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To my dear friend
Mrs Warren
hoping you will not
be in early
A. W. A. W.

Bankers Headly
June 7th 1922



REMINISCENCES OF
AN AUSTRALIAN PIONEER



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Robert J. Barton

REMINISCENCES
OF AN
AUSTRALIAN PIONEER

BY
ROBERT D. BARTON

With Portrait

SYDNEY
TYRRELL'S LIMITED
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PREFACE

IN writing these reminiscences I have been persuaded by my friends to give my life and anecdotes exactly as they stand in my memory, but in doing so I find some difficulty in blowing my own horn without making myself out to be more than I am. However, as no one else can give my life, I must ask my readers to remember, in the lines of Will Carleton, that—

“For people’s lives, full well we know,
Two sets of things recall,
The one of which we always tell,
The other not at all.”

I was born in 1842, and, if not a pioneer, I certainly think I was a pioneer baby of those born two hundred miles west of Sydney, and I was probably a year or two old before the first clergyman came into that part of the country. This was a Mr. Gunther, who came from Mudgee, and had a field day of christenings, I believe, at Boree, the wool-shed having to act as church, as there was no room in the house for the families that came to have their offspring christened. Of course, I do not recollect this, but that is what I was told.

My aim is to record my memories, which may, however, in some cases, have been coloured by circumstances and conditions that followed later.

Since my birth and first experiences I have been in the van of civilisation all my life, and, though the discomforts and troubles that always go with the

pioneer have been mine, I realise that they have never equalled the troubles and privations that were undergone by the real pioneers, among whom were my parents.

The remarks that I shall make about the convicts and assigned servants are, as you will gather, principally very old hearsay recollections, but I should particularly like to point out that these men were not all the hardened ruffians and criminals that they have been represented to be. As far as my knowledge of them goes (and I knew many) they were mainly honest and hard-working. Those who succeeded in life, of whom there were many, were the best of citizens, and almost invariably left the best of descendants.

I have found it impossible to omit reference to the varied and complicated legislation that has affected the man on the land, and I say advisedly that I consider the greatest trouble that the man on the land has had, even up to the present day, is the shifting policy of governments with regard to our various holdings. To sum the matter up in a few words, the system of party government, combined with the landlordship of leasehold areas, has been a great mistake, and has retarded development, and I hope that in putting this in my recollections I shall not hurt the feelings of anyone. I shall also touch on the unions and the difficulties that they have caused in the working of all holdings.

I must ask the consideration of any who may read these lines, and trust they will be able to see that I have told nothing except what I really believe to be true.

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT MY FATHER.

MY father was a commander in the East Indian Service, and left that employment when that Service ceased to exist, and was, as I understand it, bought out by the English Government. From conversations with him and others, I came to the conclusion that the East India Company had, by their contracts with the government, secured the whole of the British commerce, and at that time (as pirates were about) the fleet of merchantmen sailed under the escort of a warship. No doubt it would be a poor sort of warship, but it answered its purpose.

Perhaps, whilst on the subject of my father, I ought to relate some of his stories that may interest my readers, but before doing so, I should explain that I learned at an early age that he was a very bad farmer; absolutely unfitted for such an occupation.

I first discovered this one day when he had bought some poultry, among which was a turkey-cock, at a neighbour's sale. The birds were duly delivered, and my father went to inspect them. He thereupon got very angry, and told the man who delivered them that he had brought the wrong turkey-cock. "You have changed the bird; I am not going to have anything to do with you." The man assured him that the bird was the one he had bought. "No," said

my father, "the bird I bought had a red head; this one has got a blue one," and my mother had to come out and assure him that the bird was probably the correct one, as their heads were not always the same colour.

One of his ship stories - is, perhaps, worth relating:—The battleship that conducted the merchantmen carried any passengers there might be, and on one occasion there were two young gentlemen and a very attractive young lady on board. The gentlemen both became violently attached to the lady, who was prepared to accept either, and the only way to decide who was to be the lucky man was to fight a duel. They came to my father and asked if they might be allowed to fight a duel on the quarter-deck (duelling was allowed in those days). He said he had no objection, and would clear the deck for them. They then asked him if he could supply them with pistols. He replied: "No; I cannot do that, but I'll tell you what I will do—I'll give one of you the ship's gun at the bow, and the other the ship's gun at the stern, and then you can blaze away." The absurdity of this ended the duel for the time being, and I do not know what happened afterwards to the young lady.

There is another story of those days which may be worth telling; it certainly would be if I could repeat it as he told it, but there is many a story without much point that is inimitable when told by the author, and very poor if put in writing or told by one who has not the gift. The East India Company found that they had a great deal of trouble to prevent the ships being filled with all sorts of birds and

animals at the various native places where they called. (All birds were called by the natives "parrots," and all other animals "monkeys.") An order was issued that no sailor or officer would be allowed to purchase any of these, on account of filling up the ship with rubbish. On one occasion, however, the purser smuggled on board an immense baboon, out of which he hoped to make a fortune when he got back to the Old Country. He got the beast down in the lower hold, and chained him to the foot of the mast, and the voyage progressed for some distance without anyone being aware of the baboon's presence, the purser being the only one who fed him and knew of his whereabouts. After a while, our friend, the purser, thought that the baboon was quite harmless and tame, and that for the good of his health he would let him have a run off the chain. However, when the chain was undone, he very soon found out his mistake, for the baboon gave him a very rough time, nearly killing him, and then went up through the hatches like a lamp-lighter, frightened the seven senses out of those on deck, and went straight up to the top of the mast. The captain came out of his cabin, and the first thing that he noticed was this object at the top of his mast. He simply ordered up the marines, said "Shoot that beast," and returned to his cabin.

Two Scotchmen found a pig's nest, where a sow had some young ones in a cave, the entrance to which was very narrow, and they decided to steal the young ones before the sow returned. One of them went down to secure the little pigs, which at once commenced to squeal and make a great noise, and the

other one stood in the opening to keep guard for the old sow's re-appearance, but he became so interested in leaning over trying to see what was going on, that the sow darted through the opening before he saw her coming. However, true to his trust, he managed to get a turn on her tail with his hands, brace his feet against a rock and hold on till his friend said: "Ye're keepin' oot the licht, Sandy; what's keepin' oot the licht, Sandy?" and Sandy replied: "Gin the tail breks ye'll ken what's keepin' oot the licht!"

I will now give you some idea of the pioneers' life, part of which is derived from recollections, and the earlier part, of course, from hearsay, although I feel as if I had seen it, having been born in the midst of the circumstances.

Properties were taken up in those days by paying a very small rent and occupying as much country as was required for the amount of stock owned. As the stock increased, other areas were taken up to provide for them, and the result was that in a very short time the holdings of two or three neighbours became very much like a chess-board—one had a patch here, and one a patch on the other side of him, and so on, all intermingled. However, inevitable disputes and doubtful boundaries were all amicably settled by a commissioner, against whose award there was no appeal, because neither land nor improvements were of much value when new areas could be taken a little farther out. About that and the land matter I shall tell you when it comes into its right place in my recollections.

My father took up the property of Boree with some twenty thousand pounds which he brought out,

and bought for his holding a number of sheep, cattle and horses, the price of which was at that time very dear. He gave twenty-two shillings and sixpence a head for his sheep (they were a very poor lot); horses were almost at a prohibitive price, but he succeeded in getting a small number of the best imported mares and a stallion (which were imported by a neighbour—Mr. Kater—about whom I shall say a few words later on). A few years after he started his farm, sheep fell to two shillings and sixpence a head, and cattle were almost valueless.

One of my earliest recollections was that my father was boiling down his sheep and cattle. The cattle I remember very distinctly, because his uniform sword was taken to the stockyard to cut the bullocks' throats. I can distinctly recall that sword, as it was something that I had always coveted, in a small boy's way, and I saw it at last ingloriously covered with rust and dirt lying in the killing yard on the station. It is obvious that this boiling down must have been a loss when one considers that the tallow and hides, as well as the wool, had to be carried to Circular Quay, Sydney. This was done by a bullock-team, which did about two trips in the year, and brought back the necessaries for the farm.

Can you imagine a household with only assigned servants, with supplies once, or perhaps twice, a year to last for the season, no neighbours and no doctor within sixty miles; further, that my mother never left that station for twenty years; that she educated, clothed and looked after nine of us! To make things worse, very early in the time my father had a compound fracture of the leg through being thrown out

of a gig. I can just remember his being brought home. Dr. Curtis, of Wellington, some sixty miles away, was sent for, and said that in his opinion the leg should be amputated, but my mother would not hear of it. Dr. Machattie, of Bathurst, was sent for, and, between them, they managed to save the leg, but my father was ever after a cripple, which certainly spoilt his temper, and made him very irritable, though at times no one could be jollier or kinder-hearted.

I have said that no pioneering that has since been done in Australia can in any way equal for hardship that taken up by my parents and by the other families who tried it at the same time. I have told you that my father invested some twenty thousand pounds in his station at Boree, which station was sold some thirty years afterwards, with stock and everything, for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds. This price included three thousand acres of purchased land, fifteen thousand sheep, cattle and horses. Such was the result of thirty years' hardship, and a very similar result was the lot of many of those who brought out any considerable capital to invest in the land of Australia. This, I feel sure, is proved to be correct by the history of the Colony. The successful pioneers have to thank those first adventurers who spent their money in opening up the country; even though New South Wales is now populated and producing wheat and every other thing making for wealth, for thirty years the produce was not more than sufficient to pay expenses.

I may add, for the information of a great many, that the rations of flour were supplied to everyone on the place in whole wheat, which was ground with a small steel mill and made into flour, bran, etc. This,

of course, was always eaten as brown bread, or, if liked, the wheat could be cooked whole; so that a man, after he had done his day's work, had to grind his flour before he could make his damper, that is, bread made only with flour, water and salt, as there were no hops or baking-powder in those days. These conditions lasted until the discovery of gold in 1851, when there was an exodus to the gold fields of all free labour, and it was impossible to get men to shepherd the sheep or carry on the work of the station.

About this time a number of Chinese were brought out as a speculation by Captain Towns, who was one of the greatest pioneer merchants. He owned nearly all the Sydney shipping, and he formed the whaling station on the coast at Townsville, which was named after him. He, like my father, was a ship's captain, and though at one time he had a great deal to do with stock, he made no success of this; but he made a great deal of money by cornering the tobacco in the country, and his shipping speculations were very successful. I have no doubt also that he made money out of the importation of Chinese labour. I heard a story about him which will show the rough character he was. He had been asked to lunch on board, what for those days was a rather fine vessel, which had just come into the harbour, and was further asked to say a few words about the ship. He had evidently learnt up some few poetic illustrations for the occasion, but when he got up to talk about the ship these apparently left his mind, for he only said one line—"This beautiful ship sails o'er the waters of our beautiful bay like a like a she sails o'er the waters of our beautiful

bay like a bloody duck," which image was received with much enthusiasm.

People who wanted servants could engage Chinese from the ship for a term of three years at a very small monetary wage, with rice and food and some clothes as well. My father got about twenty of these Chinamen, and the first thing he set them to work at when they got to the station was to grind wheat into flour. All the steel mills were brought in from the various shepherds' huts, and erected in an old shed, and each Chinaman had to grind this wheat, and sift it to get out the bran, pollard, etc. In this way they made fairly good flour—not silk dressed as at the present time, of course—and the bread was rather dark, but otherwise all right. However, this arrangement did not last very long. A Chinaman came on a visit one afternoon, and told his countrymen who were grinding the wheat to break their agreement, as they could only be punished by a few months in gaol, and they could then go to the goldfields and make big wages. So that agreement (like all other agreements of industry when they do not suit both parties) counted for nothing.

That evening the Chinamen, headed by their visitor (who had told them what tactics to employ), came down, and I can vividly remember what happened, although I had been put to bed, and witnessed the scene in my night-gown (pyjamas not having been invented at that time). The first performance was that my father seized hold of the ringleader and dragged him into the store, handcuffed him and fixed him up; but when he had got this done all the other Chinamen were in the store, and the fun was to try

and get them out. They could not, of course, speak much English, but their ringleader had instructed them in the words—"Me go gaol." Mr. Kater, who was a neighbour living some twenty-five miles off, happened to be there that evening, and he assisted my father in trying to remove these twenty Chinamen. My father was armed with a four-in-hand-whip—rather a useless weapon at close-quarters—but it was very soon broken till about two feet of the handle only remained. With this he plied right and left in trying to get these men out of the store. Mr. Kater armed himself with a piece of rope, at the end of which were a few links of chain. The strategy of the campaign was to take a Chinaman, hammer him well, drag him out of the store, and throw him on the bricks, and then go in for another; but before they got the next one out, the first had crawled back, and this process was kept up till nearly midnight, my father shouting vociferously, and, perhaps, swearing, the Chinamen with their only war-ery—"Me go gaol." They succeeded in getting about half of them out of the store, and the door was locked on the other half, together with the man in chains. The following morning the man was released, and the whole crowd walked off the station. To have taken them to court would have been a very long and tedious trip to the nearest magistrate, and the only punishment that they would have got for breaking their agreement was about a month in gaol; and, as that was where they wanted to go, it was not worth the trouble of compelling them to do so.

At this time there was rather a large tribe of blacks at Boree, and I saw many corroborees and fes-

tivities when I was young. This tribe, however, got very broken up, even before a raid that was made by the Yass blacks, who came down and killed a number of our blacks, and took away the gins as prisoners of war, or booty. The raid took place right at our house. My father at this time was away in Sydney, and there was a young gentleman, who was out for colonial experience, in charge. The day before the blacks were attacked, one of the black stockmen reported that he had seen the enemy, in war-paint, camped some miles back, and he got permission to go and inform the other remnants of the tribe, and fetch them down to meet the enemy. However, he never returned, and the few blacks that were camped near the station moved that night to about a hundred yards from the house—between the men's huts and the house. The first thing that I remember was just at daylight, my black boy, Albert (who was about the same age as myself, but far more advanced in bush knowledge), opening the door of my room and coming in to tell me that the blacks had come down and were spearing the other blackfellows; he asked me to let him get under the bed, which I did, and that saved his life. As, hearing a noise, I went out to see what was going on, three gins met me near the door of my mother's room, and she, also hearing the disturbance, got up and secreted these three poor gins in her room.

The first thing that struck my attention when I walked into the yard was a very big, stout blackfellow lying about a hundred yards away with several spears through him, but still living, because I saw him half sit up and try to pull out the spears. I then met Mr. Naylor—the gentleman in charge of the station—and

he called up another man, and requested him to fetch the gun, which he went away to get, but it was some considerable time before he returned, as he was at first unable to find either ammunition or gun. While standing in the yard with Mr. Naylor I saw a young black—Charlie by name—rush across the paddock, jump in and out of the sweet-briar hedge of the garden, pursued by a number of his enemies. He ran like a deer across the cultivation paddock and up the pine ridge, which was as far as we could see him, still pursued by the other blacks. About an hour afterwards I saw the pursuing blacks coming back carrying their spears upright, each spear decorated with parts of the human body; they had got poor Charlie, and were carrying his body on their different spears as a memento of victory. Just after that the leader of the Yass tribe joined Mr. Naylor, myself and the other men on the station, also the man who had been sent for the gun, and who, having at last found it, had come back: although I think there was a deficiency of ammunition. Mr. Naylor said—“Oh, I don’t think we shall want the gun now,” when Andy, the leader of the Yass tribe, who had been a black-tracker, and was wearing a uniform coat, and who could speak very good English, said—“Oh, no; you will not require the gun now.” The victors then, having collected all the gins they could find, went off at a sort of quick march or run, shouting their own report of victory, which no doubt was complete, for from that day I never saw a camp of blacks on the station.

From these slight recollections you will see that the first pioneers’ lives were very troubled ones.

Although some time after the gold discovery labour again became available, the discovery of the gold completely altered the conditions that reigned formerly. The air was filled with reports of men going to the goldfields without a shilling and picking up a fortune the next day or a few days after; and nothing was said of those that lost all they took to the goldfields and got nothing. However, these rumours completely changed people's ideas; everybody who possibly could do so rushed off to the goldfields to try and pick up a bagful of gold. This fever remained in our blood for many years, and I think there is a taint of it still left. Nobody is satisfied in this country to work for a good profit, or to get good interest on invested money; the idea is always to try and do something that will make a fortune in a very short time. Men of the poorer class who have worked themselves up into owning small homes and living comfortably get struck with this fever, and make all sorts of rash ventures in the hope of getting to the top of the tree in one jump; of course, they almost invariably land back where they originally started, and have to begin life over again; at least, that is my impression of a great many.

However, when labour again became available after the gold discovery, it was at more than double the former price, but, still, prices for stock and meat improved very much, and employers were better able to pay the increased wages. The price of wool (like that of other commodities) fluctuated, but I think I am right in saying that the average price for the best wool in those times was about sixpence a pound, and the weight of greasy wool per sheep was about four

pounds. These conditions continued, with fluctuations, until about 1867, which was the year in which I really started a man's life of responsibility; but of that anon, as I have still some fifteen years to cover before I arrive at that period.

Now for one word about our convicts and assigned servants, because they (the assigned servants) are the only ones that I knew intimately. I can recollect on first going over the Blue Mountains the men working in irons on the road, and my impression was that they were making the road, but that was wrong, the road was made before I was born, and the chain-gangs that I saw were only those keeping it in order. The road from Sydney to Bathurst stands to-day a monument of labour that was done in the shortest time in which any work of the kind had ever been accomplished. To induce the convicts who cut that road to get on with it as quickly as possible, they were offered their freedom, or their "ticket," as they called it, if the work was put through in a given time. It was accomplished considerably under the time stipulated, and when we consider the primitive character of the implements and tools that they had—the fact that there was no steam, no horse-power to move their "muck," everything having to be done with a wheel-barrow, no anything but hard work—then I think that road stands as something to the convicts' credit. No strikes, no eight-hour, and had such been the case in my young days, Australia would not be as far ahead as it is to-day. Australia, as it stands at present (and this is true probably of any other country), was never created by union labour, strikes, and no work.

CHAPTER II.

THE LAND LAWS.

I HAVE said that the greatest drawback to the man on the land was the varied legislation under which he had to exist, and I have told you that the land taken up by my father was at a very small rental. It had to be actually occupied and arranged to suit the different holders and form a run, which they then held under what was termed the "Orders in Council," which I think involved a lease of twenty-one years at some ten pounds a block of five miles; I know my father's rent was about twenty pounds. With the exception of fixing the boundaries there was no legislation required, and no alterations could be made until the leases were up.

When the lease was up there was a right given to every holder to buy as much of his holding as he liked at the price of one pound per acre freehold, but this land had to be valued by a government official. One pound was the minimum, but if the official thought the land was worth more, he could, of course, increase the price.

But to go back to my story. One of these gentlemen (though no doubt they were all alike) had a certain amount of country to value for the different holders. He appeared at one station, and was driven out in a good buggy and ponies. He took a violent

fancy to these ponies and the buggy; said it was just the thing he wanted to carry him round to the various holdings; got into the buggy, still very much enamoured of the ponies, and said: "Now, what will you take for those ponies?" The manager said they were not for sale, as the owner thought a great deal of them. The valuator pulled down his shirt-cuff, took out a pencil, and remarked: "You are applying for twenty thousand acres here; twenty thousand acres at one pound?" "Yes." "Ah, you must give me those ponies; you must let me have those ponies!" Again, "No." Out came the pencil again—"Twenty thousand acres at twenty-two shillings and sixpence." They proceeded some distance further, and the ponies again attracted his attention, but no price could be put on them. Out came the pencil again: "Twenty thousand acres at twenty-five shillings." The same procedure till it came to twenty-seven shillings and sixpence, when the manager handed him the reins—"Take the bally buggy and horses!" Though this may have been practised by others, I have never heard of any case in which the land was valued at more than one pound.

The balance of the holdings was on a lease for five years, with an appraisement of each block of five miles, on which the rent was based. This appraising was done by a "commissioner" in the same way as the first settlement of occupation was carried out. Rentals were small, but a small increase was always stipulated for by the government who sent the commissioner. The valuations of capabilities were not the valuations of the commissioner, nor have any others since, whether valued by land board

or anything else, been the value of the man who appraised them. It might as well have been done in Sydney, and saved the country the expense of going through a matter of form as far as regards the appraisal of the country, and it would have saved the owners of the land a good many horses and buggies and some loss of principle.

I have had, of course, to attend at a good many of these appraisal courts, and will say in a few words just what appears to me to be the facts. I give my name and holding, and after a few preliminary questions, I am asked by the chairman, or commissioner, as the case may be—"What stock do you carry?" I tell him the number that is on at present; he then asks the stock-inspector to give the numbers that I have returned for the last two or three years, which, of course, are correct. "Well, Mr. Barton, you seem to have got a very good piece of country and (with a few preliminary remarks) we have come to the conclusion that your country is very valuable, and that we shall raise the rent one penny an acre" (or twopence, as the case may be). Of course, this is just a very condensed account, because the evidence of the gentleman who inspected the land and my evidence would have lasted probably half a day, but the result is invariably the same. Of course, the increased number of stock from year to year was occasioned by water improvements principally, making the country that was unavailable for stock carry something, but no account, of course, is taken as to the cost of putting on these improvements; it is simply "you have got good country, and you are carrying a lot of sheep, therefore, your rent must be

raised." Your neighbours, perhaps, have made no improvements; carry a few sheep for a few months in the year, and then travel them on the road. This was a very popular way of sheep-farming before Dangar's Act for travelling stock came into force, as before this act people could live entirely on the roads, travel as far as they liked, stop as long as they liked, and when they got on to a district where there was good grass, they travelled up and down that district, lambled their sheep, and shored them while travelling; but Dangar's Act (which is in force to-day), of course, stopped that. This act sets out that the distance to be travelled daily is six miles, and there is no turning back, and every lot of sheep must have a destination—to be reached by the shortest main road—but this act did not come into force till some time in the seventies.

Sometimes, too, your neighbours took their sheep to some place on agistment at a very cheap rent in those days, and when their turn came to be appraised the register would probably not show any sheep returned as running on this country on the thirty-first December, so the owner got off very lightly—"Your country cannot be much good, Mr. So-and-so, so we will leave it stand at the present rental."

Now, the whole of this formula could be done away with, and the increase of rental put on according to the amount of stock that is returned by the different owners, which would, of course, amount to a tax on your improvements; but it comes to the same thing in both instances—the amount of your improvements means the raising of your rent in proportion. I have told the court, wherever I have been before

it, that it is absurd to question me, because they do not believe what I say, and that "the Government have instructed you to raise the rent, and you are going to do it no matter what I say to the contrary," and that "I am quite satisfied that you have got my country appraised before you ask me a question about it."

This will show, as I said in my preface, that the Government as a landlord has been a mistake, and quite reverses the principle by which private landlords lease their different farms. The man who is going to leave a valuable farm when his lease is up is encouraged by private landlords; the man who does very little and puts in no improvements that will make his land any more valuable when his lease is up is the one that they like to get rid of, but the Government gives him a bonus to stop on. While on this question, I should like to tell you a short story of a gentleman who made an application before one of the highest land authorities of the time to get some favour granted on his particular holding. The man in authority said: "Well, Mr. So-and-so, you will have to give some very good reasons before I can consider this matter." The grazier put a sovereign on the table, and said: "That is one good reason, and I have got a thousand just as good reasons." The reply was: "And very good reasons, too."

I suppose I ought to say something about the 1861 Act—"Free Selection before Survey"—but that has been so much talked about and explained that it would be absurd for me to try and point out anything new, and I will simply add "The Alphabet of the Land Act," written by my mother:—

“A was the Act, anti-cursor of strife,
B was the Bill that brought it to life.
C was the Court overcrowded with law,
D was the Dummy, the creature of straw.
E was the Enmity sown among neighbours,
F was the Folly that baffled their labours;
G was the Grazier whose cattle were poor,
H was the Homestead he sought to secure.
I the Improvements to please the Inspector,
J was John Jenkins, a bold Free-selector.
K was the Knot that in Red Tape was tied,
L was Legality lurking inside.
M was a Mortgage for money effected,
N was Non-residence, clearly detected.
O is the Oath that was sacred of yore,
P is the Perjury, shameful no more.
Q is the Question that never was solved,
R is the Ruin that question involved.
S was the Station selected upon,
T was the Thursday when Tenure was gone.
U was the Upland where nothing would grow,
V was the Valley where streams overflow.
W was the Wife, who with worry went mad,
X was Xantippe, whose temper she had;
Y was the Yell that in frenzy she gave,
Z is the Zamia that shadows her grave.”

I know nothing personally about the workings of this act, as I never had a “dummy,” or made any attempt to secure land, though I was once summoned to appear before the land board to give evidence that I had never had a “dummy.” I replied that I would not appear unless I got my expenses, and that I thought that could not be British law. However, I was compelled to go, and had my expenses paid, and was duly sworn and asked if I had ever had a “dummy.” I said “No,” but I feel certain the Board could not imagine any man in the district on the land that had not a “dummy,” and certainly did not believe my oath. Of course, as things have turned out since the drought broke up in 1903, and the prices of land and stock have been going up ever since, I should

have done very well if I had laid out to secure a quantity of land, but, then, the drought that broke up in 1902 ruined me without my having spent a lot of money in securing land, and had I done so I would probably never have recovered the amount of my indebtedness, as it would have been so large that the property would have been sold for a song, and the buyer would have reaped all the unearned increment since.

I have attended several of the courts before which selectors had continually to appear to prove residence and improvements and goodness-knows-what. A selector, bona-fide or otherwise, had always to attend some court or other and make a declaration of some sort. Of course, I knew those who were "dummies," and those who took up land to re-sell at the first opportunity, and were quite prepared to sell before their term of residence (three years at first, afterwards five) was up; but, of course, they could give you no security on the land, and when the residence was up they would never transfer according to the agreement made when you purchased it; you always had to pay a pretty big bonus, or else the adventurer would keep the money you had paid and the land as well. These adventurers generally went to a main water-hole, as near the centre of the run as possible, the taking-up of which would reduce the carrying capacity of the run by more than half probably, so that if you had to pay a big bonus when he could transfer his holding it probably paid. Still, that established a business in that trade, and when you had paid him for one piece of your run, he would simply take up another piece, or lay some friends on

to do it, so that the grazier who bought out these adventurers was looked upon as a soft snap.

Then there were the "dummies" that were station-hands, and took up and resided on their holdings, but they were your masters, and you could not find fault with their work or discharge them; they simply did just what they liked, and in nine cases out of ten would not transfer unless they got a fairly large bonus. There were two rather amusing cases I heard in court; one was the evidence given by a "dummy" for a station. I will not try and repeat it, because I should only spoil it, but I saw the grazier afterwards, and I said to him—"My word, that's a good man you've got!" "Yes," he said; "he's a marvel, a wonderful liar, and the best of him is he can invent as he goes along; and the Inspector, when he thinks he's got him, finds that he's got a splendid reason for not being there when he passed." At the conclusion of this case, the chairman passed the "dummy" in the door of the court house as he was leaving, while I was talking to this man, and he said: "Let me shake hands with you, Mr. So-and-so, I have always been under the impression, till to-day, that you were a "dummy," but after your evidence to-day I am quite satisfied that I have misjudged you, and I believe you are an honest man."

There was another case I heard which amused me very much; this was a selector's "dummy" who had taken up a selection for his uncle, who was also a selector. He was asked where he got the money to pay the deposit on this land, and said: "I worked for it; it's my own money." "Have you got a bank account?" "No; never had one." "Well, where do

you keep your money?" "In my hut." "Aren't you afraid of being robbed?" "No; I keep it in a tin box which is buried in the ashes behind the fire." Of course, he got through.

I could also tell a good many stories of really bona fide men whose changing circumstances have necessitated their leaving their selections for a time, and when asked why they left it they explained that it was business of importance; that they had to go, and did not tell anything but the truth, and the probabilities were that their land was forfeited. Jack Robertson, who was the father of this act, said, I believe: "If you can't make a declaration, you have no business to take up land."

"O was the Oath that was sacred of yore,
P was the Perjury, shameful no more."

So much for free selection.

Appraisement by a commissioner did not suit the next land administration, and these appraisements had to be held in open court. The commissioner had to hold a court at the nearest township, or pub; he was to appraise each block of land, and the owner or lessee had to appoint an appraiser to meet him, and if they could not decide upon the value, an umpire was to be appointed to decide between them as to the value. This looked very fair and just on paper, but it did not work out exactly as we graziers expected. The commissioner engaged his own umpire, or rather (so public opinion thought) the umpire tendered for the job; he was to get five pounds a block for umpiring, and he offered the commissioner so much for the job. Of that, of course, I have no proof; nevertheless, the commissioner and the umpire used to tour the different districts and

appraise the land; they generally went together, and the commissioner would look at the land, and, as to the umpire, it did not matter; he would not know much about it if he had seen it. The result had to be decided in open court, but it was frequently decided before that, though it went to court. You knew what your rent was going to be on the payment of five pounds a block of five miles to the umpire and the commissioner, because your appraiser would not get anything. The arrangement we made was that we appraised for each other, and, of course, no five pounds changed hands in any case, and very often one grazier would act for a great many, all of which he did for nothing; so when this matter came to open court, you would simply, having known pretty well what you were going to pay, and the commissioner having put on one rate and your appraiser another, and the umpire having split the difference, deposit your ten pounds on the table—five pounds for the appraiser and five pounds for the umpire. Of course, as the grazier's appraiser never took his five pounds, it was left on the table for the "good of the Government."

On one occasion when the commissioner came round he had to appraise, among a great many others, a block belonging to one of my neighbours. I saw my neighbour after the land had been inspected (he was living by himself in a miserable hut at the time, and was rather a character; had been a tradesman, but married a widow, whose block it was), and I asked him: "How did you get on with the commissioner; he was round your way, wasn't he?" "Oh, splendidly," he said. "He came here in the after-

noon, and we spent the evening together yarning and talking; quite jolly-like, you know; but he never gave me a chance to slip the 'tenner' into his hand that I had for him, so in the morning I got up early and had my breakfast, and I cooked a beef-steak for the old cock, and put it on the plate by the fire, and I put another plate over it, and on that plate the 'tenner,' and another plate on top of that. Then I went out to get his horses in the buggy, and when he came out, rubbing his hands, you know, quite jolly-like, I said to him: 'And how did you enjoy your breakfast, your Honour?' 'Very well, indeed, sir,' said the old chap; 'the steak was very good, but the sauce was excellent.' Then I knew that he had struck it."

On one occasion a number of the graziers decided that they would object to the imported umpire and get one of our own to do the umpiring. Of course, that state of things would have considerably upset the financial arrangements of the business, and when the local umpire was nominated, the commissioner, in whose hands we found out was the nominating of the umpire, the graziers having nothing to do with it, took out the act from his pocket and read the portion relating to the appointment of an umpire. I can only recall a few words of it—"that no man that was directly or indirectly interested in land can be an umpire," and the finishing clause said—"and he must be a man of intelligence," and our commissioner said: "I don't consider this a man of intelligence." That ended the endeavour to alter the umpire, and the imported man went on with his job.

After that the commissioners were done away with, and the next legislation decided that the land

was to be appraised for its rent by men appointed by the Government. Well, I cannot class all these men as some of Ali Baba's Forty, because I have met and had business to do with one or two men whose actions were certainly *sans reproche et sans doute*. I have been approached by some of the Forty, but I have never given one sixpence in the way of bribery, though in conversations with men who had applied for the billet of appraiser they certainly made no secret to me of the fact that "they would have got the billet, too, only they were fifty pounds below the man that tendered." In other cases they made no secret of getting their "squivalens" out of the grazier to make anything out of their job after they had paid the tender. This was all right enough had it remained even at that, but the Ministers for Lands seem to have thought that a monopoly of this business would be quite justifiable, and there is a story told of an old-time grazier who took his yearly trip to Sydney, and arranged with the then Minister about his lands and their worth. He was once noticed not to be enjoying his trip at all, and, on being questioned, said that "he could not understand it at all," mentioning the Minister's name. "I can't find the Minister's partner; I have always been able to find a Minister's partner to get my business done," so we must presume that there was one Minister who had not a partner.

The old appraisement of rents on runs had given place at this time to the formation of a land board, which consisted of a chairman appointed by the Government for each district, and two local men to sit with the chairman and to hold inquiries in all cases that were brought before them, and an inspector

was also appointed to sneak about, see that the people were living in the huts that they were supposed to live in, and to see that the necessary improvements were put up ("I the Improvements to please the Inspector"). The land boards, which travelled round to the various townships in their districts, used generally to have a courtful of men on the land under various rights, either to make declarations or stand their trial for neglect of some of the provisions. I have already told you one or two stories of the court. Looking at it on paper, this seems to be as fair a tribunal as could have been adopted, but from my experience, which was only of one board, it was no improvement on the old régime of the commissioner appointed by the Crown and the appraiser appointed and paid for by the lessee, and the umpire given in. The appointments of the two citizens to assist the chairman of the land board were, as far as I know from the experience I had of them, all men who had not been a success on the land, or at anything else, and their positions on the board were a great assistance to their income, as they were paid something for each sitting, and so I told the chairman on one occasion when I accused him of treating me unfairly, and he said: "I always consult my colleagues, Mr. Barton." I said to him: "I could cut you two better colleagues out of a ballah log with a blunt axe."

I had forgotten to tell you when describing the Free Selection Act that any improvements over the value of forty pounds could not be selected, but I do not know of any case where the improvements barred selection on the land adjoining them. How-

ever, I will give you an account of a selection on Burren when I first went there. It had already been taken up, and on it was a tank full of water and a good deal of fencing, which it was decided should be paid for by the selector. The surveyor who had surveyed the blocks for the selector—there were three blocks I think—valued the tank at one hundred and fifty pounds, and the fencing at thirty pounds a mile, which, of course, I was prepared to accept. However, I could not get the board to decide on any value; they said that they would not take the surveyor's official report; that he would have to give evidence before them, to which he objected unless he was paid his expenses for attending the board, which, as a professional man, would have been a guinea a day, or something like that, and the board refused to pay him for his evidence, so I was dragged in every month about this valuation, and did not get any satisfaction for over a year. I was very tired of the matter, but after the ninth or tenth time I had been in, the selector and Mr. Ross (one of the chairman's assistants, and a member of the board) came to me, and Mr. Ross said: "I have been talking to the selector about those improvements, and if you will agree to my acting as a valuator I will go out and value the tank and other improvements." I said: "All right; I'll agree to you as a valuator."

The improvements were valued at a ridiculous price—the tank at thirty pounds, the fencing (six wire with three cable wires) at seven pounds a mile. I received this valuation by letter, and an account for my share of his expenses for valuation—seven pounds ten shillings—together with a note to say that as the

understand

Government allowed time-payments for improvements, I should allow payments to extend over some two or three years. I replied to the letter, enclosing a cheque for his expenses, and telling him that as I had agreed to him as a valuator, I made no comment, but I distinctly objected to time payments for these improvements. I got no reply to that letter, but at the next sitting of the land board these valuations were dealt with, and the selector was granted two or three years to pay them in, which made his obligation somewhere about eight pounds or ten pounds a year. No notice whatever had been taken of my objection to this time-payment, and, of course, I had to submit.

When the first payment became due it was not met, and I applied to the board for the money; they pretended to be very much surprised that I was not paid, but assured me that they would see that I was paid. Then they asked me to value a tank which was near Burren, but I told them I did not know anything about the value of tanks. "Oh," they said, "it does not affect anybody; we just want to know what is about the value of it." I said: "Well, your worship, if it was legally selected and paid for by the decision of the land board it is not worth a damn." I had possession of that court for a while, anyhow; the chairman looked at the chandelier, and the assistants began to write. When I inquired if they had any more questions to ask me, they said: "No; you may leave the court."

I think that the selector and I came to terms afterwards by my giving him discount for cash. That selection changed hands several times, and some ten or twelve years after the episode I have just related,

I was in the court over the valuations, and I reminded Mr. Ross about his seven pounds a mile fence, which was then being valued at twenty pounds, and according to his and the chairman's ideas of the life of a fence it ought to have disappeared. However, the valuations of improvements have always been, and always will be, a very difficult problem to solve, because without the improvement, especially water, you cannot occupy the land; the selector could not live on it. No matter how valuable the land may be, it will not return one cent unless you improve it—put some capital into it either in the way of water or fencing or stock or cultivation; if you do nothing to it you get nothing from it.

About that time another land act came into force. The country, I remember, was divided into three divisions; the western division men got long leases, secure tenure and low rents. These conditions saved that part of the country, and it was one of the most statesmanlike acts that has ever been passed in New South Wales, and made available and profitable large tracts of country, most of which had been occupied and abandoned as profitless. Then there was the central division and the eastern division. The central division was on a lease for some ten or twelve years, I think, at an appraised rental, and at the end of the lease it reverted to the Crown, and was to be cut up into large leasehold areas of two thousand or three thousand acres for selection by ballot, improvements to be paid for by the incoming tenant, and there was a sort of promise that the owner of the run could

acquire one of these leases to enable him to hold his surplus stock until he could dispose of them.

This seemed to me a very fair proposition, and in 1886 I purchased Burren, on the edge of the central division, about fifty miles from the boundary of the western division, and close to the boundary of the eastern division. Of course, this boundary was only approximate, and they deviated it considerably to get Burren all into the central division, because I had rather a large area of leasehold country to split up.

In 1897 our leases terminated, and I had, unfortunately, bought a rather large number of sheep to try and make something before my land was taken away, on which, of course, I lost money, as this year was the start of the big drought, which broke up fairly generally in New South Wales in 1902. Though I had bought no sheep since 1897, and had spent thousands of pounds in feeding my sheep, I found myself, when the drought broke up in 1902, with five thousand sheep, which I was shepherding myself in a paddock at Guyra, New England. Everything had been moved off Burren (the station I then owned) but one horse; there was plenty of water in the troughs at the wells, and the fences were all open, but there was not feed enough on the whole run to keep one horse alive. I had to start life again with a debt of three pounds a head on my five thousand sheep—fifteen thousand pounds—and no tenure to my holding except a promise that one-third of the different leaseholds would be retained by the holder. You see, I was in the central division. Of course, this promise was not carried out with any holding, and all of those who got their leases had to

pay one shilling an acre deposit. This was not in any act, but we all knew that by going to a certain agent, or agents, we would get our leasehold by paying one shilling an acre, and we all knew that this shilling an acre was not going into the treasury.

I have said that in 1897 our leaseholds expired, but they allowed us to carry on and pay rent up to 1903 or 1904, because it would have been useless for them to have taken the lands from us during those years of drought; nobody would have taken them up, and, as I had not bought my lease, they took every acre of my leasehold except about six hundred acres (a remnant in a corner), which they offered me as a lease. I told them they could give it the Submerged Tenth; it was no good to me.

Luckily, I met a friend who guaranteed my account with the company, and I plunged in for a fairly large number of sheep, out of which I did remarkably well, and was able to clear my indebtedness before the leasehold was taken from me. I may add here that the law was "payment for all improvements." My improvements on the leasehold were valued at a very low rate by the surveyor who surveyed the country into blocks. I think the total value of my improvements was made out at about five thousand pounds, wells and fencing principally—boring was not known then.

These blocks were, of course, selected as soon as opened, and I never received a shilling for the improvements. The land boards held that as my well would water ten thousand or fifteen thousand sheep, which was far more than the selector could run on his holding, the well was no good to him, and that as

it was situated in an inconvenient part of his holding, and he could put up a well that would suit him in a more convenient place, my well was actually no use to him, and generally valued it at some twenty pounds or thirty pounds to the new tenant, with four, five or six years for payment. I handed the different valuations to my lawyer, and he told me that they were not worth collecting.

I then took a vow that I would never own station property in New South Wales again (and that vow I shall stick to), and went to Queensland, where the drought did not break up till 1905, or very early in 1906.

I think that these stories of the land laws will quite bear out what I said in my preface—that the greatest obstacle the pioneer grazier has to surmount is the land law—and will also explain the impossibility of the Crown being the landlord with any justice to the men who have taken up and improved the country. Their object appears to me to be to hunt the man off the land who wants to stop on it and make a home, while they try to get men on to the land who would rather do something else, and who have to be given inducements to go on to the land, which inducements are extracted from the man already there.

To go back to the station, I have told you that among the many other drawbacks and hard conditions of the pioneers' lives, was the one of implements and machinery, but I forgot to tell you when on the subject of issuing the rations of whole wheat, and the steel mills for grinding it, that my father, when I can first remember, was certainly the largest grower of grain in the district, though, of course, in a very

short time, there were numbers of farmers growing grain, and steam mills were established. As well as I can recollect, the first mill was put up eight or ten miles out of Orange at a place called Frederick's Valley, though it is probably not known by that name to-day any more than the town of Orange would be known by the name it first had—"Blackman's Swamp;" and it was one of the most dreaded bogs that the bullock-teams had to get through on their trips to and from Sydney. This mill at Frederick's Valley was put up by Captain Raine, and the motive power, I think, was wind at first, but I believe it was later turned to steam. Of course, this mill very soon had opposition. A steam mill for grinding wheat was erected about six miles out of Orange by Mr. Templer, and about the same time another mill was built about twenty miles out of Orange—at Caloola—by Mr. Kater. (Both Mr. Templer and Mr. Kater were my uncles, and brought considerable money into the country, and, like all, or nearly all, the early pioneers who came out with money, lost it, and had to start afresh.) I shall devote a chapter to my recollections of all the pioneers in the Orange and Wellington districts, and I think that for grit and perseverance their records are an example to the rising generations.

In writing this at the present advanced stage of implements and machinery of all sorts, people reading it cannot see the conditions that were encountered. All the farm machinery, ploughs, harrows, and other material, carts, drays, everything was made on the station out of trees that grew on the place, and iron, of course, came from Sydney, or rather, England. I well remember the old swing-plough

(drawn by bullocks), with one of which I learned to plough, and, having held the up-to-date ploughs now used, I have come to the conclusion that a man who can plough with a swing-plough can plough with anything now made better than most people can. It was hard work, both for bullocks and ploughman.

The wheat, when it got ripe, was cut by men with sickles, or reaping-hooks, and when drawn in and stacked, it was a year's work to get it threshed by a flail, winnowed or sifted through a sieve in the windy weather (so as to blow the husks on one side), and this sieving sometimes had to be done several times, and there was some laborious process, which I do not recollect exactly, in getting the smut and wild oats out of the wheat. I think the price for which it was sold, when these mills which I have mentioned came into operation, was from nine shillings to twelve shillings a bushel, and, though labour was cheap, it had to be carried, of course, from Boree to the nearest mill—twenty-five miles. Calculating the expense and time it took to get this wheat converted into flour, it hardly paid to grow it at nine shillings a bushel. The time was the principal drawback, and the quantity of labour, which, though really cheap, was dear when you calculated the amount of time that it took, say twenty men, to cut a field of, say, a hundred acres of wheat. To-day, one man with a machine could cut more in an hour than twenty men could then do in a day, and even in those days time was money.

Do not forget that in those days there were no shops or machinery depots where one could run and get anything in a few hours by train to carry on the work, and if we consider it seriously we must see

the great difficulties surrounding the early pioneers, and the amount of pluck they had to have to carry on their business. The benefit of their experience and capital is being reaped by the people of to-day, who, unthinkingly, and without taking into account the difficult conditions, stigmatise the old pioneers as "old fossils" without even ordinary intelligence because they did not secure hundreds or thousands of acres of the best land in Australia when they could have "got it for a song;" but it must be remembered that the "old fossils" had not got the "song." It must be remembered that when these same pioneers started on their holdings they had to find out what they were suitable for, some parts of the country being suitable for the merino sheep, and other parts—the colder and wetter parts—for the English sheep; and, considering that hardly any of them had had anything to do with sheep, or cattle or horses in their lives before, they managed to flounder along and do wonderfully well, considering that they had nobody else's experience to work on.

CHAPTER III.

REGARDING SOME OF THE OLD PIONEERS.

NOW for a few remarks about some of the old pioneers whom I remember intimately. At the head of the list I will put old Parson Thom, who (I believe) was the first man that crossed the Blue Mountains with his own bullock-dray, and brought a large family with him. His first settlement was twenty miles from Bathurst, but he soon proceeded further, and went about thirty miles the other side of Bathurst, and took up his holding, which he called "Springfield" in those days.

Parson Thom was of the Wesleyan creed, and spent a great portion of his time in spreading the gospel, which he did most sincerely and devoutly; but one of the greatest things he did for the country was to rear fourteen children. The boys were among the next generation of pioneers, and were the first, I think, to take up a great deal of the Lachlan River country. The popular idea when they first went out was that the open plain country was worthless for grazing, as it was believed that the land was no good. I think I am right in saying that what sent them out to the Lachlan was the terrible drought, which any of the few old pioneers now living will tell you was the worst ever known in Australia, and that none of the other droughts we have since had has been any-

thing like it for severity. The Thoms had to move their cattle for want of grass and water from their place at Springfield (which has never to my knowledge been short of either grass or water since for any length of time). They moved their cattle and took them on to the Lachlan River, agisting them, as I understand it, at the big water-holes then in the Lachlan until the grass got short, when they moved their cattle further on to another water-hole, and kept them there till the grass wore out.

By this process of taking up country, which was the possession of the first occupier, as I have previously described, the Thoms became the owners of a big scope of the very finest grazing country, a good deal of which is probably to-day under wheat. With one or two exceptions, all the young Thoms were pioneers, both in New South Wales and Queensland, but none of them ever succeeded in becoming wealthy. They were also the first, or among the first, to find gold—I think, perhaps, the annals of New South Wales would say they were the first, though not the first to advertise it.

I may add a few words about poor old Parson Thom. He, with the best possible intentions, drove me out of the church, as you must know that my mother was very anxious to have a son in the church, and picked upon me to fill the gap. She was very careful about our religious teachings, so much so that years afterwards I took the divinity prize at The King's School—the only prize I ever took, and, unfortunately, I never got that one, as it was lost in the *Dunbar* when she was wrecked at The Gap in the South Head. My recollections of that examination

are these—A boy who was sitting next to me during the examination was not doing much (I must mention that one of the questions to be answered was to write the life and doings of the Prophet Elijah), and when the papers were finished he showed me his account of the Prophet, which was short and sweet, he having written right across his sheet of foolscap in large letters—“Elijah was a Tishbite.”

But to return to old Mr. Thom and his having driven me out of the church. On one occasion, after giving us a discourse, when I was saying good-night to him before a number of other boys, he put his hand on my head, and said: “When are you going to seek after the Lord and His righteousness?” I felt as though I wished the ground to let me through out of sight, but stammered out: “I don’t know.” He said: “Now is the appointed time.” I was a nervous boy, and I took good care to keep away from anyone who might ask me such scriptural conundrums in the future.

On another occasion the poor old gentleman came round about the time wax matches first came into fashion, and a large case of these matches had been sent up for the use of the men. Now, none of these matches would strike singly; they would make a puff of smoke and go out, and the only chance of getting a light was by striking about a dozen at a time, when you might get enough latent fire out of them to make a blaze. The poor old man went to his bedroom with a box of these matches to light his candle, and one of his grandsons and I stood outside the door and heard him strike every one of those matches, and

finally go to bed in the dark, yet he never said "damn," so I am sure he practised what he preached.

I have said that wax matches had just come into fashion, and in the earliest days of my recollection, the only means we had of making a fire was the old flint and steel and tinder-box; and the test that I gave a new knife (when I got one) was whether it would strike fire or not; if it did not strike fire it was no good to me. After this there came a wooden sulphur match that burnt blue until it nearly choked you with smoke before you got a blaze, and then, of course, came the wax matches, a great many of which (in those days) were like the box with which Parson Thom tried to light his candle; and these boxes cost half-a-crown a piece on their first appearance.

Now I will single out another of the old pioneers who certainly did a very great deal for the country—Mr. Kater—a neighbour of ours, who afterwards had the mill at Caloola, and who brought out probably, if not certainly, the best blood horses that ever came to Australia. The pedigrees to-day go back to *Cap-à-pie*, a horse Mr. Kater imported, which was the sire of Sir Hercules, and when I say that I think I need go no further. Many of his mares, too, were quite equal to their mate, but pedigrees are not taken from the mare's side (as they are in Arabia); and the good qualities of any of their famous descendants are probably awarded to their sires.

Mr. Kater was, at the time he came out, a very wealthy man; he brought out about thirty thousand pounds worth of horses, cattle, and some sheep. The last-mentioned I know nothing of, and he very soon disposed of the cattle. He also brought out the

machinery for a wool factory for making cloth, and worked it for a short time, but he found that it was a dead loss, and brought him virtually insolvent; and he had to sell all his horse stock, and put steam machinery for grinding wheat into his factory, and so, by many years of hard graft and economy, succeeded in making a good provision for his old age.

Before concluding these remarks on the old pioneers, I should like to relate a story in which Mr. Arthur Templer did a feat in taking two bushrangers, but I shall have to lead up to it by informing you that at that time there were no banks in the country, and people owning stations a long way out had to take up their money to pay their labour and expenses in cash. The very fact of this was one reason why bushranging was a profitable employment. After the banks got out, and cheques were used, we were too poor to be worth robbing. Mr. Templer at that time owned Nanama Station, close to what is now the town of Wellington, and in taking a trip up from Sydney he had a large parcel of money wrapped in a water-proof cover, which he strapped on to his carpet-bag. He got safely to within about ten miles beyond Bathurst from Sydney; the coach was slowly dragging up a steep hill when two men, carrying flint-lock guns, stepped into the road and bailed them up. The coach stopped, of course; Mr. Templer was on the box-seat; one man stood a short distance from the coach covering it with his gun; the other one put his gun down and started to search the passengers for any money they might have about them; and, as there was always a danger of being robbed in those

days, you had to secrete your cash in your clothes where you considered it least likely to be found. Of course, the robbers were up to this trick, and each passenger had to undress, or nearly so. While the bushranger was examining the passengers on the coach, Mr. Templer sat on the box-seat, and when his turn came the man came round and said: "Now you get off and let me have a look at you." Mr. Templer was a fine athlete, of splendid physique, and, on the impulse of the moment, he jumped off the box-seat on to the robber, and caught him by the shoulders, and kept the robber's back to the man with the gun, at the same time calling out to the other passengers to come to his assistance; but their trousers not being quite on, impeded their progress, and the bushranger with the gun, seeing that he would have to do something, attempted to fire, but, fortunately—it was a wet morning—missed fire. He then threw the gun down and made off. Mr. Templer then threw the other man on his back, called out to the other passengers to secure him, and followed the man who ran away, whom he succeeded in catching and dragging back to the coach. They secured both men with straps and ropes, and amused themselves by kicking them into the first police station, which was at that time near Guyong. The thanks that Mr. Templer got for this action was a paragraph in the *Sydney Gazette*, and if anyone would like to authenticate this story, no doubt the *Sydney Gazette* with the paragraph in it can be found.

On looking back to the hardships of the pioneers and to what I know of what happened before I was born or old enough to observe for myself, I think that

the pluck and grit of the pioneers of New South Wales was grand, as they went through as much hardship as any other pioneers in the world, though, unfortunately, they did not make history, and their works have died with them. I am not writing a history of New South Wales, or I should have endless names to mention, for all the men who came out previous to the gold discovery would be worthy of a place in the book. However, I have heard of the name of Ben Boyd, which I dare say is in some of the histories of early Australia, though his name is completely forgotten. I know nothing of him personally, except from what I gathered from my father and others. I once saw a mare of his, and it was branded BOYD on the ribs, and that made me enquire who Boyd was, and I learned that he was a man who either represented a large company or came out here with a great deal of money, for we hear of his having started a bank (one of the first), having a large whaling fleet at Twofold Bay, and being a large holder of country in New South Wales (I do not know where). But just before the gold discovery the banks or company behind him got alarmed at the magnitude of the investments, and wound up the whole concern. Had they continued for a year or two longer I believe they would have been the wealthiest corporation in Australia, and I suppose that there is some record of their dealings to be had, which I should like very much to see. Ben Boyd himself was lost; he went away in his schooner to visit some of the Islands, and was never heard of again; but I do not know whether this happened before or after his estates were wound up.

CHAPTER IV.

ADOLESCENCE.

TO return to the subject, as I seem to have got to an era in which I was an old man by the last chapter, although, in my reminiscences, I am a very small boy.

I have not very much to chronicle about my school days, which I commenced at the age of twelve years at The King's School, Parramatta, and which were, I suppose, not more interesting than any other boy's school days. I had my fights and my fun, and my punishments.

I may say that the master I went to was the Rev. Frederick Armitage, and though no record of him has been made in the annals of The King's School, I firmly believe he was one of the best masters, and a man ideally loved by me as a boy, who would not think of telling him a lie or giving him pain or trouble if I could help it, though with all the other masters I was always prepared to give as good as I got, and I think that was the general condition of school-boys in the fifties. The schoolmaster wanted to make as much out of you as he could for his pocket, and the school-boy wanted to give him as much trouble as he could in making it; but there has been a change since my early school days, and I think that Fred. Armitage was the man to whom this is greatly due.

He put boys on their honour, and believed them till he found out that they were liars; then he would punish severely, though he was not a man who believed in punishment, but, rather, tried to induce boys to behave properly by kind homilies.

In going to and from school I rode alone—a boy of twelve to sixteen—across those mountains four times a year; when I first went to school at Parramatta the railway had only about reached that town. On one trip across the mountains (I think my second from home), I, boylike, selected a very young thoroughbred horse to carry me down, but he was entirely unfitted for the journey, and knocked up completely before I reached Bathurst. However, I toiled along, driving him in front of me, and carrying my carpet bag, which contained all my belongings. I can remember that journey very distinctly. On reaching the hotel at Pulpit Hill (somewhere about five miles from Blackheath), at which my father used to stay on his periodical visits to Sydney, I was running rather short of cash, and feeling desperately ill with a very sore throat, so I went to this hotel and asked Mrs. Head, who kept it, if she would give me some dinner and my horse a feed, and I told her that my money was short, and the horse knocked up, and that I would like to borrow a little from her to carry me on, which she readily gave me. While I was trying to eat my dinner she asked me if I was well; I told her “No; I had a very, very sore throat,” and she said: “I will put a flannel round it for you,” for which I thanked her. In doing this she took off my jacket, and I shall never forget her exclamation: “Heavens above, the child’s a mass of

measles!" She asked me to stay for a time, but I felt that I should proceed, and went on, caught up with a mob of travelling cattle coming in to Sydney for sale, put my horse among the cattle, and walked behind them for two days. When I arrived in Penrith I left the cattle, which were, I think, resting there for a day or two, and came on to school, but, as I was to leave my horse with some friends near Baulkham Hills, on the Windsor Road, my good friends there kept me for some time until I was in an uninfectious state and able to go on to school.

I think I may end the school days of my life here, and start on what happened after I left school, though really, as I told you previously, my father being a cripple from my very earliest recollection, I was always engaged in carrying out his instructions on the place, and my holidays, especially at Christmas time, were always spent in looking for lost sheep. There were no fences, of course, in those days, not even a paddock; and the shepherds invariably enjoyed their Christmas, like any other Christians, with a keg of rum (which was the customary drink in those days), and, of course, their sheep were let go where they liked, and my Christmas Day was spent, like a heathen, trying to find these sheep—but such is life. Still, I do not wish you to think that I had no fun at all in my school days, for we had some neighbours whom we saw weekly, at any rate, because there was a church in Molong, and we all used to go in to church on Sunday, and meet our friends that day, at any rate, and, of course, the young people planned meetings during the week at one place or another,

and we got as much fun, I suppose, as all young people do, no matter where or how they live.

On one occasion I went (surreptitiously I think) to the Molong races, which took place about once a year. The A.J.C. rules, of course, were not in force in those days, and the races were very much "go-as-you-please," and would astonish the race-going community of to-day. I had taken over a horse that could gallop, and I intended to enter him—all post entrances—for the Selling Race, which was a prize of ten pounds, and the horse to be sold for ten pounds; if he brought anything over it went to the club. However, when the time for entering the horse for this race came I found that the crack horse of the meeting, called Harkaway, which had just won the big money, was entered for this Selling Race. Being very unsophisticated in racing dodges I thought it was hopeless for me to enter my horse against this Harkaway, and the race started with two only—Harkaway and another. They galloped slowly along for part of the road, and old Harkaway came round into the straight with his mouth open, leaving the other all behind. Harkaway's owner, when he saw his horse winning by miles, ran into the middle of the course in the straight, pulled a sapling out of the fork-and-rail fence that enclosed the straight, and swinging that above his head while standing in the middle of the running, called out to the jockey—"Pull him off the gory course, or I'll knock your brains out." Of course, the horse pulled off and pulled up, and allowed the other one to win the race. This, of course, was a dodge entering Harkaway, as anybody but a simple fool like myself would have known that

he would not win, because I think even in those days he was worth fifty or sixty pounds, and he would not be likely to be sold for a "tenner," with the balance to go to the club. However, there was no enquiry, or carpeting, about the matter, and I just wish to point out that there were dodges in racing in those days just as well as to-day, but they are more refined now.

However, when I went back to work on the station it was nothing more than I had apparently been doing all my life. Towards the end of the fifties my father sold the property, as I have previously informed you, for the sum of fifteen thousand pounds. A small portion of the property and a few head of cattle were retained, and this I was left to manage till my father's death, which occurred shortly after.

The country that was retained from sale was not sufficient to pasture the cattle and the hundreds of wild horses that I was supposed to possess, and I found it necessary to sell something. The horses could not be mustered without great expense, but to this—the horse subject—I will devote a chapter later on. The cattle were sold to large station-owners in Riverina by my brother-in-law; the bullocks were to be thirty shillings delivered, and the cows twenty shillings. I did enquire before I started with these cattle about how I was to be paid, and what I had to get when I delivered the cattle. I was told that I simply had to get a receipt for the number delivered, and I said: "Is that good enough for the money?" and was told "Yes; it was good enough," that "the name of the buyer was one of the best in Victoria,

and there would be no trouble about my money." I delivered these cattle under trying circumstances. I was not very old, and knew nothing about droving; I had three lads with me and an old chap driving the cart carrying our rations and beds; one of these lads was a cousin of mine, who was sent up to me because his father could do no good with him, and he was certainly more trouble than good on the trip.

At night we used to camp the cattle, and as there were only four of us to watch, it took two at a time to watch them at first; it meant night after night with only half a night's sleep, and was very trying indeed. On the first night my cousin, who was on watch with me, said about nine or ten o'clock: "It must be time to call those other coves now." "Well," I said, "No; we've got to do our whack," and he grumbled for the rest of the time, and said that it was worse than reefing main-yards on board a ship. That was the last night he watched; but I could tell you of some pig and dog hunts we had on the road which interested us very much, though I am afraid they would not interest my readers as they did us, with one exception.

On the Narraburra Creek, between the Marool and Bland Creeks, we sighted one day two big dogs and a number of pups following their hunting. Without considering for a moment the colour of the dogs (they were hounds), and being certain that they were wild dogs, we all started after them, and each caught a pup. I killed the one I got but the other two said that they saw they were not wild dogs, and brought them to the camp, and we took them on with us until (passing another station) the owner said: "Where

did you get those pups?" He was told that we had got them in the bush—run them down. "Oh," he said, "those are from So-and-so's hounds; he breeds hounds for hunting native dogs, and these are very valuable; you will have the police after you." On hearing this we were quite satisfied to leave the pups in his possession, though they really were getting quite an institution in the camp, and we were sorry to part with them.

We toiled on slowly, and on the whole road from Boree to where I delivered the cattle in Victoria we never lowered slip-rails nor opened a gate; the whole country was unfenced from one end to the other; nobody came to interfere with us or even to look at us as we passed along. Numbers of stations that are to-day very valuable were abandoned, or, at any rate, had nobody living on them.

The cattle were duly delivered, I got my receipt, which I posted to Mr. Forbes, the agent who sold the cattle in Sydney, and gave him instructions to pay the money to my mother, who was living on the Parramatta River at Gladesville. She got in touch with Mr. Forbes, who delayed the payment under the excuse that he could not get a cheque from the purchasers, and no cheque was ever forthcoming. The law, I believe, is changed now, but at that time the bank had a large mortgage on this property (I understand), and they had advertised for some nine thousand head of cattle to be delivered between certain months, in which my little lot were included. When all the cattle had been delivered according to advertisement, the bank foreclosed on the property, and included the nine thousand head of cattle that

were their property, though they had never been paid for. That was my first start in life.

I made my way back to my little holding on the old paternal estate, and tried to do something with some, more or less, five hundred head of wild horses. I had a number, probably over one hundred, of broken-in horses, but many of these were as hard to get as the wild ones, as they ran with them, but I should like to point out the history of these horses from the beginning, and I think one thing will strike anyone who may read it, and that is the extraordinary rapidity with which the lower animals go back to what they were when they came out of the ark when once they are let go wild. In a few years, say, ten, the wild horses on Boree were very numerous, and a great number of them very inferior, though they had been bred, as I mentioned previously, from a few of the best stock—mares and horses—that ever came from England. I think though that probably my wild horses were a cut above most of the wild horses that at that time were a pest to Australia, and utterly valueless, as they remained for many years. The last of the horses in which I was interested were shot for their skins, and some boiled down, so they literally, as well as figuratively, “went to pot.”

CHAPTER V.

HORSES.

I HAVE already pointed out the scarcity of horses, but I forgot to say that for some years the mail was carried from Bathurst to Wellington by a man on foot. This was before I was old enough to remember; but I know that my mother often told me that she had got packets of needles and thread from the man who carried the mail on his back from Bathurst to Wellington and back.

The scarcity of horses also for station work rendered it necessary (perhaps you will not believe me) for all the cattle work to be done by men on foot, and the rations and shepherds' supplies were taken to the different stations on a pack-bullock, which frequently had to take a trip to Bathurst to bring back some food supplies that were urgently needed. This same bullock, I remember, was worked at the head station in a water-cart, drawing water for household use from the creek, and used to take his load up a steep bank that very few horses of the present day could do.

Still, when I arrived at the age of fifteen or sixteen (about 1858), the whole of Australia that I knew of was over-run with thousands of head of horses that looked splendid in the bush galloping along, though the majority of them looked very

miserable in the yard after they were brought in the next morning. They grew a tremendous lot of hair—tails and manes on the ground. One would hardly think it possible that in so short a time they could have increased to the extent that they had, and have gone back to their progenitors from the ark; but the older horses, and those that had not got into a wild state, were the best horses that I have ever ridden in my life. I say this feeling certain that I am not exaggerating—that for bush purposes there was nothing to equal them. To-day the stock-horse is a back number.

This I put down in a great measure to the absence of wire fencing, as fencing for sheep with wire did not come into practice till 1874 or 1875, and the wire fencing was what depleted the mobs of horses more than anything else, as the wild horses were fearfully afraid of the wire. On one occasion, in the year 1870, I was travelling through Queensland buying sheep; it was a very wet year, and I had to swim every river, creek, and watercourse from Narrabri (in New South Wales) to Cecil Plains, on the Condamine (in Queensland), and I stayed there for a day or two to rest my horses. There was a large paddock nearly fenced in, the posts were all up, but for about half a mile at each corner there was no wire. In this paddock were a number of wild horses, and a lot of us went to run them out through the unfenced corners. We found any quantity of horses, raced and chased them, but could never get them nearer than a hundred yards from the fence anywhere, until after a whole day's galloping we managed to get out a young filly,

which was really pushed out. I write this to explain the fear of these horses of fencing. I have also seen a water-hole fenced in with only three wires, and numbers of horses standing there and dying round that fence because they would not try to get through to the water.

The wire fencing eradicated the wild horses, but it also spoilt the stock horse, at any rate, in my opinion. Certainly the stock horses were not so much required after the runs became fenced in, their vocation being more to hunt sheep than wild horses or wild cattle; but they never had the knowledge of galloping through scrub or rough mountainous country, which I put down to the different conditions in which the horses were bred. The best now are bred in small paddocks on which no sticks or stones or impediments which a foal might injure himself on were left, and if the mares and foals were brought into the yard for any purpose they were always brought in at a very slow pace; the boys were not allowed to gallop them for fear of injuring the foals. Now, in the days before fencing, any mare (even one of the quietest) when she had a foal, as soon as she saw anyone approaching, would make off with the foal as fast as she could gallop into the rockiest and scrubbiest piece of ground that she could find, and would continue that practice until the foal got to be a good size. The knowledge of galloping through timber and over rough ground, in which he had so much practice as a foal, he learnt young, and never forgot. The others that had never had that practice while young never seemed to acquire the knack of being good safe scrub or mountain horses. I write this as my own

idea. I have never heard anyone mention it but myself, and I suppose there are few now living who have ridden the original horse—bred without wire fences—so that they would not be as good an authority as I, who have ridden them all my life in all stages. However, I give you that for what it is worth, and will make another start in life after my first failure.

After delivering the cattle that I mentioned in my last chapter I came back to the small portion of the old station that was nominally mine, and mustered some of the horses, and joined with a partner. We sent some two hundred head of horses to Rockhampton for sale. I do not remember now what my share of the profits was, but it was not very considerable—Rockhampton at that time was being largely stocked up, and horses were more valuable there than in any other part of Australia as far as we could learn.

There is one fact about horses that I would like to point out, and, as an example, would mention two of my colts which were handled and being ridden. The agreement between my partner and myself was that none but broken horses were to be sent, and the consequence was that I and three or four other young fellows broke the colts in at the rate of five or six a day, and rode them all; but it was really avoiding the spirit of the contract, as they were far from tractable horses; still, with these horses, when you had kept them in for a few days, and they got used to the uncomfortable feeling of bit and girth, they would carry you safely through scrub or mountain country after their wild mates, and race all the way—no horse of the present day can do it. These two colts broke

away from the mob at a river, I think it was at Bellianda, and my partner, who was taking the horses, wrote to me, and told me that these two colts had broken away and were lost. I suppose it took some little time for the letter to come round by Brisbane, but weeks before I got it I saw those colts back on the run, which is one instance of many that I could give of the instinct of horses to get back to the place where they were bred, and, generally speaking, they have more patriotism for poor country than for rich; in that respect they are like the Scotch.

While on the subject of horses I will give you two instances of horses coming back to where they were bred. One was in the very early days at Boree. My father sold a number of horses to the police, and these horses were branded with the crown on the neck. Some years after the sale one of these horses—a grey—appeared on the run with a set of lock-hobbles on him (like hand-cuffs), and I can remember old Paddy (the blacksmith) cutting them off his feet, which were terribly cut about by these hobbles. My father wrote to Captain Battye, then Inspector of Police in Bathurst, and informed him that this horse had turned up. The answer he got was that at the separation of Victoria from New South Wales this horse had been sent to Victoria with the police, and had been lost in the vicinity of Echuca, on the Murray, with lock-hobbles on, and that he had never been heard of since. And the horse remained on the station till he died.

On another occasion, about 1869, I was on a station called "Gurley," and I had a very deaf old

man, old Collie, who was a sort of pensioner of my boss, Mr. J. D. Macansh. Old Collie had had a small farm on the Hunter, near Raymond Terrace, and used to do a very good business in shipping cattle and horses to New Zealand. In the last trip he made he was very unfortunate, as rough weather came on, and the hatches had to be battened down, and when they came to clear out the "betwèen-decks" there were only two animals living—one cow and one horse. He brought them back to the Hunter with him, and afterwards joined Matthew Gog, one of the Queensland pioneers, in taking up stations in Queensland, and he took this pony with him by steamer. He was some years exploring and pioneering with Matthew Gog, then he came down to the Yass district, and was employed by Mr. Macansh on his stations there for some years, till he became too old to be of any use, when he was sent up to vegetate with me at Gurley. The old pony, which he would never part with on any consideration, was also brought along with a lot of horses; he was blind of one eye, a broken-down, rough-looking animal, but old Collie could not have rested unless that pony had been there. About this time I bought a very good horse for myself, but let Mr. Macansh have him for the same money. All the horses (there were no paddocks) were only just looked after, and run at large until shearing came on, and, as the shearing was done some twenty-five miles from the head-station, and all hands were down looking after the shearing, the horses did not get their usual attention, and when I mustered them after the shearing I found that this horse of mine had disappeared. I never missed the old pony,

but I watched in the impoundings until one day I found the advertisement of this horse that I had bought and Collie's old pony impounded at Raymond Terrace. That pony, taken on a trip to New Zealand, and back by steamer to Rockhampton, and certainly over twenty years away from the place of his birth, walked right off, as soon as he got fat enough, to where he was bred, and took with him this horse of mine for company. I sent a black boy down for the horses—old Collie insisted that his pony was to be brought back, or he would go for him himself—but only one horse came back, the other was supposed to have died in the pound.

I think that after this little digression I must get back to the next stage of my life. The gentleman who had purchased my father's station was not what we called "the clean potato." He got an advance on the property for about the same or a little more than he paid for it, and seeing, I suppose, that there was not much chance of his ever getting anything more out of the place he eloped with a lady friend who was staying with him on the station, and left his wife on the place. His trunk of clothes, which she thought he was sure to come back for, she found was full of bricks, so she was left lamenting.

As a great portion of the money for the sale of the station was owed to my mother, and the advance was owed to one of the companies, I was instructed by my mother's lawyer to take possession of the place, and manage it in her interest. The company who had advanced the money also sent up a gentleman, Mr. Crawford, to look after their interests. Well, it was a very funny management. One day we would get

word that I was to manage the place, and a day or two after that I was to hand it over to Crawford to manage; and this exchanging got so monotonous that it was just a matter of—"I am boss to-day, and you are boss to-morrow." As he did not like riding and outside work I took that part, and Crawford did the books and looked after the farm, etc., and the difference of boss or understrapper made no difference. However, this ended by a party—two brothers—buying the property and satisfying both the mortgagees.

These two gentlemen arrived on the station, and asked Mr. Crawford if he would stay as overseer; he said "No, he wouldn't," and told me what had been said to him. "They are sure to ask you to do it, but I should strongly advise you to have nothing to do with it, because these fools are going to make a holy mess of things, and you have got to make your living by managing for others, and it will be no recommendation to say that you have been managing a station that has gone hopelessly insolvent. I should advise you not to touch it." However, I did not take his advice, as I thought that doing anything was better than do nothing, and billets at that time were not to be had every day, and I undertook the job, and did my level best for my employers, but, as I told them before I had been with them long, I thought they had make a mistake in getting a young fellow like me; that they ought to get someone older from whom they would take advice in the way of managing their property. However, they expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with me, and I remained, but in a very short time they asked me to take some eight thousand ewes to a station called "Scrubby Range,"

which they owned, somewhere between the Lachlan and the Murrumbidgee. They had never been there themselves, but they had sent some sheep. I agreed to take these ewes across, and after nine months' wandering up and down the Lachlan and waiting for rain sufficient to get across on to this never-never country I eventually reached it, having taken them up the Humbug Creek and across to their destination through some seventy miles of mallee and pine scrub. It was winter weather, and there was some water in the gilgais, and as the country had been recently burnt, there was good green feed, and the wattle scrub was burnt off. Previous to taking the sheep across I had gone over on horseback, and found that there was no water on the place, and the sheep that they had on it—very few—were in a wretched condition. I got them off, however, and joined them with the lot I had on the road, and what lived of them eventually got home again.

In taking these sheep over I had six men—a horse-driver, who did the cooking, and five men driving the sheep. A waggon with six or eight horses came with me. When I got to this wretched place a small tank had been sunk sufficient for water for the spot that we called the head-station, and there was sufficient water for some time in the creeks that ran out of these scrubby ranges, but the creeks disappeared as soon as they got on to the sandy level country. At Scrubby Range I put in, I suppose, the hardest pioneer's work that it falls to most men's lot to do; I had to put up bow yards and temporary gunyahs for the sheep to lamb in (I had three or four of these places put up), and I lived by myself, and

for the first and last time in my life I had to do my own cooking.

To return to Scrubby Range (which I hope never to do), I succeeded in getting a very good lambing, and I had to take the sheep over to Naria station to be shorn, which was some thirty miles away, and where they had a shed.

While at Scrubby Range I put up (with my own hands) a small paddock—a “one-railer and a bow”—in which I could keep a horse at night. Previous to putting up that paddock the greater part of my time was taken up in walking over the country with a bridle round my waist tracking horses. The mosquitoes and flies were bad, grass good, and the horses always broke their hobbles and wandered miles and miles away, but generally came in some time during the night for a drink, and night after night I have waited to hear the bell to pounce on a horse and tie him up till morning, but many days, after walking all the morning, and being unable to overtake the horses, I had to return and put the shepherds' rations on my back and carry them out to where they were wanted. On the whole, I do not look back with any feelings of regret to having left Scrubby Range, though there was one thing it did, I learnt to track, and probably gained a good deal of experience.

This tracking was forced upon me by having to track my horses before I got the paddock up to keep one in. After that paddock was up my life was very much easier than previously. While talking of tracking, I must tell you that one day there was a stockman sent down from Naria station to where I was living to get me cattle instead of killing sheep.

His story was that some seventy or eighty head of cattle had been let go on Scrubby Range, and that they were supposed to have joined the station cattle that came out from the Lachlan and Cudgellico Lake in the winter; and that, as it was winter then, he would probably be able to get some of these cattle, and he asked me if I would give him a hand, to which I agreed.

I will here say that I considered myself a fair bushman, and the very fact of taking eight thousand sheep through eighty or ninety miles of mallee and scrub country to Scrubby Range without any track or guide I think proves that I am not a bad bushman. However, I went out with this stockman (who, I may tell you, was afterwards hanged or imprisoned for life as a bushranger, which I readily vouch he deserved by the way he deserted me), and we each put a single blanket on our horse, as we would have to sleep out at night, and started on this marauding expedition—as I am perfectly confident that there were no cattle there belonging to the station, and the mustering of these cattle for killing purposes for the Naria shearers and men at Scrubby Range was nothing more or less than cattle-stealing. However, I did not know that at the time.

After camping that night we got on to some cattle tracks, and eventually found some, but the country was fearfully scrubby and rough, and my stockman was no use in that country, and several lots of cattle beat me, as I had no one to back me up. However, I at length succeeded in rounding up a small lot, and when my mate joined me I said to him: “Which way must we take the cattle, because I have

not the least idea of where I am or in what direction to go?" He pointed in a direction with his hand, and I told him to "Ride in front, straight home," and that I would keep the cattle after him, which he did; but we had not gone very far when I saw him gallop away. I got round the cattle and stopped them and held them there till sundown, but my mate never returned. My horse was completely knocked up, which perhaps was a good thing, as I might have gone on in the direction that he indicated for home, and never have come back.

I spent a very miserable night trying to draw a map in my mind of the different directions and distances that we had gone in each direction to try and get the direction that I ought to go to get home. I knew that about forty miles or so would take me to the Lachlan River, and about eighty miles or more to the Murrumbidgee; but if I got to either of these places I should have to go miles round to get a track by which I could get back to the station—probably a week's riding—so before morning I came to the conclusion that I was thoroughly lost; and I can assure you that that is not a very pleasant feeling to have. The horse was very fat, and that accounted for his knocking up, but under the circumstances I decided not to leave him, as I might want a feed before I got home; and I made up my mind to run my tracks back, and started in the morning on the back trail, a slow process, but, fortunately, the ground was soft and tracks plain, with no other tracks to confuse me.

I followed these tracks for two days, and just before sundown on the second day I left my horse on

a small watercourse, and started to follow it up on foot to see if I could find water. I had not gone very far when I heard a bell. The stockman, my mate, had informed me that there was a party of tank-sinkers out somewhere, and that they had lost their bullocks, which were belled. The idea at once came into my mind that I would join the bullocks, as I thought the bell was probably on them; and I went back for my horse, which I started to drive along in front of me, as I had been doing, but I had not gone far in the direction of where I heard the bell when my horse began to trot. I considered that if he was good enough for that he was good enough to carry me, so I caught him and got on him, and he trotted along briskly till I came, not to the bullocks, but to the camp where they were building the tank, and the bells I had heard were put on the horses as they knocked off work, and the horses—rolling and shaking themselves after being let loose—had made such a noise that I had heard the bell at a very considerable distance. The tank-sinkers treated me very hospitably (as is always the case in the bush), and gave me directions in the morning which enabled me to get home that day.

On reaching home I found my mate asleep; he had only succeeded in reaching home a few hours before my return, and I believe it was his horse that brought him back. My horse would probably have done the same had he been fresh enough to go anywhere, but as it was, he would not carry me, and the only thing to do was what I did; and it took a great deal of strength of mind to keep me going at the tracking, as frequently I saw something that made

me think that I knew where home was, but I also knew that I was completely lost.

I forgot to mention that on the first night that I spent out I had a fire and my little blanket, but never slept. Sometime in the night a dingo came within a very short distance of me, I should say about twenty feet, and set up a most dismal howl, which did not tend to the night's enjoyment.

On rousing my mate I asked him what he meant by leaving me in the bush, and he said that he saw some cattle ahead of him and galloped off to round them up and bring them back to add to the lot we already had, which he did; that is, he said he brought them back and that I had left, but as I had stayed there all night that part of his story was not true. In my mind he was just as much lost as I was, and he galloped ahead to see if he could find any landmark by which he could guess where he was; and I do not think that he ever tried to get back; he left me to do the best I could, and did the best he could for himself.

With the end of my term at Scrubby Range I reckon I have finished the second venture in working for myself, and I started life again with very little more than I stood in. This time, however, fortune favoured me; I got the best employer that any young fellow could possibly have had—strictly honest and honourable, with an abnormal sense of justice, which made him appear to some people, perhaps, as being what is to-day termed "close-fisted," though he was not really out to make money out of anyone, so much as to pay them justly and exactly to a ha'penny what was due to them. In contracts for labour, or large

business transactions, he stuck conscientiously to the wording of the agreement, no matter whether it was for or against him, and when the literal agreement was in his favour his sense of justice declared that it should stop there, that he would make no concession.

He was, I suppose, one of the first to start the great improvement in the sheep of New South Wales, which began to be generally considered towards the end of the sixties, but which did not go on at the rapid rate that it has done since the inauguration of the sheep sales and shows which have been held for the last twenty years or more, and which gave all the wool-growers and people interested in sheep a chance to see what their competitors were doing, and to compare their different results in sheep-breeding. Previous to the shows we were all stay-at-homes, and considered our sheep the very best, in fact, our geese were all swans until we met the other fellow's at the shows, and found out that we would have to change our breeds and opinions if we meant to keep up in the race of growing merino wool.

CHAPTER VI.

A FEW BUSHRANGING STORIES.

BUT I am before my story, and the chapters which will follow this one deal with a new era in my life, when I became a man with responsibilities; but to this I will refer later.

I have been asked by a number of friends to put in any stories I know of interest concerning bushrangers. The earliest story that I can remember was when I heard the trial of two gentlemen for manslaughter, and the facts, as they came out in court, were these:—These two young fellows had taken up a holding, which they worked by themselves entirely, and one evening they came in to a rather late dinner, and were sitting opposite to one another at a small table when two armed men came into the room and ordered them to put their “hands up.” They were searched to see if they had any money about them, and the bushrangers inspected the guns that were in the house, and to make sure of their not being fired on in a hurry (although they were not loaded) poured tea into the barrels (in those muzzle-loading days the barrel would have to be made quite dry again before the powder was put in, which would take some little time). After inspecting the place the two bushrangers sat down to eat the dinner which was intended for the owners, and put their revolvers on the table

beside them (most robbers and thieves come to grief through overlooking some slight circumstance). These two took no notice when the two gentlemen sat down on opposite sides of the room with the bushrangers between them, but one gentleman was sitting on a home-made sofa, the bars of which were of stringybark, and only fitted into spaces cut for them, and were not fastened in any way. He made signs to his mate that he was ready to use the baton, and, at a given signal, he struck the nearest bushranger on the head and killed him, while the other young fellow seized the other bushranger by the shoulders, and his mate coming round with the baton, they soon secured him. But, for this deed they were standing their trial for manslaughter, and what struck me as very funny (though I was little more than a child at the time) was the remark of one of the jurymen, a real Irishman, on hearing how the bushranger had been hit on the head with the baton. He jumped up in great excitement, and said: "And did ye hit the man with the bit between his teeth." Such a gross breach of hospitality was too much for the Irishman. However, the young fellows were acquitted, and left the court without a stain upon their characters; but in my opinion they should have been highly praised for their pluck.

The next story that I will tell you is not about bushrangers, but I have to write these stories as they come into my head, and I heard this one about the time of the incidents I have just related. Two brothers, John and Andrew Paterson (who married two of my sisters), started their colonial experience somewhere down on the Edward Billabong. I think

their cousin, who had come out earlier, had some property there. There were also one or two other young fellows on the station (what we now call jackaroos), and one of these gentlemen, named Bellamy, had some money left to him, and the diggings having broken out some time previously in Victoria, he went off to "better his position." About a year after he left Mr. John Paterson took a number of fat sheep to one of the gold diggings (I do not remember which) for sale, but as he could not get the price from the butchers which he thought the sheep were worth, he decided to kill them at his camp, and cart them through the town ready dressed, and sell them by the carcass or the quarter to anyone who wanted them at rather a less price than the butchers were asking for their meat. While riding through the diggings one day shortly after he had started this killing and selling he saw Bellamy standing at the door of a shanty. He got off his horse and spoke to him, and asked him to come in and have a drink; so they went in to a side-room and Paterson rang the bell that was on the table. There was no response, so he rang it again, when a harsh female voice from somewhere at the back called out—"Hi, you Bellamy, there;" he was the barman, and, apologising, went and brought the drinks. Mr. Paterson then began to question him on what he was doing and what he had done with his money. He replied: "The whole of my worldly possessions now consist of two blooming bulldogs." Paterson told him that the best thing he could do was to go down to his camp with him, and he could find him some better work than what he was doing, to which Bellamy agreed, and it was arranged

that the next day Mr. Paterson was to bring up a horse on which Bellamy could ride down to the camp.

It appears that that night there was a sort of sing-song social, and Bellamy, who could sing a good song, had apparently cut the baker out of his best girl with the song of "Gaily the Troubadour." However, Paterson came up in the morning, and a start was being effected, but the "worldly possessions"—the bull-dogs—refused to follow their master on horse-back, so he got down and caught one, which he handed up to Mr. Paterson to carry on his horse, but in endeavouring to catch the other some of the town dogs tried to assist, and there was a hooray battle going on between the dogs. Added to this, while Bellamy was trying to extricate them, the baker, with his white cap on, ran out from his shop on the other side of the street, and fell on Bellamy furiously, got his arm round his neck, or, as the stadium would say, "his head in pillory," and commenced to fib him to the chorus of "I'll teach you to sing 'Hither I come.'" The other dog got away from Mr. Paterson, jumped off the horse, and joined in the dog-fight, and poor Bellamy, who would not leave the dogs, had to be left to fight his own battles.

Before I give you any more of the bushranging stories I happen to know, I think that in fairness to the bushrangers I must deal with the real cause of their taking to the bush. I have told you the story of Mr. Templer and the bushranging before the gold discovery, which was brought about by people having to travel with so much cash in those days owing to there being no banks or institutions of that kind where one could get cash after leaving Sydney, at

first, and probably Bathurst later on. While these employers of labour were obliged to carry the money for their station expenses in their luggage, bush-ranging was about as profitable a game as one could engage in, but that came to an untimely end by the extension of banks and the discovery of gold, which caused this same extension of the banks, but which also, in a very short time, made bush-ranging more profitable than ever, and on a very much larger scale, by sticking up the coaches which carried the gold to Sydney. Of course, like the cash, the gold was untraceable, and if once they succeeded in getting it safely away it could always be sold for cash in quantities not large enough to attract suspicion as to where it came from.

Now, I have also told you that cattle before the gold discovery were very cheap, but for a few years after that event they were fairly valuable for meat. The settled part of the country abounded in fairly wild cattle, which had not been looked after for some years, and it was marvellous how both horses and cattle increased. I do not know whether it was the law of the land then, or whether it is so now, but anyone buying a holding claimed all unbranded cattle and horses that might be running on that holding. Whether that is the law, or whether it is only a law of custom I do not know, but in a great measure that is the practice to-day in the unsettled or partially-settled parts of the country. The young Australians were, I think, strictly honest as regards money or valuables; you could leave your hut or house with everything open for days, perhaps weeks, and when you returned you would miss nothing, except,

perhaps, that someone had made himself a pot of tea or got a feed, which, of course, they were all entitled to, and never refused. But, from my earliest recollections, the branding of other people's calves was not looked upon as a crime; it was, rather, considered a smart thing if you were able to brand more of your neighbour's calves than he could of yours; and the killing of cattle for meat on the place was almost invariably done at somebody else's expense. However, that condition of things gradually changed, but a great many men never realised the change; in fact, they did not live up to the times, and continued their depredations, which were then called cattle-stealing, to a lesser or greater extent. Of course, the police stations came out, magistrates and clerks of petty sessions were sent to the different villages that had been formed with the object of putting a stop to this cattle and horse-stealing, and numbers of these young fellows became aware that the police wanted them. Some, of course, were taken before the court, but no case was proved, as it was then, and is now, one of the hardest things in the world to prove.

These gentlemen cattle-stealers (who, I am firmly convinced, did not consider themselves anything more than a little smarter than the average) were obliged to get further into the unsettled country, but they had, to do any good, to raid on the more populated parts—where there was more stock to be got—and, of course, were hunted by the police, and eventually the more hardened of them found that there was a better living to be made by arming themselves and going in for robbery and bushranging. I once had a conversation with Ben Hall, and he told me that it

was the police that drove him to take to the bush, and he told me in such a way that I feel convinced he thought so.

I happened to be camped out not very far from Goimbla the night that David Campbell shot bushranger O'Meally, and I came into Goimbla station early in the morning, and I will tell you what I saw, and, of course, what I heard from both Mr. Campbell and his wife, but I must first tell you that David Campbell was a born fighter, and whenever the bushrangers appeared in the district he was the first to arm himself and try to find them. The principal reason for their great hatred of Campbell was that when the bushrangers had bailed up the township of Canowindra there was a gentleman I knew well, Mr. Barnes, a very little chap, who was travelling with sheep for the Patersons, and passing Canowindra at the time it was in the hands of the bushrangers, they let him proceed with his sheep on condition that he said nothing of their whereabouts. However, he stopped the night at Goimbla, and, unfortunately for himself, he told David Campbell, who immediately raised all the neighbours in the district, and led a small army to the relief of Canowindra, but when they arrived there were no bushrangers there, and though they hunted the locality they were unable to find any.

There was one story told of that hunt which I will repeat. There were a number of police with them at this time, and blacktrackers were on the tracks of the horses supposed to be ridden by the bushrangers, when they came in sight of a shepherd's hut on a small plain. The bushrangers were supposed to be

in this hut, and after a consultation as to how the hut was to be attacked, it was decided that they should gallop up and take it by storm, a rather foolish proceeding if the bushrangers had been there, because they were armed with repeating rifles, and would have decimated the horsemen as they galloped up the plain. However, there was nobody in the hut, and only one shot was fired, and that was by a policeman, who shot his own horse. However, David Campbell's actions and leadership were very soon telegraphed to Ben Hall and his gang, who gave it out that they would come and pay David Campbell a visit, and threatened to mutilate him and torture him in unspeakable ways. Of course, Campbell knew this, and never went anywhere without a revolver, which he carried in his boot (long Wellington boots were used in those days), and a little clip on the revolver kept it from going down too low to his foot, and it was so fixed that he could draw it at a moment's notice if surprised. I have ridden with him once or twice during the time that he was so armed, and he was a marvellous shot. I have seen him gallop past a small tree or stump, and, firing at it as he passed, he invariably hit it within a few inches of the part he had aimed at, and I have never seen a better quail shot.

But to return to the story. He had also planned with his brother, who was living with him, the plan of campaign which was to be carried out if anyone was heard about the premises. On the night the bushrangers stuck up the house he and Mrs. Campbell and his brother were in the sitting-room; his gun (loaded) was in the corner where there was a door

that opened into another room, and immediately opposite this door was another door opening on to the verandah. A knock came at the front door, and Mr. Campbell immediately jumped up, and, following the plan already arranged, took his gun, and opened the door which led out of the sitting-room on to the verandah. The moment he opened the door he saw a man standing on the verandah near the door, this man was Ben Hall, and he had a revolver in each hand, both of which he fired immediately on Campbell's opening the door, and one of the bullets went into the door pretty close to Campbell's head, and the other entered the wall close to where the door fastened. Campbell fired his gun from his hip, and the bullet, as Ben Hall afterwards asserted, went between his legs, cutting a piece of the trouser near the fork, and lodged in the door-post. Ben Hall at once bolted, and Campbell followed him on to the verandah. Mr. Campbell's brother got his gun and went out also, as previously arranged, by the back door, which led to the kitchen. As he stepped out of the door he was fired at—the gun was evidently loaded with slugs, for one of them struck him obliquely in the chest, which gave him such a start that he sprang off the verandah and dropped his gun, and immediately ran off to Eugowra, where there was a police station.

Mrs. Campbell followed her husband on to the verandah, but, having fired one bullet of his gun, he had no ammunition with him, the ammunition being on the piano in the sitting-room, and Mrs. Campbell heroically returned by the way Mr. Campbell went out, and took the ammunition off the piano and

brought it back to him, though she was greeted with volleys through the windows as her shadow passed, and the piano and wall against which it stood showed a good many bullet marks, but luckily none touched her. Mr. Campbell's house was a pise one, with a verandah all round, and as the night was dark, he could sneak about the verandah without being seen by the bushrangers. They fired volleys at the house, and called out to him to surrender; he only replied once—"no surrender," but they fired in the direction of his voice, and he found it advisable to say nothing in the future. They then set fire to a large shed and stable, in which there was at least one horse, which, I believe, screamed piteously. Between the stable and the house there was a cart covered by a tarpaulin, and as there was a danger of the cart getting on fire and igniting the house, Mrs. Campbell went out and took the tarpaulin off the cart. The fire blazed up, of course, lighting the landscape all round, but making the side of the house away from the fire darker than before, and giving the besieged an advantage, because they could see anything outside by the light, while they were in darkness themselves.

There was a paling fence round a small garden about fifty yards, I suppose, from the house, and Mrs. Campbell, who was watching at one of the corners, saw a man's head rise just over the fence. She pointed him out to her husband, who immediately shot him. Of course, I saw the place in the morning, and noticed the mark of the bullet that killed O'Meally; it just cut through about a quarter of an inch of the top of the paling, and struck him in the neck, breaking it, and killing him instantly. Out-

side this paling fence was a wheat paddock with an abnormally high crop of wheat (nearly ripe), but it was lucky that it was too green to burn, or they would have most likely fired it. After O'Meally was shot, Ben Hall's gang fired a volley at the house, and nothing further happened that night.

The bushrangers dragged O'Meally some fifty yards from where he was shot into the high crop of wheat, where they evidently rummaged his pockets, and, I believe, took off his rings, which he was supposed to be very proud of. The pockets, when I saw him, and they had not moved him, were all inside out, and he was lying with his head in the middle of his back. In dragging him by the arms, his neck being broken, his head, of course, by the friction of the wheat, was put back to between his shoulders.

In a very short while the place was full of police, Sir Frederick Pottinger, and a police magistrate from Forbes, and I heard some of the inquest on his death. A lad who was in my employ, and whom I had left to mind the cattle, came up (O'Meally's body was then on the verandah of an outhouse, surrounded by police, and the face was covered), and as soon as he saw the body, he said: "That is O'Meally; I know him by his small hands." The magistrate instructed the police to arrest him, and they took him away to prison to Forbes on one of my horses, which he was riding, and that horse I have never heard of since. It seems that this young fellow (I forget his name) was one of the clan of would-be bushrangers that had left the district of Young, and come to the Forbes district because he was "wanted," and foolishly ran

his head into a hornet's nest of police. What became of him afterwards I cannot say. So ends that story.

It was about this time that Mr. Keightley shot, under the same circumstances as Mr. Campbell, Bushranger Burke, but Mr. Keightley surrendered after shooting Burke, and they put a ransom on him of five hundred pounds, which was the reward on the head of each of the gang, as well as I remember. Mrs. Keightley got a horse, saddled and rode into Bathurst with Mr. Keightley's cheque for five hundred pounds, cash for which she brought back and gave to the bushrangers, but as that story I have frequently seen told in print, probably much better than I could tell it, I will not make any further comment.

Among the other bushranging stories I would say one word about Ben Hall's gang sticking up the Faithful boys near Goulburn, which was one of the bravest fights against the clan. Luckily, nobody was hurt—I think only a horse was shot—but as that has been repeatedly referred to elsewhere, and claimed, I think, as one of the records of the King's School boys, I will make no comment on it here, though I believe that old Mr. Faithful was one of the original pioneers who luckily was able to weather the hardships and bad times and keep the country he took up, which is now owned by one of his sons, and, in my opinion, the best merino sheep are bred there. Of course, I say this advisedly, but I have bred from his sheep for many years, and I found them the best adapted to salt-bush plain country, which has been the sort of country that I have always lived in, and I have taken my sheep, the progeny of the Springfield stud, from Burren (which I held for twenty-five

years) to Bidnam, in Queensland, near Charleville, and I found that they were a success in both places.

I have mentioned that a Mr. Barnes, who was travelling sheep for the Paterson Brothers, had told Mr. Campbell about the bushrangers having possession of the township of Canowindra. My brother, who was afterwards the Master in Equity, then a little chap of about twelve years old, was staying with the Patersons, and went for a trip in the waggonette into Yass with Mr. Barnes to get some supplies for the station. When they were coming home the bushrangers (Ben Hall's gang) stopped them, and at once recognised Mr. Barnes, and Ben Hall said: "We've been looking for you for a long time; now we've got you, and we'll make you remember giving us away to Mr. Campbell, and we'll mutilate you." They made him take off all his clothes, and Ben Hall was sharpening an old pocket-knife on the tyre of the wheel while this poor wretch stood by in the cold shivering. However, they decided that they would only flog him, which they did with his own whip, and then allowed him to proceed on his way home without his clothes. My brother, as a sort of consolation, said to him after they had started: "What a good thing it was that you didn't put that new lash on your whip that you intended to." However, they got home safely, and, covered by the darkness, poor Barnes got into his room to dress himself.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT THE BLACKS.

YOU will see by what I have written that my youngest days were spent among the blacks, so to speak, and that as I have moved out in the van of civilization ever since, I have always come more or less in contact with aborigines.

Of course, their dialect is not the same everywhere; even a few miles will make such a difference that one blackfellow cannot understand another, and, though there is no record of it, I think the Tower of Babel must have once existed in Australia, but none of them have anything that can really be called a language; and how they manage to explain to one another seems to me to be very difficult, and in their explanations to one another, nowadays, they generally have to use a lot of English words.

A great many of the accounts of the blacks have been written by missionaries or church-going people; but none that I have read seem to have thrown any light on the customs or religion of the blacks, simply because they have none. They have undoubtedly a superstition, being really very superstitious. They worship nothing, but their idea is to propitiate the evil one, and to do so they have to put up with barbarous customs or religious rites for fear that if they neglect these the evil spirit could draw, or suck,

all the blood out of their bodies, no matter at what distance. But their ideas are so confused that they cannot express them in language that could be transcribed.

They have a certain sense of loyalty, but that can be altered by a sort of savage instinct which they possess to murder even their best friend. On one occasion I was exploring with a blackfellow, and we left the horses and went for a walk through scrubby country, following a watercourse. I walked along in front for some distance, and when I stopped the blackfellow came up to me. I noticed that there was something rather peculiar in his manner and appearance, and he said: "Boss, you bally fool walk front blackfellow; never you walk front blackfellow: always make blackfellow go first time." I feel sure now, and I did at the time, that the blackfellow while walking behind me had been fighting with his savage instincts. He saw a splendid opportunity of murdering me, not that he had any illwill towards me, because we were the best of friends, but it was an opportunity that had tempted him to knock me on the head, just an impulse which is generally too strong for them to resist. I have never walked in front of a blackfellow since when alone with him.

The blacks are extremely useful on stations, and their tracking is more than marvellous. In one instance a number of sheep had been lost; they were shepherded on open plain country, but on one side there was some almost impenetrable scrub which it would have been impossible to drive the sheep through. My blackfellow, the one I have just spoken of, was away from the station when the sheep were

lost out of the flock, and they were not found until his return. When he came back I went out with him and explained the number of sheep that were missing by "big" or "little" track. (Of course, numbers are quite lost on the blacks.) They would call hundreds more than thousands, or fifty more than any perhaps, though I have taught the blacks to count up to a hundred, and they could do it correctly. For instance, when riding with one of the blacks that I had taught to count past a mob of cattle of less than a hundred, if I asked him what number of cattle were there he would tell me exactly—of course, he counted them—but further than that they have no arithmetical head, and I have never seen a blackfellow who could count a pound's worth of silver made up of the different coins; and I do not think there is one that could do it. However, to go back to those lost sheep, when we got out to the shepherd's hut from which they had been lost—you must remember that they had been gone some time—we found on the plain one of the sheep very badly bitten by dogs. I told old Billy that that was one of the sheep that were lost; he gave me his horse to lead, and tracked that sheep for a long way backwards to where he came from, which was out of this dense scrub. He followed on a little further, and we came to a great many of the sheep dead; the native dogs had evidently rushed them into the scrub, killing them all the way along for a mile or more. However, when I found the first lot of sheep dead I gave up the hunt myself, and went no farther, but told the blackboy to follow on and see if he could find any that had escaped from the dogs. When he came back he brought me a stick about three feet

long with notches cut in on both sides, each notch representing a sheep that he had found dead or so bitten as to be unable to move, and he was very few short of the number that were lost. I consider this a most remarkable feat of tracking, because on the plain country across which he tracked the sheep there was nothing but sheep tracks, and the very fact of tracking backwards is a hundred times more difficult than tracking forwards.

Another feat of tracking which I consider very wonderful was this—The shepherds' huts were at this time frequently being robbed by loafers, who took blankets, clothes and rations. I had made up my mind to make an example of the next loafer that robbed a shepherd's hut, and a report came in from one of the shepherds that he had been robbed of his rations, a rug and some other things. I took this same blackfellow, Billy Levy, with me, and went to the hut (it was about two days after the robbery), and, of course, the sheep had been in and out of the yard and all round the place; in fact, it was nothing but sheep tracks. However, Billy Levy just walked round the hut, and "got um track," which he followed for some distance over bare country covered with sheep tracks made by the sheep coming in and out of the yard, but he never seemed to be at a loss for a moment. He tracked him into a clump of timber, in which he pointed out a horse had been tied up, and we then followed the man and the horse track; the man, according to Billy Levy, was leading the horse. The grass was very high, and he had to walk along through this high grass with a small stick in his hand, opening the way as he went through, but

at no time did he halt or appear to lose the track, and, strange to relate, when he had got a mile or two on the track through this open grassy country, Billy said: "This man big man, got big track, limp in this leg (indicating the left leg); only put 'm toe on ground." That, I think, was a very wonderful thing to be able to tell, when I, who could track a little, could not discern the horse tracks very easily. However, we followed on till we came to a big man, lame in the left leg, with his tent pitched; I told him what I was after, and went into his tent to see if I could identify anything of the shepherd's, but there was nothing there, which I told Billy, and he walked round the camp, and followed the man's track down to the creek where he had got some water, and to every other place he went while at the camp; then Billy struck the horse track again, and we followed the horse track some distance up the creek to where he had camped previously, and then had gone back on his track to where we had found him. Though every track was followed, we never succeeded in finding anything that I was looking for, and it has often puzzled me how he secreted the swag without our being able to find it; so our ride was for nothing, but it had the desired effect, as there were no more shepherds robbed for some time after that, if at all. He evidently spread among his confederates the fact that it was not safe to rob the huts on Gurley.

There was another instance in which a woman, the wife of a shepherd, disappeared, supposed to have been lost. I went again with Billy, and he looked round the hut, saying: "'Nther fellow, white fellow, been here." I said: "No; that husband track."

“No,” he said, “that not husband track; that ’nuther fellow track; woman gone away with that fellow.” So the husband, myself and the blackfellow followed the track till we came to where the horses had been tied up; they evidently rode the horses, because there was no track of people walking; and we tracked them for a considerable distance—to where they had made camp for dinner. The blackfellow looked round the camp, and from the tracks, said something in language I cannot repeat, and I said to the husband: “Do you want to go any farther?” and he said “Yes.” “Very well,” I said; “you can go on with Billy; I am satisfied she is all right, and I am going back.” However, they did not follow much farther on the track, and returned home.

I think those are the greatest instances of tracking that I have ever seen myself, but, of course, I have heard of others that perhaps eclipse these.

Every blackfellow or gin knows the track of any other tribe; and I have proved that on several occasions when out with a black boy or two when we have crossed the tracks of blacks. I have said: “What track that?” “Oh, that gin,” or “gin go along there,” or “oh, three, four fellow.” “What name?” “Oh, Minnie.” (They are all “Minnies,” but are known by an addition, such as “Toby’s Minnie,” or some other name; but, as a rule, all the gins are “Minnies.”) We followed on the tracks, and very soon overtook the three or four gins that were described by the blackboys.

The worldly possession of a blackfellow that he values most is his gin, unless it is somebody else’s gin, perhaps, which he values more; and as there is

no law against bigamy there is no objection to a black-fellow having at least two gins if he can keep them. The law of matrimony in most instances, especially before or soon after the whites' occupation of the country, was that every young man had to go into his neighbouring clan's territory and steal his wife. That was a very risky feat, because it was sudden death if he was caught eloping with the gin, or even found outside the boundary of his own territory. There is one instance of an elopement which occurred after the blacks were civilised:—A blackfellow from a neighbouring tribe had been sent with a letter to one of the stations that was situated on the territory of another tribe. He delivered the letter, and went back with the answer, but they do not seem to take long to make love, because he had arranged with a young gin to meet her some distance on the road after a certain day. After delivering the answer to his employer he walked back to the trysting place, and met his fiancée. Now, she, of course, knew that she would be tracked by the camp, and, if caught, probably belted, and perhaps taken back, but if there was a blackfellow with her, of course, his doom was sealed, so this young lady took her lover on her back, and carried him for considerably over fifty miles, so as not to leave more than one track. When her own tribe probably tracked her for some distance and found that she was going away on her own they let her go, and took no more heed of it, so that she probably saved her lover's life by carrying him the distance to get him back into his own country. That feat, perhaps, among the knights of old would have

been called romantic, but with these poor senseless blacks it would have been called by a crueller name.

I have said that no blackfellow could count a pound's worth of silver made up of different coins. I once wanted some bark stripped, and there were a number of blacks about, as there had been a bora festival, which means (as far as I can make out) that the young men of the tribe, instead of going, as the custom was in olden days, to the neighbouring tribe for wives, were turned out in the bush and not allowed to come near any camp or get any food except what they got by hunting. On the day they returned, I remember well, the whole tribe went out and welcomed them back. They all came back not looking very hungry and in very good spirits after their fortnight's life in their wild state. I asked some of these blacks to cut some bark (several hundred sheets), and they wanted to know what I would give them. One chap spoke English very well indeed, and I said: "I'll give you sixpence a sheet." "No, boss," he said, "make it a shilling." "Oh, well," I said, "I'll split the difference with you; I'll give you ninepence." They had several minutes' consultation among themselves, then the spokesman came back and said: "All right, boss; you give us sixpence, blast the bally ninepence." They stripped the bark, and when I was paying them for it I happened to have on the station a large quantity of silver, and I paid them all off with silver. The money was from one pound to one pound ten shillings a piece for the bark, and the first man that got his (about twenty-five shillings) in the store looked round, and said he wanted some tobacco, so he got some tobacco, and put

at least twice as much money in silver as was necessary back in payment. He then wanted some sugar and several other things—amounting to about seven shillings, as well as I can recollect—but as he put down money for every article that he wanted, and always far in excess of its price, he had very little of his pile of silver left, but when the storekeeper made up the amount of his purchases and handed him back the overplus, he said: “This belonga me?” “Yes.” “Oh, then,” he said, “I buy dress for the gin.” So a dress was bought, and everything else till he had not a penny left—he had spent the whole of it in stores. The whole of the tribe did exactly the same; they took their flour, tea, sugar and tobacco principally, some lollies, and all the gins had dresses; and they went away happy.

When engaged on station work the blacks always require a spell to go for a “walk-about;” they want to pull off their clothes, stick kangaroo bones in their hair (which sometimes make them resemble a bull in a small way), put a little paint on themselves, and run about and howl, and eat lizards or 'goannas. They come back, as one of my blackfellows said: “Very poor; want feed beef,” and are quite satisfied to go on again for a short time, but they are like school-boys, they always look forward to the “walk-about” when they have no horses to get up and no responsibilities. Some time ago a blackfellow, the head stockman on the place, wanted to go for a “walk-about,” as he was sick. I told him that I could not spare him just then because, “If you go, Toby, all the other blackfellows go too, and there would be nobody to stop to see that the cattle got a drink, and

you couldn't go away and let the cattle die, you know." "Oh, well, boss, stop a week." "Oh," I said, "that is not long enough; you say you sick; you stop in camp I pay you wages just the same; other blackfellow do work as long as you stop here." "Oh no, boss," he said, "I want to go for a 'walk-about.'" "Oh," I said, "you had a 'walk-about' only a little while ago; what you want to go for now?" "Oh," he said, "you know, that old Minnie wants a belting," and I presume that he could not belt her properly with her clothes on, and therefore wanted her well out in the bush.

However, to go back to my story of the travelling court. If the wild blacks came and did any depredation in the way of spearing cattle or other troubles, the common practice was, and is, to give your quiet blackfellow a rifle and about two bullets, because if you gave him more he would shoot as many blackfellows as he had cartridges. You send him out to bring in the marauders—dead or alive. There was a blackfellow shot in this way for some depredation, and the travelling court immediately proceeded to the station, and held an inquiry. Of course, the only witness to the murder was the blackfellow that did it, and he was rather proud of it. However, the court sat, and the blackfellow was questioned as to what he did and what followed. After a good deal of explanation they got out of him that he went to the camp on a certain day.

"What did you see?" he was asked.

"I see blackfellow."

"What did he do?"

"He run away."

“Then what did you do?”

“I say, ‘Stand, belonga de king!’ three time.”

“Then what did he do?”

“Run away.”

“Then what happened?”

(He made a gesture as if firing his rifle) “Ass over head.” That broke the court up, and I do not think they attempted any further investigations.

Perhaps it would be as well here, while writing of the blacks to give the story of the Wills’s murder, which was told to me by a Mr. Raven, who, in the fifties, went past my father’s station with a number of sheep (the property of my brothers-in-law—the Patersons) to take up country in Queensland. I can hardly remember, but I should think that about that time properties had been paying fairly well ever since the discovery of gold, and a rush for Queensland country was at its height—everyone was trying to secure large tracts of country on the good terms offered by the Queensland Government, and the long-secured tenures. Free selection in New South Wales was started about this time, or, if not started, at any rate, people knew that it was about to start, and that assisted the migration of New South Wales graziers into Queensland. I mentioned the fact of Mr. Raven passing Boree because I was very anxious to go with him, and begged of my father to let me go, but he pointed out—very rightly—that the boom for country and stock would probably not last, and exemplified his own start in buying sheep at twenty-two shillings and sixpence a head, and the following year they were down to two shillings and sixpence, and had never risen until after the

discovery of the gold, and he thought it probable that very shortly they would be back to the legendary two shillings and sixpence. But I shall say more of Stainbourne Downs, the country that Mr. Raven took up for the Patersons, and perhaps I might as well say it now. The Patersons kept it for some six or seven years, made nothing on it, and supporting it ruined them on their stations in New South Wales, and the whole of their properties were sold or foreclosed on. One of my brothers-in-law went past Gurley, which I was then managing, about the end of '69 or '70, to wind up the Stainbourne Downs property; he sold most of his sheep to an adjoining station for six shillings a head, and the buyers refused to take the country, and it became abandoned. Some little time after that I got a notice from the Commissioner for Lands in Queensland telling me that this station had been abandoned, and that if I chose to pay the rent—some twenty-five pounds a year—I could have it. I felt very much inclined to do this, but I was just starting on my own with a partner, and we had bought a small property on the Castlereagh. I asked my partner if he would look after the Castlereagh property and I would make a start on the Queensland property, but our capital was very small—barely two thousand pounds—and, he, being perhaps a more cautious man than I, pointed out that we had quite as much as we could look after with our limited capital, and that this other place would probably lead to ruin, as it had done by its former owners. So I reluctantly allowed the place to pass by, and it was taken up very shortly after, and the parties who took it up sold it for a very fair sum of

money—something over three thousand or four thousand pounds, which, of course, they had made without any risk. In 1884 I took a trip right through Queensland, as far as Normanton, and came back via Rockhampton; but I will give an account of that trip in its proper place. I have only mentioned it now to say that I passed the Stainbourne Downs property, near Aramac, and saw the manager, and asked him casually what price he thought Stainbourne Downs could be bought for. He said: "We gave eighty thousand pounds for it, and I am sure it could not be bought for less than one hundred and twenty thousand pounds." Of course, I had only asked the question to make a sort of mental calculation as to what I might have made had I taken the property for twenty-five pounds a year when it was offered to me. This fairly well represents the ups and downs of a squatter's life, as described by Rolf Boldrewood.

However, to go back to my blacks and the Wills's tragedy (as I got it from Mr. Raven). The whole of the family that were at home, simply consisting of the womenfolk, were all murdered by the blacks. One girl had been evidently sitting on the verandah on the floor reading a book; her head was split open, apparently from behind, with a tomahawk, and she fell dead with the book in her lap. This case alone shows that the blacks had the run of the house, so to speak, and came in and out without question; and they saw the opportunity of committing murder, partly on account of their natural instincts for murder, but more probably because they wished to acquire some small objects, such as nails, tomahawks, or knives,

which they coveted, and which, like children, after their possession for a short time, they chucked away. However, after this murder the whole district turned out, among them Mr. Raven, and from him I have got the story which I am about to relate. They followed the blacks into some rough country, and came on them in camp at night. They surrounded the camp, and waited for daylight, when the leader of the party was to fire his gun as a signal for them to attack. But, before the gun was fired, one of the blackfellows got up at his fire, and picked up a flask of powder, one of the old 3 F flasks of black powder (everything was muzzle-loading in those days), and he amused himself by pouring a little into his hand and throwing it on to the coals, and was delighted with the puff, but, not satisfied with this, he started to pour the powder out of the flask into the fire. Of course, you can imagine what happened; there was a great explosion; the blackfellow, I suppose, was a bit damaged, but that explosion saved the leader from firing his gun. The attack commenced. Of course, this was really a war, like the present, of extermination, or to a finish, to give the blacks a lesson not to make war again, and all that stopped were shot, but numbers, of course, got away.

On looking through the camp Raven discovered a blackboy about ten years old hidden among the goods that had been left behind, among which were a lot of articles that had been taken from Wills's house. Raven wanted a blackboy, so he secured him and carried him on his horse in front of him, and the party proceeded to follow the blacks who had escaped. They had considerable difficulty in following the

tracks in some places, and this blackboy quite joined in the hunt, and tracked the blacks in a marvellous manner, pointing from the horse's back which way the tracks went, and they were able to follow them up. That night the party camped at a deserted hut, and Raven was very much afraid that his boy might bolt in the night, so he put a piece of string across the door with a bell on it, so that the boy would make a noise if he went out by ringing the bell. He did go out in the night, but not with the intention of bolting, for he was in great alarm when he fell over the string, and the bell started jingling, and some of the party got up and brought him back. However, they changed the string business then, and put the bell on his neck, and whenever he moved or went anywhere he used to ring his bell, which he carried for a considerable time after, and was very proud of. When he went to get the horses, which might be some distance away, he rang his bell from the time he left till he came back, and seemed to think it was the funniest toy possible.

I will now give you another story, the truth of which I can vouch for. When I went up to Headingly, on the Georgina River, I met a blackfellow there who was offsideing for the horsedriver, and was called Archie. It appears that when Headingly was first taken up the gentleman who took it up brought up his wife, and she got a girl from the blacks, whom she educated and made into a real good servant, and Archie was the horse-boy. I fancy that the ladies, at any rate, did not stop very long on Headingly, but went to a station nearer in, taking Archie and the black girl. Of course, as a natural

result, she became "married," probably after the blacks' fashion, but as this did not quite correspond with the lady's ideas of morality she insisted upon their being married in the orthodox manner in a church. Of course, Archie told me the story soon after I went to Headingly. He said: "I am married man; I married long a church; I'm going to get divorce; soon as I get thousand pounds I'm going to the Government get divorce." He was up there when I left, but had gone with the blacks altogether, given up work, and I did not hear that he has yet succeeded in getting his divorce from his gin.

These unfortunate blacks are born to be robbed by someone, though the Queensland Government—I am speaking of Queensland now, the black in New South Wales is *non est*—is continually trying to make laws to render the blacks' conditions better, but the attempt to protect them by law, as if they understood law or conditions, is utterly absurd. The last attempt that I know of which was made to enact something for the benefit of the blacks was a law to make every station-owner have an agreement with his blacks, this agreement to be made before a clerk of petty sessions (which was generally a solitary policeman a hundred miles from anywhere). The agreement was that the blackfellow was hired—you could not engage gins at all—for five shillings a week, with clothes and food; half of this five shillings was to be paid to the blackfellow, and the other half was to be paid to his account with the C.P.S., which was meant to ensure the blacks getting their full wage, but it did not work to the advantage of the black. The money that was paid to the C.P.S. the blackfellow never saw, nor

did anybody else. Of course, the blaek went over for his money, but the C.P.S. did not know him, and, of course, wanted a receipt from the blackfellow, which, naturally, he could not get, and after the blackfellow had hung around for a while, he took a few shillings in silver, and was glad to get away; but the blacks dropped down to it, in some instanees at any rate. My blacks at Headingly would have nothing to do with the agreement, but rather preferred to leave their payment in the station-owner's hands, and I applied for an exemption for them, and it was allowed in my case, at any rate, and when the whole was summed up the blacks got a great deal more than their five shillings a week, and I think always did prior to the agreement. They do not get it in money, but they take it out in stores.

When some of their sisters, eousins or aunts came round they liked to give them a good spread, and rations of all sorts (beef, of course, was given to them) were supplied to them, and they generally wanted to know how much was eoming to them, and then they would take it out in rations for the tribe. Then a eireus, or raees, or something, would happen in the distriet, and you had to give them one pound apiece, or something like that, to go and have their bit of fun. A hawker, too, frequently eame along, and they always required something from him; and the useless rubbish that they bought for extravagant prices always ran their accounts into debt. I never yet saw a blackfellow's account that was not in debt, or which would have been in debt if he had been allowed to, so this attempt of the Crown at seeing that they were not robbed was really preventing their

feeding their friends and connections, and they never had anything to take at all.

I have told you that a great many of the gins are "Minnies"—it is a stock name. "Minnie," from Headingly, went to the C.P.S. for her blanket, and he asked her what was her name. She said: "Minnie." "Minnie what?" "Minnie, Minnie." "Minnie what?" "Minnie, myself." She ought to have said "Minnie from Headingly," because the names of all the blacks due for blankets are sent in from the different holdings, but she got the blanket when she told the C.P.S. that she was "Minnie, me gory self."

Under this law of agreements for the blacks I was once informed by the constable at Urandangie that the blacks could be brought back by warrant if they broke their agreement; and his blackfellow, having gone for a "walk-about" without permission, he wanted me to give him a summons, or warrant, I forget which, to fetch him back; and also wanted me to sit on the case and give the black a few weeks' gaol at Urandangie, because he wanted some wood cut. I told him that there was no law for punishing blacks for breaking their agreements. He said: "Yes, there is; I'll show it to you in the Statute Book when you come down; they can be punished the same as whites." "Well," I said, "if that is the law you will have to get someone else to administer it, for I certainly will not."

To show the absurdity of this law, if it is law. On one occasion I had bought a lot of sheep in Queensland, and I had to send a party of drovers for them—station men and station plant, as in those days there

were very few who made droving a business. I got everything ready to go, and was sending a black-fellow with them to bring along the spare horses, etc., and, as all the men who were going were getting agreements, of course, Billy wanted an agreement too, which I told him I would give him, but I had forgotten about it until they were about starting on the trip when he said: "I want my agreement." It happened that that morning a travelling agent for a circus had come along and handed me a big pictured play-bill of the performance, which I had stuck in my pocket. I handed this over to Billy opened wide; it showed a lady jumping through a hoop off a horse's back, a lion in one corner, and a clown in the other; and he stared at it with his eyes and mouth open. "This the agreement, Boss?" "Yes, Billy," I said, "that's the agreement." He folded it up, and went away quite happy. About three months after they came back with the sheep, and when I was paying off the men he came up smiling for his money, and pulled out the circus play-bill. Now, how in the name of conscience can anyone expect a blackfellow to keep an agreement, or punish him for not doing so?

However, a very few more years will see the last of the blacks in Queensland. There are very few, if any, in New South Wales and Victoria now; and they will be exterminated in Queensland within the next twenty years I think. Their usefulness will be over, and they can be done without, which it would have been difficult to do in the earlier occupation of the country, but, as I have said, their usefulness is now done, and I doubt if they have any hereafter;

our ideas of heaven, at any rate, would not appeal to the soul of a blackfellow; and we can only say "Let them R.I.P."

The homing instinct of the blacks is the same as that of any of the other lower animals. I have described the horses getting back to the places where they were born and bred, and the same instinct must belong to the blacks, as they are able to find their way home as long as they have no sea or big water to cross. This is exemplified by the two blackfellows who murdered a man in Gippsland, Victoria, and found their way home to the north coast of Queensland, from which they were brought by steamer to Victoria. To tell the story as I know it, these two blacks, with a number of others, were imported from Athol on the north coast of Queensland, to track the Kelly bushrangers. After the Kellys were taken, the trackers were all taken back to Queensland except these two, who remained in Victoria. They knocked about there for some considerable time, but at last got very homesick, and determined to go back to their own country and people. Without money or food of any sort, the tramp of some three or four thousand miles was an undertaking that would daunt anybody but a blackfellow, but they had sense enough to know that they must have some weapons for killing game for food while on the track.

There was an old man who lived in a hut in the bush by himself, who had a rifle and cartridges, and the only way that they could obtain these was to murder him. Of course, to us civilised people, this was a dreadful crime, but it was their only hope of getting back to their country, and they murdered him,

took his rifle and ammunition and some tea and sugar, I think, and started on their long tramp. I cannot remember now, but I think that they were never seen after the murder; they followed the Blue Mountain Range right round till they got near their own country and joined their own people. Now this, in my opinion, was a very remarkable performance for a blackfellow, who knows nothing of maps or compass, to have been able to strike out and go three or four thousand miles without getting any information, and I think it amounts to instinct.

Of course, no one knew where they were, though the whole country was on the alert to secure them, and they would probably have lived and died among their own people had not the tribe, or some of them, given them away, and reported them to the police, who, of course, made them prisoners, and they paid the penalty of the law. Knowing the blacks, as I do, this looks to me as nothing less than murder, but our civilised laws make no excuses for a poor blackfellow that cannot pay the fee for a leading barrister, and has no friends to petition for a remittance of justice, like the I.W.W.'s of to-day. However, I am not a pleader, and if I were I am too late on the scene. I have simply mentioned this to point out what seems to me the marvellous instinct of the lower animals, to which the blacks are a near approach.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH I GO TO GURLEY.

AFTER leaving Scrubby Range I came down to Sydney, and stopped with my mother at Gladesville, while I was on the look-out for something to do. I think it was the day after I got to my mother's that Mr. David Campbell (the man who shot O'Meally) came to see me in the early morning, and asked me if I would take an overseer's billet under him as manager of Kiticarara station, to which I agreed; and he asked me to meet him in Sydney the following day, which I did, and we fixed up an agreement that I was to go up on to the station immediately and learn from the overseer who was there all about the sheep and station, but that my salary would not commence until the overseer left, which would be in about nine months. However, I thought I was very lucky in getting something to do so soon, and gladly accepted the terms; but I met Mr. Macansh that day or a few days after, and he told me that he had just bought Gurley, and was going up in a few days to take delivery, and he asked me what I was doing. I told him about my agreement with Mr. Campbell, who was taking Mr. Macansh's place at Kiticarara, and that he wanted me to go up at once to learn about the sheep and station. Mr. Macansh said: "What's he giving you?" and I mentioned the sum,

but that I was to get nothing for nine months. "Oh," he said, "that's not fair; Campbell's getting his salary, and I think that you are entitled to get yours; and it won't take you nine months or anything like it to pick up all you require to know." "Well," I said, "if you think so, and Mr. Campbell would agree to it, I should like very much to go up and help you, if I could be any good, in taking delivery of Gurley." There was nothing more said at the time, but a few days after I met Macansh again in Sydney, and he said: "How long will it take you to get ready to go up to Gurley with me?" "Oh," I said, "it won't take me long." "Well," he said, "can you meet me at eleven o'clock to-night on the Newcastle boat leaving Sydney?" I said "Yes," and met him, and went with him to Gurley.

We took a single buggy and one horse in the steamer with us, and we drove that buggy and horse to Gurley from Newcastle—the railway was just about up to Maitland at that time. We got to Gurley all right; found the country very dry; in fact, a drought was on, but, of course, there was not much stock on it; the fifty thousand sheep that were bought with the place came from Burburgit, or somewhere on the Namoi, because the whole of the Namoi, on both sides from Gunnedah to Narrabri, was the property of the Lloyds, principally John Charles Lloyd, from whom Macansh bought Gurley. I am rather particular in giving all details of this time in my life, as it was really my turning-point from boyhood to a man's responsibilities, the transition only taking a few days. The manager of Gurley was ill in bed when we arrived, and we did not see him for several days.

His wife and the wife's sister were there, and they looked upon me, as they did upon all the overseers on Gurley and the other stations owned by Mr. Lloyd, as not good enough for their society. Mr. Macansh and myself had a small room given to us in the store building, and we went for our meals only into the house. It was very soon apparent to me that I was not supposed to go into the house, no place was ever set for me, and I always had to go to the kitchen for my plate and cup, which, of course, I did willingly, and appeared to take no notice; but on one occasion the tea was being passed down, and I was passing his tea on to Mr. Lloyd, who was at the head of the table, but he told me to keep it, so I put it down on the table, because I knew that that tea was not intended for me. When the cup that was meant for me came down the table, on the opposite side to me, Mr. Lloyd took it, and Mrs. ——— said "Mr. Barton has got Mr. Lloyd's tea." "Oh, it's all alike," said Mr. Lloyd good-humouredly. "No," said Mrs. ———, "Mr. Barton gets no cream in his tea," and I smilingly handed it over, and said: "I think you had better take your own tea, Mr. Lloyd." I know Mr. Lloyd felt that slight to me far more than I did myself, but matters got worse and worse, and I decided to join the other overseers, all of whom were gentlemen, and take my meals in the kitchen, which I did, but Mr. Macansh, in passing the kitchen to go and get his dinner, saw me sitting at the table, and he came and sat there too. I said to him, "Oh, you go in and have your dinner; you are all right; they will treat you all right," and I tried hard to persuade him to go and have his dinner as usual, and

not take any notice of it, but he said: "If the kitchen's good enough for you, it's good enough for me." I said, "Oh, I am not going to be the cause of trouble, and I'll go into the house and I'll stop there till they kick me out, and under any circumstances." So I appeared again at the table, but not very often, for I generally managed to be too late for their dinner or other meals, and, of course, went to the kitchen to get what I wanted.

There was a very great deal of trouble in getting delivery of the station. The sheep delivered were not, in many instances, according to description of sheep purchased, in ages principally, and there were some very vigorous and wordy arguments; but I must say this for old J. C. Lloyd—he was a perfect gentleman when out of the sheep yards, and amusing and extremely gentlemanly in his manners in the house. Of course, I frequently met Mr. ———, the manager, and we certainly did not foregather, and on one occasion he had been removing some property which was sold with the station, and I accused him of it, and he said that he was still managing the place, and would do what he liked; and I told him that I would stop him. He said: "How will you stop it?" "Oh," I said, "I'll wring your blasted neck." Picking up one of his little children, he said: "Perhaps you might, you are bigger than me." I said "Yes, and don't you interfere with anything that is put down as station property." However, Mr. Macansh interfered between us, and made peace, but I just mention that for what it is worth. Of course, all this time, and up to the twenty-seventh day of March, 1867, I was only assisting Mr. Macansh as a friend, but on

that day—never to be forgotten—the delivery was completed, and he started back for Sydney. He told me that morning that he was going to leave me to manage the property until Mr. Edwards, who was the overseer at Kiticarara, could be spared to come up, and I would then take Edwards's place, according to the agreement with Campbell. I said: "But how about Mr. Campbell; will he be satisfied?" "Oh, yes," said Mr. Macansh, "I will square it with Mr. Campbell," and he got into the buggy and drove away.

I opened the slip-rails for him to go through, and I put them up again, and, leaning on the rails, I watched that buggy wending its way across the plain for about five miles, feeling, like Atlas, that the weight of the world was on me, and even now, looking back, it was a great responsibility to leave on so young a person. Fifty thousand sheep, no fencing in those days, no huts or yards, as they never ran more than about ten thousand on Gurley previously; and I can remember the crushed feeling that I had as I watched that buggy go away bearing the last ray of hope; and I can remember thinking "Well, I've got to make my way in the world, and I've got a splendid start; if I can do it I'll be all right, and I will do it, or do my very best to satisfy everyone." Previous to this my whole aim and object in life was to ride a horse, either bucking or in the bush, mountain or scrub, as well or better than anybody else. The real object in life, or making money or name, never entered my mind, as long as my hat was on my house was thatched; but in that hour in which I watched

Mr. Macansh drive away, the whole of my former life was changed, and I had to come on the stage in an entirely fresh role—a man with responsibilities and position—and I am happy to say that I succeeded perhaps better than I ever thought to, and hold a testimonial given to me by Mr. Macansh (without being asked) that speaks for itself.

During the four or five years that I was on Gurley I had more experience in every subject connected with grazing than falls to most people's lot in a lifetime. I had one of the finest possible men to work for, one of the best judges of sheep, who spared no trouble in teaching me what I could learn, and I think I was naturally fitted for stock, and I learned the good and bad qualities of sheep and wool more readily than most people. Then, we had law suits over disputed boundaries, which disputed country had to be occupied by both parties, and the occupation consisted in rescuing your stock from the other owners of the land, who endeavoured to take them to the pound, and making raids on their stock for the same purpose. To reports of these raids I will perhaps devote a chapter. I also got a great deal of experience in buying and selling stock, and a smattering of machinery, because we put up a large hot-water sheep-washing plant; of course, the shearing machines did not come in till about 1888, when I had to learn all about them, as I was one of the first to put them in in New South Wales, and a great trouble they were.

In telling you I was left at Gurley as sole boss, I have hardly explained the whole of the circumstances under which I was left, though my great good

fortune was a heavy storm of rain that christened me on the first day of my management, and was a wonderful blessing, as I do not know how I should have got on had the drought continued. As it was, looking back to-day, it was a big undertaking. The manager who was on Gurley when we arrived there was still on the place, and had possession of the house when Mr. Macansh left, telling me—"I leave him to your tender mercies; you must not pull the house down, but I do not care a straw about the house; you can cut it down stump high to get him out of it; but you must not pull the posts out of the ground." I said that I had an idea of filling it up with stones, chucking them in through the windows and doors in cartloads, and he said that that would be a good idea. However, I hit upon a much better plan. As I had two big flocks of sheep—about four thousand—at a station which belonged to the adjoining station, which was owned by Mr. Lloyd, I thought that it would be as well to leave those sheep where they were, and let him occupy the house; so I said nothing about it, and my cook cooked for him, and I lived in the hut and kitchen as I had done previously, though the role was changed—I was boss, he was nothing. There were certainly a few rather unpleasant little scenes, but not of much moment. The first, I remember, was over the beef; I put a storekeeper over the store, and told him to distribute the meat fairly between everyone, not to keep any particular pieces for anyone, to salt it into the cask, and to distribute it to the shepherds or anybody as it came. Mrs. ——— came to the storekeeper for some beef, but she wanted to cut the undercut of all the roasting pieces out for

steak for her household, and this the storekeeper objected to, saying that my instructions were that he was to serve it out to all alike as it was cut up. On my coming home that evening she met me, in tears, and said that she could only get a piece of hard ribs from the storekeeper, and that Mr. So-and-so could not eat it, and wouldn't I tell the storekeeper to let them have the meat as they had always had it on the station. I told her that I would not alter the rule, though it was difficult to see a lady in such distress, but still I thought that my boss and myself had had nothing but "hard ribs" and enjoyed them, and I would not alter the rule.

The cows were milked as usual, and the whole of the milk went to the house, but some alarm had been given that I was going to stop the milk, which, of course, I had never any idea of doing, and I was again interviewed by the lady. I told her that, as far as the milk was concerned I had done without it ever since I had been there, and I could continue to do so, and that she was perfectly welcome to all the milk the cows gave, for which she expressed herself very thankful.

Then Mr. ——— one day told me to move the sheep that were on the boundary, the hut and yards of which were on his side. I was ready for this, and told him that I was prepared to move the sheep within a week after he left the house. Of course, he snorted a bit, but I was adamant on that point—it was my trump card—I had nowhere to put the sheep, and the matter blew over, and I kept the sheep there for some time after he had left the house, and I felt proud that I got the best of that deal, for my

employer, at any rate. If I gave you all the little incidents that happened at this period of my life it would take up too much time, and some people might think that I was blowing my own trumpet to too great an extent, which probably would be a fact, for, as I said at the beginning—

“For people’s lives, full well we know,
Two sets of things recall,
The one of which they always tell,
The other not at all.”

After two years of strenuous exertion Mr. Macansh came up to see for himself how I had fulfilled my stewardship. Of course, I wrote to him weekly, or monthly, and sent balance-sheets of stock and money used on the place. I had to make up, I remember, a quarterly return of stock, and I do not know about the returns for expenditure, but I know I had to make up one for the first twelve months. The expenditure, I can remember well the amount, was over seventeen thousand pounds (cheques drawn) for the twelve months. This to me seemed to be an enormous sum, and I could not see how it had been expended; still, there it was, and I had no idea that the amount would have been anything like that, and when I found out what it was I had a sleepless night or two, and thought my career had come to a close, and I did not feel comfortable about it until I got Mr. Macansh’s letter saying he had received the statements, and was quite satisfied. Of course, when I sent the statement I had sent a few lines explaining that I did not know how all this money had been used, but it had, and I could not see how it could have been done without, or words to

that effect. However, his answer was that I had done remarkably well, and that he was quite satisfied.

While on the subject of my old boss. His letters were concise, and such as no other man ever wrote. I remember writing to him and saying that there were a large number of fat sheep on the station then, but prices were so low in Sydney, I did not like to start them without consulting him, and asking his advice as to whether to send them away or hold them for a rise. He replied: "If the sheep are fat sell them; the price they bring is no business of yours." On another occasion I advised that it would be a good spec to buy some store sheep—wethers—to fatten; the country was very good; I could get the sheep for something like four shillings, and we could probably get seven shillings for them when fat. His reply again was concise—"You are managing the station, not me;" and those lines made a man of me; they showed me that I had responsibilities, and that I had to show my employer that I was worthy of his trust, and any spec that did not come off as well as I anticipated I always felt that I should offer what little money I had earned to help to pay for the loss.

CHAPTER IX.

ON WEATHER AND VEGETATION.

I HAVE been asked by many of my friends to give my opinions on the different parts of the country that I know something about on the growth of vegetation, and, last but not least, on the weather and the chances of seasons being good or bad. About the last I can only say that you must ask me something easier, for, although I have followed the Russell theory of the nineteen years' cycle, and for one cycle found it fairly correct (and on two occasions successfully bought stations on the prospect of rain coming soon after), that is the only cycle that has supported the Russell theory as far as my experience goes.

I mentioned that I took delivery of Gurley on the twenty-seventh of March, 1867, which was the day Macansh left me in charge. It rained that afternoon—a splendid storm—and I had a magnificent season for the year 1867, but 1868 was a very dry one. Nineteen years after (1886) I bought Burren under similar circumstances of drought that I remember when I went to Gurley, and on the sixth of April I had plenty of rain and a splendid season. I may add that I felt so sure of my cycle recurring favourably that I bought a number of cattle that were travelling for agistment before the sixth of April

(when the rain fell), and they were not delivered till the grass was up to their knees. I once more backed that cycle nineteen years afterwards, when I bought Bidnam, in Queensland, under exactly similar drought conditions to those under which I went to Gurley and to Burren. However, I purchased it at drought price, and before I took delivery of it I bought over thirty thousand sheep that were on agistment or travelling in the district. These sheep had all to be delivered, and though they were not far off, the floods and rain prevented their reaching Bidnam till some time in June, and I did well out of them. So much for that cycle; but I may tell you that I kept a record of all the seasons from 1867 till I went to Queensland in 1905, when I gave up recording them, because the conditions were different. Of course, in my records I only put down what happened in my own district, and my record does not tally with many others, even within a hundred miles radius, and their drought might not break up for a month or two after I had sufficient rain to say that I was safe, but that happens more or less all over the States, and there is very seldom droughts that we could call universal—droughts that are bad everywhere. The drought that ended in 1902 was, I think, the worst we ever had, though the one that is just over (1915-1916) was probably as bad, only that I was not in it, as I was then living right in the north-west—on the Georgina—where the season was one of the best.

But to go back to the cycle. Of course, what knocks Russell's theory out is the 1864 flood, which still holds the record as the biggest flood ever known in the north-west of New South Wales, and that flood

occurred in September, and is the only one on record that occurred in that month. The September previous to 1864 was, according to Russell's book, one of the wettest months, but since that, till last September at any rate, it has been one of the driest, so that the only conclusion I can arrive at on Russell's theory is that it works sometimes; still, I think it is all luck, and that unless we get the monsoonal rains in the autumn, or after Christmas, the whole continent is more or less likely to have a drought.

There is another thing that I have a fad about. I notice that if the rain comes in from the north, on the western side of the York Peninsula, it very often comes right down through the centre of Australia, and ensures a good year. This year it came in all right, but only reached the north-western districts of Queensland, and, though they got copious rain and floods, there was nothing to speak of south of Longreach, and the drought was very severe right down to Melbourne, so that my theory of the weather and drought all depends upon the monsoonal rains. That is all the information I can give you on the weather, though I might add that if the monsoons come in on the eastern side of the Peninsula they seldom cross the dividing range, and follow the coast-line right round, which accounts for the good rainfalls that appear on the coast—both in New South Wales and Queensland—when the interior is dry, and *vice versa* when the storm comes in on the other side of the Peninsula—it then makes floods inland and a less rainfall on the coast. However, in writing this I know I am writing of what I really know little about.

I would like to say that I am not a Joseph, a

dreamer, nor an interpreter of dreams, for if I had been I should have made more use of my powers than to have been nothing more than a magnanimous savage to my own brothers. Still, I think that the years of lean and the years of plenty recur the same in the interior of Australia as they did in Egypt, both being drought-stricken countries. The cycles, as I take them, go about ten years—a few years of plenty at the start, followed by seasons with a decreasing rainfall that ends in a drought. Then begins a fresh cycle, with a plentiful rain supply for one year only, followed by one year of very dry weather, then the good seasons go on for four or five years till they once more peter out, and the drought starts again.

The year 1867, when I started to take note of seasons, was the year I went to Gurley, which was then suffering from a very dry period. On the twenty-eighth of March of that year we got copious rains, the results of which I will tell you of later on, but 1868 was a very dry year, also '69; '70 was one of the wettest seasons known, and the good seasons continued till 1878, which was a very dry year; '79 was a good one, then comes another run of good seasons up to 1887. The year 1888 was, I think, the driest year on record; then there was a good run of seasons up till 1897. This year is fixed in my memory, as it was the year that our leases terminated, and I had, unfortunately, bought a rather large number of sheep to try and make something before my land was taken away, on which, of course, I lost money, and you may call this the start of the big drought which broke up fairly generally in New

South Wales in 1902, but which did not break up in Queensland till 1905, or very early in 1906, and as I found that my records of the seasons did not tally at all with the tropical parts of Queensland I gave up record keeping.

With regard to vegetation. I have kept records of the rainfalls and the months in which they came, and also of the grass or herbage that those rains produced, and I have formed a theory of my own, which I have cautiously expressed to some people, but never felt that they believed in my theory, and put it down to a lunatic's dream. What I hold I can prove is that we seldom get a prolific crop of the same variety of herbage for two years running, and I have come to the conclusion that prolific crops only grow when some chemical required by certain crops is put into the ground, and the seeds may lie dormant for years, until, by the decomposition of the various other classes of herbage, aided by the action of the wind and sun, the chemical properties again predominate, and cause a growth so profuse as to exhaust the ground to such an extent that it takes years to recover. This, strange to say, applies to the imported grasses, such as the variegated Scotch thistle, and the trefoil; also to the Bathurst burr.

I can remember somewhere about 1863 or 1864 the variegated Scotch thistle made its first appearance on Boree, or, at any rate, that was the first time that I really noticed it, and the circumstance is impressed on my memory by the tremendous increase in the bronzewing pigeons that came to feed on the seed of the thistle. In a very short time the surrounding country was covered with this thistle. On

one occasion I drove a brake to Cowra, and from Canowindra to Cowra I was driving through this variegated Scotch thistle, and I often wondered how if we had met anything, we could have passed, as the thistle heads were so high in places that I could pluck the flowers from the brake seat, and there was no trouble in driving the horses—they never went off the track. This state of things lasted, more or less, for some time on those rich flats, and the thistles also took possession of the Wellington Valley, and the Bell River flats were a mass of thistles, and very good feed they were; and I think that when the flats were covered with this Scotch thistle the country carried more stock to the acre than it has ever done since. Certainly, when the thistles died, the ground was as black as your boot—no sign of any vegetation, but it was also covered with a great deal of the seed, which the sheep managed to find, and did well on, and the dried thistle stalk was eaten by the cattle and horses. The horses, when it was green, used to bruise it by pawing it with their front hoofs to get rid of the thorns. However, it did not take the thistles long to exhaust these flats—a few years and they virtually disappeared. Of course, there were always a number of thistles scattered about, but no excessive crop.

They were followed, I fancy, by the Bathurst* burr, which for some years monopolised everything in the shape of good country. Burr-cutting, of course, was tried, and I have seen miles and miles of nothing but burr, which it would have taken a Prussian army to eradicate, but it gradually disappeared, not that

*Whilst this book is in the press (Feb., 1917) I have been told that both the burr and the thistle are again prolific in the aforesaid districts.

there is not always a sufficiency to keep the seed going, and I am perfectly certain that there is enough seed in the ground to bring that crop back again, probably in greater profusion than ever, when the right time comes, or the chemical that the seed requires is put back into the ground; the same with the Scotch thistle, which I think will probably make its appearance again very shortly.

Then for the clover, which I believe is an indigenous grass. I have seen perhaps five or six prolific clover seasons (what I call a prolific season is when the clover on the flats is knee-high and hardly a leaf of any other herbage is to be seen). You never see anything eating it when it is green like that, but you never see anything poor; a horse kept in a yard full of clover has always got his head over the slip-rail, but he is always fat, and, of course, when it dries and the seed falls to the ground it leaves the country very like the thistle—bare—but the seed, by the action of the wind, gets put up in little ridges, as if it had been raked up by a miniature mowing machine, and the horses, cattle, and sheep are never poor while there is any of that seed getatable. Of course, light showers of rain will cover the seed with earth, and there will be perhaps a great shoot in the seed; but if not followed up by more rain it will very soon disappear. There may be several attempts of the seed to grow, and one would feel inclined to say that it had all germinated, but it has not, but five, six or ten years after, perhaps, you will see again the same prolific growth, when it will monopolise the whole of the country it grows on.

The same thing exactly applies to all the other

herbages that I know anything about. When I went up to Gurley, in 1867, I have told you there was a drought on, and the rain came on the twenty-seventh of March and broke it up. In my opinion these droughts are sent for the good of the country, because it is the only way in which it would be allowed to lie fallow. Had we every season good, with floods and rain, and the one set of vegetation, the greed of man would overstock the country till it would carry nothing, just as they did some years ago in the Argentine, when they made their country what we term "sheep-sick," but, by the way, this country is cultivated by the Power above. With rotation of crops and the lying fallow of the ground we can do our best to destroy the recuperative nature of the country without succeeding. After every drought the recuperation of herbage, whichever comes, is as good, or better than the preceding break-up.

I was speaking of Gurley in 1867, when I had twenty thousand ewes to lamb in about September. Of course, the sheep were all shepherded in those days, and to lamb a flock of two thousand sheep it took about four men to mind the different lots until the lambs got into what we called the "strong mob," and nearly everyone believed that unless ewes were locked up with their lambs in a pen for a period of twenty-four or forty-eight hours they would not take to the lambs, and allow them to suck, so that lambing in those days was an expensive and tedious process, and many ewes were hunted away from their lambs in trying to pen the ewe and the lamb that was supposed to be hers. You can well imagine that I had rather a tough job before me with my twenty

thousand ewes to lamb, particularly as I had only succeeded in getting up very temporary bow yards, and no hurdles to make pens. I have told you that the herbage was prolific on the open downs, principally wild carrot, and in the valléys (among the myalls) the sow-thistle grew in large patches, perhaps a mile square, and sometimes occupying the whole of the valley for some miles in length and perhaps half-a-mile wide. When the ewes started lambing, though most of the places had the right quantity of men to look after them, according to the then idea of lambing sheep, what with quarrels among the men and men that were of no use at all, I very soon got down to a shepherd and a hut-keeper. One day, just at the commencement of the lambing, I rode into one of these patches of sow-thistle for some distance—the sow-thistle was as thick as it could grow, and I could not see over it from my horse—and an idea struck me. I got a bush-scythe and some blacks, and I cut a lane in through to the centre of one of these patches with the scythe, the blacks throwing what I had cut on top of what was standing at the side, and when we got to the middle I cleared a small patch, throwing the thistles that were cut to one side. I drove the ewes and lambs that were dropped each day at the nearest lambing yard to where I had cut the thistles, and put them in this yard, and I had no more bother with them. The whole flock were lambed and put in those yards (which I had made at every lambing place), and I never saw them till they ate their way out—fat and jolly. The result of that lambing was that I weaned at six months old over twenty thousand lambs out of my twenty-two thousand

ewes, which is the best record for that number of sheep that I have ever heard of, especially when they were lambed by hand, as they were in those days.

I have seen the sow-thistle once or twice since taking possession, as it were, of the patches of country that suited it, but never to the same height or vigorous growth as on that occasion. The average thickness of the stalk that I cut with that scythe would be about equal to an inch-and-a-half. Some of my readers may think this an exaggeration, but I firmly believe, as I see it now in my mind's eye, that it is perfectly correct.

There is another of our natural herbage which takes some years between its prolific crops, but is one of the best that we have. Some people call it the "wild parsnip," but the right name is the *berang* (the blacks' name); I do not know, whether it has a botanical name or not. It consists of a clump or bunch of radishes about three inches long, and about as thick as a radish of that length. They grow in a very close mass, and the leaf, of course, grows up from the crown of these little radishes very much like the carrot. The bunches run from ten or a dozen up to hundreds perhaps, and the head grows about a foot or eighteen inches above the ground, and is the same colour as a carrot. When you see a few acres of ground covered with this it looks very nice, and the stock pay particular attention to it. In the summer, when the dry time is on, after a season of this *berang* you have no trouble in knowing where the sheep are, there is always a cloud of dust to be seen where they are all digging for these *berang* roots, and as long as they can dig, or find something by

digging, the sheep will do well. It is splendidly nutritious food, but, like everything else, it does not come half often enough.

Then, again, the same thing exactly applies to our crowfoot and carrots, and every other weed, whether very good or middling for food, they all take their turns.

Another question that I have been frequently asked, especially by the Government rent collectors, is—"What will your run carry in sheep?" I think as I have explained the differences between the growths and herbage that I might well reply—"It would depend upon what herbage grew in the winter as to what stock the country would carry, or upon what was the rainfall, and at what time of the year the rain fell." When all these things are taken into consideration it makes the carrying capacity of your holding a conundrum that no amount of figures or experience can solve.

Such is my experience, for what it is worth, but all that I have said about herbage does not, of course, apply to the part of the country I have just left—on the Georgina—where we only get our rain in the monsoonal season, which starts in December, and (for the five years I have been there) we have always had good rains on Christmas Day, and the wet season ends in February. I may add that the wet season is nothing more nor less than a succession of small patches of terrific storms of rain, some of which I will describe exactly, as I saw what happened.

On one occasion I was at a bore twenty miles from the head station, and started in with the buggy in the morning; there was a warm sun, but patches

of heavy clouds, principally in the north. I had jogged along some five or six miles, with the hood up, when I was suddenly startled by a terrific clap of thunder, accompanied by lightning, and almost at the same moment I was wet through. I had been jogging along thinking, with my reins slack, when this occurred, and the horses started off the track, and before I could gather up my reins and straighten them up the hood was blown off the buggy, which almost capsized. I was wet through, and when I got the horses back on the road (which did not take more than a few seconds), the water was some inches deep along the track, and pouring down through the cracks in the ground (which before the rain had not been visible), making altogether quite a noise similar to a small waterfall. I do not know to what depth these cracks went, and I had no idea of getting out of the buggy and gauging them at that time, but ploughed on through the mud and water for a mile or so, when I got out of the storm, and the ground became dry enough to again jog along. I went out of my road a little to go by another of the bores, which was five miles from the head station, and here again I came into a sea of water, and the man, who was pumper at the bore, told me he put a pint measure out in the rain, and it was filled and running over in a very short time. His estimate was five inches of rain in that patch. I went on home, the country getting drier and drier, and when I got a mile-and-a-half from home the dust was blowing from the horses' feet, and I got home just about sundown. While I was having my dinner that evening a terrific storm fell on the house, and the following morning a very large water-

hole that had been dry for years was full and running over. I forget the amount of rain that was measured in that storm, but I know it ran over the gauge.

I got a horse later in the day and rode up the tributary of the Georgina River, on which the house is situated, to look at another very large water-hole some five miles farther up. The first mile or so was very heavy work for the horse, but when I got to this other water-hole there was not a sign of a drop of rain having fallen there, and the hole was as dry as it had been for at least a year. However, very shortly after that a storm fell on that hole, and it was filled up, but none of that storm fell at the house. The rivers ran from storms higher up, and we considered that we had done very well, and it was not for many months after that I found out that over a very large area of the run, in the south-western corner, there had never been a drop of rain. Still, as the rainfalls are taken at the head station, always that quantity is supposed to have fallen on the whole of the run, which in that part of Queensland are fairly large areas. But some months after the rainy season is over large patches of country can be found on which no rain had fallen.

Of course, I can only speak of what I saw, but I feel sure that the whole of that district of what you might term Central Australia gets its rainfall, or its no-rainfall, under the same conditions. Of course, the old hands tell me that I have never seen a wet season; well, perhaps not, but I only believe what I see, and not what I hear, and in these records I try to stick to that.

In writing these reminiscences I find it very

difficult to confine myself to the past or early history with the conditions of the present or later events continually intruding, and my dates (specially in the early part) will only be approximate, as they are from memory, as I have kept no record at all after going to Queensland, and destroyed what I had previously kept, as I found that I could find out nothing by continuing them. The heavy rains which occurred one year in, say February, brought up a prolific crop of one of the sorts of vegetation, but the same rain in the same month of the following year brought up something quite different, and all I can say is that you have to be thankful for what you get in the shape of herbage, but you will always get something of which the time has come for the rotation of crop. This is my experience, and you can take it for what it is worth.

As an instance, this is what happened in 1914 and 1915 (which, of course, are dates clearly remembered, as they are just past), which will perhaps explain the rotation of crops better than all that I have said previously. On Christmas Day, 1914, we had a heavy storm of rain on Headingly, with succeeding storms up to about the middle of January, making in all some six or seven inches of rain. The river and all water-courses ran high; in fact, the country was fairly flooded. In April or May of that year (perhaps I should say here that this rotation of crops refers only to herbage, the grass remains virtually the same) the whole of the herbage country was covered with pigweed, nothing else grew; it monopolised the whole of the country suited for it, and as the leaves dried off the red colour of the stalks

made the country look like a red plain. The cattle did remarkably well, and the pigweed really lasted them till the following Christmas.

On the same day in 1915 (Christmas Day) we had heavy rain again, which continued in exactly the same way as the year previous—till nearly the end of January, and about the same quantity was registered on the station, but the creeks and river were not so high as in 1914. The growth that year in the herbage country, after the rain ceased, was what is called Flinders grass, which grew in even greater profusion and over a greater extent of country than the pigweed the year before. The Flinders grass really seemed to be choking the standing Mitchell grass, and there was hardly a vestige of pigweed to be seen—just a plant here and there—the Flinders grass having monopolised the country in exactly the same way, or even more so, than the pigweed of the year before; and that herbage is still, though dried, the principal food of the stock, and there is any quantity of it yet. I think those instances, which are beyond doubt, prove what I have been trying to explain in this chapter about the rotation of crops.

CHAPTER X.

PLAGUES OF BIRDS, RATS AND MICE.

WHILE dealing with the weather, vegetation, etc., of Australia I may mention the bird and animal life. These remarks, of course, only apply to what I know of, and that is the drought-stricken plains of northern and western Queensland and New South Wales.

I have noticed that the birds of the different species are some years abnormally profuse; the quail, for instance, come periodically in huge flocks on these plains, and then for many years it will be rare to see one. The same with the flock pigeon, which come down from goodness-knows-where in countless numbers like the quail. I have only seen them once as far south as Burren (between Narrabri and Walgett). It is a good many years ago now since that happened, and I have forgotten what the crop of herbage was that year; they only stopped a short time, seemed to come and nest all over the plains (their nest was simply two eggs on the ground), and in places I have seen from my horse five or six of these nests, that is the eggs or young ones, quite close together, and as soon as the young ones could fly, which does not take long, the whole tribe would disappear in a night just as they had come.

The magpie, of course, in the New England

country or cooler regions than I speak about, is always present, sometimes I think more numerous than others, but they never get so scarce that you miss them entirely, which they do in the interior. At Burren, shortly after I went there, the magpies were very numerous, and I had five pets. They were free to fly about, but came to be fed every morning, and were generally about the house or garden. One of these magpies, christened Faughauballah, was, I think, a remarkable bird. When very young he got into the fowl yard, and the hens nearly killed him and broke one of his thighs. I put a starch bandage on his leg, and kept him in a cage till he recovered, and during that time he learned to whistle—"There 's nae luck about the hoose" and "Boyne Water," and to say a good many words. However, he soon forgot all that when he regained his liberty. Every morning after breakfast I used to feed all my birds, jackass, butcher-birds and five magpies. When I went on to the lawn with my food I used to be covered with birds, head and shoulders and everywhere, and I used to throw a great deal of meat into the air, and the birds would catch it before it reached the ground. The smartest bird on the wing was the jackass.

When Faughauballah took unto himself a wife from the wild tribes I always knew when the young ones were hatched how many he had, as I would throw him a small piece of meat, which he would catch in his beak and stand and look at me. I threw him another; he caught that too, and so on for three or four, and then he flew away, so that I knew the number of young ones to whom he was taking a piece

each. When the young ones were able to fly he invariably brought them into the house and kitchen, walked them through every room, introduced them to the scrap-bucket, butcher's shop, etc., and apparently was very proud of them, but this only lasted for about a week, after which he basted them soundly if they ever came near him, and he would not allow them to come into the garden at all, so, of course, they very soon disappeared.

But the magpies gradually got very much less in the bush, and when old Faughauballah was killed by another magpie there were no magpies to be found on the station. You might see a pair here and there occasionally, but they never, during the time I was there, again increased to anything like the number that were there when I first went up, though I feel sure that probably since I left that part they have been as numerous as ever.

Since writing the foregoing I have been informed by some of my friends who have stations in the west and north-west of New South Wales that the bird life on those salt-bush plains has almost entirely disappeared. This they attribute to the rabbits—the poison-carts to kill the rabbits act as baits for the birds, and the dead rabbit also becomes a home for the fly, and that probably has something to do with the terrible pest of the flies now, which has been an increasing scourge on the sheep farmer for the last twelve years, when it first made its appearance.

There are other birds besides the magpie that have disappeared, such as the black-eyed crow, or raven, which is not a lamb-killer, at any rate, in normal seasons, though I do not know what he might

do in a drought. These birds used to go in large flocks, and after rain, when the grass began to shoot an inch or so above the ground, on riding across the plains you would see flocks of these birds fly up, which has often induced me to go across to where they rose from to see if there was anything dead, but I never found anything, though I noticed that the ground was all full of little holes, which I put down as having been made by the crows' beaks pecking out the worms and grubs.

The ibis, too, was another fellow, with his long bill, that buried his beak in the soft ground to grab some unsophisticated worm or grub, but as they are very migratory in their habits I cannot say that they have decreased all over the country. One year, at Burren, we had a tremendous number of these birds, and they built their nests in the lignum, which does not grow more than twelve or fifteen feet high at the most, but is very dense scrub. A flood came down over this lignum while the birds were building, and, of course, washed their nests and eggs away. There was a dam just at the bottom of the lignum, and when the flood had ceased I went down to see how the dam had stood, and the whole of the shores on both sides, and the dam itself, were covered with ibis eggs, and they certainly never appeared on Burren again in anything like the same numbers.

It may have been that it was simply like the pigeons, quail and other migratory birds that I have described, but the disappearance of the crows, magpies, butcher-birds and twelve-apostles also, makes me think that in poisoning the rabbits we have

interfered with the laws of Nature, and that we are suffering for it now by the plague of flies.

I ought to have said before that I started a garden at Burren, and had very good results for three or four years. I irrigated the ground with water from a well—the water was quite drinkable, but not what you could call fresh—and the vines especially, did very well, but a plague of grubs threatened to destroy them at a very early stage, so I got two young magpies, and as soon as they were able to walk about the garden it was astonishing how the grubs disappeared. As I have told you, I got five afterwards, and never a grub was to be seen; they used to walk round the garden with me, and if there was a grub they could not reach easily they could always point him out to me.

The galahs and corillas (all the same family), budgerigahs, and quarriens, or cockatoo parrots, are just the same, in that they have their seasons when they are almost a plague. At Headingly, in 1914 (the pigweed year), they were in millions, and seriously affected the water-holes near the trees round which they used to roost, but the probabilities are that now they have got down to their normal condition, which is always a good many. The dry weather further south, where the country was suffering from drought, no doubt was the cause of so many of the parrot tribes coming up my way.

The plagues of mice, too, are just as unaccountable as the appearances and disappearances of the birds I have mentioned, especially quail and pigeon, and my idea is that when there is a profusion of seed, which is good for either bird or mouse, that family

increases to a most marvellous extent. The following year or two, perhaps, their supply of food runs out, and they have to migrate to find anything to eat, though the mice and rats especially, are cannibals through hunger, and will eat any mortal thing that they can get, even your hair and finger-nails when you are asleep; candles and slush lamps disappear before them; your saddles, bridles and harness have to be hung up on wire to keep the rats from eating them.

Of course, it is terrible trouble to keep flour, rice, or any vegetable from the depredations of these mice and rats. The rats are particularly troublesome, and on one place I was at we had to build a platform to put our flour on. There was no timber within miles of the place, and then nothing more than a fencing post could be got out of them, and that very crooked, so the stage was put up with galvanised iron only. The walls were all galvanised iron—nine feet sheets sunk in the ground a foot or so—and the flat roof was made of iron the same size, and the bags of flour put on top of that. That, we thought, would lick them, but there is a gentleman rat with a tail like a feather, known as the feather-tailed rat, that can jump nine feet if there is no other way of his getting up, and they used to get up on the flour, and cut holes in the bags and let the flour out for the mob below, so we had to put a tarpaulin all round this flour to keep the rats from cutting the bags. When we had done that there was a good deal of flour brushed off the platform on to the ground, and an idea struck one of our geniuses that it would be a good thing to put some poison in the flour on the ground that night, which was done. I do not know

how many rats were caught, because they never leave any of their dead—simply eat them up—but we got one draught horse which was not eaten up.

These plagues of mice and rats, I think, always come from the north or north-west, and travel south and south-east, but where they finish no one knows; they seem to disappear suddenly, and finish nowhere.

While on this subject perhaps I might tell you what I know about cats and dogs, but to do this I will have to take you back to Gurley. When I took charge the place was overrun with dingoes. I used to shoot wild cattle in the scrubby, rough country, and salt them with strychnine. Some days after poisoning one of the cattle I had shot, I found that I had got some fifty or sixty large eagle-hawks, all lying in a heap under a dead myall that grew close to the dead beast. I remember counting them, and as I pulled them out of the heap a great many of them had their crops torn open. I could not understand it at first, but I came to the conclusion that the hawks tore the crops of the dead open to eat what they had eaten. This I have since ascertained is the custom of the eagle-hawk.

I added a little more strychnine to the beast, and noticed that when I put it on the meat it dissolved like fine salt, and I came to the conclusion that there must be some acid in the dead—poisoned flesh—which melted the poison.

I went up again some days after, and found a native bitch, which evidently had a lot of puppies; she was dead, with her nose right against the beast. Judging from her appearance, I believe that she had taken as much meat as she could carry back to the

pups, and there vomited it up for them to eat, and had come back for more when the poison affected her, and she died. This way of feeding their pups is not altogether confined to wild dogs, for I had a big stag-hound bitch, which, when she had pups, used to follow me out on horseback, and if she caught a kangaroo-rat, or anything else that she could carry, she took it straight home to the pups. With a big kangaroo she would simply take as much as she could carry, and very often go back for more, though this is the only instance that I know of a tame dog doing it, but I have not the least doubt that if that was the only way to get the pups a feed any female dog would do it.

While I was looking at the dead dingo I noticed some crows fly up a short distance away, and I went over to see if anything was dead there, and found a dead dog. Within the radius of a mile I counted twenty-nine dogs (all dead), so that will give you some idea of the number that were on the whole run.

I engaged four or five men, gave them twenty-five shillings a week, and supplied strychnine, with a bonus of five shillings for every tail they got. They all started out with the idea of making five or six pounds a week, but they found that it did not come off, and I was very shortly left with only one who stuck to it. I had not limited them to the Gurley run, they could go on the cattle runs that adjoined, or anywhere they liked, but I saw we must get rid of the dogs. I think after about three months my last dog-poisoner gave it up; he reckoned that he could not find enough tails.

But I must get back to my cats and dogs at Gurley. I certainly had a plague of tame cats there;

I had my five pets, the cook had about twenty-five, and the storekeeper had three of the biggest cats I ever saw, one, in particular, that was called Bally, a black and white cat. We weighed him one day, and he weighed twenty-five pounds; the other two were large cats, but they only weighed eighteen pounds and nineteen pounds.

One of these cats, Jerry, after rain, when the creeks had run and the swamps were full of water, used to catch ducks at night, which, I presume, came out of the water to feed on the short green grass, and whenever he got one he brought it up to the house, and I used to take it from him and give him a piece of meat in exchange. The duck would be quite alive, not even marked, as he carried it by the breast, and he was a bedraggled-looking object, because the duck, of course, flapped his wings for all he was worth, and sent the mud and water all over the cat. After a flood, while the creek was still running fairly strongly, this same cat used to bring us up fish at night, and very good ones too, about a pound-and-a-half or two pounds in weight. I can only presume that he caught these fish when they came out into the shallow water to feed, but the cat family have such an objection to water of any sort, that it was rather strange, I think, that this one should take to fishing, and it is the only cat that I ever heard of that did it.

At Burren, too, I had what I may call a wonderful cat. There was an old carpenter, who built my house (it took him a long while to do it, because he was a hatter that could not work with anybody else, but he did it most thoroughly, seasoned all the timber, so that when it was put up—with pine

timber—it never shrank). There was a cat came from somewhere, and took up with old Thomas, and never left him. If anybody else came she disappeared like a shot, but she used to follow him like a dog, even when he went out into the bush to fell timber, and when he was dressing it she used generally to be between his legs. When the house was finished, of course, the old man went away, and the cat was only seen occasionally, and was very wild. However, she had kittens under the house, and heavy rain coming on, she found it was necessary to shift the kittens, and she brought two into my room, and was lying on the bed with them when I came in. There was a broken pane of glass in the window, through which she went like mad when I opened the door. Of course, it gave me a start, and I meant to wreak vengeance on the kittens, but when I went to take hold of them they put up their tails and me-owed and made every demonstration of friendship, and I could not knock them on the head as I had intended, but took them on to the verandah, and put them in the wood box, where the old cat allowed them to remain till they grew up.

One of these kittens was a yellow tom, the other a black, brindle colour, which was christened Mick. Some three or four years after the house had been built old Thomas came round, and I was talking to him in the garden when this old cat of his came out from under the house somewhere, and went up to him and rubbed herself against his legs, and knew him as well as possible. He picked her up, and stroked her, and put her down again, but she followed him about the whole time he was there, and dis-

appeared again as soon as he left. I never heard before that a cat could recognise or remember its human benefactors, but this cat certainly knew old Thomas after he had been away for two or three years just as well as if he had never left.

I think Mick was like her mother, and knew me as well as her mother knew old Thomas, and when I left the station for a time she generally disappeared, but invariably turned up when I sat down for my first meal. She would not allow a dog of any sort to come into the garden, and had such a reputation that numbers of my friends brought prize terriers to fight her.

On one occasion Mr. Lord brought over a prize fox-terrier called Pasha, which had taken the prize at the Sydney Show, and could kill cats like one o'clock. I told him to fetch this dog along, and that my cat would lick him. He came over one day when I was in the office writing, and he walked into the room with the dog following him. We went out on to the verandah, and old Mick was lying under a table, quite complacent, taking no notice of anything. The dog very soon spotted her, and stealthily approached her till he got within a foot of her, but she never even winked an eye, just lay perfectly still. The dog bent up one foot, like a pointer, and stood perfectly motionless, and the cat lay perfectly motionless. We watched them for some minutes, Lord assuring me that the dog would kill the cat. I said: "No fear; you don't help the dog, and I won't help the cat, but come round and have a bunch of grapes."

As soon as we walked away the dog thought it was useless to take any more notice of a blessed cat

that would not run, and turned to come after us. The moment he turned his tail she was on to his back, both her claws in his ribs, and her hind feet on his hocks, and if you had seen that dog travel and heard him howl! He went down the verandah, which was a very wide one, to the corner, where there was a small covered path leading to the kitchen, but in turning short on to this path he fell off—cat and all—but she determined to keep him going, and he went out the back on to the verandah there, then away across the garden till, by some lucky chance, he got a hole big enough—for it was a wire-netted fence—and he never stopped to look back, but went for home. “Now,” I said, “Lord, what do you think of your dog?” “Oh,” he said, “she didn’t give the dog a chance.” I said: “She gave him every chance; she never moved.” “No,” he said, “if she had run he would soon have killed her.” “Oh,” I said, “she knew that too, so she didn’t run.”

There was one thing about Mick, she never interfered with any of my bird pets; no matter what bird I brought home I could let it go in the garden, and she would not touch it. When feeding the birds every morning she used to come out and stand alongside of me; of course, I gave her a bit, too, but the birds were far quicker at catching it than she was. When I happened to catch any mice in the trap I used to take them out on to the lawn, cats and birds all round, and shake them out of the trap. Mick, of course, made a dart, but the jackass (who was sitting on the roof five times as far away from the mouse as she was) invariably got it first, and Mick used to gaze

in astonishment at the vacant space where the mouse had been.

The gate out into the yard might be open, and three or four dogs standing there, but not one dared to come on through the gate; old Mick would give him a start if he did. Still, when I went to feed the dogs she came with me, too, into the yard, and walked about amongst them quite friendly; and they never touched her nor she them; that seemed to be common country. Sometimes she would walk over to the stable, which was about two hundred yards away, and the dogs would make a rush when they saw her about half way, but she simply turned round, and looked at them—with her tail a bit thicker than usual, and a fighting bend in her back—and the dogs all tried to make believe that it was something else they had seen, and she walked off quietly to the stable.

When writing the chapter on the recurrences of herbage I mentioned that there was a tremendous crop of Scotch thistle in the early fifties, which did not reeur until the early seventies, and again in the early nineties, and from the reports that I have received in the last few days the crop this year surpasses any of the previous crops, which shows fairly well that the recurrence of the thistle is a period of about twenty years, but a very large rainfall I think must come to bring up the prolific crop, and after the big crop of thistles in the seventies there were tremendous numbers of native bears to be seen about (not on the plain country where I have lived, because there are no bears where there are not sufficient gum trees, and I think they do not like the hot weather). What I mention about the bears

happens in the cooler climates, and about Wellington I have counted as many as thirty or forty bears in a single large tree, and hardly a tree without one or more bears on it. Their skins were not valuable at that time, and consequently they were not killed in such numbers as they have been lately, but I feel sure that there will be another large increase in these harmless animals after this big crop of thistles, but, of course, that remains to be proved.

In 1888 all the 'possums on the plain country died of some disease. When I first went to Burren, in 1886, the place was alive with them, and my school-boys when they first came up spent a good deal of their time in killing them, and with a pea-rifle at night (just round the house) they would get from eighty to a hundred every night, and, of course, they killed numbers during the day as well. But in 1888 some virulent disease got into them. They seemed unable to climb the trees, and you would find two or three seated round the bottom of a tree, which, of course, my dogs used to kill; and any old carcass of a dead beast that had a bit of hide on it would be full of 'possums, and I have seen them hanging half out of the spouts, dead. In a few months there was not a 'possum to be seen, nor have I ever seen one since on the plain country. In fact, I never saw a 'possum again till I went to New England with my sheep in the big drought of 1902.

It is a great pity that we could not find out the microbe that killed the 'possums, and convert it into doing something useful by killing the rabbit.

CHAPTER XI.

DISPUTES ABOUT GURLEY BOUNDARIES.

I HAVE mentioned before that there was a great deal of disputed country on Gurley, between Mr. Bowman's Terrihihi on the east, and Mr. Eckford's Malarawah on the west, but for the first year or so of my sojourn on Gurley these disputes did not trouble me very much, as I had only to muster the cattle trespassing on the disputed land, which we claimed as Gurley, and put them into the yard, and send the Terrihihi people word that they were impounded, but that they could have them by giving me a receipt for the cattle. However, later, I had to put sheep out on this disputed country on both sides, but before I could do so I had to make water-wells and dams before it could be occupied, and it was when I got the sheep out there that the trouble arose, and, though I am going rather ahead of my story, I think I might as well give you a description of these raids.

The first raid on the Gurley sheep was made by the Eckfords. They took a flock of the Gurley sheep that I had put on the disputed country on their boundary, according to instructions from the lawyers; these instructions were to "put the sheep on the disputed lands, and keep them there at all costs." This part of the run was about twenty-five miles from the head station at Gurley, and word was brought up to

me that the sheep had been taken, but in taking them to the Moree pound they had to pass through ten or twenty miles of the Gurley run. I got all spare hands, and met them with the sheep on the main road to Moree (on the Gurley run). We stopped them from driving the sheep by driving the sheep the other way, which, of course, meant that the poor sheep were in a heap, with men and horses all round them, and I think there is nothing in the world to make a saint lose his temper more easily than trying to drive sheep when somebody is trying to drive them the other way, and before we had been at it very long stirrup-irons were drawn, but, fortunately, not used, as I saw at a distance a flock of the Gurley sheep being shepherded. I galloped over to the shepherd, and told him to bring his sheep down and mix them (we call it "box") with the sheep that were being driven, which he did, though the Eckfords' crowd tried to prevent their boxing. When they were mixed I told Mr. Alex. Paterson, who was the manager of Malarawah, that he could take the lot now to the pound if he liked. He had a consultation with his men, and one bright genius said: "Oh, let us cut them out on horseback." This amused me very much; the fertility of the man's brain to think of driving sheep like cattle, particularly when there were as many to put them back as to cut them out, even had it been possible for them to do it. However, they decided to let the sheep alone, and rode away, and I had the trouble of taking the sheep to yard and drafting them and sending those back to the station that the Eckfords had taken them from.

The next raid was on my side; I took about four

thousand sheep, and drove them to the Tycana Creek, which was the Gurley boundary on the road to Moree. A big lot of Eckford's men passed me before I got to Tycana Creek, which was running slightly, and camped on the other side of the creek. When the sheep got close I rode down to the camp, and asked them what they intended to do, and they said they were going to prevent the sheep from crossing the creek. I said: "That is a very foolish thing to do, because I am going to put them into the creek, and if you won't let them come out the other side they will all be smothered, and I should advise you to consider what you are doing, as the loss of the sheep will be yours, and lose them you will. Of course, I don't like doing this, but I must carry out my instructions." We talked about it for some time, and they at last agreed to give me a receipt for the sheep, as taken off the disputed country between the two runs. This I agreed to, and withdrew my "dogs of war" (I had a big staff with me), and left them the sheep to take back.

These were the only raids of importance that occurred on that end of the run, and I think, when the boundaries were settled, that I had taken their sheep, or part of them, off country which was eventually decided to be theirs, but this boundary dispute never came to serious court business, the same as the one to the east—on the Terrihihi.

Having put down a well, this time close to Bowman's proper boundary, but on the disputed country that he claimed, and having put a flock of sheep out there, the Terrihihi people found they interfered with their cattle, and made a raid on them

to take them to the pound at Bingara. Mr. Macansh was at Gurley when the raid occurred. We got news of it from the shepherd late one night, and on the following morning at daylight we set off, Mr. Macansh, myself, old Colly, and a big half-caste called Sam Gatehouse, who was one of the finest types of humanity I have ever seen—as strong as a horse, and as active as a goat. We overtook the sheep about two miles from Terrihihi, and we brought them back, the men that were with them not resisting till we got to the Terrihihi house, where we had to cross a creek. Then the fun began. We were trying to drive the sheep across the creek, and they were preventing them from going into the creek, which was dry. As I have already told you, it is the most trying thing for a man's temper to knock poor wretched sheep about all in a heap, and I know, for my part, I was itching for a fight. I managed to cut off a hundred or two of the sheep, and was taking them up the creek with the intention of crossing them higher up, and bringing them down on the other side opposite to where the others were held, hoping that they would break across to join their mates, and thus get the lot across the creek, but the manager (Mr. Sullivan) came up to stop my little game. When I galloped round the little lot of sheep to turn them into the creek he used to gallop round the other side to prevent them from turning, and when he came to the end of the sheep I used to let my horse go full butt straight at him, hit his horse sometimes in the hindquarters, sometimes in the shoulders, in wheeling round, but I never succeeded in knocking him down, and all that Sullivan would say as we wheeled round

to gallop round to the other end of the sheep was: "I beg your pardon." But I bumped him again at the other end. However, Mr. Macansh came up, and told me that they had brought a dog on the sheep. Well, I could not stand that, so I went up to old Colly, and asked him to lend me his revolver, which he invariably carried, and went round determined to shoot the dog, but his owner (a boy), when he saw the revolver in my hand, guessed what I was up to, and chased his dog back to the station on horseback, and I returned the revolver to Mr. Colly.

Just about then my big half-caste's hat was knocked off by a bough, or fell off, I do not know which, and there was a cheer of derision from the oppositionists, who had, as reported, a fighting man in the ranks. Sam got off his horse to pick up his hat, and, when they jeered, he stood some yards from the hat, folded his arms on his breast, and replied to their jeer: "Is there any blanky man game to kick it?" He, too, evidently, was itching for a fight. He walked round the hat for some few minutes, reiterating: "Is there any man game to kick it?" but as there was no response, and the jeering stopped, he got on his horse again.

Well, after some considerable time at this game, Mr. Macansh and Mr. Sullivan came to some understanding that a receipt should be given that the sheep had been attempted to be impounded, which Mr. Sullivan thought would be good enough for his lawyers, and cleared his conscience of having tried to carry out their instructions, and so ended that raid.

There was another raid on the same lot of sheep some time after, but I had wind of it, and met the

raiders just when they came to the sheep, and I pointed out to them that I thought the sheep were on the Gurley side of the disputed country, and they eventually decided that they would not touch them, and I was able during the whole time to keep the sheep on the disputed country, though one might as well have lived on the borders of Scotland in olden times—always prepared to raid or be raided.

Perhaps, while on the subject of this disputed country, I may say what I know about it outside what happened in the Supreme Court, where it occupied the attention and time of the court for two sittings, and, perhaps, as many of my readers may not have interested themselves in the suit of *Bowman v. Macansh*, I must state shortly that *Macansh* lost the first action by a mistake of the jury. A great deal depended, of course, on occupation, the first occupier having the best claim. The *Terrihihi* cattle certainly, I think, fed on this country prior to the Gurley stock, but they never “occupied” it in the judge’s interpretation of the word, which was that—“They were to run there with the express wish of their owner, and not be molested,” but in the papers of Gurley there were files of receipts of cattle that had been impounded, so to speak, off this country. These receipts were only taken in a friendly sort of way, just to show that the country belonged to Gurley, but still they were receipts to show that the cattle were not “occupying” the country, as the judge most explicitly explained. However, as the jury left the box one of them asked the question—“If we find that Mr. Bowman’s cattle ran there before Mr. Macansh’s sheep we must find in

favour of Mr. Bowman." "Yes," said the judge, "*if occupied,*" but he did not again explain what he had already told them about occupation, which had evidently gone out of their heads, as they returned in favour of Mr. Bowman.

This meant a fresh suit, and this occupied two sittings of the court. When the first sitting was over it was agreed that the jury should be sent up in charge of the sheriff, Mr. Ure, to Gurley and Terrihihi to find out for themselves all about it, which I suppose was about the most ridiculous thing that could have been thought of. How these tobaccoists and storekeepers were going to arrive at a boundary between two runs is ridiculous enough for a comic opera. However, they arrived at Gurley, and I had the pleasure of driving them about the run, but as far as information or anything else that they got, I am perfectly satisfied that they were quite as ignorant, if not more so, when they returned as when they left Sydney.

There was a tree marked by Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Bowman many years previous in a small clump of ironbarks. There was no marked tree when I went there, and everyone had looked and inspected that clump of trees, still there was the sworn evidence of Mr. Lloyd that he had marked the tree himself, and decided on it as a boundary between the two runs. Well, to find this tree was the object of the jury, and one evening I was down at the house (where the jury stayed, my residence being some distance off—at the shed), and they decided that night that they would go and find this tree. Of course I knew that there was no tree there, and it was really nonsense to take

them out to look at a dozen trees. However, they were quite satisfied that they must find it.

On walking home to my residence that night I passed close by the blacks' camp, and I roused up old Billy Levy, and asked him if there ever had been a marked tree in that clump. "Oh, yes," he said, "I know the tree." I said: "Where is it; can you find it?" He said: "Yes; burn um down." I said: "You know where he stood," and he replied: "Yes; I know where he was." "Well," I said, "get your old horse to-morrow, and ride to that clump, and I will come along with the jury, and I want you to show where the tree stood." He said: "All right." When the jury and cavalcade of Terrihihi men, and some Gurley men got to the clump old Billy was lying on a bare piece of ground, some twenty or fifty yards from any tree. I went over to him, and said: "Where tree, Billy?" He just moved his foot, and scratched the ground with his toe—"That where he was," he replied. Well, of course, there was no sign of there ever having been a tree there; it was all covered with grass, and I felt that it was rather hopeless to find anything there. However, I told Mr. Macansh that old Billy was lying on the tree (or where it had been). He went to the sheriff and told him that from information he had received he could point out the spot where the tree had stood. Well, after some hesitation, it was decided that they would allow an exploration to see if there ever had been a tree there, and a blackboy brought a tomahawk, with which he started to move the ground. He made a chop or two with the tomahawk into the earth, and old Billy indicated two or three inches further one side of

where he was chopping. He had not gone many inches into the ground when he struck wood. This was excavated, and turned out to be the trunk of a tree with one half of it burnt, but when we got it clear of the ground a mark, made with an axe, was plainly visible on the unburned side.

Now, in my opinion, I would have wanted no more evidence than that had I been on the jury. Of course, this rather upset Mr. Bowman's side, and he said to one of his blackboys: "Go and find a stump," but all they could find was one or two stumps that were where we could all see them, but there is no doubt at all that that was the tree, and, further than that, from a hint old Billy gave me, the tree had been burnt on purpose. However, the jury did not take that view of it, and could not agree, as well as I remember, and the case was eventually left to arbitration, and Mr. Rotton, from Bathurst, was appointed arbitrator, and his decision was all in favour of the Gurley side. Still, the expense of that law-suit was enormous to both sides, and either one of them could have purchased all the country in dispute at one pound an acre, and have been in pocket, instead of spending the money for the right to call it theirs from one Thursday to another, as free selection was then the law.

So much for the great law-suit—Bowman v. Macansh, which has taken me a year or two ahead of my reminiscences, and I should like now to add a little of the life that I led at Gurley previous to and during this law-suit.

CHAPTER XII.

LIFE AT GURLEY; AND THE MULE.

THE manager of Gurley left in due course, and my sheep had to be brought back to a hut of their own, which I had got built. I was then living in the house quite alone, with a cook, and a man to look after the store, and butcher. My companions were five cats, which sat round my chair when at my meals, and I had taught them to jump for their food. I used to put a piece of meat on a fork, and hold it up so that the meat was the lowest object, and they would all jump to try which could get it. Sometimes one, of course, would knock it off with his foot, but he would not be back soon enough to pick it up, and the consequences was that they were like lightning at this game.

I also had a little cattle dog; I did not claim it, but it claimed me, and was the most marvellous animal to follow that I ever saw; no matter what distances I went, or how long I was in the saddle; and it used to camp under the table. It had one peculiarity. If anyone came to the table with me for meals it used to lie with its front feet crossed, and its head just against the man's feet. So long as he stayed still, and did not move his feet, he would never know there was a dog there, but if he started the devil's tattoo, or shuffled his feet, she

immediately bit him—not hard—across the instep, and generally gave him a great start, but that was her peculiarity.

There was a certain Mr. Chauncey, a surveyor, who came to Gurley to mark some of the lines that were in dispute. He was a peculiar man, with ginger hair and expressionless light-blue eyes that always gave me the idea that they had been boiled at some time or other. He was very poor, had a miserable inadequate turnout, and I am afraid that all his earnings went to the publican; but I kept no spirits on the place. It was very wet when he arrived, and the creek was in big flood, so he and his plant were brought over on a sheet of bark manned by a blackfellow. Embarkation was from a wharf made by a bending tree, under which the canoe was brought, and the passenger—he could only bring one at a time—had to step off the tree carefully on to the bark, and he required to have his hair parted in the middle while getting seated on this very primitive boat. The whole of his plant and men (two of them) came across without adventure, old Chauncey being the last to embark. He always wore a white top-hat, and when his turn came to embark he came out on the tree, and said, just as he was about to step aboard: “I am not deficient in courage, but I have got a superabundance of caution,” and he stepped on to the boat, but his hat must have been a little on one side, for over he went, and for some short time the only thing to be seen was his hat going down the creek. However, the blackfellow rescued him and the hat, and brought him safely across, looking frightfully dejected.

He did not put up his tent, or make any attempt at forming a domicile, but came to live with me in the house. The next morning at breakfast he finished his beef-steak a little before I did mine, and he cut up some small pieces of meat to feed the cats, which he started to do by holding it in his hand, and the whole five immediately sprang for the meat and landed on his hand and arm, and scratched him pretty considerably. He was dreadfully put out, shook his hand, and asked me if a cat's scratch was poisonous, pushed his chair back from the table a little, and began to move his feet. Of course, the dog got him under the table—"Oh, cripes," he said, "a dog!" and turned angrily to me, and said that he would not stop in the place with "animals." Of course, I was roaring with laughter, but when I could speak I told him that the animals were residents here before he came, and that they were going to continue as such, and if he could not agree with them he could pitch his tent. This, of course, he had no notion of doing, and the subject dropped, and he lived peacefully with the animals as long as he remained my guest. There is another good story about Mr. Chauncey that I will relate here. A letter was brought for him from one of the neighbours; it was not stamped and not closed, and it was addressed to "Mr. Chauncey." When I handed it to him he said, with a snort: "Mr. Chauncey, indeed! Do you know I am descended from Sir Hugh de Chauncey, who came over as standard-bearer to William the Conqueror?" I said for fun, though I claim no connection with that band of robbers, "How strange, my great-great-great-grandfather was barber to William

the Conqueror." He said: "How strange, your great-great-great-grandfather might have shaved mine." Poor old Chauncey; his leg was easily pulled. So much for old Chauncey.

Included in the stock—sheep, cattle and horses—that I took over with the management of Gurley there was one little mule that I must give a history of his own; it was the only mule that I ever had anything to do with in my life; and there is no doubt he was a mule, most useful in parts, but as tricky as a woodheap.

We used him for packing during bad weather—when the roads were wet, and the ration cart could not get out—he was then used for carrying small quantities of rations to the different stations. When once you caught him, saddled him and packed him, which he would submit to quite quietly, you could get on your horse and let him go, without bridle or halter, and he would follow as far as you liked, unless the pack shifted, and became uncomfortable, when he would stand on the plain in a stretched-out position, and his screams were appalling, and not one inch would he move till you went back and shifted the pack to make it ride more level, and he would then come gaily along. He would walk right to the door, or inside, every shepherd's hut as we came along—sometimes we went to several in a day—and I would take off the bit of tea, sugar and flour for each, and put the empty bags back on the pack, but after I had got the last of my rations off at the last hut we went to there was no chance of catching him any more. When I first used to take him out, and I very often took him myself on my rounds, I used to put on the

sheep-skins at the different stations, and carry them back to the station. These were often wet, and I am afraid I often overloaded him, but he soon dropped down to it, and then he would follow you back past all the stations you had been to in the morning with the empty bags on the pack-saddle, but there was no chance of your catching him to put on anything in the way of sheep-skins.

But the great fun was to catch him to start with. He could never be put into the yard with the horses; he always stood under a tree, a short distance from the yard, until the horses were let out, and no amount of men, or horses, or stockwhips could put him into the yard. On one occasion the Terrihihi men (about eighteen of them) came over to make a night muster of cattle (the only way to get them was at night, when they came out of the scrub, and had to go some six or seven miles across the plain to the creeks for water, and it was while they were doing this that we used to try to muster them). I was going with them myself this night; in fact, I always did, and I said: "Don't you think it would be a good thing to take a pack and a bit of tucker, for it's a long while before breakfast?" This was in the afternoon. They thought it would be a good idea, so I told them—"Well, put the mule in, and I'll put a pack on him," but I told them also that I doubted their ability to put him in. They were a rough, boastful mob, and laughed at my not being able to put the mule into the yard, and went for him. As soon as the mule saw them coming he dropped to what was up, and cleared off as hard as he could. They immediately galloped after him, and the leader was just getting near

enough to use his stockwhip, and was swinging it round his head, when the mule suddenly reversed, and came backwards, nearly as fast as he could go forwards, with his hind-legs in the air, kicking like fun. It was amusing to see them gather up their stockwhips, pull their legs out of the road of the business-end of the mule, and wheel their horses out of the way, though they nearly all had a try at him, but gave him best, and the mule came back to his stand under the tree.

The only thing that could yard that mule was a cattle dog I had, and the dog and the mule both knew one another. When we wanted the mule—frequently in wet weather—old Bluey (the cattle dog), when I tried to set him on the mule, would pretend not to see him, and rush into the yard and bite the horses, but when I insisted on his going for the mule he would often go about half-way towards him, and sit up and howl piteously, but the other dogs used to go barking round the mule, which took very little notice of them, sometimes pawing at them when they jumped at his nose, or kicking at them if they went anywhere behind him. But his equilibrium was not upset until he saw Bluey; then he became uneasy, and would shift about a little. Of course, that was Bluey's chance, his instinct for biting was so keen that he never could resist having a chop at the mule, and he probably would get one bite at him. But the mule, instead of jumping forwards like a horse or bullock, ran backwards, and invariably kicked old Bluey over, which evidently was all he wanted, for he would make straight for the yard then at full gallop, and it did not matter whether the slip-rails were up or

down, he went under them like a rabbit, but Bluey nearly always had another chop at him before he got into the yard. We had to catch him while Bluey was there, or else he would go out just as fast as he came in. We had to put a halter on him, and tie him up in the yard, and then he would stand perfectly quiet until packed, but it was impossible to lead him out of the yard before you put a pack on him.

By some chance, I think, he went away with some horse that he had chummed up with, and joined the wild horses. I was anxious to get him back, and a number of us went to try and round him in. We found the mob of wild horses which he was in some three or four miles out from the scrub, on the plain, and, of course, they raced for the scrub as soon as they saw us. The mule, naturally, could not go fast enough to keep in sight of them, and when the horses got into the scrub we horsemen tried to stop the mule, who was coming along the tracks with his head down near the ground. Whether he was tracking by sight or scent I do not know, but do all we could, we could not stop him; he went through us, and used his hooves on both sides with such extreme rapidity that you could not even get a hit at him with a stock-whip, and he beat us into the scrub. However, I got him some time after (I forget now how it happened), and Mr. Andrew Paterson, who was going up to give delivery of Stainbourne Downs (of which I have already told you), got the mule to carry his pack. He took him right to Stainbourne Downs, and after he had sold the sheep, or part of the sheep, as I mentioned before, for six shillings a head, he took the remainder down to Melbourne for sale, and also took

down another lot of sheep, as a drover, from one of the stations up there. He kept these sheep separate, and they travelled in two lots. The mule was with the last lot, and carried the blankets and rations for the two men that were with the sheep, one of the men leading him all day, and that mule had to be tied up to a tree every night during the whole trip, because if they let him out in hobbles he would go straight away to join the horses in the mob ahead, and would have to be brought back every morning. During the whole trip he lived on the bark of the trees he was tied to, barking them as high as he could reach, and keeping mud-fat.

Old Mr. Colly, whom I think I have mentioned before, was living with me at Gurley at this time. He was a very deaf old man, and always carried a revolver. He took a trip to Tamworth on some business, and brought back a mule with him. I do not know what he wanted with it, but one Sunday I asked him to come for a ride with me, and he said: "All right; you ride your mule, and I'll ride mine." I agreed, and we got the mules and saddled them in the yard, and Colly got on his mule. I took the halter off mine, and was in the act of getting on when he rushed straight ahead for the slip-rails, and I had no chance of holding him by the bridle or getting on his back, and we were going straight for old Colly, who was sitting on his mule. I had to let my mule go, and, looking up towards Colly, I saw his long boots and spurs disappearing over his mule's head. There were a number of blacks present to see the fun, and they were highly delighted, laughed tremendously, and volunteered at once to bring the mules back on

foot. They wanted to see a second performance, but Colly decided that he would have no more, so the mules were let go.

When Mr. Colly was on his way to Tamworth (the trip he got the mule) some young man rode up to him and asked him some question, and he said: "I am very deaf, you will have to speak very loud." The fellow shouted something, but Colly did not hear it exactly, so he again told him that he was very deaf, and could not hear. "Then, I say 'Bail-up,'" shouted this youngster, at least that is what Colly thought he said. "Oh," said old Colly, "is that it?" and pulled out his revolver. The fellow turned his horse round, put both spurs in, and, with his head well down on the horse's neck, disappeared in a cloud of dust. Old Colly said: "The only thing I saw on his saddle was a quart pot." But he was a marvellous man to get into trouble with his revolver and bushrangers, and I shall probably devote a small space in these reminiscences to old Colly, though he has appeared in these pages before.

But to return to the mules. On one Christmas Day two of the overseers were at the head station, and an overseer named Irvine, who looked after the top end of the run, and was a married man with a large family, invited us all up to dinner. It was suggested by one of us that we should ride two horses that had never been ridden before to our knowledge; they were cripples, and quiet to catch. I said that if the other two would ride these horses I would ride the mule. Anyhow it was decided that I should ride the mule, and we started gaily off. Of course, it was very hard to keep any of them straight, and after going a

short distance we decided to have a race. I got the start along the road; of course, the mule could not gallop much faster than you could run, neither could the others, but when either of them got near me the mule put his head under their horses' necks and stopped all progress. He was not going to race for fun, and before we got to the overseer's house we nearly fell off our animals with laughter.

I must tell you about the first shearing at Gurley. The sheep were shorn at the western end of the run, on what was then known as Millie's south run, which adjoined Gurley. I shored them there because there was plenty of water for washing the sheep, and in those days of high carriage, sheep shepherded and herded in dirty yards had fleeces which were as much dirt as wool. I had to put up an extemporary sort of wash-pool, just a cold-water swim, and also to repair an old shed that had been down there, and made things work fairly well, and the shearing started.

I did that time what I have never done since—engaged the men at so much a hundred for shearing, and found them in rations, or "tucker," and cook, and they did give me a gruelling before I got those sheep all shorn! Labour was fairly plentiful, but I found the blacks, especially the gins, splendid hands at rolling the fleeces and picking up on the floor. They only had their blankets fastened round them with a wooden pin, and, of course, they had to throw them off when they started to pick up the wool, and one remarkably smart young gin worked along for about a week; then she came to me, and said she wanted a shirt. "Oh," I said, "what do you want a shirt for; you are all right?" "I won't pick up

the wool unless I get a shirt." "What do you want a shirt for?" "Oh, I am ashamed to pickum up wool 'longum that men you know," so, of course, that meant that there were shirts and trousers all round, and they were dressed decorously. But the shearers were getting plenty of the best to eat, and they were not anxious to work, and when I got a heavy lot of wethers in the majority of the shearers used to sit in the huts and play cards all day, the excuse being "sore hands." Of course, they were using the old shears, and it was impossible to keep them in cooks. Every cook I got they hunted in a few days; then, of course, there was no work until I got another cook. However, I got a god-send in the shape of a big American nigger, who came along looking for work. I asked him could he cook. He said: "Yes, a little; I do not think I'm good enough cook for shearers, though I have cooked in public-houses, but you know shearers are very particular." "Yes," I said, "I know that, but I'll give you double wages if you will undertake to cook for them till the shearing is over." He considered for a while, then said: "Yes, I'll take it," and went to work. That day at dinner-time, when the shearers all came down for their dinner, he had the table laid and all ready, and stood at the door with his towel over his shoulder, and said to the men as they walked in—"There's the dinner; here's the cook, and you can eat which you like." That man got through.

CHAPTER XIII.

MY FRIEND BAKER, AND OTHERS.

SOME time after this I had a visit from my employer (Mr. J. D. Macansh). He only stopped ten days with me on that occasion, and the whole of the time he never went out of the house. He went through all the books and accounts of the station for my two years' management, and though I do not profess to be a book-keeper there were no mistakes in any of the accounts more than threepence or sixpence, in which accounts he put a slip of paper—"This account does not balancee."

I was perfectly aware of the mistakes, but in those days, with the exception of Gurley, everyone was paid by orders, "calibashes" we used to call them, drawn on himself by the person paying. The townships all followed the same system, and if you took a horse to a blacksmith to be shod, and paid him with a pound note you would receive the change in I.O.U's for various small amounts, drawn by every member of the township, and if he was short of a shilling or two to make up the balancee he took down an order book, and wrote an order on himself for the balance. Consequently, as there was no silver or pence in circulation, the pence that you put in a cheque in paying a man for his work he never received when he cashed it, so I thought it was useless

putting in the pence that were due. When I drew the cheques I made ninepence or over a shilling, anything under threepence or fourpence I crossed out, and paid sixpence for any amounts that might be fivepence, sevenpence, or eightpence. The odd pennies, as I said before, were never taken into account when the cheque was cashed, consequently a great many of my accounts did not balance, but the total when added and subtracted did not amount to more than five or six shillings, of which the station, I think, got the benefit.

On going over all the books Mr. Macansh said: "You are doing too much, Barton; with all your outside work you have no time to keep books; in fact, you are doing ten men's work, and you must get a book-keeper." To which I gladly assented. I had on the station shepherding sheep a man named Baker, who, I knew, was a man of some education, and I asked him if he would take the store and book-keeping, which he willingly agreed to do, and I gave him the job.

I shall give you a short history of Baker, as he told it to me. He was the son of a clergyman in England, and a B.A. of Oxford, and came out with a few thousand pounds to make his fortune in Australia, but it seems that hard luck had pursued him through his whole life. He spent some time in Sydney after landing, and managed to get rid of the greater portion of his capital, for which he had nothing to show. He then went up to Muswellbrook, on the Hunter, and knocked about there for some short time, when some of the people there put an idea into his head that he should try the theatrical

business, and on this he spent the last of his money in building a weatherboard theatre (I suppose about the last thing that anyone with a grain of sense would have thought of doing in those times, or perhaps even at the present). When he got his theatre built he found he could not get a company to assist him in his performances, so he was compelled to write his own plays—one man plays—still, he says, in his own words—“I was getting on splendidly, and all the élite of the district used to come to the performances,” but one of his plays, just when the theatre was at its zenith, literally brought down the whole house. He had written in this play an American scene, in which a beautiful lady was to be carried across the stage in a palanquin with four black bearers; the roar of a tiger was heard, the bearers dropped the palanquin, and the lady swooned. Now, I must tell you that he could not find a lady, or girl, in the district to act the part, and all he could get was a lad of about eighteen, a smooth-faced fellow, whom he persuaded to act the lady, assuring him that he had nothing to do but lie quite still, and he agreed to take the part. Baker gave him a stage gauze dress to put on, which he did after taking off all his other clothes. When the bearers dropped the palanquin, Baker, having fired his rifle from a secluded spot on the stage, and, presumably killed the tiger, he stepped out into the light with his rifle, dressed in his moccasins and American hunter’s garb, and, seeing this beautiful damsel lying in the palanquin he approached with trembling, and gave a small discourse on this beautiful object that he had never seen before in his

life. Then, with a sort of spasmodic impulse, he took her in his arms, and carried her to the footlights to make the great speech of the evening, but before he could start there was a great commotion among the audience—hootings, cheers, and general noise—which he could not understand exactly as to whether it was applause or what it was. The ladies were putting up their fans, and commenced to leave the theatre, Baker all the time standing with his damsel in his arms waiting to commence his speech, when a friend came running round from the back of the theatre, caught hold of Baker, and said: “For God’s sake take him away; you’ve got a naked man in your arms!” That broke the theatre, and on the next visit of Mr. Macansh poor old Baker’s book-keeping would not suit at all, and Mr. Macansh said: “You must take these books again, Barton; I can’t stand this,” for which I felt very sorry.

There is another story that occurred about this time. I had to take a trip to see a Mr. Jacobs, whose station was on the Upper Barwon (it is so long ago now that I do not recollect the name of the station, and I have never been on that road since). On my way I passed a station, called Whaland, I think, that had just been bought by Mr. Adams, of Gimmerroy station, near Bingara. It was a large cattle station in those days, and delivery was being given, and the cattle were all mustered and counted. The station buildings were of the usual architecture of those days, a small building called the house, and a kitchen with a very large room, and, as was usual, everyone had their meals in the kitchen, except the blacks; half-castes were allowed to sit at the table always, and

the blacks might have been, too, if they had wanted to, but they preferred their fingers before forks, and they came into the kitchen and took away their food, consisting principally of beef, in a big dish, and a big billy of tea. Mr. Adams did not like this arrangement very much, but, of course, until he got delivery of the place, he had to comply with the rules of the management, but when the last of the cattle were delivered he said to the crowd of men that were there from all the stations round—some managers, some head-stockmen, some halfcastes, making, I suppose, thirty or forty men—“I have ordered the cook to lay the dinner on two tables—one in the house. and one in the usual place, and now, gentlemen, I will ask you to draft yourselves,” which they did correctly. To many who read this will not occur the difficulty that there has always been in the bush to know how to place those who come to see you, and many men have been grossly insulted by being told to go to the kitchen, and others made extremely miserable by being asked into the house, especially if there were ladies there, but old Adams hurt no one’s feelings, as they drafted themselves.

On that same trip I passed a station on which they had a few sheep, which they were going to shear, but before shearing them they tried to wash them in one of the most ludicrous ways that I ever witnessed. They put the sheep in a yard close to the bank of a big water-hole, and put a lot of long forked sticks close to the water’s edge. In each of these forks was placed a long rail, one end of which, of course, hung over the water, and the other on the bank. A rope was attached to the end of the rail, which went over

the water, to which they fastened a sheep, and a black-fellow at the other end of the rail pulled him up and down, dousing the sheep in the water, fetching it up again, and dousing it again. There was about half-a-dozen of these "washing machines" going at the same time. I do not know how the wool turned out, but I am quite satisfied they did not shear all the sheep, for a great many of them did not recover from the process of washing. I have never heard or seen sheep washed like this before or since, so I suppose the inventor never patented.

Mark Twain, in his "Innocents at Home," gives a splendid story of the biggest liar that he had ever met. I think it is so good that I will repeat it as I remember it. It was in a hotel, where he was spending the night in a village in the back-blocks of America. The local residents were regaling him with anecdotes, principally concerning horses, when one weird, keen-eyed individual, addressing one of the residents, said: "You remember that brown mare I had; the fastest thing that ever looked through a collar? Do you know that I started in the waggon from a village near by in front of the biggest thunder-storm that ever came from heaven, and do you know that I did the distance in an hour, and not one drop of rain fell on that waggon, and the dog was swimming behind."

That story takes a lot of beating, but this country—in the sparsely inhabited parts—contains a great many men who tell probably bigger lies than this, but their language is unprintable, and the lie would be no good without the language. But I heard one story, that I can repeat, told in a public-house to me

and others. There was a coach driver called Bill Lawler, who had a wonderful reputation for being able to catch wild horses in the bush without yard or anything else, put the harness on them, and put them in his coach and drive them. I happened to know the man, and, of course, this magnetic influence on horses was all imagination; he was certainly very unprincipled as regards horses, and I have no doubt if he wanted horses to run the coach that he would not be long getting them, for he would take any that were hobbled out by travellers, and, of course, travelling the roads frequently, he generally knew where somebody was camped. However, it was a gentleman who told the story about him, and he told it very well. He was travelling with this Lawler on the coach, the only passenger; the horses he was driving knocked up, and he caught a fresh lot, which were put in the coach at night, and the coach started full gallop, every horse kicking and plunging, but the near-side wheeler was particularly bad at kicking, and before they had gone very far kicked both his hind heels over the footboard. Lawler, who was driving, called out—"Stick to his legs; don't let him get them back again," "which," said the passenger, "I did, and we drove that team for five miles with this horse travelling on his front legs only, his hind legs in the coach." I think that is a good specimen of the inventive imaginations that some people possess, and the stories they try to palm off on the new chums that come into the district.

The manager of the Terrihihi station when I went to Gurley was a Mr. Fletcher, but he was only there for a short time, as his health would not stand

the rough life, and a younger brother took the billet. This was before the raids and disputes about the land had come to a head, and Mr. Fletcher and I worked very amicably together. He gave me receipts for his cattle when I put them in the pound, which I had to do, of course, under instructions, and he, knowing that, had no animus against me for interfering with the cattle, but, poor fellow, he did not live long. He was mustering by moonlight some of the cattle which were running on the Gurley country, and I was giving him a hand. We had taken out a number of quiet cattle to go as coachers, which we had on a piece of open country close to the scrub, and, of course, the scrub cattle came out to feed on the plains at night. We had to get between them and the scrub when they came out a distance, and then run them to where we had the coachers.

He and I had just brought in a small mob of cattle when one of the number broke, and went away by itself. Fletcher followed it, but as he passed me I noticed his horse was winded, and he was riding with a slack rein, using the double of his stockwhip to urge the horse on. After I had put the rest of the cattle into the coachers I heard him coo-eeing, and galloped back to where he was, not very far away, and found him sitting on his horse. I said to him: "What's the matter?" He gasped out, "I am done." I said, "What on earth have you done?" "Oh," he said: "I have staked myself on a leaning limb; it struck me just about the hip, and went into me a foot long, and broke against my back-bone, but I pulled it out and threw it away."

I at once called out to some of the men, and told

them to let the cattle go, and the man with the best horse to go for the doctor at once. Another man I sent to Gurley station for a spring-cart and a bed, with orders to have a bed ready and plenty of hot-water for a hot-bath. Gurley being nearer than Terrihihi, where there was no spring-cart or vehicle that could be brought, I decided to take him to Gurley. We then assisted him off his horse, and he lay down on the ground gasping and moaning. I could see no blood about, but we lit fires round him, because it was a very cold night, and I asked him to let me have a look and see if I could do anything with the wound, to which he agreed after a while, though for some time he only reiterated—"I'm dying; leave me alone." However, I had a look at last, and I found on his thigh that his trousers were torn—he had two pairs on—and there was a scratch right down his thigh to where it would reach the saddle, but that was the only wound I could find, and the only one that existed. Probably, the horse, wobbling along, had swerved under this limb, which, perhaps, Fletcher had not seen in the moonlight, as he was going pretty fast, and the myall stick would have given him a very hard prod. However, the cart came along in due course; I got him in on the bed, and drove him carefully to Gurley station.

He recovered a good deal on the road, and when we got to the station he was able to walk in, with my assistance, to the room prepared for him, where we gave him a hot bath, and put him to bed, but he never seemed to recover from the shock. Dr. Seegul, from Narrabri, came out about nine o'clock in the morning, and I went into the room with him to assist him in

any way I could. He could only find this scratch on Fletcher's thigh; of course, it was a deep scratch, the skin being very much thicker there than I had any idea the human skin was anywhere, and when the doctor opened it with his fingers you could see the blood at the bottom of the scratch, but not running. When the doctor had examined him all over, he said: "Why did you want to send for me for a scratch like this; why didn't you tie a handkerchief round your leg, and go on with your work? I can't afford to come here for nothing, and you can't afford to pay me to come here for a scratch; get up and eat a feed of beef-steaks, and go home; you are all right." With that we left the room, and the doctor said to me: "You've got a buggy here, haven't you?" I said "Yes." "Well," he said, "he seems very nervous and out of sorts; you had better let him stop where he is to-day, and drive him home to-morrow in the buggy." I said: "All right, I'll do that."

When the morning came for him to go, he said he felt very bad, and could not go that day. "Well," I said, "all right, but I can't take you to-morrow, because I have got business in Narrabri, but I suppose a day won't make any difference to you." He said "No." The next morning I was going off to Narrabri, and I asked him if I could do anything for him. He said "Yes; tell the doctor to come out at once, I am getting lockjaw." I said: "I don't think the doctor will come; you know what he told you when he left, that there was nothing wrong with you and so forth." "Oh," he said, "send the doctor; tell him I am getting lockjaw." I said "All right," and on reaching Narrabri I went to the doctor, and

told him what Fletcher had told me. He was surprised that he had not gone home, and said that it was no use his going out, he could do nothing.

Having done my business, I started back for Gurley, though I cannot remember now what time I left Narrabri, but it must have been about the middle of the night, for just about sunrise I was within twelve miles of Gurley, when I met a black boy coming with a note for the doctor, which I opened. I did not think the black boy's horse was good enough to go for a doctor on, so I gave him my horse, and told him to ride him as if old Nick was after him all the way to Narrabri, and give the note to the doctor. I said: "I have often given you a thrashing for galloping your horse when there was no need, but you can kill this fellow if you like; keep him going all the way in," which he did, and at nine o'clock that night the doctor was back at Gurley, but poor Mr. Fletcher was dead.

It was one of the most fearful deaths that could be imagined; it was more like a dog with strychnine poisoning than anything that I can think of. A cramp used to start in his feet, and bend him up backwards till his heels and his head almost came together; of course, the jaw was set tight. When the spasms came on he used to shriek with pain, and when they were over he used to murmur: "If I live through this I'll live for ever." I sat him up in the bed, and sat behind him with his head on my shoulder, and my arms around his waist, and when these spasms came on I used to hold him with all my might and main to keep him from bending backwards; and I gave him, at his request, a great deal

of laudanum, which was the only thing that he craved, and when he died suddenly in one of these fits I had some misgivings that I had given him too much laudanum; and I told the doctor when he came what I had done. He said that the laudanum was neither good nor harmful in his condition; that I could have given him enough of it to poison a regiment of soldiers, and it would have taken no effect upon him, so I felt easy on that score, and we buried the poor fellow the next day.

I have told you some of the long rides that have been done by bush horses; but I think the ride that my horse had is worth mention. I had ridden him for over eighty miles when I gave him to the black boy to ride for the doctor, and the black boy rode him a hundred miles in thirteen or fourteen hours, and, of course, the doctor could not come back as fast as the black boy would have done had he been by himself. That horse did nearly two hundred miles in about forty-eight hours, and was none the worse; of course, the boy was very light, still it was a good performance.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRIP TO JEWANDAH.

IN March, 1870, I left Gurley with a Mr. Briggstock, who was a jackeroo, for a trip to Jewandah station, on the Dawson River, Queensland. The day we left it rained heavens-hard; we intended to get to Bangat station (some miles from Bingara) that night, but when we came to the Horton River there was a big flood up. My mate could not swim, and I tried to ride across, leading a pack-horse, but as soon as the horses started to swim they headed back in spite of me; I had to let the pack-horse go, but we landed safely on the same side as we went in. I then decided to try the other two horses—those that Briggstock was riding and leading. The pack-horse was in winkers, as he was a bit of an outlaw. I led them down to the water's edge, and before trying them, I took the winkers off the pack-horse to give him a chance. As soon as I took the winkers off his eyes he saw the pack on him and jumped right on top of me, wheeled short round, and went up the bank kicking and bucking, and across the flat as far as we could see him, kicking and galloping. He had my boots and coat on the pack, but we followed him on foot, tracking him in the mud, and found him in shallow water, on his back, the halter having got round his hind leg and tumbled him over, and pre-

vented his getting up again. However, we brought him back to the river, but it was getting dark, so we decided to camp for that night. Everything we had was, of course, soaking wet, the first pack-horse having doused everything in the river, and the second rolling on his pack in the mud and water, and, of course, the ground and everything else was wet, and it was raining like fun, but we succeeded in making a fire, and put in the night somehow.

The following morning the river had gone down a good deal, and a station-hand came across on a horse and assisted us to get over, but from that day till we reached Jewandah we never had anything dry. Every water-course or gutter was a swim, and the days that we did not have everything wet in the creeks we got them wet with rain. Mosquitoes and sandflies were beyond description; we had to ride with comforters round our necks, with boughs in our hands, and our clothes and horses were nothing but mosquitoes, and if we patted our horses' necks our hands were covered with blood. We had a small tent, which we used to pitch at night, and have it without a crack for a mosquito to get in, but they were there all the same; I think they used to hatch in the wet ground, and we had really to sleep in turns. Luckily, we had candles, which we lit every now and then for one or the other of us, whoever could not stand the mosquitoes any longer, to get up and bash all the mosquitoes out with a towel, and then we went to sleep again, but before long the other would have to be up and do the same. This continued all night, and when we made up our minds to stop for a camp for the night I used to look out for dead boughs that I could

put a match to quickly, and make a big blaze, which the horses would stand round while we took their packs off. Otherwise, it would have been very difficult to have held them while you were getting the packs and saddles off; the mosquitoes would not let them rest a second.

The next river that gave us any trouble was the north branch of the Condamine. The main road crossed the river, and, of course, we had nothing to do but to follow the road; we did not know that there was a station on the same side of the river as we were, and I went in, leading my pack-horse, but the brute refused to swim a stroke; he just floated down the river like a log, and I had to let him go, and swim my horse out. When I got across I went in myself after the pack-horse, which was floating along, and, getting hold of the halter, I towed him to a gravelly beach, and began to take the pack off him, when he got up quite all right. Well, then, we were in a fix; I was on one side of the river and Briggstock on the other, and he could not swim a stroke. However, I thought I could not be far off some place, and rode up the river a little way, when I met a boundary-rider, who told me that if we followed the river down on the other side we would come to Cecil Plains station, and could cross it there in a boat. Well, that meant that I had to get back on to the side I had come from, and it was no use trying to get my pack-horse back, so I left him on that side, swam my own horse over, and came back myself and carried over the blankets and part of the swag that was on my pack-horse, and that we could not do without, leaving the horse and saddle where they were. I had, of

course, to carry these blankets on my head, and swim back with them, and I remember, just before landing, there was a sharp turn in the river, which got the swag out of equilibrium a bit, and a billy-can that was tied on to the blankets got full of water, and I very nearly lost my blankets. However, I got them out all right, and we got on to Cecil Plains station that night.

We spent a day or two at Cecil Plains, and then started on our road again. We were taken across the south branch of the Condamine in a boat made out of a log, which at any rate took us over dry; the horses, of course, we had to swim over. When we got on the other side I had to go back to where we had attempted to cross the river two days before, and get the pack-horse and pack that I had left on the bank of the river. I found the horse all right, and put the pack-saddle on him (of course everything was wet and heavy, as it had not been spread out to dry), and brought him along to join his mates, and we proceeded on the road again. However, we had not gone very far before we had the north branch of the Condamine to get over, which was also in flood.

Some teams that had been camped there some time before had felled two big gum trees, one on each side of the river, and made a precarious bridge, which you could get over dry by climbing through the branches of the hedge of trees where they met; so we unpacked and unsaddled all the horses except the one with the wet pack on, and we carried our things across on this bridge to the other side. I then took off all my clothes, left them with the packs, and swam over the river to put the horses across. I

led each one into the river, and started him fair, and he swam across. When I came to the one with the pack on (which was the last horse) he would not let me catch him; he did not know me in the nude, and I had to swim back again, get my coat, boots and hat, carry them back, and put them on. Then the brute walked back half-a-mile or more to a gate, and I managed to catch him and lead him back, but the mosquitoes and sandflies by this time had nearly eaten me, and I was very angry, and when I led him into the river with the wet pack on he gave me some trouble. When he started to swim I got on the beggar's head to try and drown him, but slipped back on him and intended to make him drag me over by catching him by the tail. This he rather resented, and tried to kick or buck in the water, and the girth broke, and the pack-saddle floated off down the river, so that I had to leave go his tail, and cling to the pack, which I managed with some difficulty to get to the right side, and then swam back for my boots, coat and hat, which I brought over all right, and we again started on our road.

When we reached Yandilla our horses had bad backs, and were worn out; and I could see that if I tried to get to my destination on them the time for moving the sheep specified in the agreement would have expired, so I would have to buy some fresh horses. I went to Mr. Gore, of Yandilla, and asked him if he could sell me some more horses, and he said: "Can you ride?" I said "Yes, I can ride, but I want something with three legs and a swinger, and that can carry a pack. I don't want outlaws." "Well," he said, "I have just sold all the old stock

off the place, but there are two outlaws that I'll sell you; they have done nothing for years, and they are very fat, and you can have them for six pounds a piece." "Well," I said, "we'll have a look at them," and they were put in the yard for us to look at. One was a roan mare that had been broken in, but had had a fistula, and had been turned out, and had never been ridden since, and had had some three or four years' spell since she was broken in. The other was a grey horse, that from all accounts, was a perfect terror. However, I liked the look of him, and in those days I fancied myself on a horse, so I said to Briggstock—"Would you be game to ride the roan mare, and I'll take the grey horse?" He said: "Oh, if you'll ride the grey horse, I'll ride the roan mare." I said "All right," and caught the mare for him, and put his saddle and bridle on, and let her go in the yard for a run, and she bucked beautifully all over the place for a few minutes. When I caught her again I said to him: "You're a bit frightened of her, Charlie; I'll ride her for you first." "Oh, no," he said, "I'll do my bit; you have got the other one to ride," and he got on her, while I held her head, but he was in an awful funk, and I believe if that mare had shaken herself he would have fallen off, but she did nothing, only walked away quietly.

Then it came to my turn with the grey horse. I took my bridle in hand, and walked into the yard, and caught him without any difficulty, patted him, and led him down to where the saddle was, and he stood as quiet as a sheep till I put the saddle on him, and did nothing. By this time the stock-yard fence was covered with all the station-hands, who had come

to see this horse ridden. I led him round the yard once or twice, threw the reins over his neck, and got on him, and he walked away just like a lamb; never gave a jump, and neither of them ever did anything but behave as very quiet horses. I sold that grey horse at Chinchilla for twelve pounds, and a quiet old mare in good condition; I forget what became of the roan mare.

We arrived at Jewandah in good time to inspect the sheep which I had bought for Gurley. I think this was the first big lot of sheep that I had bought up to that time—that is, inspected, purchased, and took delivery all in one trip—and I had some experiences over that purchase that I have never had in any transaction since. The agreement was ten thousand wethers of certain ages; price, I think, four shillings and sixpence, with all sick, lame, or sheep unfit to travel to be rejected, and the first eight thousand I got delivery of without much trouble; the only trouble to start with being that he made me pay for the tar for branding them, which is a thing that I have never heard of before or since. Anyhow, I rejected the sheep that I did not want, and any ewes that were in them, and no objection was taken at all to anything that I put out, and consequently I did not go as close as I might have done according to agreement, but when the last flock came in—about two thousand head—the manager told me—“These are the pick lot of the wethers; I went through them myself; there is not a ewe in them, and there is not a sheep in them that you can reject; so you can just count them and brand them.” I then went down to the yard, and saw the sheep being yarded—in a big

yard—and as they came through the gate I counted twenty-four ewes, and I told the manager I had counted these ewes, that they were a very fine lot of sheep, but that I would put them through the yards, the same as I did the others, to get these ewes out, and we got a good many more than twenty-four, but I do not know quite what number.

There was one miserable, sick sheep in the lot, and one of the station men asked me if he should throw him out. I said "Yes." Well, we had got about half of those last two thousand done when the manager came up to the yard, and asked me what I had rejected that sheep for. I said: "He is a sick sheep, and unfit to travel." Well, he said: "You must take him." I told him "I would see him damned first." "Then," he said, "you will take none," and I told him he could keep them. Then it occurred to me that I would have a very poor story to tell Mr. Macansh when I got back; that I had refused ten thousand wethers for the sake of one. So I went back to the manager (who was still in the yard), and said: "Yes, I'll take that sheep; I'll give you five shillings for him;" put my hand in my pocket and pulled out the money. "No," he said, "he must be branded and put in your lot." "No," I said; "I'll cut his throat and give you five shillings for him; I don't want him." He said: "He must be branded and put in your sheep." The thing, to me, then began to seem ridiculous, so I said "All right; fetch the brands along," and they branded him from horn to hoof, covered him with Q's and T's. When he was properly branded I picked him up, carried him to the outside fence of the yard, and chucked him

over into the bush, and told the manager to "put him down one to be paid for," and told the blacks that were there, and had been giving me a hand, that they could have him; but they did not get him, and when the sheep were counted out he got into them and came along for some distance on the road towards Gurley; at least, so I heard from Briggstock, who brought the sheep across.

I had to buy a plant—dray and three horses, two to work in the dray, and one saddle horse (a chestnut taffy horse that I took a great fancy to, and that turned out one of the best horses I ever rode). When I had got Briggstock started away, I said to the man from whom I had bought the plant—"If I can catch the train to-morrow in Dalby, I can get to Brisbane in time to catch the steamer that leaves for Sydney; do you think this horse will carry me from here to Dalby in time to catch the train?" He said "Yes," and he did it. I rode that hundred odd miles from about five o'clock in the afternoon till ten or eleven o'clock the next day without a rest or hardly getting off a minute; and rode the last few miles into Dalby with a gentleman I had overtaken, who was also going down by the train, and he offered me twice as much as I had given for the horse, which I intended to sell on reaching Dalby, but I took such a fancy to him that I left him there to be brought on with the sheep to Gurley. I sold that horse years afterwards to Mrs. Gardiner, of Gobolion, near Wellington, for thirty pounds, and she drove him for many years, until her death or his, I don't know which came first.

I think I have once or twice in my life ridden about the same distance, and have owned a good many

horses in my young days that would have done it, but to-day there are few that could, and I very much doubt if to-day the same number of horses could be found to start as did in the ten mile race at Wagga Wagga that was run, I think, about the year 1870, and if they would do the same performance. Then there was the ride of Scillicorn, the butcher of Bathurst, from Bathurst to Sydney without stopping on his horse, called The Poor Man's Friend; and another race, from Dubbo to Orange, one hundred miles, which was won by a horse called Colonel, the property of Frost, the Orange butcher, who backed him to race a fresh horse the last mile into Orange after he had come from Dubbo, and he won that too. Such trials of endurance we have not heard of since, and it is a good thing too, because it was really cruelty to animals, though I have often heard, when I wanted to buy a horse, the owner say that "He had ridden this horse a hundred miles in so many hours," but I have always replied—"I don't want him, because I wanted him to do that for me."

The horses of the present day, the best of them, are not in their natural state; there is too much cultivation. From the time a horse is foaled he is hand-fed and looked after, allowed out in a small paddock with his mother, which has been cleared of all sticks, stones, or anything that might hurt him. When taken from his mother he is stabled, and still allowed to exercise in a small paddock, ridden, and exercised on a course, probably, where there is nothing but very level ground, and taught to gallop and race. If you took him off the level ground, and put him to run a hundred mile race over

very bad and rough roads he would probably break his neck, or his rider's, before he had gone very far; and if he did stand up he would be a very long time on the road, quite outpaced by the time of the others, and probably not worth tuppence for ever after, as he would get fevered on account of the inflammatory food that he had been fed upon. A grass-fed horse that has got his own living all his life never gets any ailment; work him as hard as you like till he is so knocked up that you cannot get him any further, and in two or three days he will be quite right again. But, as I said before, we do not want horses now to do the work that we did in the days that I am writing about. The motor car and cycle do all the long journeys now five times as quickly and five times as far as the best horses could have ever done, and the motor is not knocked up at the end of any distance, so probably the cultivated horse pays the community better to make money by galloping half-a-mile or three-quarters with a postage stamp on his back in wonderfully quick time.

But to return to the reminiscences. I caught the train and steamer round to Sydney, and found when I got there that the boat for Newcastle did not start for a day or two, so I put in the time by a trip to Bathurst to see my best girl, now my wife, and I may add that this was the first time I had visited Sydney since I left it in 1867. Managers nowadays would find a lot of reasons for coming down at least once or twice a year, but then all circumstances are altered.

CHAPTER XV.

A BATTLE ROYAL.

“Of many a brawn and muscle bout, by plastic memory fed,
In which the one who tells comes out invariably ahead.”

—*Will Carleton.*

I HAVE told you that we put up a steam sheep-washing plant on Gurley. It was necessary in those days of long bullock-dray carriage—the Gurley wool was delivered to the steamers at Raymond Terrace, on the Hunter, above Newcastle, the head of navigation. Teams were scarce, and consequently carriage was very high, and it would not pay to cart dirt. Often, when it rained, the sheep had to stand up to their bellies in mud and water, and wade out through the gateway, and even on the run they splashed through mud and water, which formed great clots of mud on their wool all over them. So you can see that it was necessary to get as much of this off as possible, and only pay carriage on wool, which, at that time averaged about sixpence all round, and the lower classes—locks, etc.—were not worth sending away, as the best of them would not fetch more than twopence, and the carriage was nearer sixpence.

However, we put up a steam washing plant, with hot soak and spout. Mr. Macansh was on the station at this time, and he undertook to look after the sheep-washing; I had to look after the shed. He had made

agreements with all the washers before the plant was erected, but they were all employed assisting to put up the yards and outside work of the plant, and giving a hand in moving the heavy pieces of machinery into position. I had made no agreement with the shearers, except verbally, and Mr. Macansh often told me before the washing started that he had his men all right, and that I would have a lot of bother with the shearers. However, of course, the washing had to be started about a week before the shearing, and I was down every day helping with the getting ready, and when everything was right, and the sheep brought in, the steam got up, water hot, and spouts going, Mr. Macansh asked me to take the penners up and show them how to yard the sheep, etc.

I had just got the sheep all penned up when Mr. Macansh came down, and told me that the men had all struck for a higher wage, which was given to the spouters only, who were liable to get wet. I came up to the engine, and interviewed the men, and they declined to do anything unless they all got the same high wage, so I told the engineer to draw his fire, as it was no use going on that day, and told the strikers to leave the place. They demanded their wages for the time they had been waiting for the washing to commence. This I refused to give them, but what really annoyed them was that the ration-cart had come down, bringing cook and tucker and utensils for cooking for the men; but I told the ration-carrier to go back to the camp, and take everything back to the station, remarking to the strikers that if they would not work they should not feed at the station's expense.

While I was doing this two sheep had fallen into the hot soak, and I said to an overseer—"Come on down with me, and we'll wash these sheep," which we did, and of course, not being properly dressed, and the spouting tubs to stand in not being properly equipped, we got ringing wet. I got on my horse to go to the station to change my clothes, only a mile or so. The whole camp, except the engineer and a station-hand or two, walked up behind me jeering and using insulting language. However, I rode very slowly up, changed my clothes, and went back to see the fires were all drawn and everything right for the night. The mob followed me back, still talking. When I thought everything was satisfactory I got on my horse again to go away, when one of the crowd stepped out and said something (I cannot put in what he said; may I say he used insulting language about my mother, that is as near as I can come to it)—"If I had you off that horse, I'd make you pay me!" This was the last straw, I was really mad, and, jumping off my horse, I rushed at him, blind with rage. He met me between the eyes with a straight, well-directed blow, which put me on my back, split my nose, and blackened both my eyes. I was up in a second, and would have rushed on again, but the engineer (we called him Tommy Dodd because he was always singing that song) put his arm around my neck, and held a can of water up to my mouth. "Take a drink; take a drink," and whispered in my ear—"Keep him out; don't let him close on you," and those few seconds brought me to my senses. Macansh came up at that time, and said: "Barton, you must take off your coat," which I did, and went

to work to win. Every word that old Harry Bradshaw, the convict servant who taught me to box, had told me came back to me, and to the finish of the fight he never hit me again, and I got him into as bloody a state as myself. During the fight there was no time called, we never ceased; the crowd, of course, jeering at me, and backing their man—"Give it to him, Bill; he is better fed than you are; there never was a man could lick you, Bill; reduce the ——," and exclamations like that continued for a little while. However, they were varied with suggestions of caution, such as "Look out for the beggar's left," and at the finish I knocked him down. The crowd immediately ran to the wood-heap, and got billets of wood in their hands to "knock the beggar's brains out for hitting him down." However, my opponent sat up, and said: "He didn't hit me down; he hit me fair, and I'll give him best." I said: "I don't want best; you can't disfigure me more than you have, and I'm not half done with you; get up and fight it out or I'll kick you up." However, the engineer, who was my backer, whispered—"You must give him best; there are sixteen to two, and it's no use making a mob fight of it," so I did, but I was not half satisfied, and offered to take the next best man on. My opponent, sitting on the ground, said to one of his mates—"You have a go at him, Tom," but the fellow referred to looked at me, and said: "No; I'll summons him for my money."

There was a tall, Yankee fellow there who was a ringleader in the affair, and who, as he had engaged for dry work, had no real cause for getting up a row. I said to him—"Come out here, you long crawler;

I'll give five pounds to have a hit at you," but he remarked that he was not a fighting man.

I had managed, luckily I suppose, to cut a temple vein in my opponent's face, and that night Mr. Macansh had to go down to the camp and put sticking plaster on him to stop the bleeding. The next morning I got some carriers, who were waiting for wool, and station-hands, and we started washing. My opponent of the day before came up, and apologised, and told me that he had been egged on by the others because he was pretty good with his fists, but that he was very sorry for doing it. I said to him—"I'd like to have you in one of those sheep-yards, where you had not room to run away." "Oh," he said, "you're too good for me, and I'm very sorry that I knocked you about as I did." "Oh," I said, "I think you're the only man amongst them; go up to the shed and get your account, I'll pay you;" which I did.

The others all left without any money, and, as a sort of revenge, wrote up in raddle on the engine, all over the shed, and a great many places on the run—"Beware of Fighting-Barton," and probably it is that fight that has given many people the idea that I am a fighting man, but I can assure you that I am not, and no man that has ever learned to use his hands ever wants to fight if he can help it; it is too much like work, and bad for the eyes, as the old woman said when the wheelbarrow went over her nose.

I may as well add that I had the painful satisfaction of going through the shearing of that season with two black eyes and sticking-plaster all over my nose, and I felt anything but proud of it.

CHAPTER XVI.

MY START IN NELLGOWRIE.

I LEFT Gurley in 1871, having made up my mind to try and make a start on my own. Mr. A'Beckett, who had been with me all the time at Gurley, and I had agreed to make a start together; our capital was about one thousand pounds each, and the next thing was to find a place that would suit us. Perhaps, I ought to add that Mr. Macansh gave me some very good advice, which I have never forgotten, and always acted up to, and that was—"Whatever you do, get good country; you can make water, but you can't make grass, and poor country will always be a millstone round your neck." These words I have found to be the best advice any young fellow could have, even at the present day, though what was poor country in those days has, in many instances, been converted into the best. New England, for instance, in those days was very poor grazing country, not fit for merino sheep; they died from footrot, fluke, and all other ailments that sheep are heir to, but, owing to the killing of the timber, the draining of the country, and the introduction of English grasses, New England to-day produces the highest-priced merino wool. However, that was not the case forty years ago, and we took some considerable time before we could decide upon a property that would suit us. Of

course, properties then were very much cheaper than now, but when you took into consideration the cost of carriage and improvements, together with the price of wool and sheep, they probably were as dear as at any other time.

The first trip of inspection I made was into Queensland. I inspected a station called Bendamere, but I could see nothing in that. I hired a horse at Bendamere, and rode on to inspect a station called Victoria Downs, some two hundred miles further on. I arrived safely at Malvern, which was close to Victoria Downs station, and there I got a pilot to show me the run and stock. I did not see the owner of the place (Mr. Jones) at all on that trip, but I saw the run and cattle—a few hundred very fine bullocks. If they were on the place to-day they would be worth about twelve guineas a head. I do not remember now exactly what the station was offered for, but I heard from my pilot that whoever bought it would probably have a law-suit, as the station belonged to two brothers; one Mr. Jones, who lived in Sydney, and from whom we had got the offer of the place, and his brother, who lived on the station. They were partners; the Sydney Jones, I think, had found all the capital, and he thought that the best thing he could do was to get it back again by selling the place. His brother (the manager) objected to the sale, and would not deliver the station or cattle. When I learnt this I thought it was no use buying a law-suit, though I liked the country and the cattle, and I decided to have nothing to do with it, and came back to Sydney, but while on the subject of this

Victoria Downs station I may as well say what I know about it.

There was another gentleman induced to go up and inspect it soon after I turned it down, but the Mr. Jones from Sydney agreed to go up with him and hand over the property. They arrived on the place, the managing Jones not being visible, and they went out in the morning to inspect the cattle (which were running close to the place on a plain, and could be very easily seen in a day). They soon found the cattle, which they put on a camp, intending, I think, to count them, when Mr. A. G. Jones appeared on the horizon, armed with a cavalry sword. He rode straight at the would-be buyer, brandishing his sword. The buyer turned his horse off and galloped for his life, A. G. Jones after him, swinging the sword, and the Sydney Jones following up his brother with a revolver in his hand, calling out to the would-be buyer—"Don't run away; let him hit you, and I'll shoot him like a dog." However, the would-be buyer did not think it was worth while to be hit with a sword, and kept on going, and, like me, returned to Sydney. He was quite full of it.

I heard that some time after this they had to send up a number of mounted police to take delivery of the cattle. I think the Sydney Jones gave up his half-share of the station, and was satisfied to take the cattle for his share in the capital. Before the time of sending up the police I think he had sold the cattle to some buyer, who went up to take delivery of them. He mustered the cattle with the men he had brought up to drove them, and was preparing to start on the road when A. G. Jones again appeared on the scene;

this time without the sword, but with a couple of cattle-dogs, which held the cattle on the camp in spite of all attempts to drive them, and A. G. Jones, drawing a stirrup-iron out of his saddle, kept the drivers away from the cattle, and the dogs kept them where they were. Of course, the buyer went away without them, and then came the police.

The next inspection I made turned out a purchase. It consisted at that time of a little over two blocks of country, which was part of Narrawah station, on the Nedgarah Creek, about twenty miles from Coonamble, which was a very small place then. I forget now the price we gave for the place, with about five or six thousand sheep, but the seasons favoured us up to the year 1877, when we had a very bad dry time. In 1876 we bought an adjoining property—Conimbia—all fenced, with two thousand head of bullocks, and with two big dams of water, which we thought would see us through any drought, for twenty thousand pounds. We sold a number of these cattle (fats) in Orange for about eight pounds a head, but we had to move all the rest of the cattle the following year, and also all our sheep, from the other station, which we called Nellgowrie. Luckily, I got the cattle on agistment on a scrubby piece of Calga, called Tirridgerrie, so I had not to drive them far. If I had had to do so, there was no water and no grass to take them any way, and they probably would have all died.

The sheep Mr. A'Beckett took got as far as Pilliga, on the Namoi, but could get no farther, as there was no water in the Namoi River, except in holes fifty or sixty miles apart, that sheep could never

have reached, and those that did would probably have bogged, so he was obliged to turn back. A thunderstorm having fallen at Nellgowrie, I had sent A'Beckett word to bring the sheep back, and he had got them as far as Coonamble, but, unfortunately, camped on the wrong side of the river. A heavy thunderstorm that night brought the river down—not very high—the sheep could have waded across the sand, but he could not get them to cross, and they had to camp for some weeks on the other side of the river while we were making bridges to cross them.

The sheep he took away—about twenty thousand—had come back to the river at Coonamble without a very serious loss, but during the weeks that they were on the black plain not a vestige of feed did they have, and they became so weak they could hardly drag themselves through the black-soil mud, and by the time we had got the bridge built and the sheep across, their numbers were terribly reduced. I forget now, what the number was that we got home, but not seven thousand, and the plain where they were stuck up was covered with dead sheep, washed perfectly white by the rains, that reminded you of a pumpkin paddock after a frost had killed all the vines; but it was sheep, not pumpkins.

After several attempts to bridge this river, each attempt being washed away by a rise in the water, I struck upon an idea, and succeeded in borrowing three or four big waggons, which I drew across the river one behind the other, and then started my bridge on the guard-rails of the waggons by putting saplings across the waggons and bark on top of them, but we had a difficulty which I had not reckoned on—the

water washing the sand from under the wheels and letting them sink—and during the time the sheep were crossing we had to stop them several times to raise our bridge work higher, as the water was going over the bark. It is generally very difficult to start sheep across a bridge, and every stop makes that difficulty again, but with these poor sheep you only had to break a gun bough down and walk across the bridge, dragging the bough after you, and the sheep would crowd after you to try and get the green leaves.

The sheep, I may say, before we crossed them, were camped on a portion of the Coonamble common, and the ranger interviewed me several times about moving the sheep, and said that I would be punished if I did not move them, but I found out that they could not hurt me for trespass unless they put the sheep in the pound, to do which they would have to cross the river, and I told the ranger that I would be well satisfied to pay all damages if he took them to the pound.

Just after we got the sheep across the river I walked up to the town in my wet clothes—I found it necessary to stop in the river on the lower side to rescue any sheep that fell off the bridge—and at the hotel I met the gentleman who owned the country round Coonamble common. I thanked him for his kindness in not worrying me about any trespass my sheep might have done off the common (I had previously given his men half-a-sovereign each for what they had done in keeping my sheep from getting boxed with the station sheep), and added—“I have had a horrible time with these sheep, and I would not go through it again for five thousand pounds,” and

asked him to come and have a drink, which he did. I said to him then that I had plenty of grass on my station, and if it would be of any use to him he could send over any sheep or stock that he liked until his grass grew. He remarked: "A sort of *quid pro quo*." My partner, A'Beckett, replied: "A *quid pro nothing*, you mean." When I said that I would not go through the same again for five thousand pounds the publican overheard him say: "I may get that yet." However, we parted, as we always had been, on fairly friendly terms, but by the following mail I got a notice of action for trespass for three thousand pounds damages from his solicitors, he having gone to Sydney by the coach that left not long after we parted.

I felt that I had done no trespass, and that if I had trespassed I could not have done any damage, because the country was as black as your boot for miles, so I determined to fight the gross injustice of this action, and instructed my solicitors to reply to the notice. The matter went on between the solicitors for some weeks, when they decided that I should pay one hundred pounds and the matter would end, my solicitors explaining to me that no matter what happened I could not win, and that I must pay expenses, which would amount to considerably more than one hundred pounds, which, I believe, is the law of the land, but how such a law ever got into the statutes has ever since been a mystery to me.

I went into Coonamble, and drew a cheque for one hundred pounds, which I posted to my solicitors, and I felt very sick and depressed over it, and for once in my life I prayed earnestly that I should be allowed to live long enough to get even, which prayer

was answered some years after, when I bought Burren, and found large lots of his sheep living on the place. I ordered the sheep off at once, and sent him a note by the drover, saying that I had had the opportunity of getting a great deal more than one hundred pounds out of him, but, though I felt that instead of heaping coals of fire on his head I was throwing pearls before swine, as my prayer had been answered, I had determined to let the matter drop.

Of course, we never spoke from the time that he entered the action until many years after, though we often met in Coonamble, and at race-meetings and land courts, or any of the general grazing gatherings, and it gave me an infinite amount of pleasure to walk into a room where they were all collected, shake hands and make myself agreeable with all the company except my friend, and it invariably happened that he was left in the corner by himself, and I was in the crowd. This proceeding of mine was real coals on him, and I had repeated messages from him asking me to speak to him in public if I would not in private. My reply was always—"When I've got anything to say to you I will say it." However one day (I think it was at a race-meeting), nearly everyone was away from the hotel, and a commission agent came to me, and asked me if I would have a glass of sherry with him, to which I agreed, and we went round to the bar. There was no one in the bar, so the agent went round and got the bottle of sherry and the glasses, putting three glasses on the counter. He then went into the next room, and brought out my enemy, and said: "Now, gentlemen, you have not spoken for a long

while, and I want you to have a glass of sherry with me, and make friends." I turned round, and said: "We have not spoken for some years; I will be the first to speak now, but don't make any mistake, you are no friend of mine, and never will be." He then tried to make excuses or explanations about this lawsuit, but I told him that I could not talk about it without getting angry, and that it was a matter that in my mind the more it was stirred up the worse it would smell, and wished him good-day and walked out. However, he has gone to join the great majority, and I have mentioned no names, but facts, nevertheless.

When we got all our sheep and cattle back there was a woeful shortage, and a big overdraft, made extra big by the purchase of Conimbia, and we were virtually insolvent. I came down to Sydney to interview the bank as to whether they would carry us on or not, and saw Mr. Dibbs one morning, placing the matter before him exactly as it stood, and he said, "Now, what do you want me to do?" "Well," I said, "we would want money enough to buy about thirty thousand sheep to stock up, and I think if you will do that I will be able to repay it shortly." He said he would put the matter before the board, and give me an answer if I came back at four o'clock.

Just as I walked out of the bank I ran against Mr. Pat Osborne. He asked me what I was doing in Sydney, and I told him that I was, like a great many others, I thought, trying to get some money. He said: "Come down to the club with me" (I was not a member then), "and tell me all about it," which I did, and he said, when I had told him everything—

“I’ve got a lot of money idle in the Commercial Bank, and if Dibbs’s reply from the board is not satisfactory you can tell him that I will advance you the money if he is afraid.”

When I went back to the bank (I do not think the board were very strongly against it, if against it at all), Mr. Dibbs started to explain that I would have to do this, that, and the other if I were carried on, all of which I knew very well, but I told him—“I have seen a friend who is prepared to advance me the money if you are afraid; he is Mr. Pat Osborne, but I would rather do business with you, whose business it is to lend money than do it with a private individual.” He said: “All right, Barton, we will let you have the money, but reduce your account as soon as possible.”

History repeated itself. After every drought there is always a boom, and by getting this money I was able to come in on the top of the boom, and we very soon wiped off our debt, though we had to sell the largest half of Conimbia, with, I think, seven hundred head of cattle—all that was left after the drought—and we got a good price for them, though I felt at the time that they were very cheap; I felt so sure that cattle were going to be very high indeed, but my forecast turned out entirely wrong. Mr. Blake, who bought that portion of Conimbia from us, never realised three pounds a head for his fat cattle in Sydnéy, and he very soon disposed of them all, and went in for sheep.

The following year, and for many years after, cattle were not a paying proposition in New South Wales. To make cattle pay at any time you must

have large areas of very cheap country, which can only be obtained in the outlying regions of Queensland and the Northern Territory, and the distance from markets has, at the time I am writing, made them a very bad spec even out there. However, the freezing companies started, though they were a long while before they made the freezing a success, and a tremendous lot of money was spent by the graziers in different ventures to try and make a success of shipping meat to England. Owing to the success of the freezing works in making it possible to treat our meat the same as our wool, and export it to other countries, the pioneers of the freezing, Mr. Mort being the leader, have done more good to Australia than any other industry that has ever been started, because it has assisted to make grazing, the great industry of Australia, a profitable business for both sheep and cattle, and is responsible for the higher prices that we can now get for our meat. So much for that, but it is only twenty years since freezing has been a reliable and paying business.

CHAPTER XVII.

A TRIP THROUGH QUEENSLAND IN 1884.

I MUST mention that I got married soon after we bought Nellgowrie, and my family increasing rather fast, I thought that I should have to get into something bigger to be able to feed, clothe, and educate my children, so A'Beckett and I agreed to dissolve partnership, he to retain Nellgowrie, I to take the smaller portion of Conimbia. Perhaps the real reason of my wanting to get out of Nellgowrie was that civilisation was coming along—there was a church in Coonamble, and with civilisation I knew would come free selection, and the matter that we really dissolved on was whether we should buy the land, which we could have done at that time at one pound an acre, or leave it as it was—leasehold—and chance its being selected. Free selection, you must remember, had been the law of the land for at least ten or twelve years, but up to the time of which I am speaking the selectors had not come out much beyond Dubbo, on the western side, but, of course, they were certain to come sooner or later.

I sold out the block of my share of the property, and decided to take a trip right through Queensland with a friend, Mr. James Murphy, who had just sold out of his Calgar station. I bought a pair of horses and waggonette in Bathurst to start with, but we

increased our horses, buying fresh ones at different stations along the road, till we got right out beyond Winton, where horses got too dear to buy. We stopped and inspected Oondooroo, for I must tell you that we were thinking of investing in Queensland property if we could find anything suitable, but, strange to say (this was in the year 1884), stations right out in Queensland that were just taken up, with no improvements, were selling dearer than they were six or seven years ago. There must have been a big boom on at that time; the government were getting twenty-five shillings a mile for leasehold for country that six years ago could be had for five shillings a mile, the former lessees having abandoned them.

We made up our minds to take Oondooroo if it could be bought for seventy thousand pounds with thirty-six thousand sheep, and my mate went down to Melbourne to bid for it at auction, but the first bid was for one hundred thousand pounds, and it was run up to one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, but my friend did not think there was a *bona fide* bid in the room, and he never as much as looked at the auctioneer, and a year or two afterwards the same place was sold for thirty-six thousand pounds, and for some years was a very poor bargain, but, of course, it is now, the same as all properties up there, a gold mine.

I stopped at Oondooroo, and marked their lambs for them till we heard the result of the sale. I then went on to the head of the Diamantina to look at a station called Belcase—it is now, I think, part of Kynuna—and from that I crossed over to the

Flinders, and then ran the Flinders down for a considerable distance until I got into the coast country, which I did not like at all, and meeting with a friend (Mr. Arthur Rankin), who was a schoolmate of mine, about to take a trip into the York Peninsula, I sold him my turnout—twenty-six horses, all broken to lead or go anywhere, and the trap and harness—I think, for one hundred and twenty pounds, and came back to Sydney *via* Aramac and Rockhampton. There was no communication, I think, open then from Townsville to the Flinders, though that is the shortest road now to the coast; the whole of that country was occupied from the port of Rockhampton.

From Aramac I took my passage in the coach to Bogantungan, where the railway was in course of construction to Rockhampton, and we could get a seat in the contractor's train to take us there. At Aramac I fell in with a Mr. Pepperday, at that time a great cattle speculator, and I found him a very nice man as a travelling companion. The coach, on that trip, only went as far as a place called The Rock Hotel, owing to heavy rain, and Mr. Pepperday and myself, being the only passengers, were told that we would have to stop at this wretched pub until the road was dry enough for the coach to go on, which would mean the next trip, probably, and that would be a week or a fortnight. The coachman was going to take the mails on by pack-horse, and I suggested that we could go with him, and ride the coach-horses. He agreed to that if we found our own saddles and bridles, which we managed to do, though I forget now under what arrangement we got them or what we paid

for them, and we jogged along merrily with the coachman.

When we got to the Severn River it was in flood, and the coach that had come up from Rockhampton was on the other side, not able to cross, and in those days (as it is in the outback parts of Queensland today) the idea was large areas and lots of time, that is, time is of no value. At the pub where we stopped there were a number of carriers and other travellers—all weather-bound—and I shall relate a short story, which commenced as soon as we got off our horses. There was a very tall man, dressed only in his trousers, who was wanting to fight anyone or everyone, and insulting everybody whether they spoke to him or not. He insulted Pepperday, who was only a little fellow, but as plucky as they make them, and who would have taken this fellow on straight away, but I thought I was a much better match for him, in height, at any rate, and took Pepperday's part, though much against his will. A ring was formed in two seconds, and we went to work. This was the most harmless fight that I ever had in my life, for in the first round—I do not know whether I hit him or not, there was no mark on him, and I know he did not hit me—he fell down, and refused to get up. However, the crowd insisted on getting him up, and two or three of them held him up in a very limp position, his legs bending under him, and wanted me to punch him. Of course, I could not do that, but all of a sudden he straightened himself up, broke away from his backers, and ran like a kangaroo down to the carriers' camp, and he never came back again that night.

We then started to make inquiries about getting across this river. Of course, Pepperday and myself could have got across easily enough, but the trouble was that the coach that was on the other side of the river would not go on unless the mail-bags were brought over. After making some inquiries we succeeded in borrowing a long wool-press rope, with which I volunteered to swim over to the other side. It gave me all I could do, the rope was so heavy, and the water was washing it down. However, I got it across, and tied my end of it to a tree some eight or nine feet above the water, and they did the same on the other side. A large ring was put on this rope, to which the mail-bags were attached, and two light clothes-line ropes were tied to this ring, one to pull the ring along the rope across the river, and the other to pull it back. As I was the only one across the river, without a stitch of clothes, I had to draw the mail-bags across to my side, unfasten them from the ring, and carry them about a hundred yards through mud and water before I could get a dry place to put them on, and by the time I got the whole lot across I was pretty full of it, and felt red-hot by the action of the sandflies and mosquitoes. However, we got everything over, and swam the horses across, hooked up the coach, and went on our road rejoicing.

We had to stay at Bogantungan a night; it was a galvanised-iron house, without ceilings, and, of course, every word that was said at one end was heard by everyone. There was a drunken bullock-driver in one of the rooms close to mine, who kept-us all rather amused till daylight, but I cannot (though I remember some of his ravings) put them in these

reminiscences. However, we got into Rockhampton the next night, and from that out we had the steamer and civilisation.

At Rockhampton I was talking to the barnaid, and I saw that she knew me, but, as she had altered the colour of her hair since I had seen her previously, I could not recollect her till she told me that she had met me in Coonamble. Then I remembered her at once. She was at that time the wife of a surveyor, a useless drunken little wretch, and on one occasion in Coonamble there was some gathering, and this surveyor got full. I had advised him to go home, but he said he would not go unless I went with him, which I agreed to do, so I took him home, and there was a light in the house (she was evidently sitting up for him). I knocked at the door, and the answer was "Come in," so I opened the door, and said: "Please, Mrs. ———, I have brought your husband home. You know, there has been a bit of a spree down the town, and he has had a little more than is good for him, but, taking the occasion into consideration, you must excuse him this time." She said: "Oh, come in, deah." There was something in that "deah" that did not sound very inviting to me, and the poor dirty little devil walked in. She was very kind to him, and took him into the bedroom to wash himself. This, I thought, was my chance of getting away, so I slipped out quietly, and started to walk down the street, but I had not gone many yards when after me he came, and said: "Oh, you must not go away; you promised to stop with me." However, I got him back, and his wife having assured him that she was not angry, he was prevailed upon to stay, and let me go.

To go back to my story. When I got to Sydney there was a good deal of talk about freezing meat. Mort had shown that it could be done, though I think it ruined him finding it out, but I foolishly took some shares in a meat company that was started to freeze sheep and cattle near Orange, and took the management. The result of this spec was that I lost some months of my time and about three thousand pounds in cash. I may tell you that when this company was started all the graziers who had taken shares in it, and they were a good many, had promised to supply so many thousand sheep or so many cattle. Fat sheep at that time were worth about two shillings and sixpence or three shillings a piece, but, dry times setting in, the price in Sydney rose to about seven or eight shillings, and the shareholders who had promised to supply the company with stock carried out their agreement, in a sense, but they delivered me nothing but worthless old rubbish that was not worth skinning, and I put them all through the digester to get what tallow there was out of them, but, of course, it was a loss to run a big plant for the sake of their worthless skins, as the tallow was very little, and I had to buy fat sheep from the graziers round about at higher prices than they would bring in Sydney. However, as contracts had been entered into with the Orient Company, we had to load the vessels, and the meat when it got to England was always sold at a loss, because there was no place to store it; the Orient Company, I think, gave us ten days to unload the meat, and, as we could not keep it for twenty-four hours after it was landed, it had to be sold for what it would fetch, and, of

course, the English butchers were just as ready to form a ring as the Australians, so that my venture in the meat business was an absolute failure, yet I never lost confidence in its being some day one of the leading industries of Australia, which it is to-day, and in the progress of Australia, ranks second only to the pioneers who produced the sheep for freezing. And to-day, though our stock is greatly depleted by the drought, we can still sell to the Empire beef and mutton for our soldiers cheaper than it can be got in any other part of the world, the only trouble now being that there is no freight and no coal to drive the freezing machines.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I VISIT NEW ZEALAND.

AFTER leaving the freezing works I heard from my old mate, James Murphy, who was in Melbourne, that he had had word from his brother in New Zealand that he thought it was a very good place to invest in sheep-breeding, and he asked me if I would take a trip with him, and join him in any speculation that we might see over there and think good enough.

I am afraid my description of New Zealand, as I saw it something over thirty years ago, will annoy the people of New Zealand if any of them should read these reminiscences, but, as I said before, I only state things as I saw them with my own eyes, and the progress that New Zealand has made since then speaks highly for the perseverance and industry of the Maorilanders; for I never saw a more forbidding place for a sheep-grower to tackle. I will just tell you exactly what I saw, and how it impressed me.

We landed in Auckland, and interviewed the manager of the Bank of New Zealand, and got a number of properties under offer, all of which we were assured would return us fifteen per cent. on the capital outlay. Of course, this seemed pretty good, and we started on our trip of inspection. We went

round to Gisborne by boat, and stopped a day or two there with Murphy's brother.

The first morning I got up very early to hear the English lark, which I had heard so much about, and which was supposed to be plentiful in New Zealand. I heard the lark, but he did not seem to me to be any better than the larks that I had heard singing in New South Wales, and I came to the conclusion that he was rather a fraud, or a very much over-rated songster.

I spent the day or two that we stayed at Gisborne in walking over the surrounding country. I saw some beautiful country, reclaimed swamps I should call them, dead level, with English grasses, like a gentleman's lawn that had not been cut for a month or so. On these flats there were small stacks of grass-hay, which I thought were probably kept for feeding stock in the bad times, but I afterwards learnt that it was the grass seeds out of this hay that the owners of the land were making a living out of by selling it to neighbours and others, who were reclaiming country. In walking over these beautiful flats there was a furrow or gutter every fifty or a hundred yards filled with water, and I noticed a great many sheep dead in these gutters. They were not bogged, but must have died of some disease. There were no sheep that I saw on the flats at that time, but on taking a walk up the hills I came to a camp, and the first thing that struck me was that it was an emu camp, the droppings reminded me more of the emu than the sheep. I saw some sheep shortly after—English sheep—and their appearance amused me; all their hindquarters were shorn, and what passed in

my mind at that time was that they looked like French fowls. I had never seen sheep crutched before, and I never saw it done again till the fly-pest in New South Wales, about fifteen years ago. Now, of course, it is done annually, the fly-pest having added greatly to the expense of managing sheep.

I found one merino wether; he was lying down, and I picked him up, and found that he was nothing but a mass of maggots. He had the foot-rot, and with lying on his feet, the maggots had gone all over the wool, and he was in a dreadful state.

Of course, I noted all these things, but we started to go out some twenty miles to inspect one of the properties that we had to look at, and to get out we hired two saddle-horses, which were brought round saddled and bridled, with about seventy yards of whale-line neatly coiled on their necks. We had a pilot with us for a short distance, and we started on our trip, both wondering what the rope was for, and the pilot having gone a little ahead, Murphy rode close up to me, and said: "What's the life-line for, Barton?" I told him I did not know, but I supposed we would find out sooner or later, and when we got to the station—there were no fences in those days—we took our saddles off, and the manager told us to let our horses go. I was proceeding to take off the bridle, when he said: "You haven't undone your line." I said: "Must I take this off?" "Oh, no," he said, "just undo it." "And let it drag after him?" I said. "Yes." I said: "All right, but I should expect to find this horse's insides on a stump before long; he will go mad with a rope dragging after him." He replied: "No; he's all right; they are

used to it," and so they were; they would walk about through stumps and logs and everything else, and they would never get it tangled up. Then, you know, it was handy when you wanted your horse in the morning; all you had to do was to sneak up and catch the rope.

The following morning we saddled up to go and inspect the country. The manager told us that he could only take us over the part that he had had a burn on, so we said all right. We proceeded some distance up a morass of a gully, not very boggy, but more of a swamp, between very high pumice mountains (I call them), till we came to a spur running into the swamp, which we proceeded to ascend. This spur was, I think, absolutely similar to all the other spurs, which run up to a top as thick as the blade of a knife.

This country, I may tell you, had been burnt the autumn before, and had been sown with English grasses, and there were a number of sheep on it—old merino wethers—which they termed "fern-thrashers," a lean, long-legged, bare-looking sheep that never got fat, and was only valuable for what they termed thrashing-fern. You must bear in mind that the whole of this country, mountains and all, was covered with dense fern, too dense to ride through, and when you walked on it on foot you were walking two or three feet above the soil. The way they had to reclaim it was to get a burn—sometimes it would be a good one, sometimes a bad one, it depended a good deal upon the rain, as, of course, a dry season burned better than a wet one. When they get a burn they pack bags of grass-

seed up all over the burned country, and scatter the seed; then they put these "fern-thrashers" to eat the fern as it comes up. It grows something like asparagus to start with, and the sheep bite off this "crown," as they call it, and kill, or very much retard the growth of the fern. However, when once the grass gets a start, it will kill the fern and make magnificent country.

To go on with my story. The guide was riding up this spur first, I followed next, and Murphy was last. We only had a sheep-pad to ride on, and to us flat-country men it needed only a false step and you and your horse would never stop rolling, for it was a long way to the bottom. However, we were riding slowly up this spur when Murphy appeared beside me on foot; his horse was following. I said: "What's up, Murphy?" and he replied: "I can't stand the feeling of one leg hanging over nothing; I'd sooner walk."

When we got on to the top of the range the guide and I were a long way ahead of Murphy, and the guide was describing the boundaries of the run to me. He said: "The top of that range over there is the boundary." I said: "How long would it take you to get there?" "Oh," he said, "about three days." "About three days!" I said, "it's only a few miles." "Yes," he replied, "but when you get off this burnt country you get up to your waist in fern, and you can't get a horse through it; you would have to walk, and it would take you a long while to wade up there with fern right to the top of that mountain. You would not do it under two or three days."

I must say here that the scenery was very fine,

glimpses of water and mountains, but from a squatter's point of view it reminded me of Banjo Paterson's poem, "The Mountain Station"—

"The grass was short, 'tis true,
But this a fair exchange is,
The sheep can get a splendid view
By climbing up the ranges."

When Murphy appeared in his long waterproof coat, battling against the wind, which you could actually lean against, he said, as soon as he got his breath—"What do you think of it, Barton?" I said "Not much," and turning to our guide, he said: "I came out here to look at a station, and I want a station that I can drive a buggy over." "Oh, well," the fellow said: "There's a bullock-team putting in fencing posts up on top of that range." I had seen bullocks working in the mountains in New South Wales, and I knew that they could take a dray almost anywhere, but I thought those hills and the ferns would block them.

We went back to the station by a different route, and getting down this mountain we came to a place where there had been a land-slip. The land had slipped about twenty or thirty feet, and had formed a sort of terrace eight or ten feet wide. Our guide rode up to the top of this slip, turned his horse's head downwards, the horse sat on his tail, and slid gracefully down the terrace. Both Murphy and I got off our horses, fastened the reins up, and started them down the slide, as Murphy said, "to break their own sanguinary necks." The horses that we were riding—those we brought from Gisborne—had not been used to the country, and they bounded down something like a rock, but, luckily, were able to turn themselves

round when they got on to the terrace, or they would never have been seen again. We were both laughing very much when we started to go down together, but the first thing I knew was that the back of my head had hit the ground, and looking round I saw Murphy lying beside me. "Oh, Barton," he said, "we are not built for this country," and I said "No." However, we managed to get home safely, though the manager and guide told me he got a tumble about four or five times a week, but, like the eels, he was used to it.

We decided we had seen enough of our "mountain station," and went back to Gisborne. Then we went to Hawke's Bay, and saw some very fine country there. The carrying capacity of the reclaimed country round Gisborne and Hawke's Bay surprised me. I forget now the amount that they told me they carried on one property—sheep, cattle and horses, and if I did remember it I should be afraid to put it in. We found, though, that the country that we would have liked to possess was quite out of our reach, as far as our ideas of the value of land went, and we inspected none of the improved country stations.

Of course, we were both merino sheep men, and I saw at a glance that it was no country for merino sheep, and while travelling in the train I met with some graziers, and they told me all they knew, very honestly, about the country. "You've got to dip them for lice twice a year; you've got to dag them twice a year," and one or two other things I was told, the last being—"You've got to give them a tablespoonful of oil and turpentine twice a year." I said: "All right, I pass," and I told them—"Why, the mortality in your sheep every year, in spite of

your large lambings, would mean that if we had only one drought in three in New South Wales we would be better off than you are without your droughts, and have far less expense in management and capital expenditure. I'm off back." New Zealand at that time might have been all very well for an English farmer, whose ideas were about three or four hundred sheep, which had to be doctored and tended much in the same way as they do in England. Still, for all that, they have made New Zealand into a very wealthy country, and the indomitable pluck of the settlers in the North Island of New Zealand surprised me.

Travelling through the country all round Palmerston you pass through beautiful forests, more like tropical growth than anything I ever saw, immense trees almost touching one another, every crack and crevice filled with ferns and creepers of all descriptions. When you climb a few yards into these forests it becomes twilight, and it is all morass two or three inches deep in mud and water. The roads that are cut through these forests are lovely to travel; the trees on either side, as high as you can see, nothing but a dense green mass of foliage and flowers from the ground straight up this wall of timber. Nothing can get off the road, not even a pig, it is so well fenced.

Still, about Palmerston, I saw men who had taken up an acre or two, I suppose, of this country for farms, and, in my opinion, they might just as well have cut their farm out of a log of wood. They fell all this timber—some of the logs when on the ground were eight or ten feet through, and dear knows

how long. Of course, they felled one on top of the other in a mass, and if a man wanted to inspect his country when he had got it all felled he had to climb up about thirty feet, and scramble over it thirty feet from the ground. Then they had to wait until it was dry, and a spell of dry weather with it, which, as far as I could see, does not happen very often; then they get a fire in, and, we will hope, have a good burn. This is what I have seen after it had been burnt—any quantity of big charred logs lying on the ground, and the stumps burnt to a sharp point, looking like a gigantic harrow upside down, though this was all sown with grass, which was growing nicely, and horses (with the life-lines on them) were picking round these stumps, where it seemed impossible for a horse to go without getting entangled. A man could not drag a rope through the stumps without getting a hit somewhere, so the intelligence of the horse is wonderful.

We had a couple of days' pheasant shooting somewhere out from Gisborne; we toiled through fern from morning till night, and saw a few pheasants, but as there was only one dog with us, the man who owned the dog secured the bag.

I had armed myself with the best pair of boots I could get in Sydney, and got studs put in them, which was deemed a necessity in New Zealand, but the whole time I was over there I might just as well have had a piece of tripe tied round my feet; they were a dirty cream colour, just resembling well-soaked green-hide that the hair had been taken off. Of course, they were always wet; if you stepped off the verandah of a house you stepped into a foot of wet

grass (it was always wet), and I was rather surprised that the Maoris were not web-footed.

I must add that we received the greatest kindness and hospitality during our trip through New Zealand, and if I have said anything that the New Zealanders may take as a libel on their land, I will add this, that I saw the best cattle, and the fattest, I ever saw in my life, and the beef I got in the North Island of New Zealand has been a dream ever since.

We got down to Wellington, and spent a day or two there. The gardens were certainly lovely, and the views that I saw in my travels right down the Island were the finest I have ever seen, from a landscape point of view, but you see I was looking at it from a sheep point of view, and that meant that it was worthless until a great deal of money had been expended, but, having been used to a country of little or no rainfall, with natural grasses, equal to anything that could be grown in New Zealand or anywhere else, and the outlay being only in getting water, the conditions of the two countries were so diametrically opposite that I could not see the value in land that would take years to carry a goat. However, experience shows me that there is more money to be made out of land that you can improve up to almost any extent than there is to be made out of land which is already improved for you up to its greatest extent, and where the outlay is only on water, which only to a certain extent increases the utilisation of the grass that is grown for you. Irrigation may some day do a great deal towards improving the grasses, but as far as I have tried it (in a small way), the natural grasses will not grow at

all, and wherever irrigation has been tried they have had to sow other than natural grasses. Also, the largest area of the best of Australia is so short of water that, as I told one enthusiast on irrigation, it would be cheaper at times to irrigate with bottled beer, for at one pub I called at I could get a bottle of beer for myself, but I could not get a drink of water for my horse for any money.

I might say here that the pioneers of New England proper, and of the North Island of New Zealand were very much on a par; the land and grasses paid well when they got their country drained and cleared of timber (and in New Zealand of fern as well), and for their areas they carry more stock than any other part of Australia.

While over there we made some inquiries about the land laws in New Zealand, but I cannot recollect exactly whether there was any law for leased land except you leased it from the Maoris, and this, I found was no lease at all, as you had to get the signature of every man, woman and child of the whole tribe before you could claim the country, and for many years afterwards (if it ever ceased) there was always some lineal descendant of that tribe turning up and claiming his share in the land that you had leased. This is only from recollection, and it may be exaggerated, but I know the place was full of Maori lawyers, and my impression was, and is, that you had a very poor title in a Maori lease. I rather think the land was sold straight out to the New Zealand farmers, but of this I am not sure.

So much for my New Zealand experiences.

CHAPTER XIX.

BURREN.

IN 1886 I purchased Burren, on the edge of the central division, about fifty miles from the boundary of the western division, and close to the boundary of the eastern division. Of course, this boundary was only approximate, and they deviated it considerably to get Burren all into the central division, because I had rather a large area of leasehold country to split up. I have told you in my chapter on the land laws how they turned me out and drove me to Queensland.

I should like to tell you of rather a strange coincidence that happened shortly after I went to Burren. Before I built my own house I was living by myself at Old Burren, though I had a married couple looking after the place, when my neighbour (Mrs. Brodie) brought down several girls, and gave me what they termed a "surprise party." They spent a couple of days with me, and I took them out riding—they were all good riders, especially Miss Flo Dight—and they were very anxious to have a hunt, so I proposed an emu hunt.

We had not far to go to find emus, for they were very plentiful, and we started after one. I could see there was no chance of the girls catching him, so I galloped after it, got up alongside it, and caught it by the neck from my horse, managed to get it down,

and got off my horse and held it till the girls came up, when I asked them what they were going to do with it. They said: "Oh, we'll have some feathers." I said: "All right, what part of him shall I pull them out of?" There was a chorus of "Oh, no, you mustn't pull them out." They said: "Have you got any scissors?" I said: "No; have you?" but as there were no scissors in the party, and they would not let me pull the feathers out there did not seem to be any hope of their getting any. However, Miss Dight took about a foot of thin blue ribbon off some part of her blouse, and asked me to tie it on the emu's neck, which I did, in a very big bow, and let him go. I tied it rather high up on his neck, and tied it very slack.

Some considerable time after this shearing was about to start, and the shearers all came and camped about the water-holes on the different parts of the run, waiting for the start of shearing. I rode into one of the camps one day, and asked if a certain man was there, and they said they did not know him, but added—"There's a man here, the biggest liar that you ever heard." I said "Yes; what's his lie?" "Well, he always goes for a walk every day—he is out for one now—and yesterday he told us that he had run an emu down on foot, and taken a blue ribbon off his neck. You couldn't beat that much for a lie, could you?" I said: "Did he bring home the ribbon?" They said "Yes," and I asked them: "Do you know where it is?" and they found it in his camp and brought it to me. I said: "Yes, there's no lie about it; I tied the ribbon on that emu's neck," and on interviewing the man who took it off afterwards I found out that the ribbon had got down low on its

neck, where it was very tight, and it prevented the emu from swallowing, and above the ribbon his throat was full of food which he could not swallow, but when this man took the ribbon off, his neck went back to its natural state, and the emu walked away. I do not know whether he recovered or not.

Had I not explained the ribbon to this man's mates he would have been dubbed a madman and a liar for ever after. How easy it is to get a bad reputation!

While talking about emus I would like to make a few remarks about them that perhaps are not generally known. The emu is a very inquisitive bird, and on many occasions when I have pulled up the buggy and got out to do something the emus have come right up to the buggy and looked in to see whatever sort of thing it was. They are so inquisitive that the blacks catch them by their curiosity. A blackfellow armed with a spear will lie out on a plain, put up one leg, down again, put himself on all fours, or do something that attracts the emu's attention, and they will come wandering round and get so close to him that he can jump up and drive his spear into one before it has time to get away. Their general way of getting them, however, when there are a number of blacks together, is to find out where the nest is—they never go near enough to touch an egg, but they mark a few trees (some half-a-mile away from the nest), and wait till the bird begins to set, which they know will happen when there are a certain number of eggs (about twelve or thirteen is the usual number). Then they all go out singing a sort of chant, which is supposed to keep the emu sitting very close on its

nest. When they come to the marked trees they surround the nest in a very large circle, which they gradually draw in closer and closer, the gins meanwhile continuing this chant at a considerable distance from the nest. On one occasion I went with them, but of course, I had to stop with the gins while the hunters—blackfellows—surrounded the nest. However, the emu escaped that time, and there was great jabbering among the hunters as to whose fault it was (I suppose), but I could not understand what they said. There was a good deal of laughter, too, at something that the emu, or somebody else had done, but they took the eggs.

According to the blacks the male bird does most of the sitting, and when the young ones are hatched he takes charge of them. From what I have seen I think this is probably correct, as on one occasion at Gurley I was riding up a creek, followed by a big staghound that would kill anything. He was some distance behind me when I saw an emu with ten or a dozen young ones—very small—they could not run as fast as a man. I thought—“Now, if my dog sees that emu he’ll kill it, and I wouldn’t like to leave so many orphans to die,” so I turned out of my course in order that the dog might not see the emu, but I had not gone far before he saw it, and went for it for all he was worth. The emu started his brood running as fast as they could, and he just shuffled along behind them, with all his feathers up; of course, it did not take the dog long to get pretty close to him. When he got about twenty yards from him the emu suddenly turned round, put up all his feathers, and made a curious drumming noise, and went straight

at the dog. The dog stopped, hesitated, turned round, and ran away, with the emu at his tail keeping him going by trying to strike him with his feet, and that dog ran some three or four hundred yards. The emu then stopped and trotted back to his young ones; the dog looked at him and had half a mind to have another go at him, but I persuaded him to leave well alone, and let the emu go. That is the only occasion on which I have seen an emu fight a dog.

Well, to go back to Burren. Though the union fights caused the principal excitement and loss of the different years, still, between whiles, I spent some of the happiest times of my life at Burren. I had put up a good house and wool-shed, and fenced it all in, had my stud-sheep and horses to interest me, and in the holidays my two eldest sons used to come up, bringing with them some of their schoolmates.

I had taught them to ride their ponies before they left Nellgowrie, and have in my mind some very funny episodes which, however, only appeal to me as a father, and would probably not be of interest to the public, but when they came to Burren I taught them to ride properly, gave them good fast horses—they supplied their own sticks, and were rather particular about getting them to suit their ideas—and we used to hunt the kangaroos, and knock them down with sticks by galloping alongside them. It takes a good deal of practice to be able to hit a jumping kangaroo in the right place, the blows generally falling on his back, and nearer to his tail than his head. To do it properly you must wait your chance, but, of course, youngsters learning hit away as fast as they can, but

after a while they got pretty sure hands at giving the knock-down blow.

We had a big dam, too, on which the ducks were in thousands sometimes, and we used to have great flight-shooting, stationing the guns at points in the dam, the water of which went back about five or six miles, and then we had one or two to ride about the banks of the water with stockwhips to keep the ducks flying. My second son never did any shooting, he preferred being a beater, and riding up and down the banks keeping the ducks going for us. My other three sons are all remarkably good shots, few better. I do not know whether it was this flight-shooting that made them so good, but as very young lads they could always wipe my eye badly, and I think the boys that came to Burren enjoyed themselves and their trips up there more than anything they had ever done in their lives before, or since, and I felt as young and as happy as Larry.

One day, when we were all starting from Sydney for Burren, the mother of one of the boys who was coming up, said to me: "Don't you think it is very dangerous, Mr. Barton, letting these boys gallop about like that?" "Well," I said, "Mrs. So-and-so, I used to do it when I was a boy, and a good little angel always sat up and looked after me, and he has got to do it for these boys now." Not satisfied with that, she turned to my eldest boy and said: "Don't you think it is very dangerous, Darvall, to hunt those kangaroos?" He replied: "Can you tell me anything that's worth doing in which there is no danger?" The reply seemed to nonplus her, for she made no response. However, with all our wild gallops we never had an

accident worth recording, though we had a young fellow whom we picked up in Narrabri (he had gone from Sydney to spend his holidays at Mr. Buchanan's, Killarney, but he joined us, and asked if he might be one of the party as there was no fun at Killarney; I said yes, and he came along). One day we were all racing to an out-station for dinner, Old Burren it was, when the horse this boy was riding fell, and laid him out properly. We got him down to Old Burren, and the policeman there had a flesh-needle, and sewed up a split in his lip. He got all right shortly, and was able to ride home with us that night, but he did not get over that shaking for a long while after.

There were a number of wild pigs on Burren, and the Pastures Protection Act dubbed them "noxious animals," and gave one shilling a piece for their snouts. When my crowd came up for their holidays they knocked up five pounds worth of pigs' snouts in a very short time, and I think broke the Board, because they paid no more rewards for pigs' snouts afterwards. My second son, who never carried a fire-arm in his life, borrowed a small revolver for shooting these pigs, as it was quicker work than spearing them with a shear-blade on the end of a stick. I was with him when he started after his first pig, a half-grown one, which stuck up at the foot of a tree. He jumped off his horse, and went within a couple of yards of this pig, and blazed away his four or five shots, none of which went anywhere, and the pig, getting tired of the fun, charged him, but, being a champion footballer, he kicked the pig to death pretty well. On examining his revolver I found that the ram-rod was loose in its catch, and used to project in front of the

barrel, and, of course, every bullet that came out of the barrel touched the top of the ram-rod, and went anywhere. However, he could not be persuaded to try any more revolver work, and went back to his spear.

Some of those boars were very touchy customers, and I had two horses ripped in the hocks by pigs, neither of which ever properly recovered. The first occasion was when I was riding down this dam, which had a good many lignum bushes round the water, and the dogs were barking at something in a clump. I knew it was a pig, and told my two little boys (as they were then) to pull up, and that I would go along and see what it was. I had not gone very far when I saw it was a big white boar, which had got more or less of a reputation, and one that I would have liked to have shot. I turned my horse round to go back to the boys, but just as I did so he charged at me, and though I am sure I had nearly fifty yards start of him he was on top of me in no time, and crippled my horse in the hind leg. However, I had the satisfaction of shooting him some time after.

Before leaving Burren I must mention my neighbours there. The Brodies of Boolcarrol were very great friends of mine, and their kindness and hospitality were proverbial in the whole district. Then there was Al Hill, who was managing Mungiah station, and who took the management of Mungiah at the same time as I took the management of Gurley. Rather a strange fact was that twenty years after that I purchased Burren and bought a buggy and horses in Narrabri, and on one occasion drove over to Mungiah. Mr. Hill said: "You've got my buggy." I said: "Yes." "That's the buggy I drove up from

Sydney when I came to Mungiah, and the old buggy that you brought up to Gurley at the same time is in the shed yonder; of course, very dilapidated. It was strange after over twenty years to find that we had exchanged buggies. Both Brodie and Alfred Hill—we always called him “Al Hill”—have joined the great majority, poor Jack Brodie about fifteen years ago, and Al Hill quite lately, and I am the last of the three that fought the union shearers during all the strikes in that district.

Al Hill was a great sport, and always up to a lark or a fight, or anything that was going on, and I will tell you an anecdote about him which will describe him pretty well, though he was a well-known man, having lived the last fifteen or twenty years in Sydney (at Randwick), but this story happened shortly after I went to Burren.

There was a race-meeting in Moree, which we were all at. Hill had a horse running, as he generally did, and they were generally hard to beat, too. There was a spieler on this occasion who also had a horse, and, in addition, he had a man that could run, and he was always trying to get up a wager with—“I’ve got a man that will run any other blanky man for a ‘tenner’ or more.” It was the day after the races had finished, and we were all sitting on the verandah of the hotel counting up our losses, when this booky appeared with his man, and commenced to shout what odds he would take on this man to beat any other man. Old Hill, to my astonishment, appeared to be very tipsy, staggered about, and eventually said: “How many yards will your man give me in fifty?” The reply was “Five.” “Then I’ll run him for a

'tenner.' ” The wager was taken, and Hill handed me a ten pound note, and the booky did likewise. With a great deal of trouble Al Hill managed to get his boots untied and off (he was rolling about on the verandah in an apparently helpless condition while doing it, and he acted so well that I really thought he was drunk).

Well, the booky every now and then would say: “Anybody have another ‘tenner’?” Hill would look towards me—“Take him, Barton; take his money,” and I had some thirty or forty pounds of each of their money when Hill managed to get on his feet. The course was measured down the street, and the five yards for the start marked out. The running man took off his coat, trousers, and boots, and pulled a pair of running-shoes out of his pocket, and appeared in real running togs, which he wore under his other clothes. He went on his mark, and Hill on to his (with a great deal of difficulty), but the moment the pistol was fired old Hill went away like a stag; and the running man never gained an inch on him for the fifty yards. When they came back to the verandah I handed Hill the money, which he was shovelling into his pockets as he went up to the booky, and said—“I’ve licked your horse, I’ve licked your man, and now I’ll fight you for another ‘tenner,’ ” but that wager was not accepted.

I must tell another story of my old friend, Al Hill. I was riding home from Boolcarrol when I overtook him in a buggy. He asked me to get in the buggy, and tie my horse alongside, which I did. He had a beautiful fox-terrier with him, one that he had given a good price for in Sydney, and he told me

that he had bought him on purpose to kill the cats at Nowley. Nowley, I must tell you, was a station that Mr. Hill used to inspect for Vickery. The manager had a very large family of children—some ten or twelve—and there was always an annual baby. They kept one small room as a sitting-room, which they called “Mr. Hill’s room,” and it was not used except when visitors came along.

When we arrived at Nowley we were shown into this room, and there were two big tortoise-shell cats coiled up in the easy chair. Mr. Hill took them by the neck and flung them away, and sat down in a chair for a few minutes. We then all adjourned to the stable to see some horses, and when we came back to the house Mr. Hill carried his fox-terrier on his arm, patting him, and let him go on the verandah of the house. He immediately ran smelling about, went into “Mr. Hill’s room,” and the two cats were again coiled up on the chair. The terrier put his fore-feet on the chair, and looked at them, and presently one of the cats lifted her head and had a look at him, then the other one, and then they went for that intruder, and rolled him down the passage till he got to Mr. Hill’s feet. Then he made an attempt at fighting, but as soon as he went for one the other was on top of him, and they very soon rolled him out into the flower-garden.

Two of the little girls came rushing up, and as they had nothing else to beat the cats with, started to cry and beat these cats with their bonnets, saying—“They’ll kill Mr. Hill’s dog; oh, they’ll kill Mr. Hill’s dog!” but in spite of the little girl’s assistance the dog made a bolt, got through the wire fence, and as

far as we could see him, he went like fun up the plain. Mr. Hill was standing with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets watching him go, and though he did not say much, it galled him keenly because the little girls tried to save his dog that he had brought all the way from Sydney to kill their cats.

With the exception of the boys' visits and the shearing troubles (some of which I will now tell you), I do not think I have anything to relate that would interest any of my readers, though I was fairly happy at Burren, and meant when I went there to make a home of it. However, I failed to do that all my life, because as soon as I had got a place comfortable and paying, the Government or something else told me I must go further afield, and I have already explained how I was obliged to give up Burren. The small piece of freehold land that I owned there I gave to one of my sons, and the marvellous rise in the value of land gave him a very fine start. I valued the property when I gave it to him, with stock and everything, at thirteen thousand pounds; he sold it some five or six years afterwards for twenty-five thousand pounds. I, who had worked it to the very best of my knowledge for fifteen years, left it with scarcely sixpence, and went to Bidnam, in Queensland, so I think that I was right in saying in my preface that the greatest obstacle for the man on the land to overcome is the Government, as far as the land is concerned.

Having lived all my life, you may say, in the van of civilisation, with no daily papers—a weekly I seldom had time to read—I never knew the changes of administrations or conditions of land acts for a long while after they had come into force, and then I am

afraid that I never took the trouble to try and unravel their mysteries, and perhaps if I had I should have been no wiser, for several of our Supreme Court judges have said that they were unexplainable, and far from understandable. No doubt, there is a change at the present time in New South Wales land laws, but I really do not know now what you can or cannot do. I have not bothered my head about it for the last fifteen years, but it rather strikes me that the land scandal game has been played out in favour of oil, or something else, with a bigger financial prospect.

So much for our Governments, and I must go back to my own reminiscences at Burren, though I am afraid that there is not much that would interest my readers regarding my life there, who would take no interest in the progress I made in breeding sheep and putting up improvements, both of which I was very interested in, but some of my fights with the unions will, I think, be read with some interest, though I am afraid many will take a great deal of it with a grain of salt. However, it is better to get into prominence, even if it is only to be a good liar than to remain for ever unknown, and, of course, I can only depend on those who know me to shield me from that prominence.

CHAPTER XX.

UNIONS AND STRIKES.

I HAD only been at Burren a little over a year when the Shearers' Union started, which I fought from start to finish. Though I was never beaten by them I earned the soubriquet of the "biggest, sanguinary scab in New South Wales," which I was rather proud of. In giving the accounts of the various troubles that I have had I cannot help feeling very diffident about relating them, and I ought to get one of my sons, who was managing for me at the time, to write this part of my life, as I am afraid it will not be altogether believed, though I shall really state nothing more or less than what happened.

I think it was in 1888 that I put the Wolseley machines into the shed, and there was no talk—or only a vague rumour—about union then. I had not got the machinery in when the shearers all turned up to shear, and I did not like to keep them hanging about doing nothing, so I told them they could start as usual with the hand-shears, and that as I got the machines in they could use them, or not, as they thought proper. This they all agreed to, and the shears and stones and oil were duly served out, and shearing was just about to start, when I walked on to the shearing floor, and saw one of the men leave a knot in conference, and go to his stand and take his

coat, which he was putting on as he passed me, going out of the shed. I asked him what he was doing, and he said: "These men say I cannot shear here." I said: "Why?" "Because I am not a unionist, and will not join under compulsion; I had rather go first." I said: "Go back to your station," and then, to the others: "Now, who objects to shear with this man?" "All," was the reply. "Then you can all go to heaven; hand up your shears and stones that I have given you, and clear out." One man said: "Will you lose twenty-four men for the sake of one?" I said: "Yes, I am captain of this ship, and nobody will be turned off it unless I send him, so hand up your things." Two men—the organiser, as I found out later, and another man—brought up their tools, and the rest went on shearing. After dinner the other man, not the organiser, came back, and asked for his tools back again, which I gave him.

That was the first introduction I had to union, but before I give you any more of troubles with the unions I should like to tell you a story to show the ignorance of the men who were organising these unions. I had to go across to Pilliga, which was the nearest telegraph station to Burren then, to send a wire. As a rule, when I went across for that purpose I would get back the same day or night, but on this occasion I had to remain a night to get a reply to my wire. Pilliga at that time, and probably it is not much better now, was a very miserable place to spend a night, and I was complaining about it to the stock inspector there. "Oh," he said, "there's an organiser coming to give us an address to-night on the union;

we can go up and hear him in the hall, and so pass away a few hours," which we did.

I cannot tell you, and I do not think anybody else could, what the address was about, but during his address he said: "If things were as they ought to be, or as they should be, or would be if I had anything to do with them,—every man in New South Wales should have one pound a week, and nobody should have any more." When he finished his address he said: "If anyone would like to ask him any questions he would gladly reply." As nobody seemed inclined to want to know anything, I got up and asked him a question—"You said just now in your address that 'Everyone should have one pound a week, and nobody should have more.'" He said "Yes." "Well," I said, "I, for one, should be quite satisfied to start on that principle, but before doing so I should like to know who was going to pay me my pound a week, nobody having any more?" This simple question seemed to stagger him. He scratched his head, thought for a few minutes, and then said: "You pay your blanky self." I said: "Thank you, that's all I wanted to know," and took up my hat and walked out of the hall. The people who were there all walked out with me, and never as much as said: "Thank you for the address," though I feel quite satisfied that had I not asked the question they would have all been jubilant at the idea of everyone having one pound a week, nobody more. It does not take much to tickle the ears of the unthinking.

I have told you the first intimation of the unions that I had in 1888. In 1889 or 1890 I got a board of

shearers, who were working very satisfactorily, though all were learners on the machines, as very few sheds had the machines at that time, when I got a visit from the union-organiser, a Mr. Cummings. This gentleman was hanged a year or so after for the murder of a bank manager at Barraba, but he was a mighty toff at the time I am speaking about. The shearers walked behind him at a respectful distance, and he was, perhaps, among the shearers a good deal more than the Governor would have been had he come up. He walked through the shed among the shearers and asked each one if he were in the union. Three men said that they were not union men, so he called out twenty that were, and they adjourned outside the shed and sat on the fence. The three men that were not union men went on shearing. They were repeatedly sending in word that they wanted to see me, so I came out and said: "What do you want to see me about?" "Oh, we are going to take a ballot as to whether we will go or stop." I told them that they could blanky-well go, and told Mr. Cummings to hang them round his neck, and find work for them somewhere else. They had me out several times afterwards on some nonsensical matter, then they interviewed the men who were shearing, and told them that they would buy tickets for them if they would join the union, which they indignantly refused. These men had a selection on Burren, and they explained to the organiser that they were not "regular shearers;" they shored at Burren, and they shored their own sheep, but they did not follow shearing, and a union ticket was no good to

them; they could always get a fair deal from Mr. Barton, and what was the good of a ticket.

When this dodge failed to get the three men out, Cummings came into the shed, and asked me if I would have any objection to his pasting up the union agreement. I pointed out to him that there were two advertisements already in the shed, also a picture of "The Lawyer and The Shearer," and that the rest of the shed was pretty bare, and if it would be any satisfaction to him he could paper it with the union agreement. However, he did not seem to think there was any object in putting it up on those terms, and did not put any up, and, after keeping the men out all day, he came to me in the evening, and said: "Oh, Mr. Barton, I do not think there is any objection to these men shearing for you." "Well," I said, "it is a pity you did not find that out before you took them out, and as they have got so little respect for their word in starting shearing for me I have got no respect for them, and you can take them with you." I filled up their places the next day, and so ended the trouble for that year.

The following year the rouseabouts all struck for something. I think it was that I was paying them by the day, and that, of course, if the shearers stopped shearing for any lark of their own, or on account of wet weather, I would not pay them for the delay unless I was able to give them some other employment. We had argued the matter at some length, when I said: "Look here, I cannot be baited like this with the lot of you, pick a spokesman, and I will argue with him." I think I must have got rather the best of the argument, for he turned to his

mates—"Can't you fellows say anything; don't you see he has got me paralysed?" but none of the others seemed to have anything to say either, and I think they went on all right.

I had always managed to shear non-union till the year 1892, which was the year, I may add here, in which there was the largest number of sheep that has ever been in New South Wales—sixty-two millions—when it was decided by the Pastoralists' Union to give the union rates, and to take the union agreement. I was very loathe to do it, partly because I would lose three or four men that had stuck to me all along, and they were remarkably good shearers, but like a fool, as it turned out, I took the union agreement, with the promise that shearing should go on so well there would be no trouble. However, I did not find it such a bed of roses as I was led to expect, as there was always something that was "not union." The agreement stated that the station should supply so many combs and cutters per thousand sheep. Well, the representative came to me and said: "I have only shorn so many sheep, and I want some fresh combs and cutters." I said: "That's all right; you can have as many as you like." "Oh," he said, "but I'm not going to pay for them." "Well," I said, "how do you expect to get them?" He replied: "The Union says we must not buy combs and cutters, and I won't buy any." I said: "I don't care whether you do or not; if you like to waste time with your old ones it does not matter to me, but the probabilities are that when the shearing is over you will not have many to pay for, if any." However, it was only a try-on, I know, and I did not hear any-

thing more about that, but I just mention it as one of the little incidents and ways in which they tried to annoy me.

However, the day came for the call-out; I forget the date, but it was the dinner-hour, and I, who was expert and engineer for the shed, was oiling the shafting bearings in the shed, when I saw the lot tramping up from the hut, headed by a lad who was learning. He rushed into the shed before anybody else, with his machine in his hand—"The news has come, we are all out; here's me machine; give me me money!" I put my hand on his shoulder, and said: "Young man, you're suffering from a very very dangerous complaint; there is nothing on earth to save you but change of air; for Heaven's sake go and get it as fast as you can." I was then generally interviewed by the crowd, but I told them all the same thing, that they had got another boss, I was no longer their employer; I had done nothing to offend them, and had fulfilled my part of the agreement, but if they intended to go away they must look to the boss that took them away for their money, it was nothing to do with me. I had about twenty-two thousand sheep shorn at this time, averaging about one thousand a man, though the youth that led the procession had only one shilling and sixpence coming to him, as I found out on making up their accounts.

There was one lad amongst them who was the eldest son of a widow, and her main support. He was sitting in the shed with his head between his hands, taking no part one way or the other, and looking very miserable. I told him—"Go to the store and get your account, Taylor, I'll pay you; I won't

war with widows and orphans." When he got his cheque, it was passed round among the whole of the shearers, and those who had pocket-books took down the number and particulars of the cheque. Then one of the leaders, closing his pocket-book, came up to me, and said: "We've got you now!" I said: "How's that?" He replied: "You've paid one, you must pay all." I said: "Is that the law of the land?" And he answered: "Yes, that's the law of the land; if you pay one you must pay all." "Well," I said, "I think if you will take the trouble to read the parable in the Bible of the man that hired men to work in his vineyard, over which there was a law-suit, you will find that the judge decided that the man could do what he liked with his own; I think you will find that's the law of the land to-day." However, they went off to Narrabri, and the lawyers would have nothing to do with the case. Anyhow, I never heard anything more about them, except that I sent all their accounts to their organiser in Moree, so that he could pay the men.

I went on shearing with three or four boys that had been engaged to pick up fleeces and sweep the shed. I told them that it was a good opportunity for them to learn to shear, but they would have to throw their union tickets (which they had not long before received) into the engine fire in my presence, because I was no more union. They demurred a little, and said that they were frightened to take it on for fear the shearers would come back and take them out of the shed and illtreat them. "Well," I said, "I'll be shearing in No. 1 pen (nearest the door), and they will have to take me out first; when they've got me

out you must look after yourselves." "Oh," they said, "we are satisfied if you'll fight for us." I said: "Yes, as long as I've got breath in my body you'll not be interfered with," and we started along. Of course, I had often shorn a few sheep before, but never as continuous work, but I got along fairly well, considering that I had to keep the machines in order for my three or four companions. I remember I got thirty-eight the first day, fifty-six the second, and eighty or ninety the third. Two of the men who had always shorn for me previously, but had not shorn during that year on account of not being union men, came back and went on shearing. I had over seventy thousand sheep to shear that year, and it took us till nearly Christmas to get them finished. These two men made over one hundred pounds a piece for the time they had been shearing; of course, they were averaging over one hundred and fifty sheep a day. I had got a lot more boys—all learners—and I think I had nineteen altogether in the shed, and they kept me all my time fixing up machines, for one learner is as hard to keep going as ten men who understand the machines.

I had not started many days with my small lot when the union camp, which was situated about three miles from the shed—at a public-house on Burren—all came up one afternoon, on foot and on horseback, some two or three hundred strong, perhaps, as all the shearers from the neighbouring sheds had congregated there. They sent in word that they wanted to see me, and I went to the shed door, and said: "What do you want to see me about?" One of the men on horseback, who was pretty close to me said: "You

are the only man shearing in this district." "Well," I said, "I am very sorry to hear it," when a voice from the crowd called out—"And we have come to stop you." "Oh," I said, "have you! Now, when you come to do that, come blanky-well prepared, and bring your shutters up with you, for, by God, you will go home on them." There was a chap standing fairly close to me, whom I had known before, and he said: "Will you shoot?" "Yes," I said, "I'll shoot, and if you will stop long enough I'll shoot till you are down to my weight, that's one, but I know what will happen, I'll have one shot, and I won't see your backs for dust as you go down that plain. Come along, I'm ready for you." They all turned round and walked away without a word, but a few days after again interviewed me.

This time the spokesman said that they had got word from Spence that they were all to go back to their work the same as if nothing had happened. I said: "Are you ordered back?" and he said "Yes." "Oh, well," I said, "I know that Mr. Spence can order you out, but I've yet to learn how he is going to order you in." They pleaded to be allowed to go back; smoodged me over by saying they liked to work for me. "Well," I said, "I will take fourteen of you back, but not as unionists; you are not coming back to be ordered out and in when you choose; you must come back as free men to carry out your own agreements." They said they could not do that—"Our lives would not be worth living if we went to any other shed." "Then," I said, "it isn't any use talking to me about working in this shed."

There was an idea, mooted, I think, by the

Pastoralists' Union, that the stations should form groups and shear in rotation, the same men to do the shearing for the group. I do not know whether this was generally done; in fact, I do not think it was, but Mr. Brodie, of Boolcarrol, Mr. Hill, of Mungiah, a Mr. Burrows and I decided to form a group. I was to engage the men for all places, and shear first, and we found it worked fairly satisfactorily, only Mr. Burrows dropped out of the group after the first year. We others carried it on until it was no longer necessary.

I think it was the year after the call-out that I had all my men engaged, and shearing was to start on the following morning, when, while I was having my dinner, the servant came in and told me that there were two men outside who wished to see me. I went out and found two men that lived at the hotel about three miles from the station. They started to ask me about a mare that had been running in one of my paddocks for a year or two. I told them that the mare was where she always was, I had seen her the day before, but they said they had been all over the paddock, and could not find her, and thought I might have moved her. While we were talking a man appeared—galloping across the paddock; he rode up to us and said: "Are you Mr. Barton?" I said: "Yes; what's your name?" He said: "I'm the shearers' representative, and I've just come down from Nowlie" (a neighbouring station) "as fast as I could as I heard you are going to start shearing to-morrow morning, and I want your permission to interview the men before they start." I said: "What's your name?" and he replied: "I'll show you my

credentials in the morning, and you'll know who I am." I said: "All right."

Mr. Webb, who was managing Burren at the time, had come out from his dinner, and when these men rode away, he said: "Did that man tell you he had come from Nowlie?" I said: "Yes." "Why, he's been at the pub for the last fortnight, preaching about," said Webb. I turned round at once, and called out—"Hey!" The three men pulled up and rode back. I said to my friend: "Did you say you had just come from Nowlie?" He said: "Yes." I said: "And why did you come here to offer me an egregious lie? You just clear off, for you are nothing but a d—— scoundrel!" and, looking at the other men, "I can see through it now; you came up to get me out and keep me talking till this fellow galloped up. Now, clear off, the lot of you!" He came up the next morning, and said that "He was a union of his own, not Spence's union. I told him I did not care what he was, and talked very plainly to him, but he took Mr. Webb on one side and told him—"Mr. Barton's making a great mistake in not having anything to do with me; I'd have all those men shearing for him without any trouble," so I presume he wanted a fiver. However, he interviewed the men; gave them a wonderful address (which nobody could understand), and finished up by telling the men that he would give them two pounds a week and tucker if they would leave the place, and would guarantee them another shed (which was going to start shortly). I said to him: "Will you pay this two pounds a week in advance?" He said: "Yes." "Well, boys," I said, "we can't earn two pounds a week doing nothing every day,

let's all go; I'll be one." Of course, he objected to the proposal, and one of the shearers (Hughie McDermott), a bit of a wag, who was dressed in his shearing clothes (the oldest rubbish he had), stepped into the ring, and said: "I've been in the camp in Queensland for the last nine months, and do I look like two pounds a week and tucker?" That made a laugh, and the shearers decided to stop where they were.

This organiser, who represented himself as "Mr. Blaxland, a J.P.," kept a large gathering of union shearers at the pub, and whenever I had to ride past there I was greeted with jeers and hoots, but if I looked round I only saw their heads as they bobbed behind the buildings, and if it pleased them, it did not hurt me.

Soon after we started shearing I came down one morning to the shed, and I asked Mr. Webb if he had got the mail-bag. He said "No." I said: "Why didn't you?" and he replied: "I've got no one to send for it; it's down at the pub, and there's nobody here game to go for it." I said: "I'll go down for it." When I arrived they seemed quite glad to see me; there was a good crowd there—some seventy or eighty, perhaps—and they at once informed me that Mr. Blaxland was going to give them an address, and that I was just in time to hear it. I said I should be very glad indeed to hear what he had to say, and I certainly heard the most wonderful stream of words—without any connection as far as I could see—and I listened very attentively because I intended to chip in when he had finished. After about a quarter of an hour, when he had finished, the publican walked up

to him, and said: "Gimme your hand, young man, you haven't got much hair on your face yet, but my word, if you live long enough Sir Henry Parkes will never hold a candle to you!" One of the shearers gave me a nudge while the publican was speaking, and said: "He's got eddication!"

However, when he had been congratulated all round he came to me and said: "What do you think of the address, Mr. Barton?" I told him I should not like to say what I thought of it. "Oh," he said, "there's no offence, you know," and there was a chorus of—"Let's hear your opinion, Mr. Barton." "Well," I said, "my opinion is that he is a blanky fool, and I think I can prove it." Then, turning to the publican, I said: "How many have you got here, Jim?" "Oh, about eighty." "Well," I said, "I'll shout for all hands, but you'll have to trust me because I haven't got money enough in my pocket." He said: "That's all right." "Well," I said: "I'll shout for all hands if there's anyone of you can tell me in his own words the sum and substance of the address that you have just heard." There was a dead silence. I said: "Surely this wonderful address that you have just heard ought to have left some impression; can't you say what he told you?" I knew I could not, and was quite sure that they could not. "Well," I said, "I'll make it easier, can anyone give me three consecutive words of this great address?" Still silence. I said: "You fellows can't be thirsty to-day. Now, look here, I could catch a blackfellow's dog, label him 'Shearers' Delegate,' tie a tin pot to his tail, start him up the plain, and you fellows would run after him and yowl. Good morning."

Perhaps, while on the subject of Mr. Blaxland, I may as well give you his history as I know it. He collected a nice sum of money at Burren, horse, saddle and bridle, and disappeared. He was had up for theft, and got three or four years in Maitland gaol. When he came out he was "Mr. Arthur Palmer, a son of the late Governor of Queensland," and appeared at a widowed lady's house, one of whose daughters had made a very bad match—her husband being in gaol. Mr. Palmer introduced himself to her, said that he had just come from England, and just arrived at Sydney, and had come straight on to see her because he had some very important business to communicate to her. She asked him what it was, and he said: "I hear that one of your daughters married a man of the name of ———. Now, one of my sisters married a man of the same name, and if we can find out that it is the same man we can have him up for bigamy and have both the marriages squashed." He was a plausible scoundrel, and got fifty pounds out of the lady on account of having left all his belongings in Sydney, and wished to take a trip up the Hunter somewhere to make his inquiries, but she stipulated that one of her sons should go with him. They had not gone very far when the lady got a telegram from her son, reading—"Arthur's a splendid fellow; getting lots of information; please send us another fifty pounds." I do not know whether she sent it or not, but she got a *bona fide* telegram from her son to say that he was a fraud. Of course, he thought that he would have the fifty or one hundred pounds snug because she would not like to bring the family

history into court, and would let the matter drop; but she was not a woman of that sort, she went for him, and I believe he got four years. That is the last I heard of that scoundrel.

Before I say anything more about strikes in general, I may make a few remarks on the origin and effect of strikes. The big shearers' strike, known as the "call-out," started through the big maritime strike. As I told you before, I did not get many papers in the bush, and my knowledge of the commencement of strikes was therefore gained from events that occurred in rotation, and by conversations with the men who had joined the unions.

The maritime strike, of course, everyone remembers, and the shearers, who had formed a union under the leadership of Mr. Spence, were called out in the big strike of 1890 in sympathy with the maritime strike, Spence having said—"Wait till my army of shearers come out; they can't starve them, they can live for nine months of the year on a pint of flour in a bend." This remark did not please the gentleman shearer altogether, but they stuck to him, and when they were called out Spence remarked that: "There would be no sheep shorn, no wool carried by teams, no wool shipped from Sydney, unless' it was shorn by union labour, carried by union labour, loaded by union labour, and carried in union bottoms. In fact," he said, "I am putting a girdle round Australia that everything is to be done by the union."

During the shearing of the strike year, before the shearers were called out, I remarked to one of them that as the teams would not carry the wool it did not much matter whether it went to Sydney or

not, because it would not be shipped. "Oh," he said, "you are shearing union, and Mr. Spence has said that all wool shorn by union will be shipped." I just mention this to show that all the unthinking labour of Australia is very much of the same opinion, that the Union is the law of the land, and that if a union says such and such a thing is to be done that means the Government—the Government is only a secondary consideration. It was no matter that the shipowners in the maritime strike refused to submit to the Unions' demands, for Spence said: "Union wool was to be shipped," so the objection of the shipowners was neither here nor there; it had to be done. The same thing has cropped up in every strike that I have had anything to do with, or remember, "the Union says so and so, and that's the law of the land." Mr. Spence and our Prime Minister (Mr. Hughes) have a great deal to answer for in the industrial troubles that have arisen ever since, until it is culminating in this big coal strike. They were induced, probably, to take up the industrial side that they did from humanitarian ideas, to improve the conditions of the hard-working man, and to dilute labour so as to give the man that will not work a chance of getting the same money for doing nothing as the man who does the work, and, really, the extraordinary part of it is the loyalty with which the expert worker in any trade or profession will not accept more money for his work unless the man who does little or nothing is paid at the same rate. Anyhow, that is the attitude adopted by the shearers.

Before there was ever a strike I always told the shearers that if they could get me a board of good

shearers that would shear one hundred a day per man I could afford to pay them considerably more than the ruling prices, as I should get my sheep shorn so much quicker that I would save the extra money twice over in the amount of assistant labour and expense of running the engine and machinery for six weeks or two months when the same number of good shearers would do it in a fortnight or three weeks. This they turned down at once; would not consider it—"The slow man must live, and if you give us twenty-five shillings for shearing, all the shearers must be paid the same." "Yes," I said, "I know that is union law, but I can't understand why a man who can double his wages must handicap himself back to the slowest man in the shed."

Exactly the same thing is in force to-day with the drovers in North-western Queensland, and probably all over Australia, but I only speak of what I know. The union law for the drover at present is that he must have so many men for every thousand head of stock, varying, of course, between sheep and cattle, and that he must pay those men so much a week. My experience is that when a drover gets a big lot of cattle or sheep to drive he has to employ more men than is actually necessary to drive the stock; less than half of these men do all the work, the balance are what we call "passengers." Now, if the drover said to the good men in his camp—"Look here, you are doing all the work, why not get all the money? I'll get rid of these three or four rubbish, and I'll divide their wages among you who are doing the work," his answer would be—"No, that's not the law; the law is that you must have so many hands,

and unless you keep that supply we'll not go on short-handed for any wages." Again, the Union is considered the law of the land.

However, to return to the origin of all this industrial trouble. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Spence remind me of one of Æsop's fables of the man who found a poor viper, benumbed and dying of cold, took it to the fire and warmed it, and, to keep it comfortable, put it in his bosom. When it got strong enough it bit him. The viper has turned dog on Hughes and Spence for bringing it back to existence, and very much improving the condition of the working man from a humanitarian point of view.

The administration, as it has been carried out, at any rate since the Labour Government came into power, has made it a practical certainty to the unthinking part of Labour that the Union is the law. All the results of every case tried by the Arbitration Court have been that the union leaders have either won their demands, or, if the decision did go against the men, no fines for breaking the law of the land (the Arbitration Court's decisions) have ever been enforced against the Union, though the application of the court's decisions is always vigorously enforced as regards the employers. However, from my personal experience with ordinary labour, the men themselves are not as bad as people generally think, and they are entirely led, and loyally support their leaders, no matter what the demands are, always considering that they are obeying the laws of the land.

They read no papers, except, perhaps, *The Worker*, and anyone can tell them what they have read in the papers, and tell it quite differently to the

way in which it really appeared. I will tell a short story here, which will convey my meaning better than I can express it. I had occasion to go to Cobar once to inspect some sheep, and went from Sydney by train. There were a number of unemployed going down at this time to cut scrub on the Bogan, and I was rather interested with one of these unemployed, and went into the carriage with him for a short distance to have a yarn with him. He was quite elated at getting a job, and told us some amusing anecdotes, but unless I could use his vernacular I could not put them in a shape that would be interesting, so I will say nothing more about them. After I had done my business in Cobar I was coming back to Sydney by train, and had to wait some hours in Nyngan, on the Bogan, for the Sydney train. I saw my friend of a few days before on the platform, and I asked him where he was going, and he said he was going back to Sydney. I said: "Going back to Sydney to starve?" "Oh, yes," he said, "I can't stand this, having nothing to talk to but gum trees, and you know you'll never starve in Sydney; it's a damn bad day that you can't cadge threepence, and then you can get a counter-lunch and a pot of beer, and a doss in the Domain; oh, it's a long way ahead of this." There were a number of railway men and other labourers on the platform, and one of them said: "Oh, we're going to get real good times now; all the people from down here in this hot, dry country are going to be taken by the Government to Sydney on free passes to free accommodation, and given three months' rest." I said: "Are you sure that's a fact; I haven't heard anything about it?" "Oh, yes," he

said, "it's in the papers the people from these parts are to be taken down free, and can get free cottages to live in for three months." "Well," I said, "I hadn't heard of it, but it would suit me very well; I've a large family" (at that time on the Castle-reagh), "and it would be very handy for me to get them down free, and free accommodation for three months in the hot weather." "Oh, but," he said, turning to me, "you are not one of the people." "Well," I said, "what am I?" "Oh," he said, "you'll get no free pass, you're not one of the people."

The next union trouble that I had—the following shearing—was really no trouble at all. There were any number of men waiting for work, and nearly all the men I wanted for shearing had deposited one pound for their station, and when I called them to take their places they all replied without asking a question—rouseabouts and all—and got ready to start shearing, when one of the shearers came to me, and said: "There's a tremendous lot of men here, sir, and, of course, you know that shearers feed everybody that comes and goes, but we can't afford to feed all this crowd for long, and I wish you would do something. Give them a hint or something that it's time they went on somewhere else." I said: "All-right, I'll see to that;" so I sent down word to a policeman, who was stationed at the lower end of the run, to come up, which he did, and went down to the shearers' hut to see who was there. He saw several men that were wanted for small offences, and told them all that they would have to clear off the place at once, which they did in double-quick time, and

they all went on to Boolcarrol, where Mr. Brodie was manager, and I started merrily on with my shearing.

I think it was the following day, or the day after, I was working in the shed when someone put his hand on my shoulder, and, looking round, I saw the Inspector of Police (in full uniform), and, glancing out of the door, I saw some six or eight mounted troopers drawn up, with their rifles and everything. The Inspector said: "Going on all right here?" I said: "Yes." "No trouble?" "No, no trouble." "Well," he said, "I've come out here post haste because the report in Narrabri is that your shed had been burnt down, and there had been a regular riot and everything had been smashed up." "Oh," I said, "that you can see for yourself is a mistake." "Yes," he said, "I see it's all right, and I cannot understand how the report was circulated, but it is in the Narrabri paper." I heard afterwards how the report had been circulated. The crowd that had left Burren; and gone to Boolcarrol, which station was going to start shearing immediately, had made up all this account of what they had done at Burren, and this account, of course, rather frightened Mr. Brodie about what might happen if he started, as I had, non-union, and after considering it for some time he went with his overseer (Mr. Thompson) to the shearers' hut, and asked for a report on what had happened at Burren. They told him that they had smashed all the machines and burnt the shed down. He said: "And what was Mr. Barton doing while you did that?" "Oh, we dragged him through the Sludgehole" (that was a creek that ran close by the

shed). He said: "Has anybody been sent for a doctor or the police?" "No," they said, "there's nobody been sent for a doctor or police." "Then," Mr. Brodie said, "I won't believe a word of it, for you never dragged Barton through the Sludgehole but a doctor would be wanted for somebody." This is a story that I would rather have had told by somebody else, but as I am writing my reminiscences, and no one else is likely to do it for me, I have to put these things in as they happen.

I shall now tell you about an incident that took place after my second son had returned from England, and was looking after the place for me again. He had got all his shearers, as usual, and also all the rouseabouts that he required, who had verbally agreed to take certain positions in the shed—some to roll wool, some to pen up, and some to pick up the fleeces and sweep the floor. I happened to be standing beside him some week or so before the start of shearing, and heard him agree with a young chap to pen up the sheep for the shearing, and a few days after I went by the station where this man had been working—he had told my son that he had left the place—but when I mentioned him they said that he had not left, but continued—"It does not matter, because if he had not gone to you he would have gone somewhere else; he would not stop here at low wages when he could get much higher in a shed." "Yes," I said, "but I don't like engaging another man's servant before he has left."

Well, to go back to the shearing. The shearers all turned up, and went to work as usual. My son then called his rouseabouts out, and they all refused

to go on with their agreement. He told them all to clear out, and had their horses put in the yard for them to go away with. After talking with my son for some time I got on my horse to go down to the telegraph station, which was then at the pub that I have mentioned before, and I was sitting on my horse talking to him when this man to whom I have referred came up on his horse, and began to talk to my son. He said that he had never told him the price or conditions, or anything, which got my son rather angry, because it was virtually calling him a liar. Sitting on my horse, I said to this man, who was also on horseback—"I was standing beside my son when he agreed with you, and I heard what he said." He said: "He never said it." My son said: "Do you mean to call me a liar?" I said: "Leave this fellow to me, Roger, I'll deal with him."

I always carried a light stockwhip, which I found the most convenient riding whip, as it was handy for driving sheep, and useful in many ways that an ordinary riding-whip would not be. I went for the man with this whip; he dodged and twisted his horse about, but I got him going at last, and flogged his horse into a gallop. He bent his head on the horse's neck, which gave me a good opportunity of flogging him where he would not show his marks, but I managed to get a knot in my fall, and the whip not working to my satisfaction, I dropped the rein's on my horse's neck, and undid the knot. Of course, for a little while there was no whip on him, and just as I got it ready for use again he turned his head round to see what was happening, and caught the lash in the face, and he went as fast as the horse could

gallop. My old horse knew his work, though; he was one I had bred myself and ridden for over fourteen years at all sorts of work, and he kept up with the other horse, just in the right position for me to flog him well, which I did for about three-quarters of a mile, till we came to the gate, over which he went, horse and all.

I saw he was not hurt, so I turned my horse back towards the shed, and was riding slowly back, in not the best of tempers, but before I reached the shed I was laughing. The exodus amused me; you would see one man wheeling a bicycle for all he was worth across the plain in one direction, and another with a saddle on his head clearing out in another direction, and so on, and I could not help laughing at the scare I had given them. It was something like a hawk in a pigeon-house, and when I got back there was not a soul at the shed except the shearers and my son. On that occasion I think we had to wait a day or two before we got rouseabouts, though the next morning I was interviewed by some of the men that I had seen the day before, and when I came out to interview them I said: "What do you want to see me about?" The spokesman said: "We were very sorry to see you lose your temper yesterday." "Well," I said "what business is that of yours; my temper's my own, and I can lose it when I please without interfering with you." They said there were a few young boys among the lot what had come a long way, and they hoped I would take them on and give them a job. I said: "I never re-engage people that break their agreements," but I cannot be sure now whether I took those boys back or not. The probabilities are,

however, that I did, because really I am, I know, a soft fool.

There is another story I will tell you, which is about my two eldest boys, who had just entered the University at Sydney, and who wanted to spend their vacation, as usual, at Burren, among the kangaroos. I had some business in Narrabri, and while I was in there I engaged a young fellow to come out and assist in the shed, as it was shearing time. At the same time I told the publican at the house where I stopped that my sons were coming up, and I wanted him to look after them, and see they got a start out for the station. He remarked: "They won't get to the station, the union camp is on the road, and the road is blocked. Unless you get a pass from Joe Turner nobody is allowed to go to Burren scab-shed." I replied: "If they can stop my boys they can keep them." He said: "They will be stopped right enough," to which I replied: "All right, we'll see," but I thought it was only fair to give the boys some notice of the trouble, and wrote to them, stating that there was a union camp on the road that was debarring people from going to Burren, and if they came up they must be prepared for a bit of trouble. I got a reply: "Send us two horses that will face a crowd, and we'll be through."

The young fellow that I had hired in Narrabri did not appear for some days after he had agreed to be there. When he came I asked him what stopped him, and he said that he had been stopped by the union camp and sent back to Narrabri. "What did they send you back for?" To get a certificate from Turner that I was my father's son, and not a

shearer." "What did you do?" "I went to my father, and my father arranged with Turner that I could come to Burren." "Well," I said, "you can go back and tell your father that I don't want emissaries from Joe Turner; I want free men to work for me that can travel as free men on public roads."

My sons arrived shortly after without any trouble, but the late John Smith, M.L.C., made a statement in the House that two boys from the University, who were going up to see their father, had been stopped by the Union, and they had to get a pass from the organiser in Narrabri before they could proceed to the station. When I saw this in the paper I felt very angry, and immediately wrote a letter contradicting the mistake made by Mr. Smith, and said: "My sons arrived at the station with a pass that was signed by Mr. Colt, of the United States of America, and they had never applied for any other."

For a considerable time after this when I passed Turner's, when I had occasion to go into or out of Narrabri, if I saw him outside with a lot of his shearer-men (as he usually was), I used always to pull up and ask him if there was any need of a pass to Burren, and, upon my words, he used to blush up to the roots of his hair, but would only shake his head.

I forget during which strike it was that the union shearers in Narrabri burnt in effigy Mr. Jack Brodie and Mr. Sturton, who was the representative of the Pastoralists' Union in Narrabri, but as he was the son of a clergyman they honoured him by saying a prayer over him before committing him to the flames. I was vexed at the time that I had not been burnt, and could not make out why they had left me out,

and on my first trip into Narrabri after the burning I went up to Turner's to see the mob and ask them why they had not burnt me. The reply from a wag was that—"They hadn't a pair of trousers long enough to make the effigy." I told them that if they would burn me I would shout a small cask of beer, and see the job done properly, and lend them a pair of trousers, but they declined the offer. Though I got the soubriquet of "the biggest, sanguinary seab in Australia," I am sure that I never had what you might call a real enemy among the shearers.

There is another rather amusing incident of Unionism, only this was a Carriers' Union. I cannot remember now the exact date of the start of the Carriers' Union, but I know when they sent me a list of prices that the Union intended to charge for their carriage of goods out and wool in, I found that I had always been paying more than their demands, and continued to do so. I always looked upon carriers as more or less capitalists that had a rather hard row to hoe, because there was no law in existence at that time by which a carrier could feed his horses on the road without breaking the law. As they did not come under the heading of travelling stock their horses could be impounded, and they could have been put to a good deal of trouble if unable to travel on account of wet weather and other things. There was really no clause under which a carrier could live if it had not been for the concessions given to him by the owners of the land. A man who took out a hawker's license could travel as he liked, go where he liked, camp anywhere as long as he liked, but a carrier, as I said before, had no right to live. I gave

them permission to camp where they liked as they passed through Burren, and I never interfered with their taking their horses to any part of the run on which they could get better grass.

However, the Union decided that they would not carry "scabby" wool, and that as my wool was "scabby" it would not be taken from the shed. I at once put up a lot of posters along the road where they generally camped; in fact, all along, on every gate post—"No camping here; wool is 'scabby,' so is the grass," and when I met them travelling along I told them—"You must go on to the reservation; no camping here." They used to say—"Why have you turned so hard on us, Mr. Barton?" I said: "I might as well ask you the same question; why do you refuse to carry my wool?" Of course, they had no answer for that, still, I know that they felt that I was treating them very harshly and unjustly, but I could not help that.

Towards the end of shearing I had some thousand bales of wool stacked in the wool-room, and a stack of bales (outside covered with a sheet) waiting for something to turn up, and it turned out that two of the selectors on Burren, and, I think, two other teams agreed to take a load of wool. When I got them loaded I said: "When will you be back?" and they mentioned the day, but said: "We are not engaging any wool, you know." That was one of the clauses in the Union, that no carrier could engage to draw wool from any shed. I said: "No, I know you are not engaging it, but it will be here when you come back." "Oh," they said, "supposing the boycott is off, and other teams come for the wool, you must give

it to them." I said: "You can leave that to me; it will be here when you come back." Of course, there was one of the teamsters who stipulated that he was not coming back; he was going to load to Walgett. I said: "That's all right, but if you change your mind and come back you can get more wool," and they started away.

They had not gone more than a few days when five or six big waggons drove into the paddock and up to the shed. The leading man, having backed his waggon into the stage for loading, came round to see me (I had been watching him through the shed door), and asked me if I had any wool. I said: "Yes, I've got a bit" (of course, he could see that there was any amount, and I was still shearing). He said: "We have come for it." I said: "Have you?" He replied: "Yes; we have delivered our load at —— (mentioning the name of the place), and this is the nearest wool to where we delivered the load, and the Union says that we must take the nearest wool we can get." The same idea that I mentioned before, you see, that Union is the law of the land. "Well," I said, "would you be surprised if I told you that you are not going to get it?" He said: "Yes, why can't I get it?" "Because your tarpaulin is not good." He said: "You have not seen my tarpaulin." "No," I said, "I don't want to see it; I know it's no good to cover my wool, and you can drive your waggon out of this as soon as you like."

He then asked me if the teams that had loaded had engaged the wool. I said: "No, but I told them that if they came back I would give them another load, but they have not engaged it." He mentioned

the name of the carrier who told me distinctly that he was not coming back for wool—"Did So-and-so agree to come back?" I said: "No, none of them agreed to come back, but I told him, as well as the others, that if he came back I should load him." About two days after this the carrier that I was speaking to, and the one that had taken a load, but did not intend to have any more, came up to the shed, having ridden back about fifty miles. The man who had got the load said: "Did you tell this man I had engaged wool here?" I replied: "No, I did not." "Did you tell him that I was coming back for wool here?" "No, I did not, but I told him that if you did come back I would load you, the same as I told you." They got on their horses again and rode off.

The teams that took the first of the wool did very well out of it, because I kept them going for some time, and they had four or five trips from the shed, which ought to have paid them well. Of course, I knew intuitively what was happening, the short-trip wool paid them best, and the leaders of the Union were the big-gun carriers, who intended to boycott my wool until all the rest of the wool in the district had been taken away, and then leave the smaller teams in the lurch, and come down and take all my lot, and thus make a better season of it than if they had allowed the smaller men to have drawn my wool while it was being shorn. The union leaders in the bush never lose a chance by declaring a strike off till they are in a position to secure the work. This, I presume, is what is called "human nature."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE 1897-1902 DROUGHT.

AS I am drawing near to my leaving Burren I would just like to summarise my fifteen years' work in a condensed way. I bought Burren for eleven thousand pounds—a leasehold area of about one hundred and eighty thousand acres, unfenced, except for some boundary lines that had been put up by neighbours, but the half not paid for by Burren. There was one dam on the place, and several fair water-holes in the creeks, but nothing permanent, the dam itself used to dry up if the drought lasted long enough, and when I first went up there were tons and tons of bones lying all round the neighbourhood of the water-holes and dam, as before I bought the place it used to run about ten thousand head of cattle, but that was before the neighbours put up their fences. In inspecting the place with the owner, a Mr. Button, whose father had settled there and taken up the place, it having remained in the family ever since, he used to show me, when we were riding round the country, and tell me—“When the water was getting dry in the water-holes we used to bring all our cattle from this end of the run up to this plain, and camp under that tree to keep them from going back to the water-holes, and about sundown they would all start off to go to the Namoi River. When we saw them all stringing

off we used to go home, having found water on agistment for that lot of cattle, and do the same thing on the other side of the run, only there we used to start them for the Barwon, and leave the place virtually with very few stock on it. When it rained these cattle used to come back, and bring with them a great number of their friends, sisters, cousins and aunts from the neighbouring stations, and the musters that used to follow after rain. Stockmen had to go fifty and sixty miles away to attend musters to get those that had straggled furthest out."

However, the station-owners made a mutual arrangement by which, instead of sending stockmen to all the musters, some, perhaps, a hundred miles away from home, the cattle were passed from station to station until they reached the one adjoining your run, and you only had to collect them from there. But, of course, the fencing and water improvements put a stop to this no-boundary business, but when the dam was put up at Burren the neighbours took advantage of that by giving their cattle a start for the Burren dam, and I have been informed from a creditable source that in the '83 drought, for a time, there were nearly thirty thousand head of cattle on Burren, but, of course, when the dam began to get dry the neighbours removed all theirs, and left the nine or ten thousand head of cattle that were supposed to be on Burren, at that time without grass, and with very little water, and the bones that I have described represented the cattle, as there were only one hundred and twenty-two mustered when I took delivery of the place in '86. This account was verified to me by the manager of the bank where they did business, who

told me that the company had lost nearly thirty thousand pounds on the Burren investment, although when the old Mr. Button died he had left Burren clear of debt, with a fine herd of cattle, had bought a property near Maitland Vale (near Maitland), and had a good lump of money in the bank, all of which, of course, was divided amongst his family, who, in a few years, lost everything.

Two or three years after I had bought it, and put on fencing, wells, and sheep, I was offered a good sum if I would sell—forty thousand pounds—but I wanted to make a home there, and I liked the country, so I refused the offer. I have often wondered what might have been the result if I had sold. I would probably have invested in A.J.S. Bank shares, and might to-day be carrying my swag. However, I kept it for twenty years, and eventually gave it to one of my sons. I had bought about fifteen thousand acres of land, improved the place well, and had about ten thousand sheep, all of which I valued at thirteen thousand pounds, so that for my life's work I only had two thousand pounds more value than when I bought the place, for which I had paid cash, so you can see that there was not a great deal of money to be made by legitimate grazing in the old days.

This is all forgotten now, on account of the boom that started in 1903, after the big drought. Freezing of meat made a good market, which has been improving ever since; the shortage of sheep all over the world means good prices for wool, all of which tends to raise the price of land, so that anyone owning ten or twelve thousand acres of land was made a

wealthy man by the increased value of his holding, but should the supply of sheep and wool overtake the consumption, and prices fall, the man on the land will wonder what has struck him, as I feel satisfied that the present price of land for grazing is beyond its commercial value under normal conditions. I hope, however, that I am a pessimist.

I may here add a short account of my life for the years 1897 to 1902, which were all drought years, with the exception of a fall of rain we got on the first April, 1899, which fall of rain saved me from absolute ruin. I have mentioned that I bought a number of sheep in 1896 to try and make a little money, before the expiration of my lease, on which I made a loss, but I will give the particulars of the purchases and losses.

I bought five thousand ewes from Messrs. White Brothers, of Belltrees, and seven thousand from Mr. Cornish, of Mara Creek. Out of those sheep, after the rain in 1899, I had only one hundred and seven ewes left, and twenty odd lambs; the balance had all gone to Sydney in sheep-skins. From the seven thousand I got from Mr. Cornish I only sold one hundred and thirty, and I bought a station called Tooree Vale, in the mountains at the head of the Yarraman Creek, about twenty miles from Cassilis, where I took a number of Burren-bred sheep.

The White Brothers offered me five thousand more ewes at four shillings or five shillings a head. I wrote to them, and told them that I had no grass and no water, and that I had made a dead loss on those that I had purchased previously, and that I could not entertain them. They, however, magnani-

mously replied that they were very sorry for my loss, but that they would put the ewes in lamb, and hold them till the following April for me at the same price. A friend of mine asked me if I could tell him where to get any ewes, and I told him yes, he could have these Belltrees ewes if he liked, and he agreed to take them, so I wrote to Mr. White, and told him that I would take the sheep in April. Things still kept very bad, and the gentleman to whom I had sold these sheep said he had no grass, and could not possibly take any, so, to keep my word with Messrs. White Brothers, I had to send a drover to take delivery of the sheep and bring them to Tooree Vale, which he did.

Rain falling on the third April brought up a lot of Scotch thistle on the flats at Tooree Vale, and I got a very good percentage of lambs out of these ewes, and I also bought a number of Colleroy-bred ewes from Mr. Trail, and I got a good lambing from them also. I took both these lots of sheep back to Burren, shored them, and sold them "off-shears" for twelve and fifteen shillings a head, and I got nearly as much for the lambs. Had it not been for that God-send I must have been ruined, but I resold Tooree Vale station then at a profit, which amounted to about the cost that I would have had to pay for agistment.

I was absolutely forced to make this sale to reduce my overdraft, but it turned out to be a very bad move on my part, as the drought set in again at once, and though I sold a great number of my sheep, and had the stock reduced to a very small number, when the lambing came on the ewes were very fat, and living on the seeds of the herbage and the berang

root, but a shower of rain—about half-an-inch—fell. It was only sufficient to cover up the seed that was lying on the ground, and on which the sheep were living, which amounted to real starvation. The ewes were about to lamb, and all died, as, though very fat, they were unable to convert the fat into blood fast enough to enable them to support themselves and the lambs, and they became listless and stupid, standing about singly, or in mobs, not even looking for food, and, of course, dying very fast.

I had to engage five or six men to ride out in the paddock and skin them, as they were nearly full-wooled. I found that it was no use waiting for them to die, which they were sure to do in a few hours, so we killed all those that did not attempt to run away when we walked up to them, and we skinned them. The bare plain, after the skinning was done, was carpeted with skins spread on the ground, and it was very difficult for the horses to draw a vehicle of any sort across the plain where there was no track, because the cracks in the ground were so deep, and covered over with fine dust, that the horses would go down to their shoulders, and the wheels into one of these cracks down to the axle, so I had to pack the skins on to the tracks, and then draw them to the shed in the waggon.

I was carting feed for the sheep out to Burren when they died, and then, to save carriage, I took what was left of them into Narrabri and fed them there, and eventually took the remainder—five thousand—to Guyra, in New England. I got a very good paddock to keep them in, and put up a tent in the paddock, where I lived myself with my dog and

my horse. I need hardly go into the particulars of one's feelings in these long droughts, but, lying in my tent at night, I had a persistent nightmare of financial figures passing through my brain, and it seemed absolutely impossible that I could ever pay my mortgage and my debts—which amounted at that time to about fifteen thousand pounds—with five thousand sheep, a station with the tenure gone, and which I only held, as it were, on sufferance. These arrays of figures which were everlastingly running through my brain day and night were enough to drive most men mad.

I had a little relief one night. I had bought a few potatoes from a farmer, which I had put on a little table I had near the fire, and I heard something moving about on the table, as I thought, so I called out to the dog. A moment afterwards there was a rushing and scrambling, and a 'possum ran up the tree at the end of my tent. The old dog took good care that he should not come down, but when it was getting nearly daylight the 'possum got very uneasy. Little bits of bark and dirt kept falling on my tent, so that I knew he was moving. When he got close to the ground the dog used to rush at him, and up the tree he went again, and if he did not curse that dog for a time! Then he would be quiet for a bit, and try and make another escape, with the same results, and when I got up in the morning he was there, and so was the dog. I got him down to the dog, which killed him, and he was one of the finest and largest 'possums I ever saw, and was the first 'possum that I had seen since 1888, when they all died at Burren, and all over the plain

country of New South Wales and Queensland, and I do not remember seeing one since.

I buried that 'possum in the ashes to keep him away from the flies, and to feed the dog on that night, which I did. The poor old fellow was marvelously intelligent, and a very good dog (one of my own breeding), and I think I was rather famous for my breed of dogs, but I am not going to blow, because I have heard many dog stories that can quite eclipse anything that I could tell, one of which, I may repeat, was the dog that could put a blow-fly into a pickle-bottle. Well, the dog that could do that beats any of mine, still, I took those five thousand poor sheep by myself for weeks on the road with only this dog, and that fact, I think, comes next to, if not ahead of, the dog that could put a fly in a pickle-bottle. He was on very short commons with me in my tent, as I only got a bit of salt beef and a loaf of bread from the township occasionally, so I had not much to give him.

However, when night is darkest, dawn is nearest, and on coming to my tent one day I found two ladies there—a Mrs. Dutton and a Miss Blaxland—and they asked me to come up to their house, which I did, and they made me very much at home, and I shall never forget Mrs. Dutton's kindness. She cheered me up, called me "Paddy," told me not to be down-hearted, and that I would be a rich man yet, and I believe she saved me from being a lunatic. No words of mine could express what I felt for Mrs. Dutton's kindness, nor can any words that I could write in any way convey the frightfully depressed feelings that take possession of you after years of drought and failures.

I have been through a good many, and they were always the same, but one can live through and recover from droughts, which really make the country what it is—for growing the best merino wool in the world. If you want to do that you must stop in this dry land, which is carefully cultivated by Nature with rotation of crops, and allowed to lie fallow periodically—that means a drought. If we had no droughts we would not grow the best wool in the world, and our sheep would be continually in the hospital, as they are in New Zealand, where the merino sheep does no good. These remarks, of course, only apply to the country that I have lived in all my life. In the highlands, on the western slopes, where you have to clear off the timber and drain the country, and, in many places, sow English grasses, you can get equally good results from your sheep, and probably this is the most profitable investment in the long run, but, in spite of evidence to the contrary, I like the big areas, with big profits in good times and heavy losses in the dry times. All life is a gamble, and I like to gamble with Nature, though I know that she always has an ace up her sleeve, and can ruin me when she likes, but she always gives you a chance later on, and after every drought one thinks—“I shall manage better next time; I know that drought’s taught me something I didn’t know,” but, all the same, there is no management that can save the loss occasioned by a drought.

I have not mentioned any losses except those of sheep, though the loss of my horses was very considerable during these years of drought. I sent all my breeding mares and young unbroken stock away on

agistment, but after they had been away a few months I had notice that they could live there no longer, and that I would have to move them. The few broken horses that were with the mob I sent in another mob of horses, that were going to Casino, on the Clarence, and all I ever heard of them after was a bill I got for some thirty shillings a head for droving and agistment—the horses were dead.

I paid agistment for a year or two on the remainder at different places where they were sent, and about five or six head eventually got back to Burren. The working horses, which I had fed on corn and chaff, more or less, all the time, I put in the train and sent to Muswellbrook for sale when I took my sheep to New England. These horses brought an average of four pounds a head in Muswellbrook, though the majority of them were worth from twenty pounds to twenty-five pounds.

The draft horses—a team of some ten or twelve mares and a stallion—I sent on the road carrying to make them earn their livelihood. The stallion was the first to die, not from starvation, but the high-feeding—corn—combined with long stages of no water, very often in the harness for thirty hours, bred an inflammation, and more than half of them died before the drought was over. They were very fine heavy horses, and not suitable for the fast work that was necessary to get over the long stages. The balance—about half-a-dozen mares—I took to Bidnam with me, so you may say that the drought cleared me out of horses, though I only bred horses for pleasure—a bit of extravagance—and never made anything out of them till after I went to Queensland.

I should like to give some statistics for the horses and sheep from 1892 to 1902, as they appear to me, without looking into the Government statistics. In 1892 there were some sixty-one millions of sheep in the State of New South Wales; in 1902 the statistics showed something under twenty millions of sheep. I never saw the figures, but I made a wager with a friend that the sheep would be under twenty millions, and the gentleman I wagered with sent me a suit of clothes, so I know from that that there were less than twenty millions of sheep, or a loss of, say, forty millions in those ten years. To take the next ten years—from 1903 to 1913—I think the State in 1913 had something over fifty millions of sheep, an increase, say, of nearly thirty millions that ten years, but I think it is very probable that the last four years have put the number of sheep in the State of New South Wales down again to something like where it started from in 1903.

I have mentioned this fact to point out that the carrying capacity of the country is not what our Government appraisers and land boards try to make people believe that it is. I have mentioned this before in my remarks on the land boards, and I am only repeating it now so that anyone who likes to take the trouble to get the correct figures and the areas occupied by sheep can very soon find out for himself what acreage is required to depasture a sheep, and when the high-country, with English grasses (which never suffers severely from drought), is deducted from the sheep area, it will show that the plain country, with a very small rainfall, is very much over-estimated in its carrying capacity.

During the time I was away at New England with the sheep, Burren was practically deserted. My old housekeeper, old Mary, remained on the place. She had one cow that had kept us in milk during the whole of the dry seasons, which Mary used to feed and rug in the cold weather, and there were about twenty or thirty poddy lambs—not exactly pets, because we had no milk to feed them on, but she fed them on corn and chaff, and kept them alive. Her greatest trouble was an old stud ram, that used to fall into the troughs continually when he came for a drink, and she had the greatest difficulty in getting him out by herself, squeezing his wool dry, and getting him on his legs again.

I took my sheep back to Burren, and the rains fell while they were on the road, the herbage grew all over the place, and I was lucky enough to buy ten or twelve thousand sheep—certainly at prices that made my banker's hair stand on end, but I assured him that after shearing I should be out of his debt, and so I was. I more than doubled my money on the stock I bought, and with the help of the wool, got virtually out of my indebtedness, but as they were taking all the country from me I had to seek fresh fields and pastures new, and inspected Bidnam, in Queensland, which was at that time in a very drought-stricken condition.

The Queensland land laws were what induced me to go up there. Up to that date, at any rate, and, from all I know, up to the present time, there was no hint at any malpractices such as I have described in New South Wales, as the Queensland Lands Department was run by commissioners, somewhat on the

same lines as the railways in New South Wales, except that the Queensland commissioners were not under political control. They had more the status of a judge, and very good, honest, practical men they were, and there is no doubt that that has been the reason why Queensland has been so much sought after by graziers. There were good leases, with resumptions for closer settlement at stated periods, or when required; improvements were valued before the land was thrown open, and the laws were carried out impartially. That has been my experience, though, at the same time, it appears to me that they take the resumptions off the man who does the most improving to his country; I suppose it is because that would be more sought after by the public than the lands that had not been improved at all, so that the man who does most on his land is always, and always will be while Government is landlord, taxed more than the owner who does nothing to improve his country, but it would take a leveller headed man than I am to find out some law or enactment that could put this on a juster basis. I shall explain what I mean by the land laws, as they affected me personally in Queensland.

When I bought Bidnam, in 1905, there were about one hundred and sixty square miles of leasehold, and about fifty miles of the country that had been resumed, but it was the most inferior part of the holding, and had been open for selection for many years, but no one had applied for any of it, and I could have acquired the whole of it for a grazing farm without doing residence or anything more than paying the rent, but, unfortunately, I did not, as I have always been averse to spending money in land, and I

had not a great deal to spend when I left Burren, so I only secured a small portion of it, and the rest of the resumption was selected, and the Government immediately put up another portion of the run for resumption.

When I went on to Bidnam it had the reputation of being a "rotten hole," that had ruined everyone that had had anything to do with it, and the company from whom I bought it were glad to get rid of it to me for less money than the stock were worth. Bidnam was all fenced with rabbit-proof netting, and subdivided into a number of convenient paddocks, so that water was the only thing that it required to make it a good property. I put down six or seven bores, which made plenty of water in every paddock, some paddocks having access to water in two or three places. I may say here that I was the first to start putting down bores in that part of Queensland, though I was followed very quickly by all the other stations.

The fact of my putting down the bores was the signal for more resumptions, which decided me to sell out, as I knew that I could not stand the worry and annoyance of neighbours on what I considered my property, and I feared a repetition of the treatment I got on Burren with regard to my improvements. I sold out well after holding the place only five years—five years of good seasons and very jolly times, as my neighbours were all of the best, and we had a regular round of social gatherings, and the picnic races in Charleville were a "feast of reason and a flow of soul." I always had ladies staying in the house, and I took up a car, and had a very good time for those

five years, but what with the Government resumptions and the good prices that were going for station properties I decided to sell, and I thought that I would get away from civilisation in my next spec, and went up to inspect Headingly, which I had bought before I sold Bidnam.

As I am doing the land business of Queensland pretty well, I will follow it out now as regards my purchase of Headingly, which had been occupied many years before at the rents asked at that time—one pound five shillings a mile—but the occupier, after sinking three wells at a great expense, and putting stock on to it, had to give it up. His wells were not able to water stock; in fact, the one at the house would not water the goats; it only just gave us drinking water for the human beings when I went there, and as soon as the first dry season came along, and the water-holes went dry, the cattle virtually all died. One draft of fats, I believe, was sent to Adelaide, but it did not pay for the droving, and a cheque had to be sent to pay its expenses. The station was abandoned, that is, no rent was paid, and left for anyone who liked to come along and take it up, and I think it was some ten or twelve years in that condition, waiting for someone. At last, Mr. Phelp took it up, and put a few head of cattle on it, and I bought it from him.

To go back to the land laws of Queensland. When I was looking over the titles of Headingly, at Brisbane, I noticed that there was a forty-two years' lease, with a resumption of one quarter, which could be taken at any time during the life of the lease. I asked the officials if they would mark out the area for

their resumption, and that I would leave it alone for them. They said they could not do that, but laughed at me at my fear of resumption. "Why," they said, "before we require to resume land out where you are for closer settlement your lease won't be worth more than ten years' purchase; there's not the slightest chance of land being resumed up there for the next twenty or thirty years." So I took it, feeling at the time quite sure that they were right. I set to work at once, fenced the whole place in and sub-divided it, put down eight or ten bores, and made the country capable of carrying twenty or thirty-thousand head of cattle, when I got notice that the Government required to take the resumption off my holding.

It seems that Fate has decided that the Government is to hunt me off wherever I go, when they can jump over hundreds of miles of country to settle on me, when outside my fence, on the western side, there were millions of miles, you may say, of country unoccupied—the Northern Territory—and also in Queensland, further south, there are still large blocks of country unoccupied. Still, they decided to take the three or four hundred miles of Headingly that they were entitled to take. I cannot say that it is unfair or unjust, but it points out that had I left the country as I found it, it would not have been wanted for closer settlement to-day, and the pioneer, go where he will, does most of his work for Government, and gets nothing but abuse in payment.

Before leaving New South Wales I should like to again repeat what I have already said, that before the year 1902 few graziers made money. The best they could do was to rear their families and pay expenses,

and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred had a pretty big interest bill to pay for their overdrafts. When I was a lad, as I have told you, I thought my father was a very bad manager. I still think it very probable that he was, as a ship's captain would hardly understand sheep and cattle and manage them with success, especially in a new country, where there was no experience to be gained from others. But after forty or fifty years' experience on my own in New South Wales I left the State virtually without a copper, and what little I did make was all made after 1902, during the year or eighteen months that they left me the use of the country before it was thrown open for lease, and I think that if a record of every grazier in New South Wales could be taken, probably it would be very much on a par with my experiences. Of course, I'm speaking of the back country principally. Those who were in the eastern division purchased freehold land, and improved it, and made very valuable and profitable estates, and everyone now on the land in New South Wales has made good money ever since 1902, because they have got the right to make their lands freehold on time-payment, and the value of the land since that date has increased probably two hundred or three hundred per cent., so that anyone who owned a few thousand acres has made money by the unearned increment—even I myself. The pioneers from the first time till the date I have mentioned only laid the foundation for the present owners to reap the profits.

CHAPTER XXII.

HEADINGLY.

TO draw my narrative to a conclusion, I will just tell you a few incidents of my five years at Headingly. During those five years the social status of the country improved marvellously. When we went to inspect Headingly, and got as far as Cloncurry, we found that there was only a pack-horse mail to Urandangie, which was the nearest post and telegraph office to Headingly, and the dead-end of the telegraph line.

We made arrangements with the mail-man to take us out in a buggy, but when we got to Bushy Park (Mr. Kennedy's place) the mail-man had come along without the buggy, and with only a pack-horse, and we had to thank Mr. Kennedy for his kindness and proverbial Australian bush hospitality, as he put us up for the night, and lent us his buggy to go on with. It was certainly one of the roughest trips that I had ever experienced, as there was only one place on the road, that was Roachdale, about ninety miles from Urandangie, but we went out of our road to stop at a boundary rider's, on the Rabbit Board fence, where we succeeded in hiring two more horses and getting something to eat. We had made a provision of food, but carrying it along in an open buggy it got mixed with a good deal of

dust and was as dry as chips. I have travelled that road by coach frequently since, but I always took care to take a blanket and plenty of tucker. However, in the last twelve months, owing to the advance of the railway, which brings population and improvements along with it, you can now go from the railway terminus to Headingly by motor-car once a week in a few hours. The advance of civilisation always seems to follow close on my heels, whatever part of Australia I go to. This advance, of course, has been a very great assistance in making money, because no man can make a district boom by his own exertions, population must come along to make the country more valuable.

I think we were four days doing the two hundred miles out to Headingly. We used to get about thirty miles a day, and when night came on the coachman used to say, and even does at the present time—"There's a bit of grass here; I'm going to stop here." The horses were hobbled out, having had a drink some hours before; the water to make tea had been carried in a water-bag; a few little sticks were collected—timber was very very scarce, so we had just enough sticks to boil the tea—we ate our supper, made a pillow of our bags, and lay on the plain till morning. However, we succeeded in getting to Headingly safely.

I forgot to mention that before we got to Cloncurry we were delayed for several days on the roads by floods on the Flinders River, which the road from Hughenden follows to within seventy or eighty miles of Cloncurry. The railway line was covered with water for miles, and in a great many places it was too

deep for the train to move through, so that the journey on the whole could not be called a pleasure trip, though after we left Cloncurry there had not been a drop of rain for many months, and it was very dry at Headingly; none of the big water-holes had any water in them, and the well at the house was only sufficient for drinking purposes, but the water was very good.

There was only a horse or two at the head station, and the goats had to be taken two miles every day to get a drink. There were two other wells on the place, but there was no means of getting water out of them other than a windlass and bucket, which, of course, was a very slow process, but the fact of good water being procurable at one hundred and fifty feet, and the splendid grass country, induced me to decide on purchasing it.

I had to worry along to get the wells rigged for watering the cattle. I put up steam marsh-pumps, but the time that was wasted in getting them on the ground was nearly nine months from the time they were ordered, and I only succeeded in getting one in working order in time to save the cattle from perishing, as we had a thirteen months' dry spell from October, 1912, till November, 1913, without a drop of rain. However, I got the one pump going, which I put up with my own hands, together with a hundred yards of iron troughing. I had no time to put up any receiving tank, so I had to pump the water into the troughs direct, which I did myself for three months, till the rain came, and from the time I started pumping until I knocked off I never let the fire out—always kept a small head of steam on so as to be able

to start the engine when I heard the cattle coming at night, or saw them in the day time; always keeping the troughs full, so that the cattle were not too poor when the rain came.

There are a good many incidents that I should like to mention in this period, but owing to the fact of the language on the Georgina River being unprintable, I am unable to do so, and I never felt anything pall on me so much as when I was working with the men putting up the improvements. I cannot possibly even give you a sentence that I heard from any man there, the language was so filthy, though they did not mean it, and thought that was the right way to talk, and anyone who could not string out a mile of filthy words did not know what it was to live. Still, I can say this for them, that there were many good, honest workers among them, and only occasionally you came across a member of the I.W.W., whose religion was to do as much injury to the employer as possible, thereby assisting The Cause

However, I toiled along for about five years, during which time I had the whole of the run fenced in and subdivided into five or six paddocks—each paddock would have been a large run in any part of New South Wales. I put down ten bores, all of which were worked by windmills, with an engine on each to get the water up in case the wind failed, or if many cattle went to the bore when the windmill would not pump sufficient to water them. I think that I made Headingly one of the best improved runs (bar the house) in Western Queensland, and I regret having sold it, but the experience of my life has been to sell anything when you could get a good profit—the

seasons are so precarious, the money market more precarious, and the Government the most precarious. I believe they are going to put a tax on our leases now, which, of course, amounts to nothing more nor less than repudiation; the Federal Government is going to tax the leases that were given to us by the Queensland Government.

I am getting too old now to live in that far-away country, though as far as living was concerned I was lucky enough to get a beautiful vegetable garden, watered by the bore at the house, and I never saw such splendid vegetables as were grown there; cabbages, the biggest I ever saw in my life, the largest of which (a monster) weighed forty-two pounds, and was boiled in six divisions, and was a very good cabbage. Tomatoes grow all the year round, and bear great quantities; melons of all descriptions, and pumpkins also grow all the year round, but they will not bear after the first year, the leaves get yellow, and though they will flower they seldom turn to fruit. They are not worth keeping after their natural life is finished. Beetroot, carrots, and almost all vegetables grow well, so that the living at Headingly was not bad, when you add splendid beef and bread to the vegetable bill-of-fare, and there is no doubt about it that those outside places, when things are progressing, and success is crowning your efforts, have a great fascination, at any rate, for me, and I think for most people. Anyone who stops out there for a year or two always finds his way back if he possibly can. I sometimes think that in spite of our long civilisation there is a lurking instinct about us which longs for

the freedom of the savage, where you can do what you like without interfering with anybody else.

The township of Urandangie, which is twenty-five miles south of Headingly, is a difficult place to describe, not that there is much of it, but it looks like an old ruin with its rough buildings. The hotel, for instance, has got as much roofing of boughs as it has of iron, green-hides spread on the floors, and no fire-places, as the cooking is generally done in a fire outside. Then there is the post office, rather a decent building, and a hut for the court house and policeman's residence, and a very good store building, and two rather better-class private dwellings. The revenue is principally derived from the travelling public, as it is on the main road from the Northern Territory in to Queensland, and is, I think, the first pub that the drovers meet when they are coming from the Northern Territory, and they spend their money very freely.

There was one magistrate who dispensed the law to suit the district better than anyone else could do it. Here is one story that I have heard. A Chinaman was run in for having given the blacks liquor; the charge was read out by the policeman, and the Bench addressed the Chinaman—"John, you are before me for breaking the law, and I am going to fine you thirty-four bob." "Oh, Chri, woffor?" "One pound for giving the blacks rum, and fourteen bob you owe me." "All ri." No depositions taken, no chance of a prohibition.

There is another story which helps to explain our principles of justice. There was one of the station-

hands in for a spree (they generally knock down fifty or sixty pounds in a few days, and go away very seedy, but pleased that they have done their duty). This man had done his duty, and was going away with a good many doch-an-dorises bottled in his pocket, and when he got on his horse he apparently went to sleep, for the horse just wandered across the road into the policeman's verandah, where he stood, and his rider, falling off sound asleep, was put in for protection. The Court sat in the morning, the charge was read out—"simply drunk"—and the verdict of the Bench was—"Billy The Rat, you are before me for being drunk, and we do not want no drunks here, so I'm going to fine you five bob." The prisoner objected to being fined under an alias, but the objection was over-ruled.

I may add here that nearly all the old hands on the Georgina are not called by their own names (though they are generally names, I think, that they have given themselves). I had two men at Headingly, one Bob The Dog, the other Dick The Dog, and they are known by no other name. Once I met a man walking along the road, and he asked me if I had any work; I talked to him for a few minutes, then I said: "What's your name?" His answer was—"I'm Blue Bob The Bastard," and I decided in my own mind that I would not give Blue Bob The Bastard a job, but I heard afterwards that he was a very good worker, but eccentric, and would walk away whenever he felt inclined. I also heard a portion of his history. There was a manager on the River who was supposed to be a bit of a bully, and Blue Bob took a job there with the intention of showing the manager that he was not

going to bully him. However, he only stopped a day or two, when the manager got on to him about something, and Blue Bob never retaliated in the least, but the next morning he rolled up his swag, and told the men in the hut—"I must be a bastard to let the manager talk to me like that," and called himself Blue Bob The Bastard from that day.

At Urandangie we got up a race-meeting for the Belgians, and, though there were not more than twenty or thirty people on the ground, a collection amounting to three or four hundred pounds was raised for the Belgians, but, of course, a good many cheques came in from the different stations. Our publican used to be drunk most of the time, and the management of his business was left to his housekeeper (he changed his housekeeper pretty often, and I do not think they were a very high-toned lot), but after the race-meeting, when we were all paying our hotel bills, an old wood-cutter of mine was settling up his score, and the housekeeper handed him his account, which he was proceeding to pay, when she suddenly recollected that he had had some horse fodder, and said: "I forgot to charge for that horsefeed you got." He spoke in the district drawl—"Oh, I've paid your adopted husband for that; that's all right." This was the first time I had ever heard of that relationship, and it seemed to strike me as funny. But I will say this for the men of the Georgina, that I never heard them use dirty language before any woman, and however they managed to change their language beats me; they certainly do not say much if there is

a woman about ; in fact, very little indeed, but nothing that she cannot hear.

To exemplify this I can give you a very pathetic little story of one of the older pioneers, who had been for some years on his holding, but the drought and financial troubles had left him virtually ruined. The stock had been removed off the station, and the water was getting so short that it was found necessary that his wife and family should leave. As there was no vehicle of any sort on the place, except the bullock-dray, it was decided that his wife and children, with their household gods, beds and food, should go down in the bullock-dray to the nearest town, where they could get accommodation. Before starting the husband said to the bullock-driver—"Now, Bill, don't use any bad language before my wife and children!" Bill promised faithfully that he would take care of them, and would not use one word to hurt their feelings, so the cavalcade started, Bill perfectly dumb, his whip dragging listlessly in the dust, and the bullocks getting slower and slower, till at last they came to a creek where there was a pull required. Bill walked up and down the string of bullocks, calling them "beauties" and "darlings," swung his whip, but there was no whistle in it, and the bullocks looked at him, and would not move. He threw his whip away, and sat down on a stone in despair, saying—"Please, mum, I can't get them to pull." "Oh" she said, "what are we to do, Bill? We can't stop here all night; is there nothing that you could do to make them go?" "Yes, mum, I think if you would give me permission just to 'beggar' that Nobby a bit I could make them go." Of course, she said: "Do anything, Bill, to get us to

the town." He jumped up, himself once more, swung his whip round his head with a whistle, and let go a volley of three or four days' pent-up language. No one could repeat what he said—I don't suppose he knew himself—but the bullocks never hesitated; they knew their man had come back, and up the bank they went out of the creek, and shortly after Bill succeeded in getting his charge safely to town.

However, I have sold Headingly, and my life on the land is done, and I am too old now to take up any other calling, but on summing up my life I think that if I had to go over it again, without the experience that I have gained, I should probably do as I did when I started life, but from the experience that I have gained I should advise the men on the land to sell whenever things get a boom price, and never try to make a home, breed valuable stock, or put up any improvements, for that is not the object that the Government wants the man on the land to have.

From what I have noticed of the booms and depressions, they are not, as a rule, attributable to droughts, the money markets and the Government's land amendments being far more accountable for the rise and fall of the booms; but one thing that I have noticed is that every boom rises a good deal higher than the preceding one, and every ebb does not fall as low as the previous one.

In reading these reminiscences of my life I think that all my contemporary graziers will admit that I have fairly described their own conditions on the land, which is proved by the result that all the leasehold holdings are not owned to-day by any of the original,

or even by the second, occupiers. The Government being the landlord is the principal cause of this, and no man who wanted to make a home on the land could do so, for he could not buy an acre of land at any price, and if he tried to acquire it by the only way that it could be done—what they called “dummying”—he was breaking the laws of the land. A great many will say that they have “dummied” their land and never broken the law, but they certainly broke the spirit of the law, and a selector who was quite on his own would not take a grazier’s stock for agistment in a drought, though he had no stock of his own, for fear the Government would come down and forfeit his selection as a “dummy.” The whole aim and object of the Government seems to me to have been engineered to make strife between the different classes of men on the land, and any approach to friendship or good feeling between the two classes was looked upon with very grave suspicion, and I think I may say again, as I said in my preface, that the greatest obstacle to the man on the land has been the land laws and their administration.

FINIS.



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