driven by steam, with a most prodigious noise, until it is nothing but a fine powder. It is washed by a stream of clear water, and carried by the water over mercurial plates. All the earth and stone is washed away and the iron pyrites is separated from it. The gold is captured by the plates. Then, lest any has escaped with the iron and other metals, they are all put together into big "cyanide" tanks, and the very last grain extracted. But you would never take the stuff won in that way for the "red, red gold." It is black—the black alotropic modification of gold. But it is gold all right, and the alchemists, by the aid of heat, convert the sooty-looking dirty material back again into the pure, solid, heavy metal. A little wedge of it was put into my hands, in size perhaps a little bigger than a wooden match-box. But its weight was so great to my unaccustomed, clumsy fingers, that it fell through them with a dull thud on to the ground. Oh yes, it was gold, and no mistake.

Then when evening fell we drove through the dusk from the "claims" to the big mining township, and the road was gay with lamps coming steadily towards us. Miners were hurrying to their shifts on their bicycles, and cabs were running, carrying men who were going down to work all the night through, down there in the earth, in spite of the wet, and the heat, and the deadly "miner's disease." Through the gum-trees, up in the sky, appear great glowing lights, reminding you of what you see as the train whizzes you through the Black Country at home, through Staffordshire and Derbyshire. They are the electric lights on the "poppet heads." But in the township itself the scene reminds you more of the old days. It is Saturday night, and the street is a moving mass of beings, miners and their wives doing their shopping. The big pay day is over and money is plentiful. But not as in the old days, for it is only wages that have been earned, although good wages at that. A few young fellows in cricket or tennis clothes are in the crowd, a band is playing on the balcony of a hotel, the bars are full, but there are no drunk men about. You hear but little talk of mines and mining as you, in your buggy, crawl at a foot-pace through the prosperous, good-humoured crowd in the well-lit street. Then you drive out into the sweet country air again, with the stars shining down on the vine-clad slopes, and you think not unpleasantly, as you drive along with a cool east wind on your cheek, of the mining days that have gone with their romance and fun, and contrast them with the staid, sober, strenuous, business-like strivings of to-day.

CHAPTER XXXIII

BUSHRANGING

Yes, it was a wild enough life in the old digging days, but a happy one too, and the memories surrounding it are the most romantic of any in the whole history of Australia. Of course the gold drew a very queer lot from the scum of the earth to the new land, and here there were to be found those who were disappointed, or who were discontented or in debt, the adventurous, the ne'er-do-wells of the family, the unsettled and the criminal part of all the communities of the globe.

You cannot wonder, then, if crime was rife and that robbery and easy ways of making money and a living were used by a section of the motley crew drawn together by the various "rushes."

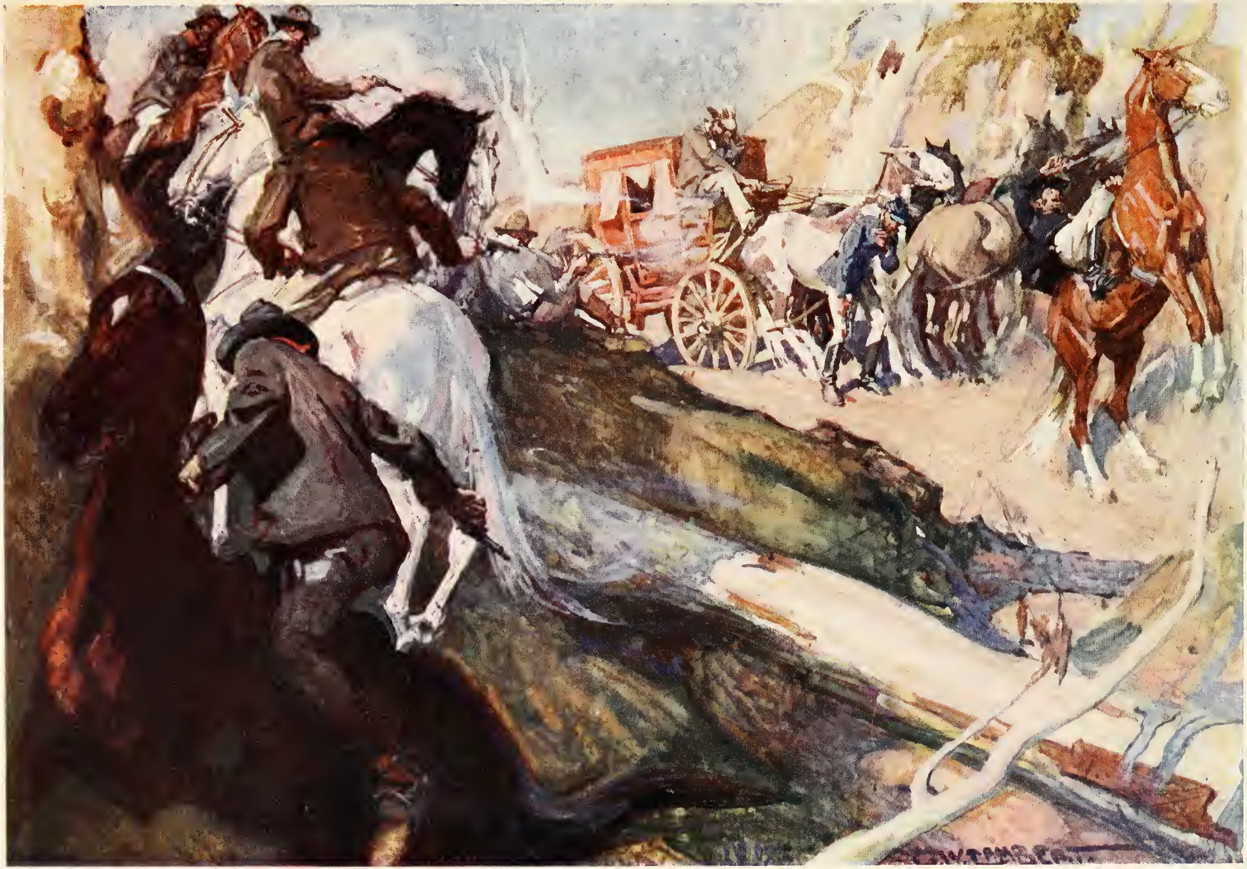
It was thus that bushranging was encouraged. There always had been bushranging in the country, ever since the first fleet arrived with its convict crews, but the business was different in the early days. Then the rangers were usually escaped convicts raiding the country-side for food, and perhaps for vengeance upon society. Bloodthirsty, wicked villains these were, the lowest of the low. Many of them were no better than wild beasts. You can read a wonderful description of them in Henry Kingsley's book *Geoffrey Hamlyn.* That is a splendid story, and it draws a beautiful picture of the life in the colonies before the gold fever broke out

There are books printed giving a full account of each individual bushranger and gang ever since the beginning, but most of them become dull enough reading after a little time, for these records are pretty well alike. There were Martin Cash and Mike Howe, Pierce the Cannibal and Jackey Jackey, Lynch and M'Intyre, and scores and scores of others during these early days, and their stories are all very similar. Infamous blackguards they were for the most part, and they are better left to sleep as quietly as they can in their graves.

But a more picturesque style of criminal arose with the gold-digging era. He was more after the nature of Robin Hood and Little John, or Dick Turpin, than anything which we can read about in the early stories, and Australia nourishes a certain amount of affection for the memories of those dead villains. Money and gold were very plentiful in those days, and all sorts of tales are told of how the miners used to get rid of cash which they were unable to use, and the possession of which was such an unwonted experience to them. They shod horses with golden shoes; they would light their pipes with bank-notes; they would pour champagne into buckets and drink the expensive wine wholesale, and really wish all the time that they were swilling rum or beer. But with the country in this state you can see how easy it was to start in a "stand and deliver" business. Distances were great and police few.

And then "escort robberies" developed from this highwayman's trade, and this branch of the game drew together gangs of men in order to accomplish it successfully and well. Large sums of gold were weekly sent down from the mining townships to Sydney or Melbourne, and everybody knew when the escort was about to start, and a crowd would assemble to see the cavalcade clank down the main street on its way. There would be a single trooper in advance, and then, at a distance, two more, well mounted and armed with pistols, carbine, and sword. After them came the vehicle carrying the gold, drawn by four horses. In front, on the box seat, was the driver, and a constable with his carbine at the ready. One or two constables sat behind, also with rifles, loaded and cocked, and alongside rode troopers, one on each side. Two more followed, and the rear was brought up again by a single trooper. You would have thought that such a well-armed force would have deterred any one from making the attempt to carry off the cargo, but the temptation was so great that, in spite of everything, it was often attempted, and sometimes with success.

The gang would wait at some "pinch" on the road, concealed in the dense scrub. They would fell a tree or two across the track, compelling a coach to pull up until the obstruction was removed. You may remember how a greater robber than they, Rob Roy, used the same device when he rescued Di Vernon and killed the scoundrel Rashleigh Osbaldi-



Sticking up the gold escort

stone. In this same way the bushrangers would wait until all was confusion and the police force divided, when they would pour in a volley, and often a very deadly volley too, and the day was their own. On occasions like these great hauls were often made, but there were usually many hands to share the spoil. If you wish to hear more of those gangs, read Rolf Boldrewood's *Robbery under Arms.*

The most famous of all these bands was that commanded by Gardiner, Hall, Gilbert, and Dunn. There was quite a little army of them, but of course their profits were small in proportion. They were the scourge of the bush for many years, robbing and raiding, stealing horses and burning stations. They were all very young men. Only one was over thirty. His name was Mount, and he was pathetically called the "old man" by the rest of the party. The end of most of them was what they deserved. Three of them were hanged, and at least five shot. One of them, Burke, was "pinked" by Mr. Keightly when his station was stuck up and that dramatic scene took place when the bushrangers determined to shoot him, though Mrs. Keightly pleaded hard for his life. Finally she was permitted to ride to Bathurst for his ransom while the prisoner himself played picquet all night with his probable executioner. I knew Mr. Keightly well. A tall, handsome man with a strong face and a piercing eye, a rather pompous manner, a flowing beard, and a brave heart.

Many others of the gang were sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from thirty-two years to ten. The "old man" went to gaol for ten, Gardiner for thirty-two. It all took place in the 'sixties, and most of them are dead and buried, but I know of at least one old man who boasts that he was Ben Hall's "telegraph," or that he was "out" with Ben Hall and Gilbert, and he receives a certain amount of homage in consequence of his boast. Ben Hall, by the bye, always loved a thoroughbred horse, and he three times over stole the stallion Troubadour, and three times was the horse recovered. I had a grey mare, a fiery old thing, whose grandsire was this same Troubadour. She became the mother of a little brown filly who could beat any horse in Australia for speed up to a mile. If old Troubadour himself could gallop like his little great-grandchild, no wonder Ben Hall loved him, and no wonder he was hard to catch. When the old horse finally died, seven bullets were found in his flesh, all intended for his master. Good old Troubadour! And his name lives for ever through his great-grandchild, my brown, fawn-eyed, swift-as-the-wind little dear.

Now, there have been books and books written about the bushrangers and their doings, but they all read rather like old newspaper reports. I would not have you struggle through them. But I shall tell you about such of them as I knew all about, and those whose country I am acquainted with, almost as though it were my very own.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE KELLY GANG

It is the last, the most daring and determined, and certainly the most picturesque and romantic outbreak that I have the greatest personal knowledge of, and the district in which all the action took place lies daily before my eyes.

When you are rushing along from Sydney to Melbourne in the express, you leave the plains of New South Wales and cross the Murray River at Albury into Victoria. Then you follow the river and its gum-covered flats for a while, till the train roars beneath the Lady Franklyn ranges, and bursts on to a fertile wheat and vineyard country as you speed away south. To the east you will still see ranges, and as you near the growing country town of Wangaratta, away across the plains, and rising abruptly from them, is the great mass of the Black Range. When you leave Wangaratta your road begins to rise, and in a little while the railway winds along some little hills at the foot of the Warby Ranges. Then it is that you get a glorious sight of this beautiful country.

I love to look at it in the morning, in early spring-time, or late winter, when the snow is lying in its deepest among the hills. You can see from the train, as you glide along, a great fertile strath at your feet, stretching for miles and miles. It is cleared pretty well of the timber, but there is enough left to give it a pretty, park-like look. Farmhouses are dotted over the strath, and there are cornfields and ploughed lands, and dairy herds and bullocks roam the pastures. Then the strath ends at some little foot-hills, thick in forest, lying dark in shadow, and through their clefts pour the waters of the Ovens and the King, seeking to worm their way through the hot plains to the parent stream. Then the foot-hills rise step above step. You can see the timber grow scanty on their sides as they rise, and the rocks become more rugged and sharp. You can see them split into gullies and ravines, and then suddenly they rise up against the rare, clear, bright blue Australian sky into sharp peaks, splashed with snow. There is a vast space of pure ether between them and us, and it makes you think of eagles and all sorts of wild things. And indeed if you look, there, hovering in the crystal, a tiny speck against the blue, is a big eagle hawk—"Mullyan" the blacks called him. He was a great fellow to them. I wish we could see all that he is looking at with those keen piercing eyes of his. We might not be satisfied even then. But from where we are we can see something that caps the whole scene. Through the gaps in the Buffalo's peaks, gleaming spotlessly white, and awfully lonely and solemn-looking, are the snow-covered, ample shoulders of Bogong and Feather-top, the Cobbler, and other great mountain heights. We can scarcely catch from here the king of them all, Kosciusko.

That is the Kelly country that we have been looking over. They were reared away up one of the rivers which we see winding down from the hills there, at Greta.

While you are trying to drink your fill of the view, all too soon the train rattles and rumbles in amongst some little rocky ranges which hide all the panorama from your eyes, and in a few minutes it pulls up at a little wayside station called Glen Rowan.

No one pays any attention now when we pass the spot. But twenty-five years ago heads used to be thrust out through each carriage window, and eager, interested eyes took in the scene. It is where the Kellys were shot. I always look at a couple of round holes in an iron shed close at hand, and imagine that they are bullet-holes pierced there during the action. They may be only empty bolt-holes, but they have been there for five-and-twenty years, and they help to paint for me the picture of the fight. But now the memory of it all is nearly dead. No one mentions the Kellys as we puff away again from the station, unless some palpable globe-trotter happens to be in the carriage, when some garrulous individual makes the history of events the theme of his discourse, beginning with, "This is the Kelly country, sir." And I have never seen any one yet who failed to know who the Kellys were.

This is their sad story.

There was a regular clan of Kellys, Lloyds, Byrnes, Harts, Wrights, and Quins settled round Greta, all connected by blood or marriage. They were a wild lot, and they lived in wild times. Old Kelly had left his country for his country's good. He married one Ellen Quin, and these two had a big family. There was Ned the eldest, and Jim, Dan, Kate, Grace, and the rest, physically fine boys and girls, but reckless, lawless, with little education, at constant war with the police and all authority. They made their living, if living you can call it, by cattle and horse stealing and by horse-breaking and general work on the stations and farms around.

Jim, at the age of fifteen, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for horse-stealing. When twenty-one he fell in for another ten years for robbery under arms. A promising lad, truly. Ned was taken by the police in 1870, when he was sixteen, on suspicion of helping Power, a noted bushranger in the district, and in the following year he went to gaol for three years for horse-stealing. Dan, at fifteen, went to gaol for three months for house-breaking along with his cousins, the Lloyds, and next year he was "wanted" for horse-stealing. Dan could not be found. He was only sixteen, you will observe, at this time, and Ned was twenty-three. Try to put yourselves in their place. They were reared in a wild country far from schools and towns. The talk which they heard all round them daily was their education, and it taught them that the only disgrace in crime was to be found out. They spent their lives upon horseback, and they loved a good horse. Riding a "bucker" was only a bit of fun to them. and they could hit a mark with a pistol without fail. Ned, it is said, could smash the insulators on the telegraph posts with revolver bullets as he cantered by. The bush was an open book to them, and had been so since babyhood. They could track like black-fellows. Above all, they had been taught since infancy to look on the police as deadly foes. As a chicken is taught by its mother to look upon a hawk, as the young deer are led to understand that the tiger is their mortal foe, as the smallest mouse knows why he must avoid the cat, so did the Kellys look upon the police.

A year after the warrant was out against Dan for horse-stealing, a constable got wind that the boy was at his mother's house in Greta. He mounted his horse and rode straight to the place. Dan was there, sure enough, and was arrested. But the constable, Fitzpatrick—and it is strange that almost all the constabulary were the Kellys' countrymen—had had a long ride, and Dan himself offered him his dinner. Old Mrs. Kelly was in a towering rage, you may be sure, and as she set the meat in front of the trooper she told him with flashing eyes, "If my son Ned were here he'd throw ye out at de winda."

"Here he comes," cried Dan.

Fitzpatrick turned to look, and Dan threw himself upon him in an instant. Down they went with a crash on the mud floor, and Mrs. Kelly, picking up a garden spade, banged the constable over the head. Then Ned rushed in with two other men, and seeing what was up, drew a revolver and fired, wounding Fitzpatrick in the arm. Then they dressed the wound and allowed the constable to mount his horse and ride away.

But the murder was out now, and it was to be war to the knife. Next day Mrs. Kelly was arrested along with the two men who accompanied Ned when he fired the shot, and the old woman was sent to gaol for three years. The men, one of them her son-in-law, received sentences of six years each. You can well understand the feelings that grew in the hearts of Ned and Dan in their hiding-place when their "bush telegraphs" brought them the news that their mother had gone to gaol. The whole country-side was filled with their sympathisers, and up till this time one hardly wonders at it. There had been bullying, no doubt, on the part of the police. The Kellys had a bad name. Young constables burned with ardour to make arrests and so earn promotion.

But, after all, their crime of horse-stealing was a hereditary one, in which, perhaps, your ancestors and mine, in the wild old days on the Scottish border, were proficients on a far larger scale than were the Kellys.

It was in April 1878 that Ned and Dan, along with their friends, Joe Byrne, aged nineteen, and Steve Hart, aged twenty, took to the hills. Why these two joined Ned and Dan I do not know. They were wild and lawless too, and loved the fun, perhaps. But till then my own sympathies are with the boys. In October, however, something took place which makes one desire to hound them all down, and calls for vengeance, even to the spilling of their blood.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE WOMBAT RANGES

A LARGE force of police and black trackers had been told off on purpose to capture the Kellys, but up to October 26 nothing had been done excepting the arrest of a crowd of sympathisers, who were kept in custody for many months. It was said that the police were enjoying the racket, the picnic-like life, and the increased pay, and that their efforts were not so strenuous as they might have been. But about this date in October, which is spring-time with us, and the weather growing hot, some individual gave the authorities notice that the gang were camped at a certain spot amongst the Wombat ranges, up the King River. It was a wild and rugged, scrub-covered spot, with such a dense growth of stringy bark and undergrowth that you would wonder how horsemen reached the place. It looks very peaceful and quiet in the far distance to-day, in a blue haze of smoke raised by a bush fire. You would never suspect that its echoes ever rolled and answered one another back to the noise of guns speaking in anger and drawing human blood.

Four troopers were despatched, "from information received," to this desolate place, and this information also went as straight as an arrow to the parties who were "wanted." The force was under Sergeant Kennedy of Mansfield, and consisted of Constables Lonergan, Scanlan, and M'Intyre. No doubt they were rather enjoying the picnic in the jolly warm spring days and the cool nights among the hills. On the afternoon of the 26th they camped in a very thick patch of scrub, and while Lonergan and M'Intyre fixed things up and prepared tea, Kennedy and Scanlan rode out to search for traces of the enemy. The two tea-makers, quite unsuspicious and unaccustomed to the usages of war, shot a quantity of mountain parrots, making the woods resound to the reports. Poor innocents! They were busily stewing these when a voice suddenly came from the bush.

"Bail up!"

Lonergan drew a pistol from his belt and jumped to gain the shelter of a tree, but before he reached it he was a dead man. M'Intyre, without arms, surrendered. Him the Kellys compelled to sit down in the camp as though nothing had happened, while the dead body of poor Lonergan lay only a few yards away. Presently up rode Kennedy and Scanlan.

"We are surrounded," M'Intyre called; "you had better both surrender."

"No fear," cried Scanlan, laughing, thinking it was all a joke, but he put his hand to his belt instinctively.

At that Ned Kelly fired, and, strange to say, missed him clean. Then Scanlan leaped from his horse on the near side, foolishly, and darted for a tree, but before he reached it the fatal bullet found him, and he never stirred again. These boys were very deadly in their aim. At the first shot Kennedy, too, slipped from the saddle, but on the off-side, and returned the fire sheltered by the horse. He grazed Ned's arm, ripping the sleeve, but it was four to one. Soon the horse fell, and yet Kennedy kept up a running fight, taking cover where he could behind the trees.

M'Intyre meanwhile crawled into the thick scrub and found refuge, in its densest part, in a wombat hole. It was growing dusk then, and the murderers searched for him in vain, but when the deep darkness fell, M'Intyre crept from his hiding-place, and, scrambling along over rocks and through thick wood, at length reached Mansfield, twenty miles away, and "brought the fray" to the police there.

It is said, but I hope it is not true, that Ned Kelly kept Kennedy, wounded and a captive, in the camp all night, and that then he shot him.

Like another Kennedy in *Guy Mannering*, "sair, sair he strove, and sair he begged for mercy," for he was not long married, and had a wife and little child, but Ned Kelly, going behind him, shot him through the head, at the last unawares. He had three bullet wounds when, a day or two afterwards, his body was found covered by his cloak in a thicket. One wonders what were the feelings of the four boys that night when they lay down to sleep under the stars. It was the first time that they had taken human life. With all their swagger and defiance, each one of them must have been very unhappy, and the youngest of them only seventeen. And oh, what soldiers they would have made, what scouts, what railway-line cutters!

But now the hue and cry was raised with a vengeance. More police were sent by special train from Melbourne on the Sunday after the murder of the constables, but all to no purpose. All the likely strongholds were ransacked without result. I have reasons for believing that the gang were camped all the time in a patch of pine-trees within sight of the main road on the New South Wales side of the river. I know that their most active bush telegraph was an inmate of a neighbouring public-house. When the police came to search the house one night, he just lay quite still in his bed and said nothing, and nobody said anything to him.

This game of hide-and-seek went on until December, and then the young villains did a bold thing. They stuck up a station near Euroa, on the south side of the Dividing ranges, and took all the hands prisoners. Then the manager was compelled to write a cheque for three pounds. With this in his pocket, Ned, along with Steve Hart and Dan, rode into the township and went to the Bank. It was half-past four and the place was shut, but the manager — Mr. Scott — was on the premises. He refused to cash the cheque, but Ned put on such a poor mouth over the matter, and made such a good story of it, that at length Mr. Scott said, "Very well, come in here." There had been a revolver on the table in the room in which they were talking, but as soon as the two men entered the banking portion of the house, Ned drew his pistol and ordered the manager to put up his hands. There was nothing else for it. The bushrangers collared some two thousand pounds, forced Mr. Scott to drive them back to the station, where they had left Joe Byrne in charge of his crowd of prisoners, and, mounting their horses, disappeared again into their native hills.

And now the whole country was stirred. And you must remember that these things were happening not thirty years ago, amongst a highly civilised community, with railroads and telegraphs and a fairly thick population. And still, in spite of their blood-guiltiness, the robbers retained many sympathisers. I know exactly the kind of men and women who would look up to them as heroes to-day, or who would take what money they could from them for giving them information. The Kellys had a big following, and many were rich then who, up till that time, never had two coppers to jingle in their pockets together. You never knew where the gang would turn up next. Trainers of race-horses would lie awake all night listening for their hoof-beats as they came to supply themselves with a fresh thoroughbred. Station managers would waken with a start as the dogs burst into a chorus in the dead of night, and would over and over again determine what they would do if the Kellys "stuck them up." In our township here a force of special constables were sworn in who kept watch and ward by day and night.

"They lay down to rest with their corselets laced, and drank the red wine through the helmet barred." Of course they had no corselets or helmets like the warders in Branksome Tower, but I have no doubt they drank plenty of red wine—or whisky—and passed many a weary watch away in playing cribbage and such-like games, and forgot all about the Kellys.

In our Bank there was an ingenious method of signalling employed. The manager had a string attached to a peg at his foot, beneath the table at which he sat. This string was fastened to a cord which held up a curtain on the outside verandah. If the Kellys stuck up the Bank, all the manager had to do was to kick over the peg, down fell the curtain, and in a few minutes the Bank would be surrounded by the gallant "specials," and the Kelly gang captured. But one day, as time went on, the cord, exposed to wind and weather, gave way, and the curtain fell. No one took the slightest notice, and it was never replaced!

But our townsmen had a narrower escape than they wot of. There is a village called Jerilderie out on the plains, some 150 miles from the Kelly country, and our township lay midway. In February of 1879, on a Saturday night, the two constables in Jerilderie were awakened from their sleep by a man's voice urging them to come down to the hotel. "A traveller had been killed in a row. Come at once." Both policemen jumped up, hurried on a few clothes, and ran out. At the door they found Ned Kelly's revolver staring them in the face. Of course they surrendered, and were quickly lodged in the cells. The bushrangers held the station all that Sunday, dressed in troopers' clothes, and not a soul suspected that they were there. On Monday morning they bailed up the Royal Hotel, adjoining the Bank of New South Wales, and from there entered the Bank by a back way. The manager, after a long ride, was enjoying a shower bath, and fell an easy prey. The Bank was quickly relieved of some two thousand pounds odd, and, after a great deal of swagger and bombast, flourishing of revolvers and brag, the Kellys, with their plunder, left the town on Wednesday afternoon. The four boys had held the place against all comers for nearly four days without firing a shot. Then, with the bushman's instinct, they made straight for home — for the "Rat's Castle" or some such cave in the hills. That night the dogs barked furiously at a station on the river that I know well. There was a muffled tramp and a thud of hoofs amongst the gum-trees on the flats. In the morning there were hoof-marks on the sand-bank where the boat had lain moored the night before, and the boat herself lay stranded up against a snag some half-mile down the stream. The gang had passed like a wandering wind in the night, and were safe among their own hills again.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE DEATH OF AARON SHERRITT

VERY little was heard of the Kellys between February 1879, the date of the Jerilderie raid, and June 1880. All sorts of reports flew about, however. They had managed to get away to America, it was said. They were living in New Zealand, or had reached Queensland, and would be heard of again when the money was done. But "official denials" were always given to these rumours, and all the time they were really "living on their means" amongst the mountains. But one morning in June 1880 the papers had black headlines with "The Kellys again" printed as big as your thumb nail, and on this occasion the end was not far off.

In the beginning of the trouble the gang had had a friend, a young fellow called Aaron Sherritt. He had a farm in the neighbourhood which he had sold. He bought a new place, and the Kellys and the Byrnes helped him to fence it in. He became engaged to Joe Byrne's sister, and they were shortly to be married. But after the Jerilderie affair a reward was offered of eight thousand pounds, or two thousand a head, for the capture of the outlaws, alive or dead. The temptation was too much for Aaron, and he went for the cash. He was soon suspected of double-dealing, a family row took place, he received his dismissal as the suitor for the hand of Miss Byrne, and quickly married some one else. He led the police more than once to camps which the Kellys were occupying in wild, unknown parts of the hills, but the birds had always flown. It was supposed that he was playing a double game and was only fooling the police, but the Kellys knew better. At first, no doubt, he was trying to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, but at the time we are talking of he was altogether with the police, a party of whom were quartered in his hut watching for Joe Byrne, whose mother lived close at hand. It is an awful thing to try to catch a man through his love for his mother,—a seething of the kid in his mother's milk. Sherritt's house was in a wild, thickly timbered part of the country on the Wool-shed creek, not very far from Beechworth. You can see its roof nestling amongst foliage from a high hill outside the township at this day.

In Australia midwinter falls in June, and it is very cold. The big mountains round the "Kelly country" are deep in snow, and the night wind blowing down from them is damp and chill, more penetrating than the bleakest east wind that I can remember in the old country on the Border moors, or in the streets of Edinburgh in March. But on the night of June 27 Aaron's hut lay snug at the foot of the hill, and a wood fire was burning so brightly that a lamp and candle were useless, and had not been lighted. There were four troopers within, and Aaron and his newly-married wife. They were sitting round the fire talking, but Aaron was apart from the others, silent, and thinking over his eight thousand pounds and what he would do with it. The wind came sighing down from the mountains, and whistled in a wild, melancholy way in the keyhole, and rumbled in the big, wide chimney, rattling the branches of the acacia-tree on the iron roof. It was deadly cold; a night not fit to turn your dog out in; and it was beautifully warm and cosy inside. Thoughts of that eight thousand pounds were sweet beyond measure.

But Dan Kelly and Joe Byrne were out that night with black wrath and murder in their hearts. They knew, without shadow of doubt now, that Sherritt was a traitor.

As they came riding down the lonely road they fell in with a German gardener named Antoine Weeks. Him they took captive, and handcuffed him to one of their saddles until they reached Aaron's hut. Then they made him call out "Aaron" in a loud voice.

When the rough German accent broke the quiet, those inside started and looked at one another, and a policeman whispered, "Who is it, Aaron?" The call was repeated, and Aaron rose, saying, "Oh! it is only old Antoine, the German." So he crossed the floor, and threw open the door to look out into the darkness. The firelight was very bright within, and his figure was silhouetted black against the blaze. No one could ask for a better target. With a "Take that, you dog," Dan Kelly fired, and Aaron fell as dead as a stone. I daresay he did not see the flash nor hear the report, and his dreams of wealth were swallowed up in darkness and oblivion. It is an awful thought.

At the sound of the shot and the heavy fall, the police, like so many rabbits, scrambled below tables and beds, panic-stricken. If they had shown themselves at all, they said, against the light, they would have been shot down without hope. It is easy to criticise, sitting here on a warm day in bright sunlight, and with no enemies around. But the circumstances remind one of the story told of young Havelock at Delhi. He was an aide-de-camp to some general, and had been sent with a message to the commander of his own regiment, which was lying in shelter behind a ridge. The fire was very hot, and Havelock was riding along at a walk past the men, he himself fully exposed. A private took upon himself to sing out, "For God's sake come out of that, sir, or you'll have your head blown off." "And what the deuce am I here for but to have my head blown off?" Havelock cried.

So what the deuce were the police there for but to be shot down—if necessary?

Then the murderers called out Mrs. Sherritt to mind her husband's body, and peppered the place through the windows and doors for a long time, cursing the police and taunting them all the time. And then they rode off into the darkness.

They were joined by Ned Kelly and Steve Hart during the remainder of the night, and together they rode straight into the railway line, at that very spot which I have described to you, where you see the beautiful broad view, the great snowy mountains, and where the train leaves it and rattles into the rocky ranges. I wonder if they turned and looked at it for the last time, as the sun rose over it all, and felt, not knowing what it meant, the love of country and fatherland surging up in their hearts. I should not wonder. They must have known that it was for the last time, for the game they played now was one born of desperation.

They reached the little town of Glen Rowan, lying in the hollow of the hills, and knew not that the avengers were so very close on their heels. One of the constables whom they had left at Sherritt's had ridden straight to Benalla with the news. The others had followed the tracks as soon as it was daylight, and were not far behind. It was the beginning of the end at last.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE "BATTLE" OF GLEN ROWAN

THE news that the constable brought to Benalla early in the morning was wired away to Melbourne, and a little force of police and black trackers was at once sent off by special train. Of course the Kellys knew that the police would be on their tracks immediately, but they had made up their minds for a fight to a finish. They calculated that the train with their enemies would come from the north, from Wangaratta way, and they compelled a line-repairer and his mate to take up the rails at the gap in the ranges. Here, well sheltered themselves, they would pour volleys into the wrecked carriages, and their vengeance would be complete. But in the meantime they collected the whole township—some sixty-two people—into the Glen Rowan Hotel, and held them there as prisoners. But this was rather beyond the strength of four men to accomplish perfectly, and the schoolmaster escaped during the afternoon, and shortly after him the local constable. The schoolmaster had thoughtfully run down the line, and at half-past three of the waning winter's day he saw the train approaching from the south. He managed to stop her by waving his red handkerchief, the men were quickly detrained, and in a few minutes they were joined by the local policeman and by the three troopers who had followed on from Sherritt's.

As they were consulting, Ned Kelly showed himself on the verandah of the hotel, and a volley was at once fired at him. Ned laughed, and, shaking his fist, disappeared into the building, and an answering volley drove the troopers to cover and smashed the wrist of Inspector Hare, the officer in charge. But the volleys of the police wrought deadly harm in the wooden house containing over sixty souls. One little boy, a son of the landlady, was mortally wounded, and his sister was badly hurt. An old man was shot dead, and altogether it was a horrible business. But as darkness fell all the non-combatants left the hotel, and volley-firing went on throughout the night. The sound of it could be distinctly heard in Wangaratta, nearly ten miles off, for a cool south wind was blowing, and the whole place was wild with excitement. Steve Hart's people dwelt within a mile of the town, and the whole connection, you might say, lived within "coo-ee" of the place, and every one knew familiarly each one of the outlaws. By early morning Glen Rowan was a centre of attraction for hundreds, and buggies were running out as though to a country race-meeting.

At daybreak that morning the besieged suffered a heavy loss. A train had arrived with more troopers, and these were being placed in position when a strange figure was seen, stalking through the bush in their rear, firing as it went. It was like a huge man with a nail-can over his head, and although it was fired at, point blank, no effect was produced. In the half-light some of the police no doubt thought it was the devil. Then Sergeant Steel had a sudden inspiration, and he fired at the figure's legs. Down it crashed, and, like the heroes of Homer, "his armour clashed as he fell." It was Ned Kelly, dressed in thick iron plates, taking the police in the rear, and he continued to fire, lying on the ground, until, weakened by loss of blood, he fell a captive to his hereditary foes.

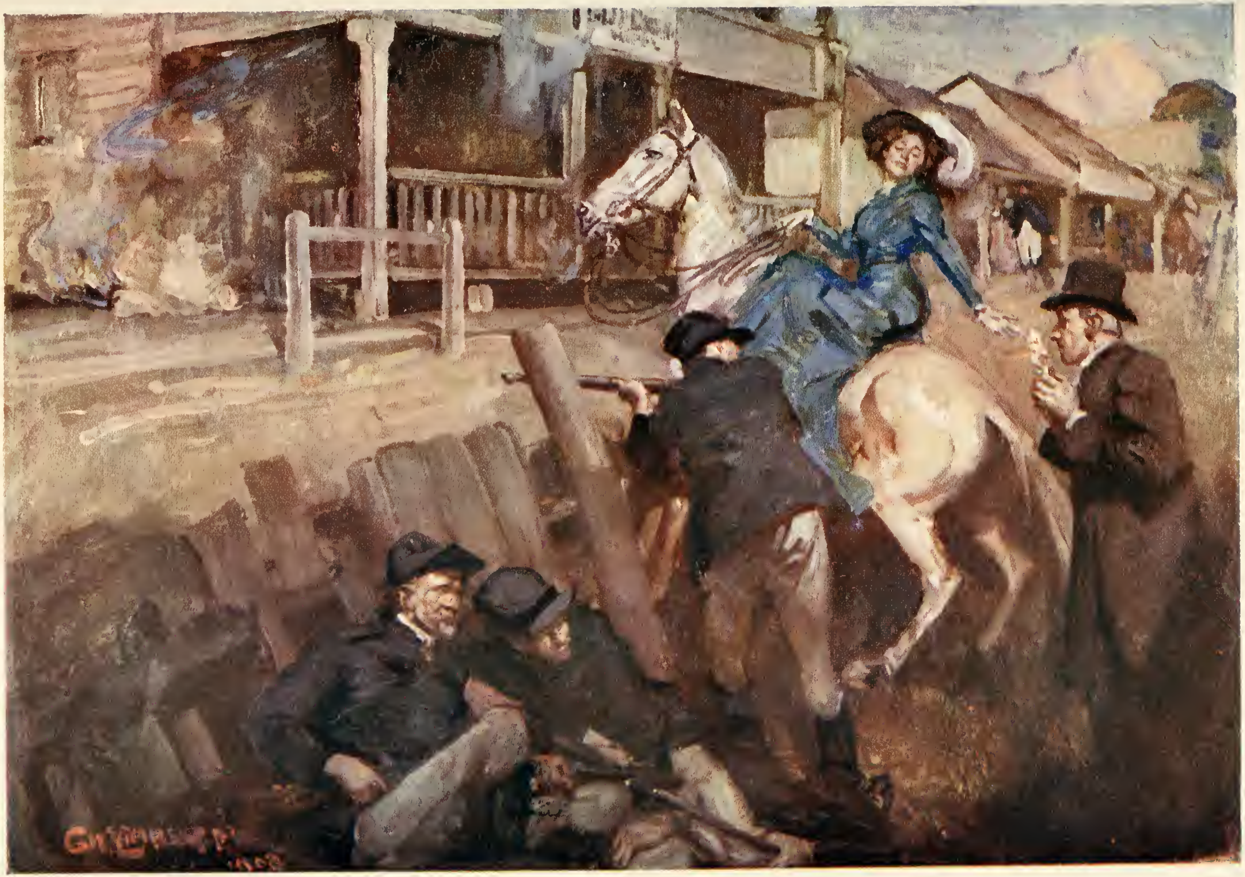
But the volleys from the hotel continued through the day.

A cannon was wired for from Melbourne, but it was not until three in the afternoon, twenty-four hours after the engagement had commenced, that the whole affair ended with two dramatic events.

At three o'clock a constable ran up to the hotel verandah, under cover of a heavy fire, and set fire to a bundle of straw which he carried with him. At first it was thought that the attempt to fire the building had failed, but after a little while smoke and flames began to break out, and at this moment one of the Kelly sisters, well mounted, and becomingly dressed in a Gainsborough hat and a tight-fitting habit, rode into the space between the besiegers and besieged. She had come, she said, to induce Dan to surrender. It was always for Dan, the youngest, the "white-headed boy" of the family, that all the anxiety was felt. They all loved Dan, the poor boy. No matter how bad a family may be, they always have human love for each other, or, at any rate, for one of their number. Even as the girl, with her horse reined up between the fighters, was calling to Dan, the flames broke out in fury and it was too late.

And then the second dramatic incident took place. Amongst the crowd of spectators from the neighbouring towns was a priest who was on a visit to the neighbourhood from Western Australia. The Kellys, and the Byrnes, and the Harts were all from his fold, for they were Catholics, and he advanced to the doors of the burning building, his crucifix held high in his hand. But the firing had ceased now and he entered unhurt. In the hotel bar, with a glass broken beside him, lay the body of Joe Byrne. He had been shot dead whilst helping himself to brandy. In the bar parlour, probably killed by their own hand, or by that of each other firing simultaneously, were the dead bodies of poor little Dan and young Steve.

With all their murders and outlawry, and all their crimes and brutality, I cannot but be sorry for these poor boys. They were only boys. They knew no better. And what soldiers were lost in them! And Ned, the great Ned, whom they looked up to as to a little God, whom Dan no doubt had worshipped as a hero, whose example had led Steve and Joe astray, for they had no other reasons,—well, he was hanged one November morning in Melbourne gaol, and "the lean 'N. Kelly' on his tomb" is all that tells of him there. He deserved his fate. He was the oldest. The murder of Kennedy rankles in one's



The last stand of the Kellys at Glen Rowan

heart, routing out pity. But still, even for him, too, one cannot but end it all up by letting a little sorrow and softness creep back again. With all his faults he was brave. A good enough epitaph for the best.

Joe Byrne's body was delivered over to his friends. What remained of Dan and Steve—a little heap of ashes only, when the fire which drove the Father from the burning hotel went out—was collected and given to their sisters, and where these ashes rest I do not know.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MORGAN

So that was the very end of the Kelly gang, and of bushranging in Australia. The echoes of their fusillades, at the Glen Rowan Hotel and elsewhere, have now ceased to roll among the hills and valleys in that romantic place; the aged and the middle-aged who took part in the stirring scenes are dead; the younger of their sympathisers and "bush telegraphs" are living decent, useful lives. The other day I fell into conversation with a police inspector on the railway train, and as we passed the Kelly country he told me that he was the last left alive of those who brought in Kennedy's, Scanlan's, and Lonergan's bodies from the Wombat ranges. Several of the connection, the "push," to use a regular colonialism, have ridden steeplechasers for me on various occasions, and "boldly they rode and well," and some went to the war and fought as you would expect them to fight. A few months ago I saw one of Ned Kelly's brothers acting as ring-master in one of our leading circuses. A fine, active, respectable fellow he was. And thus the march of time is blotting the whole thing off the slate, and it will ere long be as misty an affair as are the doings of Gilbert and his gang, of Mike Howe or Martin Cash.

The mention of these reminds me that, by telling you of the Kellys first, I have quite put the cart before the horse. And this would have been very stupid had I meant to give you a history of Australian bushranging. But that is not my intention at all. I saw the other day a book of nearly four hundred pages, being a history of each outbreak and every gang that ever rose, but it becomes dull reading after a little time. What they called "a short life and a merry one" was the lot of most of these highwaymen, and then a short shrift, a trooper's bullet, the hangman, or a long imprisonment. The country was so suited to exploits of this nature that it was inevitable we should pass through this peculiar phase of the life-history of a new land. The vast distances, the wild, desolate nature of the place, the character of the early inhabitants, all led up to the outbreaks, from the arrival of the first fleet down to the gold era, and then the sudden gushing forth of the precious stuff from the earth increased the temptations a hundredfold. So we will not wade through what, after all, are only the newspaper accounts of these old doings.

So I told you only of the Kellys as types of the class, and because I know all about them and their country. When I said that the "echoes had now ceased to roll," there was nothing very fanciful in that, because the last explosion which we can lay to these poor fellows' doors took place only last autumn. A settler was burning off the dead gum-trees in his paddock down in the Kelly country. One day, when he had gone to his dinner, luckily, there was a terrific "bang," breaking windows as much as two miles away. The boys had used an old hollow tree as their powder magazine, and now after twenty-five years the fire had touched it, and in a moment, perhaps, the last natural relic of the affair was blown into space. With it, too, there might have been some of those sovereigns and notes stolen at Euroa and Jerilderie from the banks.

I told you about these men, the Kellys, and their doings because I knew all about them, and if you wish to read any more you can get it all beautifully painted in Rolf Boldrewood's book, *Robbery under Arms*. In this volume you see the best, if there ever was a best, of the bushranger's life, and you see the worst, and it is a splendid story, splendidly told. If you read it, you will, with me and every one else, be full of the wish all through that the bushrangers may finally escape and get away to America or somewhere, and lead a virtuous life and be happy ever after.

But before leaving the bushrangers and their doings altogether, I should like to give you an account of the capture of one bloodthirsty wretch of a fellow who kept the whole country in terror for two years. He was the most infamous of the whole tribe, his district was that in which the writer is now living, and his captors were the writer's intimate friends. His name was Morgan, and he was "out" between 1863 and 1865. To this day, all over the country, prominent peaks in the landscape are called

"Morgan's Look-out," and certain caves are yet known as "Morgan's Caves."

What his object was in taking to the bush no one knows, but he lived for the most part a solitary existence, and probably the main temptation for him was the desire to kill. He was an utter brute. One night he went to the house of a station overseer with the intention of shooting him, because he was too friendly with the police. The overseer was away, but Morgan held the man's wife sitting over a blazing fire until her clothes caught and she was severely burned. One day he met a policeman on the road, who said, as one traveller always does to another, "Good day!" Morgan whipped out a revolver and shot him dead. Once, having ruthlessly shot a man at a station, he gave leave for a messenger to be sent for medical aid. The envoy was a boy, and just as the poor fellow started on his mission, Morgan repented of his clemency and shot him in the back—dead. On a certain night he went to the men's hut at a station called Round Hill. He made the manager serve out grog all round, and then when one of the men made some remark which was meant to be in fun, he out with his revolver and began firing in amongst them. He killed one and wounded another. He must have been mad, surely. But mad or not, the police could not catch him, and the countryside trembled and shook under his sway. The only touch of humanity or humour which I have ever known about was when he went to a station called Mahonga, and there compelled the owner, Mr. Rand, whom I knew well before his death a few years ago, to dance reels until midnight, while one of the hands played the concertina. There was really a touch of humour in this. And then, when Mr. Rand showed signs of flagging, Morgan would cock a pistol and say, "Very nicely done, Mr. Rand. Once more, please," and off poor Mr. Rand had to start again.

Morgan's end came either through his vanity, or a desire for revenge which he nourished against a squatter called Mr. Evan Evans. This gentleman had shot one of Morgan's fingers off, and it was an unforgivable offence in the bushranger's eyes. Now Evan Evans lived in Victoria, and Morgan's country was New South Wales. The Victorian papers had been twitting the New South Wales police on their inability to capture the brute, and a local Victorian "rag" had dared Morgan to cross the border, declaring that he would be dead or a captive within forty-eight hours after doing so.

The bushranger accepted the challenge. He sought out Evan Evans's place, and finding the squatter away from home, he set fire to his stacks, then robbed several people between Benalla and Wangaratta, stuck up Mr. Warby's station near the ranges of that name, lost his way in trying to get back to the Murray, and I shall tell you the story in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE CAPTURE OF MORGAN

Close by the river was an old-fashioned station called Peachelba. A nice, quaint, friendly, homely sound it has to me—Peach-el-ba. It lay on Morgan's track to the river on his way back to New South Wales. At Peachelba there lived two families—the Rutherfords and the MacPhersons. The Rutherfords and MacPhersons were partners, and they lived in two different houses, close to one another, the upper and the lower stations. There were the usual men's huts and store, outbuildings, and wool-shed. Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford occupied the lower house. They had only been married for a year or two, and had one little girl. Mr. and Mrs. MacPherson were at home in the upper house, and their daughter and a friend of hers were expected from Melbourne for the holidays on this particular day of April 1865, that day when Morgan was slinking, like a grey wolf, back to his den in the north. It was a warm Saturday afternoon in autumn, a day that reminded you almost of an April day at home, or even more likely of an early October one. There might be a coming thunder plump, so warm was it, and so still. Mr. Rutherford had come in early from the run, and he and his wife strolled up to the other house to see if the girls had come back from school. "Stop and have tea with us," Mrs. MacPherson urged; but Mr. Rutherford, looking with a weather-wise eye all around, decided that it was going to rain. There would be no moon, and therefore it would be very dark. They had better make their way home again before the storm came on. So they went, and Morgan's luck was out that evening.

Riding through the paddocks an hour or two before this, he found that in this unfamiliar bit of country he was not making the progress towards the river that he ought to be doing, and seeing a man minding sheep, he took him from his job and enlisted him as a guide. Half an hour afterwards these two met Mr. Telford, the overseer, on his way to an outlying hut. Morgan knew him.

"Where are you going, Mr. Telford?"

"I'm going to Brady's hut," Mr. Telford replied.

"No, you're not."

"Oh yes, I am."

"You are not; and my name's Morgan."

Mr. Telford had a dash of humour in him, and he said at once, "Oh! that is quite a different story. I am at your service, Mr. Morgan."

"Well, lead me to Peachelba."

And away they went, and Morgan could not see that his star, which was just setting, was close to the horizon. When the three reached the station, the

Rutherfords had arrived at their own house, and evening was falling. Morgan walked straight to Mr. MacPherson's house and knocked at the door. Mr. MacPherson himself appeared, and saw a pistol levelled straight at his head.

"I'm Morgan, and I want my supper and a fresh horse."

Telford and MacPherson exchanged rapid looks, and then MacPherson said, "Certainly. Come in, Mr. Morgan."

The ruffian went into the large, plainly furnished dining-room, and then he said, "Bring the whole family in here.—Are they all here, MacPherson?" he growled, after everybody had trooped in.

"Yes, *all* except a sick child."

"And all the servants?"

"Except the girl minding the child."

"Very well, bring the girl in, but leave the child. What firearms have you, MacPherson?"

"Only an old rusty single-barrel that my boy shoots crows with."

"Umph! That don't matter! Fetch in tea."

"Will you take a drop of brandy, Mr. Morgan?"

"Curse you! Do you think you're going to catch me like that? TEA, I said," roared Morgan, and he laid one cocked pistol on the table, and held another in his right hand.

Tea had been nearly ready ere the bushranger's arrival, and was quickly brought in. You can understand that conversation rather flagged during that meal, and I think you will allow that it was an awkward situation for young girls, for instance, sitting beside this well-known, bloodthirsty murderer, with his pistols all ready and cocked.

Mr. Telford was undismayed, however. "Oh, Morgan," he said, "put away that dirty-looking pistol and eat your tea in peace."

The robber was eating with a pistol still in his right hand. He looked keenly at Mr. Telford to see what he meant, and then replied, "This is my best friend, Mr. Telford."

After tea was over there was an awkward pause, but Morgan ordered Miss MacPherson's school-girl friend to play to him on the piano. You may imagine that she was scarcely playing in her best form, and after a time he thundered out, "You are making a great many mistakes."

Then he substituted Miss MacPherson at the piano stool, and his majesty was kind enough to say, "You play very nicely. Go on."

But the piano-playing had wakened the little sick child, and Mrs. MacPherson asked that the nurse might run to comfort it. Morgan graciously granted this request. Presently its cries stopped, and Mrs. MacPherson, sitting with her face to the window, with Morgan's face in profile to her, saw a little figure flit along, step off the verandah, and glide away into the night. Good little nurse-girl! But if the ruffian had looked round and seen her, what then?

Mr. and Mrs. Rutherford were sitting quietly together finishing their tea in the lower house when they heard a curious noise coming up the garden path. It was like some one panting. They looked at one another, but before they could speak there was a little knock and a voice whispered: "Morgan has stuck up the station, Mr. Rutherford. I've got out, but he'll miss me, and I must run back."

Mr. Rutherford was a fearless man, and he acted with fine promptitude and determination.

"Quick, then," he said; "off you go at once," and the brave little girl disappeared again into the blackness, and in a minute or two had crept in beside her little sick charge.

The station had been stuck up some months before, and great heavy shutters had been provided after that for the windows; these were quickly in place, so as to hide all the lights. It was unlikely that Morgan would walk across in the darkness if he saw no light and was unaware of the existence of a house there.

Then Mr. Rutherford went to the men's quarters and sent a messenger with a note to Wangaratta, some twenty odd miles off, addressed to Mr. Harry Connolly, a friend of his. There was a big bazaar in the town that night, and there would be no difficulty in getting volunteers. There was £1000 on Morgan's head, dead or alive.

"And come the back road," Mr. Rutherford added to his note. Horsemen arriving at the station by the front track could be heard a long way off, but you could sneak right up to the garden gate by the back way, through the flats, and never be noticed.

Mr. Rutherford carried out his plans like an old campaigner. All the reliable men were given their particular stations, and as many as possible were supplied with guns or rifles, which had to be quietly obtained from an outbuilding close to where Morgan was sitting watching and listening to the piano all the night through.

Was a day ever so long in breaking, I wonder! It came at length, and the work of the place seemed to be going on just as usual. Mr. Rutherford had provided for that. The milkman came down whistling with his milk-pails, the slaughterman brought the beef from the killing-yards, the horses were run in. No one outside had got wind of what guest they had been harbouring all night.

The dawn brightened, the lamps were blown out in the house, and the servants began to get breakfast ready. As one of them passed Mrs. MacPherson in the passage she whispered, "The house is surrounded," and Mrs. MacPherson managed to let her husband know the glad news.

Then breakfast was served, and as they bustled about getting knives and one thing and another, the Scotch maid who waited proposed, in a whisper, to Mr. MacPherson that she should seize Morgan from behind as he sat at breakfast. She was immensely strong, and was sure she could hold him until his pistols were taken from him.

It was a bold scheme and a tempting, but Mr. MacPherson feared lest it might somehow miscarry, and that then the villain would commence to shoot at random, and half the women might have been killed before he was stopped. He determined to let things take their course. The ruffian's suspicions were so lulled that he laid his pistols down and ate with both hands—dirty, grimy hands they were, and his beard was unwashed, unkempt, grizzled, and slavered over. He was indeed very like an animal of the wolf kind.

"Now we will go to the yards and get a horse, MacPherson," Morgan said as he rose from breakfast, picking up his pistols at the same time. He prided himself on putting no "Mr." to the boss's name as he talked to him. "You walk on my right hand here, MacPherson; Mr. Telford, you walk on my left. You," he said to the man whom he had taken as a guide on the evening before, "you walk in front."

I often go over the scene to myself. It is always interesting, somehow, to go with a man in health to the dim gates of the other world, and to see him utterly vanish away, all except his shell. Did no instinct warn him; was there no feeling of coming doom? I do not think there was. It was a quiet Sunday morning. The horses were standing flicking the flies off with their tails. The sun was shining. There were no men about, for it was Sunday, and Morgan no doubt thought they were taking their Sunday morning rest after breakfast. But Mr. MacPherson, out of the tail of his eye, caught sight of a man peeping out from behind a tree in their right rear and levelling his gun over the fence, resting the barrel on the upper rail. He knew the man, knew that he was utterly inexperienced in firearms. The gun was the rusty single-barrel that Morgan had said "don't matter." He himself was almost in the line of fire. He must get out of the way somehow. So he said, "That is your horse, Mr. Morgan, that bay next the grey mare," and as he spoke he carelessly took a step or two to his right hand, away from the bushranger's side.

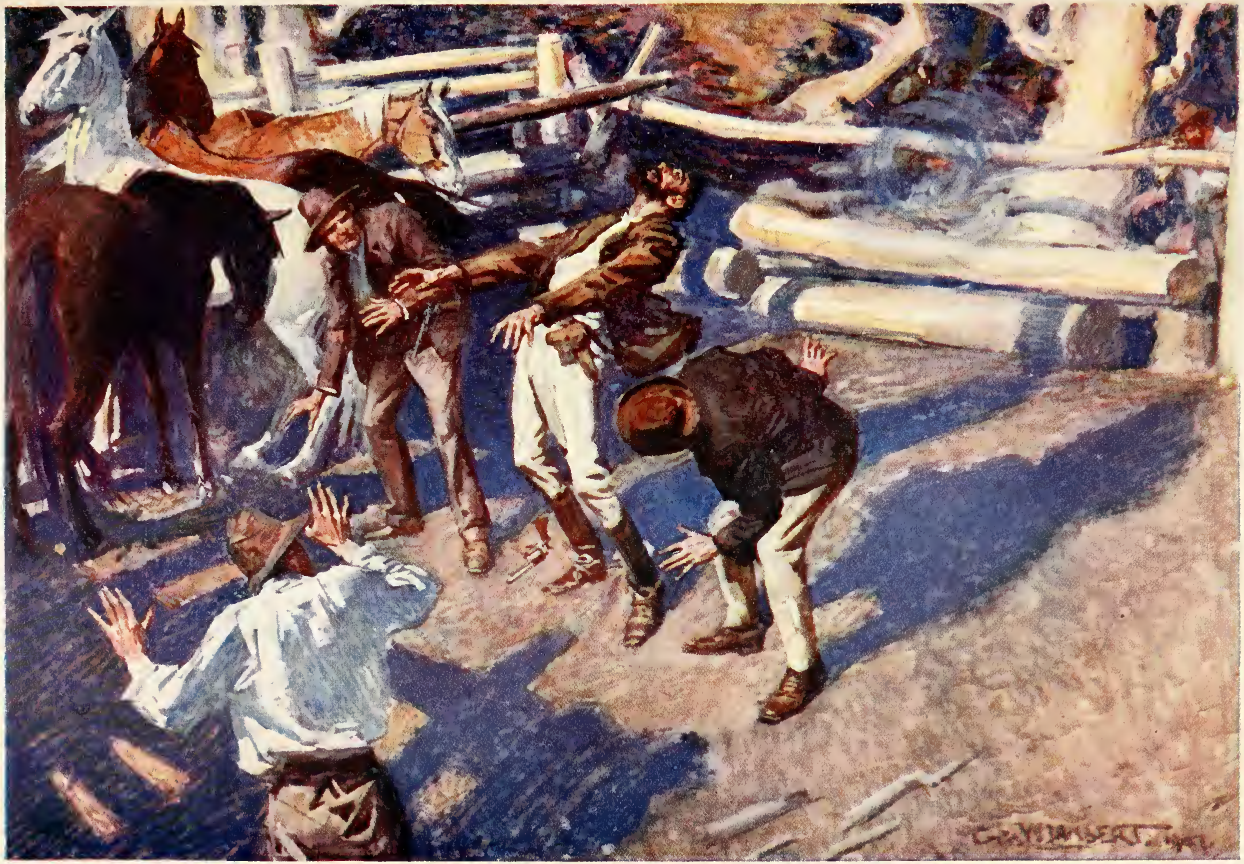
Mrs. Rutherford, in the lower house, with all her nerves astrain, had watched the little procession leaving the upper station, and as they walked away she stood up on the sofa to see the better over the creepers and rose bushes that grew alongside. She, too, saw the man creep out from his hiding-place behind the tree. She saw him rest his piece on the fence; then she saw Mr. MacPherson step on one side. Instantly there was the startling "crash" of the gun as it was fired, and Morgan fell to the ground.

Then on all sides, as if by magic, men appeared and cheered wildly, hats were thrown in the air, and it was more like the victory of a favourite in a horse race than the death of a poor hunted lunatic. For a homicidal maniac I firmly believe Morgan to have been.

It was like the death of a man-eating tiger in India—a dangerous, sly, cruel beast.

Then they carried Morgan to the wool-shed and laid him in a bunk there, and all the countryside came flocking to see the dying man. But he uttered never a word till he saw Harry Connolly, and then he said, "You might have challenged me, and given a man a chance."

"Much chance you gave those that you have shot, Morgan," said Connolly, and the wounded man closed his eyes and never spoke again till death took him, and he passed out—where?



Death of Morgan the Bushranger

I had a fine old friend who, along with others, posted away on that Sunday when the news came in, in order to see the famous bushranger. And when he saw him lying dead at his feet he laughed aloud. Those around looked shocked, and one said, "What makes you laugh, Lowes?"

"Why, to think that this thin, decrepit, starved, miserable bit of clay has kept the whole country in terror for two years. It's absurd."

That was the end of Morgan.[1] From my verandah you see the pointed shoulder of the Warby Ranges, close to where the Kellys ended their days. They call it "Morgan's Look-out." Nestling amongst the dark sea of timber on its right lies Peachelba. In that hill rising from the New South Wales plains to the north of us, and which lies like a dog sleeping before the winter's fire, in that hill there is a long cave through the great granite boulders. It is "Morgan's Cave." He may have left some treasure there!

But meantime the days of the bushrangers are over. No more will the wild ranges ring to their pistol shots, or the echoes clatter in answer to their horses' feet. They were miserable, mad, wicked, or unhappy wretches, and it is well that they have passed from sight never to appear again. But romance and a feeling of pity, and a sensation not unpleasing, cling about their memories still.

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[1] See Note, page 295.

CHAPTER XL

A DOCTOR'S YARN

We have been nearly long enough talking about the old bushranging days, but I cannot drag myself away from them without telling you the tale, as it was told to me by an old medical friend, who lived during one of the many "rackets" which were so common in his time. We had been speaking about the produce of an old mare of his, and this was the history which he gave me of her. I have altered time and place, and have used fictitious names and places, but otherwise the story is unaltered as it came from his lips.

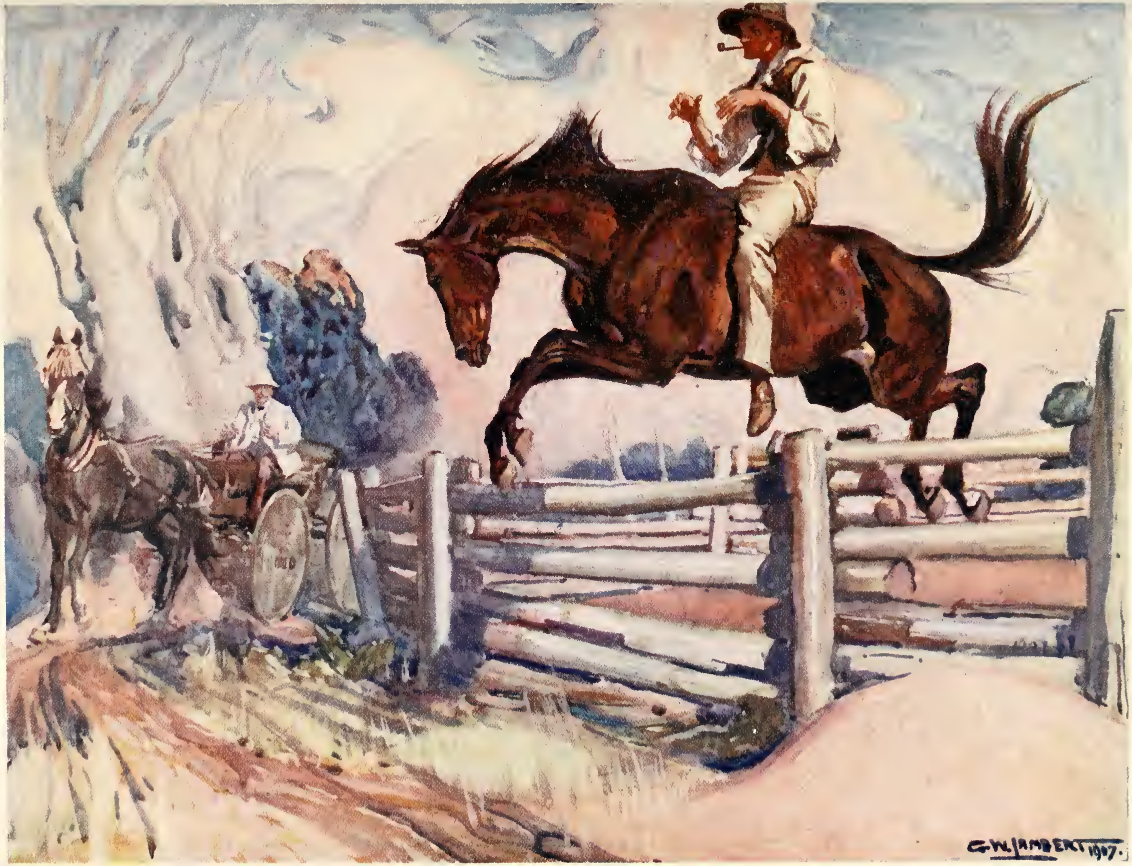
"You know I had settled down in Harkaway these many years, and I had the old mare ever since my second summer there. We had a lot of sickness all that spring. There was no other doctor then, where there are half a dozen now. I was out all day long, and often nearly half the night. Three times in one week, at almost the same hour, just at the first faint glimmering of dawn, I passed the little public-house close to the river-bank beyond the mill. Each time I passed the same sight caught my eye. A tall, strapping, lithesome fellow crossed the yard, caught a very handsome cut of a thoroughbred brown mare, swung himself into his seat by the mane, and without saddle, bridle, or even halter, set her head for the rails. I can see it now—the easy swing of her canter, the toss of her delicate head, and I can see the rider's beautiful balance, swinging with her stride, his figure clear cut against the morning sky. Then she'd gather herself together, two sharp strokes, and heigh! she was over the four-feet-six, and galloping along down to the river for her morning drink.

On the second and third mornings I pulled up at the corner and waited. She came gaily up the steep bank, hopped off into her canter when she reached the level ground, timed herself to an inch, and glided over the rails again on her return journey. And not the worst part of the performance was the rider's seat. I simply bowed down and worshipped. But I had no time to stop and have a yarn with the horseman. Once start me in those days to talk horses, and the sun might have been high before old Tom, my groom, would have heard the hum of the buggy wheels and the clatter of the cob on the road nearing home. But sometimes, while passing during daylight, I would see the young fellow sitting in the shade, beneath the big acacia-tree, and often when he sat his arm was circling some slim waist, Norah's or Bridget's or Jane's, and I somehow liked the beggar's look. He made me always think so much of Rupert and all his jolly Cavaliers, or of a careless, happy, devil-may-care hussar.

Then for a week I missed my friend. It was near the end of spring, and yet, though days were hot and dusty, nights were mild. I had had a long hard day, riding far and driving farther, till, when at last the work seemed done, and bed, its white sheets bathed in the light of a full moon, invited me, a fit of shivering came on—'rigors' we call it in the profession,—and sleep was out of the question. I don't know if you were ever so tired on a hot night as to take the shivers, but I can tell you it absolutely hurts, and all sorts of horrible possibilities fly to the medical mind. So I lay awake, tired and miserable, listening to the rising and falling of the chorus of frogs in the river flats, a sound which usually, above all others in the bush, lulls me to sleep. Then a mob of stone-plovers wailed weirdly to one another. You know the birds. They cry just like that ghost that haunts our own old Border hills, the well-beloved whaup. And just when thoughts of home and Jed, Teviot and Tweed, were calming down the brain, hark! the trot of a lame horse on the metal, and one being led beside it.

'For me, I'll bet,' I muttered, and I cursed my luck. The sounds left the metal road and neared the house, slowed down, stopped, the latch clicked, and the gate slammed. 'Confound it!' I thought, as a step neared the door, 'I'll say I'm not well, and can't go.' But round to the verandah door of my room came the messenger, and the familiar voice of old Mick Flannagan, the tenant of the public-house beyond the mill, said softly, 'Are you in, doctor?'

'I am, Mick, but I'm not well'


G.W. LAMBERT 1917.

'Without saddle. bridle, or even halter, set her head for the rails'

'You'll have to come, none the less, doctor.' Then I knew it was all up.

Mick was a determined man. A little, active fellow, with a quick, bright eye—he had only one, poor chap—and slow to words. He always cleared his throat before he spoke, and what he said you'd almost swear he meant, and he had just a touch of an Irish brogue. So up I got.

'What is it, Mick?'

'A broken leg, doctor.'

'Simple or compound?'

'What's that?'

'Is the bone through the skin?'

'God bless you, it's through both the Wellington boot and the moleskins.'

So with a bag laden with dressings and a bundle of splints, we reached the garden gate, and there stood Mick's lame pony and the grand brown mare. Mick carried the bundle, and we cantered through the township, lying sleeping in the moon, the Ascension lilies with their heavy smell nodding in all the gardens to the gentle wooing of the wind, standing there like rows of dead men's faces, communing together. And out into the country, passing now through a wave of hot, balmy air, and then through a cool, refreshing little breeze, and over the corner of the big swamp, where flocks of spurwings rose with their harsh, grating cry, past Mick's hotel—much to my surprise—and down the lane right to the river-bank. She was running a 'banker.' The winter snows were coming down, and in the clear moonlight you could see patches of foam sweep tearing round the bend above, and hurrying along like the heads of wild white horses all struggling for the lead.

'Where is he, Mick?'

'Over on the far bank, doctor.'

'Oh, you be blowed! I'm not going there! Is there no boat?'

'There's no boat, and you've got to go.'

'Well, then, who is he?'

'You know you've got to say nothing, doctor.' And Mick looked—well—like I never saw him look before or since.

'It's Tom Flynn, the O'Gradys' bush telegraph. Now you understand.'

Then my heart turned to water, and I tried to get out of it.

'But, Mick, how about the splints?'

'They'll come.'

'And where on earth will we treat him; there's no house?'

'It will be all right, doctor; go on.'

'But I can't swim; I'll never get there.'

'Go on, doctor, and look sharp about it.' And then in a rather less truculent way he added, 'She'll carry you over as safe as a ship.'

We were on a high, steep bank, and it looked almost like a precipice from us to the water's edge —a 'scaur' we call it at home,—and it was cut up and streaked by the marks of many cattle coming and going. I looked at Mick and shrugged my shoulders, and I looked at the rushing waters, and wished I was at home and in bed, when slap on the mare's rump came Mick's open hand. I had just time to throw myself back in the saddle and we were over the bank, the mare's fore-feet shot out in front, her hind-legs tucked well in beneath her, and both of us gliding straight for the gurgling tide.

'Give her her head,' I heard the old man shout, and with a splash and a flounder we were in. And oh, by George! how cold it was! The mare sat high in the water, but I was wet far above the waist, and the plunge had splashed the spray over my head, dimming my spectacles. I durst not move a hand to dry them, so everything was seen as through a mist and blurred. Ah, well! 'in for a penny in for a pound'; and now that I *was* in for it, and no mistake, I felt my courage rise, and a feeling of almost enjoyment took possession of me. The brown mare was making straight for the opposite bank, her ears back nearly flat on her neck, and her eyes starting out of her head with her efforts, for the current was taking us down at a fearful rate. With the tail of my eye I could see Mick, not many yards behind, deep in the water, and holding the bundle high above his head to keep it dry. But the mare was 'as safe as a ship,' true enough, and in a very few minutes she was out of the rush of the current, and heading for a little bay in the far bank, the only place for a quarter of a mile where we could have landed. Mick was half a minute later, and slipping off his pony he tied him up to a gum sapling.

'Just let the mare go, doctor, and come this way, please,' he said, and we pulled ourselves over a steep bank, walked a few yards up stream, passed through a thick clump of wattles at the foot of a sand-hill, and into a little 'piza' hut. I had passed the spot scores of times while boating and fishing, and never knew a hut was there, so artfully was it hidden. Inside, on a rough stretcher, lay my Cavalier, his face very pale, but his eye full of courage, and, alas! the bone, as Mick had said, through Wellington and moleskins too.

'I'm glad you've come, doctor. I was feeling a bit sick and lonesome like,' he said.

'How did it happen?' I asked.

'The mare caught her foot in the fork of a snag newly brought down by the flood, and over she went. She crushed me between the saddle and a big limb. Will it be long before I'm right?'

I had snipped up the leg of the moleskin while we were speaking, and ripped through the boot from top to bottom with a beautifully sharp pair of curved scissors, and in a minute or two it was all exposed to view.

'Come out here a minute, Mick, and I'll tell you what we've got to do,' I said; and when we were out of ear-shot: 'Look here, old man, that leg can't be saved. If we try it, he'll die.'

'Oh, good God, doctor! You don't mean that?'

'I do.'

There was nothing for it but to tell Tom. For a moment he looked scared, but only for a moment, and then he pulled himself together like a man, and, as cheery as you like, said, 'I'll risk that. I'd sooner die with it than live without it. So go on, doctor, and do your best.'

All night we worked trying to get things ship-shape. The leg was set, dressed, and swung in a most ingenious swing cradle, which Mick, an old sailor, executed by my suggestions. And when the morning light came, it was wonderful how comfortable the poor chap looked. And I began to hope almost against hope.

'Now, Mick, how about a nurse? You've got to mind your house. I can't be here much, and we dare not take him to Harkaway. The police would be on him in two shakes. They've been hot-foot on his scent this ten days, I know, and here am I, a J.P., by thunder! up to my neck in it, hiding a felon.'

'That's all right, doctor. Norah and Tom have been keeping company this last twelve months, and would have been married as soon as this racket was over. Norah can swim the brown mare over, and still nurse him well enough.'

'Right you are, and I'll stay here till she comes.'

Mick mounted the lame pony, and, leading the mare, once more he plunged in and stemmed the torrent's force. William of Deloraine was never in the hunt. Why, the dear old Ale that comes raging down from the lakes is a mere moorland burn, and Sir Walter drew a very long bow indeed when he imagined the mosstrooper sinking over the saddlebow. I have seen a Dandie Dinmont terrier wade it in summer-time at Sinton Mill and never wet his back, and I've forded it on foot in flood many a time at 'ancient Riddel's fair domain.'

As I sat smoking my pipe, down comes Norah on the mare, bare-backed, and with a graceful seat.

Without a moment's pause she slipped over the bank and down into the flood. Norah had been there before, for, like one to the manner born, she slid off up stream, and, paddling with her left hand and holding the mane with her right, she was safely, nay, gracefully, landed in the little bay. I did not watch her draggled figure, however, climbing up the bank, and, in fact, for half an hour I strolled the other way and left the poor unfortunates all to themselves. When I believed it was a fair thing to return, she was sitting sunning herself, and, like a bird, drying her plumes after her bath in the warm November sun. How very beautiful, too, she looked, with her soft, creamy complexion flushed with a little rosy pink, her coal-black silky tresses plainly tied, in Irish fashion, with a snood, and her Irish grey eyes so bold and true, and yet so modest withal, and still so often lighted up with fun. But there were bad times in front of these two.

My heart was still unpetrified by all those oft-recurring tragedies which we see in daily life. No! God help me! I sometimes think the more we see the more our pity grows. The fount of tears dries up, and that is all. So Norah and I worked on, at first with hope, sometimes with laughter on some bright, happy morning when everything looked well and Tom had slept. Mind you, I didn't swim the river every time I paid the pair a visit. Old Mrs. Tomkins on the Victorian side, by some special dispensation of Providence, was struck with palsy two nights after Tom had had his fall. And every day I crossed the punt to feel her failing pulse and listen to the jumble of her talk, and watch her sands of life run dry.

On the homeward journey, without much loss of time, I used to call on Tom.

But what I had dreaded came at length. One afternoon Norah was waiting at the panels near the lane, quite a quarter of a mile away from the hut, and then I knew that it had come. Tom had never slept; he was irritable and wouldn't eat. Sometimes Norah thought his head was wrong, and the wound looked quite unlike what it had ever looked before. Ere we quite reached the little door I could tell the worst. Gangrene was setting in. He was quite sensible. His eyes met mine, and with one glance he read their verdict.

'I might save you yet, Tom. But you know as well as I do, the leg must come off.'

He stole one glance at Norah. For a minute his eyes filled and his lips quivered, but his voice never shook when he said, 'No, doctor. By God, no!'

Norah was sobbing at the door, her head covered with a shawl, and buried in her knees. So I arose and went, when all was done that I could do.

The last time that I was to swim the flood was but a few days after that. It was sundown when I reached the hut, but the red flush in the western sky stole through the wattle boughs and tinted his face as he lay. And I swear he looked 'like a warrior taking his rest, with his martial cloak around him.' Norah sat beside him. There were no tears, and her face was as if it were carved from stone.

'I'll come, doctor,' she said, 'and we will swim the river to-night for the last time.'

I brought the mare, which was feeding close by with a side saddle on, and, sore against my will, put my own old 'Peggy' at the flood. You remember 'Peggy,' my brown cob? Old Honesty never shuffled nor made any bones about it, but plunged straight in, and I heard Norah following. I never saw a horse or mare swim so fast as 'Peggy.' It was down stream to the best landing-place on the New South Wales side, and I seemed to get there in no time. While 'Peggy' shook herself I heard the brown mare behind me scramble up the bank, snorting and terrified. Good God! the saddle was half round on her flank, a great cut gaped in her chest—and no Norah. Away out in mid-stream, rolling and dipping, came a huge branch log, working his way to the sea. Once in his upward surge I thought I caught the flutter of a dress and saw the gleam of a white hand. But I was not sure. Norah was never found.

And Tom? Ah! we buried him there in the sand-bank beneath the wattles. Mick made the grave, and I read a few words from the book. 'Tis many years since, and it's 'dust to dust.

'Did the O'Gradys give you a fee?' I asked my friend.

'No; they were hanged, or shot, a month after Tom died. But I kept the mare.'

'And you were well paid.'

'I was indeed. I used her for many a day. She was never sick nor sorry. She gave me six noble foals, and she saved my life twice over.'"

CHAPTER XLI

THE CURIOUSLY-SHAPED NUGGET

THAT was the doctor's yarn, but before leaving the old mining days and the bushrangers altogether, I should like very much to tell you of a curious bushranging crime that was committed near one of the great mining centres many years ago when the shallow alluvial diggings were still going on.

In a little mining township there was a "hotel," not a very handsome or palatial edifice, a "pub," in fact, existing mostly on its bar trade, the landlord of which had a friend of much the same way of thinking as himself. They were bad lots both of them. At the time during which this man, Searle, was landlord here, a bank manager used to receive the gold from a number of miners in the neighbourhood, and was in the habit of carrying it himself to Ballarat, to the head office. It must have been a dangerous thing to do, but no doubt it was thought that the "good old times" were over, and that bushranging and highway robbery were dead and buried. The country was becoming settled and thickly populated, and "sticking up" was out of the question. But of course the manager was well armed during his journeys. Searle knew all this, and every movement of the unfortunate manager. They were acquaintances and had many a talk together, and if they met out in the bush they would probably stop and have "a pitch" over things for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour.

Times were bad at the time for the innkeeper and his mate. Money had to be found at any risk, and it dawned upon them one day that here was an easy way of winning it. There was a particularly lonesome place in the bush on the way to town, and some thick scrubby country lay close at hand with an unfrequented side track running through it. It was afternoon when the manager started, and just at this, the most lonely part of the journey, whom should he meet riding towards him but his two acquaintances of the inn.

"Good day, boss," the one cried, as they reined up to let the buggy pass. "Off to town as usual?"

"Oh yes," the manager said, and pulled up his old horse. "Oh yes, but I'll be back this evening."

And so they fell easily into talk, about the mines and their prospects, and this and that, and how So-and-so had made a big haul for the week, and how Jerry White had found a nugget of a curious shape that had made quite a sensation. "And I have it here with me," the manager said.

The two conspirators were off their horses now, and one of them was standing at the front wheel of the buggy talking earnestly. The other, on pretence of examining the axle of the hind wheel, had slipped round to the back. Then when he was directly behind the manager he drew a pistol from his pocket, and when his victim was leaning back in the seat, he put the barrel up close to his head and fired. The poor fellow never moved. He was stone dead, and this gave the murderers an idea through which they hoped to gain time. They fastened the body as it sat on to the seat with ropes, and led the quiet old horse, the buggy, and its ghastly load into the side track, and left them there. They themselves, with their horses shod with the toes looking backwards, went off with their gain.

But the avengers of blood were soon on the murderers' heels. The black trackers followed up the trail, and they found the pistol with which the terrible deed was done.

They ran the tracks to earth at last in the stable at the back of the hotel, and there, beneath a board, was found a portion of the gold, and amongst it was the nugget of curious shape, a nugget which helped very much to give the whole show away.

Murder will not always out, unfortunately, but on this occasion there was little delay and no mistake. The wretches who committed it were tried, found guilty, and hanged, and if ever any two men deserved hanging it was these two.

CHAPTER XLII

OUR OWN TIMES

Poor Ned Kelly was hanged in November 1880, and there has been only an odd imitation ever since, and very feeble at that. Indeed I can only recall to my memory two actual bushrangers since then. One was a man who stuck up a coach out Wilcannia way, and captured the opals from the White Cliffs Mine, and the other was an enterprising fellow called Sparks. Along with a mate, Sparks stuck up a mine manager who was driving from the bank with the weekly wages for the men. The swag was collared, and both men enjoyed a brief liberty. They were captured in Sydney, and lodged in Pentridge gaol after their trial. Then Sparks broke gaol and escaped, and although it must be quite eight years ago, he has never been seen since. And this is all the more peculiar in that the criminal had a markedly crooked nose. He was a clever blackguard, he had taken nobody's life, and one cannot help feeling rather glad when his pluck in escaping from prison was rewarded and he was never recaptured. There was a pleasant excitement about the thing, and every swagman who came asking for food to our door was always keenly looked at to see if he had a broken nose or not.

Yes, bushranging is mercifully dead. The telegraph and railway lines, the clearing of the land, and the growth of population have killed the trade, and we shall never see it again. The writer arrived in this country three years after Ned Kelly's death. It was a happy day for him. There had always been a romantic feeling in connection with the word Australia in his mind ever since he was a little boy, and the realisation of his ideas and thoughts came quite up to all anticipation.

The voyage itself was ideal. Very weary and ill I joined the steamer at Naples. It had rained heavily and continuously for three days, and, then, as the great vessel got up steam, the clouds lifted like a veil, the sea became again the deep Mediterranean blue, the setting sun lit up all the houses from the shore to the highest point of the steep above, and Vesuvius showed ruddy in its rays against a clear sky, yet tender and soft after the rain. It was heavenly—Naples at its best. Then a young Australian girl on deck said, "Why, what a small place Naples is!" And a gray-bearded clergyman gently rebuked her when he asked, "Do you know that there are more people there than in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane put together?" And so there were in those days, but I do not know how statistics make it stand to-day.

The delight of that voyage was almost indescribable. After months spent among Frenchmen and Italians, in strange and unfamiliar places, to step on board a British ship, to hear the British tongue, and the stewards dropping their h's, made one feel inclined to shake them all by the hand. And then the next morning a soft breeze was blowing. Stromboli rose on our right hand, and the water was as calm as on a pond. We cleared the Straits of Messina, and Etna's snows were hanging like a cloud in the blue sky, and our own sails, as white as these eternal snows, were bellied out to the wind and were keeping us steady as a rock.

Then came the canal, with its quaint Eastern figures and effects, and the Red Sea, with memories of Moses and the Egyptians, and Aden, with its divers and ostrich-feather merchants. And then the long stretch across the great ocean, with ne'er a sight of land from "the barren rocks" until we picked up the Leeuwin one quiet grey evening in April, an "autumn April," as Tennyson calls it in "The Brook." And all the while till then the sun had shone, and only the gentlest of breezes had blown, and the sea was very blue. There is no blue so deep, so like a glorious sapphire, as that which you see in the great depths of the Indian Ocean in the south-east trades. And on this particular voyage the waters remained blue and the wind soft all through the stormy Bight. And we passed millions of sea-birds there, gorging on porpoise spawn, and so overfed that they could not rise out of the way of the ship. The porpoises themselves seemed to be swimming races around us, and jumping out of the water like horses leaping hurdles, and cutting across our bows. It was like voyaging to fairyland, and these were the fairies showing us the way home. And a fairyland and a fair land it has ever since been to me. And for you, if you perchance should come here, I can only hope that it may prove the same.

"It may be that you, too, will reach the Happy Isles." But "it may be that the gulfs will wash you down." I hope not. Every one cannot have the same luck, but if you come here young, and are steady and wish to get on, you will find Australia a hospitable home. The sun shines brightly and often, and the skies are blue and clear. Sometimes too blue and too clear. But we are only in our boyhood yet. There may seem little of romance to us in our daily round, our common task, but to those who come after us, *our* days will be the good *old* days, and to our sons and grandsons our times will be as full of the romance of Australia as the times of our grandfathers are to us.

When I landed the bush was full of romance to me. It is now my daily path, and there my task is daily accomplished. But the romance has never left it. Each day as I drive or ride along my heart is stirred by the same old feelings, and my task lightened by the same joys.

Truly, on that April day, twenty-four years ago, I, at any rate, touched the happy isles, and found everything that I expected to find.

CHAPTER XLIII

TWENTY YEARS AGO

So here one was at last in this far-off land, your very antipodes, a land which one had read so much of and had heard so much talk about, that everything seemed familiar, and as if one had seen it all before. Melbourne was just as it had been painted, except that, to a new chum, the sun shone brightly and it seldom rained. Then came the journey by train up into the bush itself on a grey autumn afternoon through interminable miles of gum-trees. As darkness gathered there came the red glow from innumerable fires where the timber was being burned off. Then, late at night, we pulled up at a country station, took a cab to a comfortable little inn, and so on next morning, still through unending gums, to the Murray banks, where the rail journey came to an end, and henceforward a buggy and a pair of horses carried us on into the beautiful bush.

It was only a little township where we had left the train, and it was a very warm afternoon, with a good deal of dust rising wherever a vehicle passed along.

The inn was not a very comfortable one, nor very cheery, and the flies were in swarms. They sat in the sugar in heaps, and tried to get spread with the butter on the bread, and made every effort to be swallowed with each mouthful of food.

"How would you like to settle down in a place like this as a doctor?" said my brother, who was travelling along with me.

And, "No thank you," I replied, with a shrug of the shoulders and a grimace. But those things are surely in the laps of the gods. In less than two years I had fastened a plate upon the front gate of a little house on the rising ground above the town, and it has never been taken down again during the space of twenty-three years. And, in the meantime, we chartered a buggy from the inn and were off into the veritable bush. It was only some twenty miles to the station to which we were going, but that seemed quite a long way to an Englishman fresh from shipboard, and I do not think that we passed a single individual—on horseback, driving, or on foot—during the whole of that twenty miles.

Everything was delightful in the eyes of one who was looking for delights. The long road straggling along, the gleams of river now and again, the winding lagoon with its waters dark and clear, and the black swans sailing majestically about, their scarlet beaks reflected in the water. They seemed like stately frigates compared to a little crowd of fishing boats, as they sailed through mobs of divers, ducking, swimming, and flitting about.

Then, as evening drew on, and as we ploughed through a sandhill at a walk, the grey shingle roofs of the station appeared nestling in foliage beside the high banks of a lagoon. A score of dogs started a lively chorus of barks as we left the main road and drove down to the station. Two young men were outside the horse yards "pulling" the tail of a vicious young colt. A thorough-bred stallion was being "lunged" on the sandhill outside the stables, and a mob of cows with their calves were being driven at a walk to the milking yards. As we stood and talked on the verandah, shady with jessamine and passion flower, far off we heard the sharp, ringing sound of stockwhips and the thud of many feet. A cloud of golden dust was floating between us and the setting sun, and a mob of some twenty or thirty young well-bred horses came thundering along, wheeled through the open panels of the fence, and dashed into the yards.

Then the sun went quickly down, and the fire and the lamp lights seemed cheerful within, for there was a snap of frost in the night air after sunset, and so great was the hospitality that one could not but feel at home. And at home I have been there ever since.

And only fancy this. As we sat down to dinner in the big room, with a grand round of the most delicious beef smoking on the table, and with everybody looking ready for his turn to come, we discovered that, of the little company assembled, four of us had been at Clifton, and two more had been at Marlborough together. What a yarn we had in the smoking-room that night in front of the warm fire, and how one slept when snug in bed, even although the frosty air came piercingly through more than one chink in the old shingle roof, and stars could be seen twinkling, while the mice ran noisy races between the hessian lining and the wooden walls. Sleep was very sound then, although everything was so novel to a new chum. But it was all so ideal. At six in the morning, when the dawn was just growing grey and the stars had paled, a big bell hanging on the gum-tree bough outside the kitchen clanged out the news that the men's breakfast was ready, and the station itself awoke. It was very delicious to lie there and picture to oneself what each sound meant. The talk of the young fellows in the breakfast-room, the crack of the stockwhip again as the riding horses were run in from the paddock, the men whistling to their dogs as they mounted and rode away to their work, the sonorous voice of the "boss" giving orders before he, too, followed. And then the station turned over and slept for another hour, left as it was to the ladies, the children, and the visitors.

I cannot imagine a happier life than that of a healthy young fellow on a station, provided he loves the country and is fond of stock. Those young men, of whose number I shortly became one, in an amateur sort of way, from the moment that they started from the yards in the early morning on their horses until they came home for mid-day dinner, were employed in work which, to me at any rate, was most delectable. Perhaps a couple of them had to muster a certain paddock and drive the sheep to the yards for drafting. Or perhaps some of the cattle in the bullock paddock were prime, and those not yet ready for market were "cut out." Or a mob of horses were to be shifted from one paddock to another, or the young ones brought in for branding. No matter what it was—sheep, cattle, or horses—it was all work in the glorious fresh air, the wide free bush around you, a great, open dome of sky above, and everything smelt sweet and wholesome. On Saturday afternoons work was finished early, if possible, and we played tennis, and it was jolly to sit beneath those spreading pines and watch the game, or to play when one's turn came, and drink afternoon tea from dainty white china. A contrast to the tin pannikin and the "billy tea" of the yards on the working days of the week.

And Sunday was a rest. "Jackeroos," "boss," children, ladies, and visitors breakfasted together at nine that day, a glorious difference from the six o'clock call of the week days.

There was a little church three miles out on the run, put there to suit the convenience of some selectors, and we used to drive or ride out—a jolly company—to the short service. It was odd how the wild turkeys used to allow us to drive up to within a few yards of them on Sundays. On other days you could scarcely crawl nearer than a hundred yards before they spread their broad wings and flapped away over the trees, scatheless of shot or shell. And there were mobs of kangaroos still, flitting like grey ghosts amongst the grey trees.

The township parson came out once a month, and the boss read a sermon on the other Sundays. I think the read sermons were the better of the two. But one always felt that a man ought to have been able to say something interesting and profitable to the men and women gathered together in the little hut in the middle of the primeval forest in the new land, starting afresh, with everything clean, pure, and happy.

Well, I hope if any of you from home find your way out here, that you will love the Australian bush as I loved it. Everything there seemed romantic to me—the birds, the beasts, the wide freedom, the silence and the noises of the place, even the graves. There are many graves scattered through the bush. I know of many a one.

Beside the wire fence near the wool-shed is a very tiny mound—yonder, where the lamb and the ewe are lying down together. Old "Blue Billy" sleeps there. His grave is neither wide nor deep. He had "sundowned" it for many a year, up and along the river; but early one morning Jim, the "rouse-about," running up the horses, paused beneath that stunted little gum-tree. Old Bill had been lying there for near a month without moving, and I saw him then to certify the cause. There was little enough to certify upon. A plug of tobacco, a rusty knife, some skin and some bones, a shirt, a pair of moleskins, boots and socks, and an old, old battered hat. "Natural causes!"

One evening I was riding into the station with one of the hands. We had been out at the yards on the back of the run, and were weary after the day's work, and contented to see the smoke rising from the chimneys through the trees. A pretty cottage stood on the road skirting the paddock, and a scent of burning pine wood, aromatic and delicious, was wafted over to us from the chimney. Two little bush children, with bleached yellow hair, brown legs, and bare feet, were sitting on the verandah "guddling" with their feet in the dust.

Near a gate in the corner, between the bullock and the horse paddocks, was a little enclosure guarded by a picket fence. Within, shielded from grazing cattle and nibbling sheep, grew a wealth of monthly roses, and in spring-time the great purple iris bloomed.

"What's that?" I asked my companion.

"It's a grave," he said, quite solemnly and huskily. He was a man of few words, and had never spoken for ten miles.

"Whose?"

"I never heard tell."

A mob of cattle were being driven past at the moment, lowing as they went, and some stretched their necks over the fence to pick a sprig of rose-tree, more from wantonness than from hunger. The setting sun was lingering on the spot; the shadows were long, and the lights were grey in the dim flats. It was very peaceful. I could imagine the mother of him who lay there loving to come in the quiet hour of twilight, in the hush of earth, to pray at the spot with a full heart, but at peace.

. . . . . .

I drove by not very long ago, just before the break-up of the great drought. The earth was brown and dry, and no herbage grew. One decaying corner-post of the graveyard still stood, and that was all. There was a dusty little heap of earth, the only token that some day, for a brief space in spring, the purple iris may yet bloom, looking, with its white centres, like a blue wave, curling and foaming on its crest. The roses had gone for ever. The cattle had taken them in earnest now. The cottage hard by was razed to the ground.

I heard of the tragedy. It was commonplace enough. Six-and-twenty years ago this autumn Mrs. Livingstone was the tenant of the cottage. Her husband had died two years before in the township, crushed by a falling tree whilst he was scooping out a tank. It is called Livingstone's Tank to this day, and the paddock is Livingstone's Tank Paddock. The widow had a couple of hundred pounds—the insurance money—and she lived on at the cottage by the roadside alone with her one boy.

She was a thin, tall, gaunt woman, plain of face, and with prominent teeth—a sad face that hardly ever smiled. You often see those faces in the bush.

So Jimmy grew up, with curly hair and a face capable of reflecting sunshine, but sober and sad for want of a mate, and full of earnestness in the business of childhood. Mrs. Livingstone washed for the station, and sold, too, the eggs from her fowls. Jimmy learned to ride the old stock horse, drove in the cows, and did little odd jobs, rising, after a while, to half-a-crown a week.

Then he graduated so as to be able to run up the horses as well as the cows, and became venturesome. He went away with Bob Bush, the boundary rider, and was once out all day. He had been kangarooing, and brought home a tail for soup. But no tales of valour or adventure fell from his tongue. Mother and son's conversations were short and to the point.

"W'ere goin', Jim?" she would say in the morning.

"Shootin' cockatoos."

And in the evening, "Where hast bin, son?"

"Shootin' cockatoos."

But, oh, how she loved him! Loved him? Yes, adored him, knelt to him, and worshipped. As she gazed at him mending the old saddle with a needle and bit of string, looking up from her wash-tubs, her face would become radiant and positively pretty. Yet at other moments, and apart from him, you could scarce believe that the thin arms had ever been plump and round, or that the withered breasts had ever carried milk. At this time the coach used to change horses at the station, and it was Jimmy's work to run them in.

They grazed in the Bullock Paddock, and always hung over in the far corner, a couple of miles at least away. This pasture "bounded with" Gunpowder Swamp, and kangaroos were numerous there. One day early, just after dinner, Jimmy started off on the chestnut cob. It was far before the usual time for the coach horses, and Mrs. Livingstone did not notice that he was gone until he was at the Bullock Paddock gate, stooping down from the saddle to undo the latch.

"Where art goin', child?" she called at the top of her voice, and she heard in reply a faint, shrill quiver like an echo of "coach 'orses!"

"Jim be early," she muttered as she cleared away the dinner things and washed up.

That day she heard no thunder of the hoofs upon the ground, nor any crack from the stockwhip in the timber on the rise. But that did not worry her. She often missed him riding by.

Then the coach rumbled past with its cloud of dust, its jingle of harness, and the creaking pole.

"He'll soon be in to his tea," she said, and prepared the things.

"The boy's late," she thought as the shadows grew long, and every few minutes she would run to the door and look up the road to the station. It was growing dark, and no one was stirring. She was in a fever within, and a sickness of anxiety gnawed at her heart. But this feeling attacked her at least once a week if Jimmy was beyond his usual time.

The sun had long set, but at last, far up the track, she saw a horseman in a cloud of dust come cantering down.

"Ah! thank God! Here he comes," and she put the chops on the gridiron ready to pop over the fire.

She had been really anxious up till now, but had fought and struggled with herself as being foolish and over fond. He was often late, she had argued. Perhaps he had gone off with Bob again. Maybe the "coachers" had broken away, or a rail was down and they had strayed into Gunpowder.

But in spite of these voices of comfort and sense, great surging waves of fear had overwhelmed her. The cob had fallen and broken Jim's leg; tempted by the warm sun he had bathed, and been——. Oh no, he would never venture on that by himself.

But he was here now. That was the thud of the cantering hoofs on the dusty road.

"Don't sound like Cobby's feet nohow, neither," she was thinking when the horse pulled up at the gate with a jerk.

"Coo-ee! Missus!"

It was Bob. Her heart froze in her breast. Her face paled to a ghastly white in the twilight and her hands clutched her dress.

"Missus, where's that brat Jimmy? He's never fetched them 'orses."

So it had come then, at length, and, after all, that blow that had threatened so often, that had seemed even nearer than this at other times, when all had yet been well. But Bob's accursed voice had struck it home now.

Then she utterly and helplessly let herself go, and shrieked again and again, at the highest pitch of her shrill voice, "Oh, my God! my God! me boy, me boy!"

Bob shouted back—big, rough Bob, with the rich, kindly voice, "What's up, missus? Where's the lad? 'E'll be all right! No fear."

With a gleam of hope again she rushed on to the verandah, and in a high falsetto, broken by tears, pausing not at all for answers, she poured out, "Ain't 'e with ye? Where 'ave ye bin? Niver seed 'im sin' breakfast? 'E was ridin' old Cobby. Did ye ever know of him for to fall? 'E's bin gone sin' dinner-time. Went 'cross Bullock Paddock, I tell ye. I'll start away and look for 'im now straight," and, kirtling up her petticoat above the scraggy old knees, she stepped off the verandah into the darkness.

"Hush! Did ye hear nothin'?" The two stood there listening, straining with all their ears for a full minute. Not a sound. Not a sound that you could conceive for a moment to be wrought by the coming of Jim. The scratching and scraping of a possum in an old dead tree, the lowing of a sick beast over at the tank, the swish of the breeze in the long grass. And she fell to screaming again.

"Hush, missus! Come to the station, and we'll get the men to go and look with lights. The boss 'e's away, but the missus 'll 'elp ye."

So she reached the station, panting for breath, striding along beside Bob's jogging horse, ghastly white, and with her hands clammy and cold.

All night they sought in vain, with lantern and torch, and all next day, in bands, or scattered far and wide. The boss came home late at night.

"I know where he is," he said quietly, when they had told him all.

"How do you know, Henry?" his wife said. But he could not say. He only had a conviction, and he felt no hope. But he ordered "Lightfoot" to be kept in the stable and to be ready for him at daybreak. Bob was to be prepared to go with him.

The boss was a bushman, and those who had taken part in the search the day before had lacked that gift. He rode straight to the boundary fence alongside Gunpowder. There was no gate, but the top rail was down. The grass was trodden here, and there were some chestnut hairs on the second panel, as if a horse had scrambled over from a stand. They leaped their horses over, making straight for the tank. A mob of kangaroos scudded off while they were yet two hundred yards away, and the boss caught hold of his mare by the head and followed, Bob spurring behind in wonder.

Round the swamp they galloped, and up the rise with the old she-oaks throwing a dark shadow, and down the other side into the little gully near the yards.

They were there! Old "Cobby" was lying with a broken neck. Alongside, crushed against a dead tree, his fair curls clotted together, and with a great black bruise on his brow, was Jim, his little whip clutched in his right hand. A half-grown kangaroo was stretched beneath the horse, dead.

"Yes! I saw him listening with his eyes aflame," said the boss, "when they were talking about running a kangaroo down without a dog, and I knew there was a mob here away."

. . . . . .

Break not, oh woman's heart, but still endure.

. . . . . .

She wandered away alone after that, broken, dejected, I know not where, nor does any one else. Her place itself knoweth her no more.

But in the words, altered a little to suit time and place, of old Dr. John Brown, the words of Rab, dear old Rab, of the white hair, the great spectacles, and benevolent face :—" May we trust that the light of God's countenance has for all these years been resting on that once forlorn little soul, as His blessed sunshine now lies on his grave on the lonely bush. 'For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.' "

CHAPTER XLIV

GOOD-BYE

WELL, I have told you something of the romance of the finding, the taking, the shaping, the exploring and developing of this our country, but there is much to tell—far, far more than has been written of in these pages. We have not even touched upon the founding of the city of Melbourne, when Batman and Fawkner came over from Tasmania, and Batman bought a huge tract of country for a few blankets and axes from the aboriginal inhabitants. There was a lot of romance in that transaction, but unfortunately the Government did not hold his bargain good.

And more romantic still was the arrival of the Henty family on the coast near Portland—the first "squatters" in Victoria. What a glorious life they must have led, with their cattle and sheep pasturing on illimitable lands, three thousand miles of unoccupied country behind them, and everything fresh, new, and prosperous! And only seventy years ago! Never again in the world's history shall we have the opportunity of seeing the same rise of a nation, in a new continent, and all during the lifetime of a generation or two of men.

America is comparatively old, contrasted with us, and her history and romance are dim and almost ancient. Our history has been made beneath our very eyes. Our earliest pioneers are only now gathered to their fathers, and yet an immense amount of work has been done since they first ventured into the unbeaten tracks of this new world. Hume traversed Victoria two years before *Woodstock* was published, and he died only when W. G. Grace was at the very height of his power as a cricketer in 1877, and "W. G." still makes runs in his best style. Yet it seems but a short time ago since Sir Walter Scott heard for the last time in his dying ears the murmur of the Tweed. Since then, however, Australia has advanced from a lonely land with but a sprinkling of people to a country with great and handsome cities, beautifully built and substantial. Sydney is the eighth city of the Empire.

I know those who remember only a wild bush with a solitary hut or two amongst the trees, where now rises the busy hum of mighty Melbourne's daily work, where trams run unceasingly from early morning until far on into the night. I have stood at the top of Collins Street after sunset with one who can recall the primeval bush, with its black inhabitants and its perfect silence and loneliness. Now at our feet bustling thousands are hurrying along. The electric lights and the various coloured tramway lamps make a chain as of jewels from one end of the great thoroughfare to the other, and there is the constant roar of traffic, the ping, ping of warning bells, the cries of street merchants and newspaper boys, the whistle of syrens from the factories, and above it all the solemn boom of the town clock telling the hours. A big pellucid electric light beams down over the whole city from a high dome at the west end. It gives you the feeling of a guardian angel keeping watch with lighted lamp in hand. The sun has set over the "You-Yangs," but there is a flush still in the western sky, and across the clear star-strewn space above passes a last relic of the old days, a mob of wild black swans, steadily beating their way home. In the lifetime of one man the great change has been wrought.

And even in "the bush" changes are working and everything is new. Where I have stood so often during the flying years on the little hill above the town, I often linger still and mark it all. Even in my own brief time there was once nothing to be seen from here but bush, an unending sea of forest leaves. A few mobs of cattle or of sheep might have raised, on market days, infrequent clouds of dust. No train shook the earth with its hollow rumblings nor pierced the echoes with its whistle. And now at my feet, and for miles around, the sea of leaves is retreating and great holes are left in the earth's sides where no trees live at all. It will soon be "puri wilpanina," or the "great hole," as the blacks called the sky. Even on the far distant hillsides we can see the dwindling away of the gums before the hand of man.

As I stand, I can see other towns springing up. There, a few miles off, is a great water tower, standing like a sentinel, or like Smailholm in the Borderland at home, and beside me is another such, looking as though he were sending greetings to his brother far away.

It is autumn-time, and from my vantage-ground I can see long trails of dust upon the cleared roads. It is no longer raised only by stray herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. They are the wheat waggons. One after the other they come rolling in, drawn some by grand teams of horses, some by miserable little scratch turn-outs, and driven by thin, sun-browned bushmen in slouch hats, with long-handled whips in their hand, and riding lean, varminty, well-bred-looking hacks. Phew! what a dust they raise! If there be half a dozen of them in a string and the evening is quiet and hot, you can scarcely see your way through, so dense is it. No wonder the teamsters look forward to a wallow in the river when their loads have been left beside the railway train.

All around our feet and far away over to Victoria lie the green vineyards, hundreds and hundreds of acres of them. Fancy seeing six hundred acres of vines in one block. I saw it to-day, and the grapes were ripe and mellow, hanging in great purple clusters as I passed, and yet one felt in no way tempted to jump out of the buggy and pick a bunch. People in confectioners' shops never eat lollies, I believe. It is the same with us amongst the vines. You can take a hundredweight for the asking, and so you are sick of them. But I remember habitually giving half-a-crown a pound for a bunch of grapes in England, and at first it was a luxury to gather the berries wholesale here.

You will think that I am bragging, and that, according to me, this land of perfection will produce anything and everything.

Have you ever read Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico*? If you have you may remember how the author extols the climate and soil of that great country, and how he traces it up from the sea to the highlands, with all its various climates and wealth of different kinds of fruits, and grain, and flowers. It is divided into its "tierra caliente" or hot region, and its "tierra templada" or temperate region, and its "tierra fria," or cold region, and each zone brings forth its appropriate produce. So is it with us. It seems as though we could grow anything out of this great breadth of Mother Earth's bosom which lies open for us in the Southern continent. We began, such a short time ago, with only a little grain and a handful of wool. And now we have wool in shiploads, grain of all kinds, oats, wheat, barley, and maize. Here we have all the fruits of the old world, and those, too, of the new, of temperate climates and of tropical, and cotton, flax, and tobacco. We have our strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, as good as, and more numerous than we had them in Scotland, and yet we have alongside of these, oranges and lemons and grapes without stint. We have our apples and our pears, peaches and apricots, and with a day or two's journey by train we can add fresh bananas to our dessert, and pineapples too, big and luscious. We are lucky to live in such a land.

We have one drawback. Indeed, we may have more than one, but I only know of this particular fellow. It is the same as that which so oppressed the early explorers, and more especially Sturt and Eyre. It is a want of water. Nature seems to have cast a spell on us in this particular. It is either a feast or a famine with respect to water—a flood or a drought. But I, at least, have every faith that this difficulty, too, will one day be overcome. Let me quote to you Prescott again. He says: "The genius of man has proved more potent than nature's spells." We are raising water from the bowels of the earth now in millions of gallons by means of artesian wells. We are learning to lock the great rivers, and to conserve the use of their flood-waters, which formerly ran unheeded to the sea, washing the country away with them as they ran. Some day those great floods which Mitchell saw, and such a flood as swept Leichhardt from sight, will all be turned to use. I do not think it is too much to hope that, as once the centre of Australia was a well-watered region, with lakes and fertility all around, the genius and enterprise of man may in the far future restore it to its primeval loveliness and utility.

I know this, that men cannot rest. They must go forward. We must continue improving, altering, building, digging, striving after food and wealth, and the whole continent will change, even as it has changed since the days of those early convicts, since the days of Flinders and Bass, Hume and Sturt, and even of Burke and Wills. And it was gold, gold, gold, and the craving of men's appetites that carried us along. And so it will continue to be to the end of all time.

Only a morning or two ago I was walking home before dawn, very tired from attending to professional duties all night. "The sun wasn't up, but the moon was down." There was not a soul stirring, not a light twinkling in the village. Not even a dog barked. I might have been alone in the world, before any man came here. The earth only seemed to be breathing. Then away from towards the northern stars I heard a mighty rushing sound, coming surging along, and I stood listening. It was a great flight of wild duck. They passed overhead, their leaders calling. One could see nothing, but one knew that some five hundred pairs of wings were beating the air with rapid flight, five hundred little hearts were throbbing with the ecstasy of the pace, five hundred pairs of brown eyes were gleaming to the pointers of the Southern Cross. Like a long-drawn sigh the sound died away, and everything was left as it was before. And then one felt that these few animals which we have left are the last living links that bind our times to the times before the arrival of the white men. Everything else is changed and changing. And in nature's book, where so many pages have been turned, and over which so many years have rolled, our day has been as short as that long-drawn sigh, stirred by the beating of the wings of those birds of passage in the night.

It is a hundred and thirty years since the first fleet landed in Sydney Cove. The grave of one of the "first fleeters" is still above the ground with its rude inscription.

Seventy years only since Fawkner camped above where Elizabeth Street rushes daily along in Melbourne to-day. A tick of nature's great clock in the everlasting.

Perhaps that is why we Australians love our land so much. We have seen its very beginnings from a human point of view, and we have almost grown up along with it. Even we immigrants love it passing well. I often fancy that if I were to leave it again and return to the motherland, I should miss it and its life and ways beyond all bearing.

One would miss the great open spaces of land, and the vast cloudless hemisphere of the sky, unhidden by houses or often even by trees or hills. A hemisphere almost always sparkling with stars, so clear and bright. Sirius throbs as you look at him, flashing like a diamond, and Venus, like a moon, glows placidly, sailing through the sky. You can see Jupiter's moons with a small opera-glass, so clear is the air. We look much at the heavens in this "bush" of ours. And I feel that I should miss the long burning days of summer, when the heat draws out the scent of the pine from the timber in your room, and you long for one cloud to gather and one breath of wind to blow; when in spite of the heat you hear the "routing" of cattle on the march down the stock road, or the plaintive bleating of a mob of sheep, raising the dust and leaving behind them the smell of greasy wool. One would miss all these things, and the long teams of bullocks in the waggons, carting in the bales from the stations, and all sorts of things besides. One would sigh for those long, cold, winter nights when the wood fire burns so clear within, and the stars twinkle so bright without, and the cold is nipping, and the grass all hoar frosted in the morning.

And the days are beautiful and warm, with the air like champagne, and the world is wide still, and black care has lost the horseman in his gallop through the bush, frightened by the ringing crack of his whip. And we would miss lying awake in the soft summer moonlight, and, when everything was deathly still, hearing suddenly the soul-satisfying "crash," as some big tree, untouched by anything save the finger of time, came toppling down; or suddenly, in the stillness and heat, to hear, far away across the tree-tops, the sigh of the coming south wind. You hear it growing louder and louder, until from a sigh it has grown to a roar, and the trees wave their arms wildly, and the wind passes over to us from the ocean, cooling all the generations of men. Yes, these and a hundred things besides we would miss were we re-exiled from this the land of our exile, where everything has been so real, leaving the old world of five-and-twenty years ago "a wraith, a film, a memory."

THE END OF MORGAN

NOTE TO CHAPTER XXXIX

After the above was in type, a strange meeting came under the notice of the writer. In an Australian country hospital during May of this year lay an old man, disabled by a broken leg. Into the bed next to him in the ward another old man was one day put, and the two, as bushmen will, began to compare notes—to "pitch," as they themselves would call it. The following day, as the doctor went his rounds, he remained for a time talking with the two men, and the conversation turned on bushranging. "This was Morgan's mate the morning he was shot, doctor," said the one, indicating the other. It appeared that the two had quite accidentally met in the Peachelba paddocks the afternoon prior to Morgan's death, had been by him seen and "bailed up," were compelled to go with him to the house, where, with the MacPherson household, they were Morgan's unwilling companions during the night. In the morning, perforce they accompanied the bushranger to the horse yard. Both noticed a man resting his gun on the rail of the fence as he aimed at Morgan. The bushranger, they say, also noticed him, and, too late, snatched for his revolver. From that day, until they occupied adjoining beds in the little country hospital, for two-and-forty years these old men had never met or heard of each other.

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