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A SPRING DAY AMONGST THE WILD FLOWERS.

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(*Read before the Field Naturalists' Club of Victoria, 8th December, 1890.*)

THE absence in Victoria of a real typical spring has been often referred to by those who, coming fresh from England, miss the splendid sight of the budding elms, sycamores, horse chestnuts, beeches, oaks, &c. What can be more delightful to a lover of Nature in her many phases than a walk on a fine morning in an English spring, when clouds of subdued colour seem to lend such a peaceful aspect to what may be termed the thoroughly English landscape. In Victoria, however, we can offer many advantages, as a bright, clear, blue sky, with sufficient warmth to make one feel comfortable; and although we cannot boast of a distinct season of spring, we have much to be thankful for in the shape of beautiful wild flowers, gay-plumaged birds, brilliantly coloured insects, marvellous fern gullies, and other advantages almost unknown in cooler climates. Turning these matters over in my mind, and having a vivid recollection of both sides of the picture, I resolved to spend a quiet day alone amongst the wild flowers about the heath ground near the coast.

I left Melbourne for Frankston, on the 20th of September, by the early morning train, and as it had been raining somewhat heavily nearly the whole of the previous night, everything looked delightfully fresh and beautiful, the morning being just comfortably warm for travelling. To attempt to note the marvellous changes observable, even in passing through districts at railroad speed, would require a far abler pen than mine; so I shall simply confine myself to noting a few of the principal places, on the present sites of many of which used to be the collecting grounds of former days—now townships, shires, and even towns are built, each having its own share of responsibilities, as well as advantages. One of the first things to strike one upon leaving Flinders-street station is to note the difference between the former very humble residence of the late Governor Latrobe—the site of which can still be noted



—and the palatial, if not very handsome, mansion now occupied by His Excellency the Earl of Hopetoun. What a change has taken place in a comparatively few years! But I am not going to detain you. Richmond Hill—named after the Richmond in dear old England, but a libel upon the latter as regards its natural beauty—then South Yarra, Hawksburn; and it is about here that the great change seems to have taken place, it being but a few years since when these districts were but sparsely populated, the whole locality being little better than a series of sandy wastes, of heath grounds and swamps; and my two dear old friends, the late Count de Castelnau and Dr. Godfrey Howitt—long since called away—have often told me how, when they used to go to South Yarra and Prahran collecting insects, they had to wear long leggings, as these parts were at that time “alive” with snakes. Now, the whole place is densely—in some places too densely—populated!

Travelling along, Caulfield is passed, and it being race-day, strings of people are congregated around the enclosure, waiting, I suppose, to obtain a glimpse of the horses which are to compete for the various events. Here another great change is noticeable, the former “grand stand” (composed of hardwood quartering with a shingle roof) having given place to quite an imposing structure, our former excellent collecting grounds in this favoured district for the botanical and entomological collector having been already “improved” out of existence. Coming to Glen Huntly, near which a splendid reservoir has been built, we pass through between fresh-looking and extensive market gardens; and here the almond trees and cherry plums were in full bloom, a truly lovely sight, and very pleasing to one who has seen similar scenes in the old country. Travelling through the very “flower” of the market-gardening districts, along towards Cheltenham, we pass South Brighton, Highett, and then Cheltenham is reached. A somewhat fossilized little place is Cheltenham, the newly formed township of Mentone having quite left Cheltenham out in the cold. In passing through Mentone, one cannot help wondering why those who selected the site for the township should have chosen a flat for the purpose, when the whole place is surrounded by beautiful heights, known in the early days as Balcombe’s Paddock. Mentone is, however, a wonderfully lively little township; and we pass on to Mordialloc, a very “old” place, formerly solely a fishing village. In the early days of Mordialloc there was but one hotel (M’Donald’s), and all along in front of the present Rennison’s Hotel used to be the so-called “Blacks’ Reserve.” The Kananook and Mordialloc tribes, having smoked the pipe of peace and agreed to bury the hatchet, used to camp hereabouts and subsist on opossums, snakes, shell-fish, &c., and these, with what they could



beg (or steal) from the very few residents then located here, seemed to be quite sufficient for their requirements, as they looked both sleek and happy, excepting when some goodnatured but injudicious person gave them some rum; then all was Pandemonium and excitement, ending generally in the "survival of the fittest," the "ladies" coming off second best. Around Frankston some of the finest trees of the Coast Honeysuckle (*Banksia integrifolia*) are to be found, and as these were just nicely in bloom, the whole place seemed to be alive with birds, principally honey-eaters, although I could not, in passing, note any particular kinds.

Having passed the "one-mile scrub" we hurry on through Carrum, a most weird and desolate-looking place; and it was near this place that the once well-known half-way house stood, the hospitality of its owner having been proverbial amongst travellers in these parts. Those who have by night crossed this space between Mordialloc and Frankston will well remember the singular bellowing and booming note of the Bittern, and, although the Carrum district is drear in the extreme, a very fair collection of birds' eggs might be made by a collector were he to remain about here for a few days, more particularly those of the wading birds. A few minutes more and the flats bordering on Frankston appear, and in these, plainly visible from the train, are feathery spikes of *Arundo phragmites*, the common swamp reed; also *Azolla rubra*, which gave to the pool in which it grew quite a reddish appearance. Large quantities of the so-called and misnamed Swamp-Oak, *Viminaria denudata*, grow here, but the cattle, it seemed, had mutilated them very much, as a number of cows were seen grazing in the swamp, and up to their bellies in water. A shrill whistle announced that we were approaching Frankston, and very soon after I was trudging along on my way to the township, which, singularly enough, at most of our up-country places, is nearly always some distance from the railway terminus, thereby often causing much inconvenience to travellers.

Frankston, formerly but a fishing village, is now quite an important place, with large hotels, coffee palaces, banks, &c. In the old days the only hotel here, which was kept by the son of the oldest resident of the district, who has been here for forty-five years, will be long remembered by those who had to travel by land between Melbourne and Schnapper Point.

The Frankston district is a rare place for plants, as close to the township one can find the lovely "Fringe Flower," *Arthropodium tuberosum*, *Stackhousia*, *Stylidium* (two or three species), many kinds of *Pimeleas*, *Leptospermums*, and other pretty plants, and proceeding a mile or so inland a perfect garden of wild flowers is to be seen. Here it was that our Dr. Morrison found, for the first time near Melbourne, that pretty plant, *Boronia algida*, then



new for these parts. The curious and beautiful *Drosera binata*, with its two-pronged and hayfork-like looking leaves, is not uncommon here; and whilst looking for this we came across quantities of the real Sphagnum Moss (*Sphagnum cristatum*), also a solitary plant of that rare orchid *Lyperanthus burnetti*, found for the first time in Victoria by Mr. Wooster, at Narre-warren.

Walking along towards Cranbourne the heath ground looked simply lovely, vast quantities of *Pimelea octophylla* and *phyllicoides* being in full bloom. *Dillwynia cinerascens*, *Bossia prostrata*, *Sprengelia*, *Platylobium*, *Styphelias*, *Epacris*, *Hypoxis*, *Xanthosia*, *Aotus*, *Comesperma volubile* and *ericinum*, and a host of smaller and equally pretty plants, as *Polypompholyx tenella*, *Stylidium calcaratum*, with here and there a stray plant of *Euphrasia* and *Hovea heterophylla*. Leaving the Cranbourne road and striking across the bush in an easterly direction, a creek is crossed, along the banks of which grew some fine plants of *Pultenaea gunni*, and another somewhat similar species, both of which are strange to these parts. In the creek I noticed quantities of *Azolla*, *Ottelia*, a *Ranunculus* growing on the bottom in about three feet of water, and some other and smaller water plants, amongst which the singular little animal *Volvox* was darting about, apparently quite at home in its supposed seclusion. A very wet and boggy flat, to which I had been directed, yielded a number of plants in bloom of *Lyperanthus burnetti*, the rare orchid already alluded to, and these were collected and handed over, for herbarium purposes, to Baron von Mueller. Turning westward, and getting more into the timbered country, many birds were seen, including the Brown Hawk, Kestrel, Honey-eater (several), Pied Robin, Emu Wren, &c., &c. Descending the high ground a beautiful view is to be obtained of the You Yangs, Mount Macedon, Dandenong Mountains, &c., the scene from here being a remarkably beautiful one. A curious reddish-brown looking patch lining the edge of a swamp is found to be caused by a quantity of plants of *Leptocarpus brownii*, and near here grew, though sparingly, *Phylloglossum drummondi*, mentioned in my preceding paper. *Fimbriaria*, another singular and fragile plant, is also common here, as also are *Microtis atrata*, *Thelymitra carnea*, *bicolor*, *ixioides*, and *antennifera*. Those two beautiful orchids, *Caladenia menziesii* and *carnea*, are here, the former in bloom; and as the coast is reached *Caladenia latifolia*, always pretty, is just expanding its light pink flowers. *Lycopodium laterale*, with the tiny *Selaginella preissiana* and *Ophioglossum vulgatum*, grow here in numbers. *Epacris obtusifolia* having taken the place of its more showy and better known companion, *E. impressa*, is at its best, being in full bloom. Stretching towards the coast, quantities of small fungi growing in the sand were passed, as also mosses, the well-known and common



kind, *Funaria hygrometrica*, being widely scattered over a piece of ground which had been burned. Of lichens there seemed to be but few, although a regular search would in all probability repay anyone having the time to devote to these and other specimens of cryptogamic botany.

One good-sized Copper-headed Snake was seen and dispatched, and underneath the damp scrub many kinds of small lizards and frogs were seen. Insects were scarce, only a few very lively Cleridæ, some Dragon Flies, Diptera (mostly Culicidæ), and only a few of the smaller beetles were taken, the heavy rains of the previous evening being partly, no doubt, the cause of their absence.

Between the Hastings road, which was crossed, and the coast there are some deep gullies in which grow a splendid lot of the coral fern, *Gleichenia circinata* (6 or 8 feet high), also large plants of *Indigofera australis*, Pultenæa. Goodia—in fact, almost approaching to the Dandenong Mountain flora—small Dicksonias, *Pteris incisa*, &c. How had they come here? *Calochilus robertsoni*, one of the most beautiful of our native orchids is just showing flower, and it is not far from here where *Spiranthes australis*, one of our rarest Victorian orchids, has been found. A very rough and primeval-looking paddock of large dimensions yielded several fine scale insects, two genera and three species of which have been determined by Mr. Maskell as new to science, and have already been described by him.

As the sun was now fast disappearing, a somewhat smart walk soon lessened the distance between the Gleichenia Creek and the railway station, and after a refresher at "my old hotel" (Davey's), the station was soon reached, and a pleasant chat with the popular Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society helped to pass the time between Frankston and the city, which was reached about 8 p.m.

The finding of the new Coccidæ, and the very pleasant outing which I had had, fully compensated me for any little feeling of tiredness experienced during a somewhat long and roughish tramp through the partially wet scrub.

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MR. ARTHUR DENDY, F.L.S., Assistant Lecturer in Biology in the University of Melbourne, and one of the members of committee of our Field Club, has been approved for the degree of Doctor of Science in the Victoria University, England. Dr. Dendy has obtained this degree, the first of the rank given by his University, mainly by his work on Sponges and his other original researches at the British Museum, on the *Challenger* staff, at the University of Melbourne with Professor Spencer, and for the Royal Society of Victoria.



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