

NOTES OF TRAVEL—1859-60.

FROM SYDNEY WESTWARDS, AND DOWN THE DARLING RIVER.

By Hon. A. NORTON, M.L.C.

(Read before the Royal Society of Queensland, 17th October, 1903.)

WHEN I was in Melbourne in 1859, a friend, whose business required his constant presence in town, asked me if I was disposed to take a long journey westward from Sydney? He had money invested in what was then the "Never-Never" of New South Wales, and was anxious to obtain a reliable report upon the condition of the property. I had just arrived from Deniliquin, where I had handed over a draft of store bullocks that I had brought from the Clarence River, and was uncertain as to my next move; my friend's request just fitted in with my convenience and my mood. Our arrangements were speedily completed, and I took boat to Sydney, at which place I was to be supplied with all details as to road, &c., by the well-known firm of Peel Raymond and Co. "We really know very little about the road," Mr. Raymond said in answer to my inquiries, "but you go through Bathurst and down the Macquarie River as far as you can get; then follow the Barwon and Darling Rivers down until you get to Mitchell's old Fort Bourke. Not very far below it the station, Tooralle, is situated. The Warrego River unites with the Darling somewhere thereabouts, and the nearest post office is at Walgett, on the Namoi." Then he added, with a warning note, "You had better be careful when you are out there, for the blacks are said to be very bad." I knew Peel Raymond, and was sure any information which came from him would be reliable, so far as he was concerned. I engaged George Davis, a smart young fellow who had lived all his life on the

Clarence River, except when he was travelling with me on two trips from Grafton to Victoria with store cattle, and on 12th September, 1859, we started on our long journey. The three horses which I had selected specially for the trip were fine animals in splendid condition, and proved to be well fitted for the work they had before them. On the first evening we put up at the Red Cow Hotel, at Parramatta, where I had engaged to meet a few friends. A brother of my own was one of them; the others were Dr. and Mrs. Walter Brown, who at that time were settled in Parramatta, and Mr. and Mrs. William Henry Walsh, the latter a sister of Mrs. Brown, but at that time resident at Degilbo, on the Burnett River. The Walshes afterwards settled in Brisbane, Mr. Walsh having honorably acquitted himself, not only as a Member of Parliament, but also as Speaker and as a Minister of the Crown.

On 13th September we passed through Penrith, made the ascent of Lapstone Hill, and pulled up for the night at Wascoe's. There, Nelson Lawson, an old schoolfellow, overtook me, and on the following day we travelled together over the old Blue Mountain road. From Blackheath, on the following morning, we started in snow and sleet, and had similar weather on the two next days. Lawson took the Mudgee road from Wallerawang, I and my man keeping along the mountainous track to the Fry- ingpan, and thence across the plains to Bathurst, on the head of the Macquarie; after passing Wallerawang the country was all new to me, but in many respects it resembled New England, where I had resided for five years. The town of Bathurst at this time was not very large; it is prettily situated on the left bank of the Macquarie River. Most of the buildings were of brick, with shingled roofs, which were green-tinted by the moss that grew on them as they became old. From Bathurst we journeyed on to Orange, a country town situated under the Canoblas, near the summit of which, at that time, were large patches of snow. Between Bathurst and Orange we passed through Gulgong. From Orange we made a short day to Molong, as one of my horses was lame. The following day, however, we had lunch at the Black Rock, and then passed on to Wellington, in all 39 miles, and on 21st September we reached Dubbo, having had a wet ride during the afternoon. Here the country was almost level; the resemblance to New England had disappeared; other trees became plentiful in the forest; other flowers showed themselves in the grass; other birds

fitted amongst the branches ; human habitations beside the bush roads were less frequent. We were still on the Macquarie River, but the country west of Dubbo was of a quite different character to that near the coast. Twice before the time I write about I had passed through Dubbo, and had found kind friends there ; they knew my father, they told me, and they gave a hearty welcome to the son for his father's sake. After leaving Sydney, tales of treacherous blacks became frequent, and took a more or less definite shape ; two Commissioners for Crown Lands had charge of districts in the "wild west," but these they visited only when compelled to do so ; they lived—one at Molong, the other at some other pleasant spot, but, having at this time to visit their respective districts, they had combined their forces and so formed a strong party as a protection against aboriginal aggression. I had brought no firearms with me ; I had still to travel about 350 miles, and the hotel at which I had put up in Dubbo was the last I should see on the route I had to follow. Nearly every night in future we must camp out ; the horses must be hobbled and forage for themselves. Under the circumstances it would have been folly to continue our journey without carrying protective weapons of some kind. I therefore visited the stores kept by Mr. Serissier, whom I regarded as quite an old friend. He had no personal knowledge of the blacks, but the tales he had heard suggested that persons who went any distance west were exposed to exceptional danger. I did not place absolute faith in these reports, but a gun of some description might prove useful, at any rate it would help to supply our limited larder, so I purchased a fowling-piece and powder and shot. We left Dubbo on 22nd September, and went about 25 miles to a station occupied by Mr. Christie ; he too was a friend of my father and made me welcome ; he was, or had been a partner with Wentworth in the station he managed. On the following day we rode through country which was remarkably level, the timber a kind of box, which, on account of its pipiness, was described as rotten box. In the morning, however, we passed through a belt of trees which, when I came to Queensland, the broad-leaved ironbark reminded me of. That afternoon we reached a station belonging to W. Lawson, who was away from home ; young Morrisett, was, I think, in charge. After this, we camped every night until I found myself amongst friends on the Barwon. The Macquarie River, which has a wide channel

at Dubbo, became very narrow as we followed it westwards. We found plenty of good grass near its banks, but the country was dry in most places and grass was scanty; there was abundance of stunted saltbush, but this the horses would not touch. About 90 miles from Dubbo, at Youngenbill, we left the river and crossed in 12 miles to Gunendaddy on Duck Creek. The country became more and more bare of grass as we travelled down the creek. At Brown's Station, where was a large dam, they gave me as much salt beef as I cared to take, and the people who lived at the stations we passed were most hospitable and considerate. At Brown's I learnt that the Commissioners, having completed their work of inspection, had returned. I had missed them, but was informed that they had not been molested by the blacks; they had seen a camping place, however, which the blacks had deserted shortly before they reached it. I was glad of my gun, though, for although no blacks attempted any tricks upon my party of two, it helped to supply us with very fine game, and this was infinitely more to our taste than the everlasting salt junk that the occupants of stations so readily supplied us with. From Duck Creek we crossed in about 20 miles on to the Marra. There was no road here, but we kept a pretty good course and struck a track near Marra Creek which took us on in the right direction. The country we passed over between the creeks was partly scrubby and partly plain, and we saw here large numbers of emus and red kangaroos as well as the ordinary gray ones. Owing to the dryness of the country small birds, budgerygars and galas excepted, and quadrupeds were scarce and I observed very few insects. That night we camped on the Marra, but our slumbers were disturbed by a heavy fall of rain accompanied by lightning which was very vivid, and as we had no tent our dunnage suffered. The heat next day soon dried our belongings and we continued our journey through country which, owing to an insufficient rainfall, looked very desolate. It seemed, indeed, that the horses would starve; they would not touch the small saltbush, but what grass they found must have been exceptionally nutritious, for hungry as they undoubtedly were, they did not suffer seriously in condition. It is easy, having seen the country as it then was, to realize the dismay of early explorers who regarded such extensive areas as little better than a desert. I had to think of my horses, which, up to the time we left Dubbo, had been stabled and cornfed. With the thought in my mind of what they might soon be reduced

to, I expressed my feelings curtly enough in the rough diary I kept—"Came 20 miles to-day without seeing enough grass to feed a bandicoot," and again—"25 miles along the creek to-day. It is most desolate and wretched looking country." There were few human habitations along the route I had chosen, and these were of the most primitive character—small huts constructed of rough split slabs with shingled roofs. The floor, if it could be so called, was the natural formation trampled by rough boots into a dusty smoothness; the openings, which were by courtesy called windows, in some cases were supplied with wooden shutters, others were open to such breezes as chose to enter. The furniture consisted of a table of split slabs nailed together, two or more three-legged wooden stools, and one or two wooden bunks formed of ill-fitting split battens. These huts were occupied by stockmen who had learnt in this drouthy country to use water sparingly. A tin dish held the salt junk, and a butcher's knife to cut it, a tin billy the tea, and tin pints to drink from, the bread was damper. These places they spoke of as their "home." On a previous occasion, when I rode up to a blacks' camp in more civilized country, a blackboy, with extremely scant clothing was playing "Home, sweet home," on a jewsharp as he squatted on the ground under the shelter of a bark humpy—I should have felt more at home where he sat, than in those stockmens' huts on the Marra Creek. George Davis, like myself, was born in New South Wales, and an open camp suited us admirably; the brilliancy of the stars never interrupted our slumbers, and we received no attention from those treacherous blacks against whom we had been so particularly warned.

On the evening of October 1st, twenty days after we had left Sydney, we selected our camp on the left bank of the Barwon River. The channel of the Macquarie continues to contract after leaving Dubbo, until at last it becomes lost in the reedbeds which give shelter to innumerable wild fowl. Below these, a narrow channel conducts the overflow water, when there is any, to the Barwon, a river worthy of the name. From our camp that evening we looked down into a magnificent sheet of water of considerable width and depth. Giant gumtrees grew beside and overhung the banks; the river flats were covered with abundant grass and herbage in fairly good condition, and the horses showed unmistakably their appreciation of it. On the clear water hundreds of ducks and other aquatic birds floated lazily, having no thought of a possible

fowlingpiece; numbers of white cockatoos screamed discordantly at us from the branches above our heads, and some of the budgerygars and galas, which were so numerous along our track through the dry country, were there to give us a welcome. Of crows and hawks we saw but few, but pretty crested pigeons were not uncommon, especially in close proximity to the polygonum country; the little shepherd's companions, called jericajerica by the blacks, were with us always. To lie down by the camp fire amidst such surroundings was joy indeed, especially as each of us, according to an honoured custom which was never omitted when we had a sufficiency, had just comforted the inner man with a plump Barwon River duck; and such ducks they were, too! George, I knew, was very contented that evening. I knew it was so because he gave us the song which he reserved for his most blissful moments. It began about carelessly straying into "yon blue meadow" and beholding a "maiden fair and a young sailor gay" who was going to cross the sea to fight "the proud Chinee." This, of course, "lovely Soo-oo-san" strongly objected to, but the hero must go at any price. A musical critic might have condemned the song. I had heard it many times during the last eighteen months, and on such occasions the camp was always in a happy mood. I liked it therefore, and best of all when it had come to an end; nobody ever asked George to sing it a second time. Cockatoos have no appreciation of music. On this particular evening they seemed to become uneasy, and as the song proceeded they gave vent to their feelings in loud screams. When George had finished he remarked wonderingly: "What the jakers is they birds squalling at? I could hardly keep in tune for them." I suggested it might be their way of applauding. "By jakers, I never thought of that. I'll give 'em a hencore!" The birds had not had eighteen months' training, however, and after some further protest they left their perches and flew wildly into the darkness. They would not allow us to approach them closely on the following day!

Travelling down the Barwon next morning I was very much struck by the appearance of a station called Nulcumbiddy. The gentleman manager, or perhaps proprietor, was Mr. Burton Gaden. "Tom" Gaden, of the Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney, "Harry," "Bob," "Ted" Gaden—these are brothers of his; David Abercrombie, of Commercial Bank, Brisbane, a half-brother. Burton Gaden was an exceptional man. In this

country, which was fiery hot all the time I was there, he got up an appearance of coolness by keeping his station buildings brilliantly white. Along the river banks there were outcrops of silenite ; this he collected and burnt and no lime could have looked whiter. And then it made the homestead look clean as no other looked. In spite of the excessive heat too, he had a patch of watermelons growing beside his hut. He did not carry the water for them from the river, but he had sufficient energy to tell the blacks to do so and to see that his instructions were carried out. When I had passed out of sight of Nulcumbiddy I felt better and happier for having seen a place that reminded me of the civilisation I had parted with. Anyone, I was told, could grow melons as Burton Gaden did. I did not doubt the assertion, but I travelled several hundred miles up and down the Barwon and its tributaries without seeing whitewashed huts or luxuriant melon vines at any other station. All honor then to Burton Gaden, to whom it is due.

I did not stop at Nulcumbiddy as I was anxious to reach my destination, but camped the night below Breewarrina, otherwise called the Fisheries, so called because of the stone-walled yards which at this spot the blacks had built up in the river bed and into which they drove the fish just as stockmen drive cattle into a stockyard. It was one of the few places where a bar of rocks crossed the channel and the loose stones were utilized for building up small yards with openings from above and guiding wings between which the fish passed to the opening of the upper, or receiving yard. Captain Cadell, the first river navigator of New South Wales, had ascended so far in 1858, and a board fixed up on one of the large river gums recorded the fact, also the date of arrival, the name of vessel, list of passengers, etc. Sixteen miles onwards, I struck a station called Haraden, which had been stocked up by Joseph Sharp, of the Clarence River, and was under the management of my good friend, Archie Shannon, whom I had last seen on the same river. Some dirty blacks had a camp near the station, and these and others like them, Shannon told me, were the only blacks he had so far met with. Whites, however, had been killed in the district by the aborigines, and others were murdered afterwards, among these an old schoolfellow of my own whose skull was smashed as he lay asleep at his camp fire. I had no difficulty of any kind with them during my sojourn in that country, and only on one

occasion caught sight of blacks who would hold no communication with me.

Near Haraden was a stony hill called Mount Druid. It was formed of loose stones which gave forth a metallic sound when struck together; the height of this mass of rock in an almost stoneless country, which for hundreds of miles is a dead level, was I should think about 300 feet. Oxley's Tableland showed up in the distance, but the course of the Bogan River, which lay between Mount Druid and it, could not be distinguished from its summit. There was capital feed for the horses on the Barwon at Shannon's, although the country away from the river banks was as dry as tinder, and I gave them two days' rest before continuing my journey; we then crossed the river and followed it down on its right bank. Our journey that day was 25 miles, and in 45 miles on the next day we reached Perry and Dowling's station, passing a stockman's hut at the Gidya, and one called Bunna-warnah, the only habitations between it and Haraden. Dowling, who was an old schoolfellow of mine, gladly welcomed me to Prinibougyra, and accompanied me to Tooralle next evening. The distance was 22 miles, and in consequence of the intense heat and the myriads of tormenting flies, we did not start till sunset. The river for many miles—in fact from the time I struck it just below the point where Marra creek empties into it—flows through vast plains with here and there patches of box forest, which is as level as the plains; there are great scrubs of mulga (*Acacia aneura*) back from the river. Often our journeys were made by night, for even where there were no well defined roads little difficulty was experienced in keeping the right course. I was told of the cold weather which prevailed during the winter months; all the months were summer, and extremely hot summer, while I was there.

We arrived at Tooralle about 9 p.m., on 8th October. I had then travelled about 626 miles in twenty-seven days, two of which I spent with Shannon at Haraden. On the Blue Mountains we had sleety weather, and snow as we approached Bathurst, but after passing Dubbo the heat began to be oppressive, and the last part of the journey was most trying. There was almost no break in the heat, and the hot winds were almost continuous: whirlwinds rushed across the plains raising immense clouds of dust and rubbish, chiefly dry roly-polly bushes, which careered along in columns often more than a hundred feet in

height ; and, in addition to all this, millions of small black flies pestered one's life from the early dawn until night closed in. My labours, however, had by no means come to an end, even temporarily. I was disappointed at finding no letters and had therefore to go to the nearest postoffice, which was at Walgett, according to instructions. Walgett, which was then a "paper" township, is situated on the Namoi, at its junction with the Barwon, about 200 miles from Tooralle. I rode back to Prinibougrya with Dowling on the day after my arrival at Tooralle, and on the following day, he having found me a fresh horse, I retraced my steps up the Barwon. That night I camped above the Gidya, and next day reached Shannon's, having pulled up just long enough for a snack of the usual dainty bush fare at Bunnawarnah. Shannon found me another horse, and next day I pushed on to Nulcumbiddy, where I spent the night. My horse was of course, hobbled, there being no paddocks at any of the stations. Next morning I had to walk five miles back along the road I had come before I overtook him. That night I stopped at Bree. It was an exceedingly rough shop. The hut was dirty in the extreme, the two men who occupied it were equally so, and, horrible thought ! How could the food which they handled and cooked be cleaner than themselves ? As for sleeping, one might as well have tried to sleep on an antbed, and there the company would have been less objectionable. I was glad enough about mid-day on the following day to accept the more cleanly hospitality of Breewun, also a stockman's hut, and after a thirty-five miles ride came to Mooraby in the evening. Here was a store, and a respectable white woman presided over the establishment and kept everything clean. That morning I had crossed a narrow, dry watercourse, a mere channel for the flow of water when there was any to flow. This was the Macquarie River, the strength of which had become exhausted as it passed through the level country west of Dubbo. Next day, after riding thirty miles, I struck the township in time for dinner. The Namoi, like the Macquarie, was quite a narrow watercourse, very different from the fine river which bears that name where the Peel River unites with it below Tamworth ; however, it had plenty of water in it, more than enough for the inhabitants of the one broken-backed hut which was used as a store, a post office, and a dwelling combined, and constituted the township.

As I had come so I returned, except that as I rode carelessly away amongst the ill-defined roads after starting from Walgett,

I did not for a time notice that my horse had taken a track which brought me on to the Castlereagh River, in consequence of which I had to ride five miles across the country to reach the road I ought to have followed. Bree I carefully avoided, and camped, without food, at a spot where once there had been a hut, rather than face the army of fleas which had tortured me a few nights before. I took a day's rest at Shannon's, and completed in fourteen days the four hundred miles I had travelled for one letter, an average of nearly twenty-nine miles daily.

Shortly after my return from Walgett there arrived at Prinibougryra, where I was for a time staying, George Perry, well known as the "Overlander," because of the large numbers of stock he bought in the Northern districts of New South Wales and sold in Riverina and Victoria. This over-landing business had been overdone and Perry had purchased the Tooralle Station and also an unstocked run adjoining it on the river. By these purchases he became the owner of 60 miles frontage to the Darling in addition to the half interest he held with Dowling in Prinibougryra. He therefore controlled 90 miles frontage in one long stretch on the right or western side of the river. The letter Perry brought me from my principal in Melbourne asked me to help to take delivery for Perry, a request which he repeated, and also to inspect and report on the unoccupied country below Tooralle. I was glad to consent to this, notwithstanding the trying conditions of the climate and the flies and other abominations which it seemed to suit so remarkably well. William Sly, who afterwards came to Queensland, was employed as overseer at Tooralle at that time, and he and I rode over the whole of the run and counted over the sheep. As for the unoccupied run lower down the river, I had to inspect it all by myself. The inspection of country which consists almost wholly of plains with a river frontage is a comparatively easy matter where the character of the whole is similar. The scorching heat, the myriads of extremely familiar flies, the whirlwinds with their accompanying dust, and the general dryness of the country—these never failed, and they combined to make life less agreeable than it might, under other circumstances, have been. The Warrego River empties into the Darling below Tooralle, and as I proceeded with my work of inspection I crossed a dry, narrow water-channel about nine miles from that station; this was the Warrego. Tooralle head station I believe was afterwards removed from its original site on to the

Warrego. No roads were needed here, for on my left the tortuous course of the Darling could be traced by the river gums which grew on its banks, and on my right the distant Berkeley Range was always visible; as I rode on I could see Mount McPherson in the far distance. I made a fairly long day, and at night found shelter and tucker at the last shepherd's hut below Tooralle. The poor fellow, who lived there by himself, made much of me; the man who brought his rations, and now and then counted his flock, was almost the only fellow-being he saw for months. He had not been troubled by blacks, he told me, but it was evident that some visited the country occasionally, for, beside the depressions which filled with the backwater from the river in flood time there were many old humpies at their camping places. These depressions were, to a considerable extent, covered with polygonum, beside which there were bare patches on which pigweed grew in abundance. This the blacks collected for food, and on almost every old humpy some that had been gathered for that purpose still lived, though in a somewhat withered condition. My horse, like myself, had felt the heat very much as we travelled over the plains, but a night's rest and plenty of surprisingly good grass had revived him by morning; so I had some of the shepherd's homely damper and mutton, and started once more on my journey. The weather was again furiously hot (it was the twenty-eighth of December, and I think hot for that time of year); right away down river I travelled through mile after mile of plain, until about midday I halted for a while beside a patch of polygonum and took some light refreshment in the form of pigweed, which helps to cool one's mouth and quench one's thirst. After an hour or so I turned my horse's head up the river again, and before night set in had hobbled my weary nag beside the hut of the friendly shepherd. I had had a long ride and my face was terribly scorched by the pitiless sun; almost the only living objects I had seen were some white hawks, which had a dark patch on each wing; these busied themselves all day in their search for marsupial mice, which seem to be their principal food. The plains were too hot during the day for other native animals. Even the heat did not disturb my rest that night.

When I got back to Prinibougyro, Dowling was arranging for a trip down the river to take horses to Percy Simpson,

who was bringing a mob of bullocks up the river to the unoccupied country which Perry had recently bought. On the lower Darling there was no grass near the frontage, but plenty of the small saltbush and also plenty Darling pea. The latter Simpson's horses ate greedily and they became mad. Poor wretches, they deliberately walked into the river and were drowned. Having collected about a dozen suitable animals, we started down the river on the left bank where there were larger patches of box forest and mulga than on the western side. Not very far down we passed Hamilton's station. Here was a hut of the usual kind in which two or three men lived. When about a year back Captain Cadell brought the first boat up the river from the Murray, these men were greatly surprised one evening by the unusual sounds which reached them. They had no thought of a steamboat and the only way they could account for the strange noises was by attributing them to blacks; so they barred their door, loaded their guns, and sat up all night expecting an attack which did not come off. Soon after sunrise, however, to their great delight the boat steamed round the point which had previously concealed it. Our business did not admit of delay and we pushed on, camping always at night, until we met Simpson close to a station opposite Mount Murchison. We were comfortably quartered that night by the hospitable owner, whose name I am unable to recall.

My business in this part of the world was now drawing to a close. George Davis entered Dowling's service, and I presented him with the fowling-piece which had helped us to many a good meal on our outward journey. My horses I sold to Dowling, making the condition, however, that I should have one to ride as far as Molong, where I was to leave him with the Lands Commissioner.

Near Prinibougryra some posts of Mitchell's Fort Bourke, erected in 1835, were still standing. The town of Bourke had not an existence at that time. Many persons were hurrying out to secure runs in the country that I was only too willing to hurry away from. One station only on the lower Warrego was occupied; the owner was a Scotchman, and I think his name was Mackenzie. Of flowering plants there were few when I was there; the rain had been insufficient, and the only specially rare bird I remember to have seen was a black and white wren. Time does not permit of further reference to the objects of interest with which I became acquainted, nor can I say anything

about the people whose country the whites had taken from them. In January, 1860, the first mail was run by horse from Walgett down the river.

In March, 1860, I bid my western friends good-bye, and rode in as far as Molong, where I delivered my horse to the Crown Lands Commissioner, who was to send him to Dowling, when an opportunity offered. I then took coach and got as far as Bathurst without delay, but in those good old times the gold from the mines was sent by coach to Sydney, and no others but the escort were allowed to accompany it; as there was only one coach daily, I had to spend a night and day in Bathurst. On the following afternoon we however made a fresh start. The roads were rough, exceptionally so in those places which had been "corduroyed"; the coach was rough also, and the language of some of the passengers was quite in keeping with our surroundings. Still all things have an end, and we were safely landed at Penrith in time for breakfast. Thence we had a train to travel by to Sydney, to which good town I was not sorry to return after an absence of six months in the western districts.

FROM SYDNEY TO BATHURST IN 1822.

A DESCRIPTION, BY THE LATE MRS HAWKINS, OF BATHURST, OF
THE EXPERIENCES ON THEIR JOURNEY OF THE FIRST FAMILY
OF FREE IMMIGRANTS (TO NEW SOUTH WALES) WHO SETTLED
IN THAT TOWN.

Communicated by Hon. A NORTON, M.L.C.

(Read before the Royal Society of Queensland, 21st November, 1903.)

IN order that the letters to which this forms a preface may be properly understood, the conditions under which the journey described therein was made must be clearly recognised. Even at the present time the father of so large a family who had just arrived from the mother country, would be glad to obtain the fullest information from old residents before he attempted to convey the whole party from Sydney to Bathurst by means of horse and bullock drays. Yet there are well-beaten roads from one point to the other, and along the whole route settlement has taken place to a large extent; fresh food and milk can be obtained day by day, and camping out would not be necessary. Besides, the settlers to whom bush life in all its phases is familiar, would always give their ready help to the wayfarers who found themselves in a country of which they had no knowledge. Such difficulties as new-comers might now meet with—real difficulties to them—would be overcome for them, and they might wonder at all they saw without being troubled. In 1822, however, people had to travel under quite different conditions. Think for a moment of this enterprising immigrant landing at Sydney, the penal settlement to which convicts of all kinds were sent that the mother country might be rid of them. The number of free settlers at that time was limited, and the immigrant found himself amongst a people composed almost exclusively of officials,

soldiers, and convicts whose dress proclaimed their unhappy condition. With him, he has his wife, seven children, and his wife's aged mother; he had left the country which Britishers never cease to speak of as "Home," with the expectation of forming a new home in the new southern continent; but how little he can see to remind him of the country and the people amongst whom he had spent the earlier part of his life. After due enquiry, it is decided that Bathurst shall be the land of promise, and the Government of the day find him employment. So far good; but how to get there, that is the then momentous question. He is told of the attempts which had been made from time to time to cross the Blue Mountains—that formidable barrier which he has to cross—and failed. Then he learns that in 1813, only nine years ago, Lawson, Wentworth, and Blaxland had penetrated the hitherto unknown sterile land, and from Mount York had seen open valleys in the distance. He learns, too, that towards the close of the same year, Deputy Surveyor-General Evans, taking advantage of this discovery, had crossed the range and followed the Macquarie River downwards to a point 100 miles due west of the Nepean River; that two years later a road had been formed, and Bathurst laid out at its terminus. The little bush town of Bathurst had only been founded seven years when this new-comer was called upon to convey, as best he could, his somewhat large family from Sydney over the ranges to the place where they were to be permanently located; he had also to take such furniture as they needed, their cooking utensils, their food, their bedding, and sufficient clothing to last until that quite indefinite time when they could obtain more. And the conveyances by which they and their lares and penates were to be transported to Bathurst were rough drays drawn by bullocks and horses; their servants were all convicts and their escort consisted of soldiers, none of whom could have had much experience of travelling over the rough roads they had to use. And, in addition to all the difficulties here indicated, came tales of hostile natives and still more hostile runaway convicts who claimed for themselves whatever they could lay their hands upon, and sometimes brutally treated those unfortunates who fell into their power. Mr. Hawkins must at the very outset have realised that the success of his arduous undertaking rested almost wholly upon himself. The result proved that he was not only a brave man animated by noble aspirations, but that he possessed abundant commonsense, a high

intelligence, and an enterprising spirit which could overcome exceptional difficulties by exceedingly hard work. I will now proceed with the narrative in which Mrs. Hawkins tells her sister in England of their fatiguing journey and its successful accomplishment. I have made a few verbal corrections and have omitted some short passages which referred to private matters and could have no general interest.

The journey commenced on 5 April, 1822.

The following explanatory memo. stands at the commencement of the first letter:—"The following is a copy of a letter written by Mrs. Elizabeth Hawkins, on her first arrival in the colony in 1822, to her sister."

"I told you in my last letter of our intended journey across the Blue Mountains. We have accomplished it, and, as I think it may prove interesting to you, I shall be very particular in my account of it.

"It took some time after my last letter to make the necessary arrangements here (*i.e.*, Bathurst) for a house to receive us, and for us to be certain of the necessary assistance from the Governor before we could leave Sydney. All was ready on the fourth of April (being Good Friday), and in the morning of the fifth we commenced our journey. We had many presents and kind wishes from those around us.

"You will hardly credit it when I tell you the number of horses, bullocks, carts, &c., &c., requisite to convey us, for we possessed no other furniture than one table and twelve chairs; these with our earthenware, cooking utensils, bedding, a few agricultural implements, groceries and other necessaries to last us a few months, with our clothes, constituted the whole of our luggage. We had a waggon with six bullocks, a dray with five, another with three horses, a cart with two, and, last of all, a tilted cart with my mother, myself, and seven children, with two horses for my husband and Tom, my son, to ride on.

"The cavalcade moved slowly on. The morning was fine and the road equal to any turnpike road in England, with a forest each side; but the sun is not prevented cracking the earth, as all the trees here are lofty and only branch out from the top. When within a few miles of Parramatta my husband and Tom rode on to the Factory for a female servant who had been selected for us; they rejoined us while we were partaking of dinner at the root of a tree.

“ We arrived rather late in the evening at Rooty Hill, a distance of 25 miles. The Government House was ready to receive us. The next day being Sunday we rested, partly to recover our own fatigues which we had had previous to leaving Sydney, and because the general orders are : ‘ There should be no travelling on Sundays.’ I could have been contented to remain there for ever ; the house was good and the lands all around like a fine wooded park in England. On Monday we recovered our fatigue, and for nine miles found the road the same as before. We had now reached the Nepean River, which you cross to Emu Plains where there is a Government house and depot, but beyond there are no habitations until you reach Bathurst, excepting a solitary house at the different places where people stop. We had to wait many hours until horses and carts were ready on the opposite side, as those which brought us from Sydney were to return. We could only get part of our luggage over that night, and Sir John Jamison who resides near, sent his head constable to guard the rest during the night. The next day it rained hard, but through fear that it might continue, when the water rushing from the mountains often makes all the rivers in this country dangerous and impassable, we had the rest of our things brought over. The next day was occupied in getting things dried, and the following one in making every necessary preparation for the journey, unpacking many things to ensure their greater safety, arranging our provisions and bedding to enable us conveniently to get at them. This being done, at five o’clock my husband and myself went to dine with Sir John Jamison, who had invited a lady and two gentlemen to meet us. There we partook of a sumptuous dinner, consisting of mock turtle, boiled fowl, round of beef, delicious fish of three kinds, curried duck, goose and wildfowl, Madeira, Burgundy, and various liqueurs and English ale. I mention all this to show you his hospitality and to convince you that it is possible for people to live here as well as in England.

“ I was delighted with his garden, the apples and quinces were larger than I ever saw before (it is now autumn in this country), and many early trees of the former were again in blossom ; the vines had a second crop of grapes, the figtrees a third crop ; the peaches and apricots here are standing trees. He has English cherries, plums and filberts ; these with oranges, lemons, limes, citrons, medlars, almonds, rock and watermelons, with all the common fruits of England and vegetables of every

kind and grown at all seasons of the year, which shows how fine the climate is.

“ The next morning, Friday, 12th April, we reloaded. Sir John came to see us off and presented us with a quarter of mutton, a couple of fowls, and some butter. I had now before me this most tremendous journey. I was told I deserved to be immortalised for the attempt, and the Government could not do too much for us for taking a family to a settlement where no family had gone before. I mean no family of free settlers, and very few others. Everything that could be done for us was done by the officers to make it as comfortable as possible.

“ In addition to our luggage we had to take corn for the cattle, as in the mountains there is not sufficient grass for them, and provisions necessary for ourselves and the nine men who accompanied us; in consequence of this we were obliged to leave many things behind.

“ We now commenced with two drays with five bullocks, and one dray with four horses, and our own cart with two; they had no more carts to give us. Amidst the good wishes of all, not excepting a party of natives who had come to bid us farewell, we commenced our journey. We had not proceeded more than a quarter of a mile before we came to a small stream of water, with sandy bottom and banks. Here the second dray with the bullocks sank. The storekeeper, superintendent, and overseer from Emu Plains, witnessing our stoppage, came to our assistance. The two latter did not leave us until night. It employed us an hour to extricate the dray, and this was not accomplished without the horses of the other being added to it. We now proceeded about a quarter of a mile further; and now imagine me at the foot of the tremendous mountains, the difficulty of passing which is, I suppose, as great as or greater than any known road in the world, not from the badness of the road, which has been entirely made and which is hard all the way, so much as from the extreme steepness of the ascent and descent. For forty miles the hills are barren of herbage for cattle, but as far as the eye can reach, even to the summit of the highest, every hill and dale is covered with wood, lofty trees and small shrubs, many of them blooming with delicate flowers, the colours so beautiful that even the highest circles of England would prize them. These mountains appear to be solid rock, with hardly any earth upon the surface. This land seems as if it was never intended for human beings to inhabit. There are

no roots as a substitute for bread, no fruit or vegetables on which man could subsist ; but almost anything will grow which is brought to it. We now began our ascent up the first Lapstone Hill (so called from all the stones being like a cobbler's lapstone); the horses got on very well, but the bullocks could not. We were obliged to unload, have a cart from Emu Plains, and send back some of our luggage ; even then the horses were obliged when they reached the top to return and assist them. We could proceed no further that night, having performed a distance of only one mile and a-half that day. Our tent was pitched for the first time. The fatigue to my mother and myself was very great every night after the journey in preparing the beds and giving the children their food, and the little ones were generally very tired and cross. It was a lovely moonlight night, and all was novelty and delight to the children ; immense fires were made in all directions ; we gave them their supper, and after putting the younger ones to bed, I came from the tent in front of which was a large fire, our drays and carts close in view. The men, nine in number, were busily employed in cooking their supper at one place, our own man roasting a couple of fowls for our next day's journey at another. The men, all convicts, not the most prepossessing in their appearance, with the glare of the fires and the reflection of the moon shining on them in the midst of the trees, formed altogether such a scene as I cannot describe ; it resembled more a horde of banditti such as I have read of than anything else. I hurried from the view, took the arm of my husband, who was seated at the table with the storekeeper, and went to the back of the tent. Here we saw Tom and the three eldest girls trying who could make the largest fire, and as happy as it was possible to be. Here I seemed to pause ; It was a moment I shall never forget ; for the first time for many a long month I seemed capable of enjoying and feeling the present moment without a dread of the future. 'Tis true we had in a manner bade adieu to the world, to our country and to our friends, but in one country we could no longer provide for our family, and the world from that cause had lost all its charms ; you and all my friends and acquaintances I thought of with regret ; but the dawn of independence was opening upon us, my husband was once again an officer under Government, we had a home to receive us, and the certainty, under any circumstances, of never wanting the common necessities of life.

“After a little while we returned to the table; these were moments of such inward rest that my husband took up a flute belonging to one of the party, and one of our daughters who we called to us, danced in a place where perhaps no one of her age ever trod before. The next morning we took our breakfast and packed up our beds and provisions to depart; but during the night our team of bullocks and my husband’s horse had returned to Emu. It was thought desirable that we with two drays, with Tom for our guard, should proceed to Springwood, as there was a house there to go into. From the difficulty they had had the preceding day with the bullocks, they took from our cart our two horses, and gave us two bullocks. After a most fatiguing journey of nine miles we arrived; the house was inhabited by a corporal and two soldiers, kept there I believe to superintend the Government stock. Formerly a greater number of men had lived there, and there was a large room or store where provisions had been kept. A great barn in England would have been a palace to this place; there was a large kitchen with an immense fireplace, and two small rooms behind. With the exception of a green in front, the house was completely in a wood. The corporal’s wife, an old woman who had been transported about twenty years, with frowning manners, came forward to show us in. We entered the kitchen, which contained a long table and form, and some stumps of trees to answer the purpose of chairs, of which there was not one in the house; several people were here to rest for the night, journeying from Bathurst to Sydney. We were next shown the small back room, which had nothing in it but a sofa with slips of bark on it for the seat. Here I felt desolate and lonely; it was nearly dark, and still my husband did not arrive, we got quite miserable. At length the storekeeper from Emu came to us to say he could not get in without horses being sent to his assistance. It was nearly 9 o’clock before he arrived. I went out. It was dark, but such confusion as there appeared from the glare of the fires, the carts and drays, men, tired with their days work, swearing as they were extricating the bullocks and horses. It was long before I could distinguish my husband, but I felt comparatively safe when I did. The old woman, a most depraved old character and a well-known thief, with a candle held high above her head, screamed out, “Welcome to Springwood, sir!” He said when he looked round he was assured his welcome would be the loss

of whatever she could steal from us. He was much fatigued, not having had any refreshment all day. It was my intention on my first arrival to have pitched the tent on the green, but it was unfortunately on the top of the dray left with my husband. Having my mattresses I spread them in the storeroom. The earth was dirty, cold and damp. We could not think of undressing the children and when in bed it looked most miserable. I lay down with my baby and a very few minutes convinced me I should get no rest. The bugs were crawling by hundreds and the children were restless with them and the confinement of their clothes. The old woman had contrived to steal some spirits from our provision basket which, with what had been given her, made the soldiers tipsy. All was noise and confusion within doors, swearing and wrangling with the men without. Never did I pass a night equal to it. My husband remained all night on the green or in the cart watching. In addition to the other noises, a flock of sheep had been driven round the yard, and to avoid the men they came close to the house and kept up a continual pat-pat with their feet. You may be certain we were happy when the morning came; we got our breakfast, packed up our beds, and bade adieu to the house at Springwood. Mother, myself, and the three girls, as the morning was fine, walked on before. It was such a relief to get away from that place that I never enjoyed a walk more; we gathered most delicate nosegays from the shrubs that grew amongst the trees. You must understand that the whole of the road from the beginning to the end of the mountains is cut entirely through a forest, nor can you go in a direct line to Bathurst from one mountain to another, but are obliged often to wend along the edges of them, and often look down on such precipices as would make you shudder. We ascended our carts, and we had now three bullocks as we had so much trouble to get on with two; but we were worse off than ever, as the ascent became worse. They reformed the dray, but every few minutes first one would lie down and then another. The dogs were summoned to bark at them and bite their noses to make them get up. The barking of the dogs, the bellowing of the bullocks, and the swearing of the men made our heads ache and kept us in continual terror. This was exactly the case every day of the journey with the bullocks. Frequently we all had to get out, and more frequently our fears made us scream out. At length we got to a hill so bad it seemed we never could get up

it. We alighted and seated ourselves on a fallen tree, and waited the event. We were on the side of the hill; in front it rose almost perpendicularly; behind was a valley so deep that the eye could hardly distinguish the trees at the bottom. To gain the top of this mountain the road wound round along the side. The first day the horses got up. They were then brought back to assist the rest with the bullocks, but they could not succeed in rising from one piece of rock to another. With great whipping a sudden effort was made, and one shaft was broken. This had to be repaired as well as we could manage it. Some of the baggage was taken off, and with the assistance of the other horses, &c., &c., it was got up; the rest was got up in like manner. When at the top the men, who were much fatigued, sought for a spring of water, and with the addition of a bottle of rum were refreshed. We again set off, and for the next two miles it was perfectly dark, attended with heavy rain. You can imagine the danger and the misery we rode in not being able to see where we went, but we were obliged to go on till we were near to water. Our tent was pitched in the road and we were obliged to remain in our cart until the bedding was got into the tent; of course we again lay down in our clothes. During this very fatiguing day's journey we had only accomplished six miles. For fear I should tire you with a repetition of the same scenes, I will tell you that every day of our journey from Emu to Bathurst we were subject to the same things, such as our bullocks constantly lying down, while others not being able to draw their loads compelled us to have the assistance of the horses, which caused us great delay. Our provisions consisted of half a pig, which was salted for us at Emu Plains, and some beef; we had flour to make bread with, tea, sugar, butter, etc., etc., and when we stopped at night we made some tea and had some cold meat. It was our man's duty every night to boil a piece of meat for the next day, and bake a cake under the iron pot; breakfast and supper were the only meals we had. I used to take in the cart with me a little just to keep us from starving, and some drink for the baby, and during eleven nights that we remained in the woods my husband never lay down until about three in the morning, when the overseer would get up and watch; never but twice did he take off his clothes; as we occupied the tent, his only resting place was the cart. It rained the next morning and everything was very uncomfortable; the men sent in search of the cattle, which

had to be turned loose at night to get water and grass, could not find all of them. After waiting some time we thought it best to proceed, excepting one dray which the overseer was to watch whilst the men sought for the bullocks. As the road this day was something better, we got nine miles to two bark huts that had been erected by the men employed in mending the road, but were never empty. We were very glad to take possession of one of them, and our men of the other, as it had rained all night and all day.

“As in England you never saw anything like these huts, I fear from my description you will not understand them. Some stumps of trees were stuck in the ground, the outside bark from the trees was tied to them with narrow slips of what is called “stringy bark”; being tough it answers the purpose of cord; the roof is done in the same manner. They had a kind of chimney, but neither windows nor doors—only a space left to enter. As many men were obliged to sleep here, all round inside the hut stakes were placed, and across and on the top were laid pieces of bark so as to form berths to sleep on.”

At this point there is a break in the story. The account of the rest of the journey and the reception of the party by residents in Bathurst, for reasons therein given, is completed in a letter addressed by Mrs. Hawkins to her grandchildren nearly fifty years after the event. The second letter is dated Sydney, 19th October, 1871, and is as follows:—

“That it may be understood why I write what I am about to do, after nearly fifty years since the foregoing was written, I must explain that I arrived in this colony in January, 1822, and in April, with my mother, my husband and family, we left Sydney to go to Bathurst, a place then but little known. It was a tedious journey, and everything was so new and strange to me, that on my arrival I wrote an account of it to my sister in England. At that time any information of the colonies was interesting, and my letter was sent to the *Times* office for publication, but before it went one of my nieces copied the first part of it, and as they never received back the original from the office, the account the family now have is unfinished; and, feeling a wish for the conclusion, I am asked if I can write it, which to the best of my recollection, I will.

“I will now describe my journey from the Bark Huts where we had to remain until the bullocks were found, as they had again strayed away. At this distance of time, I cannot enter into all the

details of each days' journey. At length we reached Cox's River. Here we remained two days ; the children had the benefit of bathing, and their clothes were washed, our tent was pitched, some fowls cooked, and we all were much refreshed. Nothing but the usual difficulties occurred until we reached Mount York. It was awful to look on the road we had to descend, and as it was thought the drays would be long in getting down, it was thought advisable that the cart with the family should proceed ; the children that could walk did so, and we all reached the bottom at two o'clock, a most wild and desolate place. Here, seated on fallen trees, we remained hour after hour ; one of the children had a small pannikin, and we found water to drink. In this state we remained until seven o'clock and the children got very tired ; at that time some of the men came from the drays bringing such things and refreshments as we required. I then put the children to bed, some in the cart and some on the ground in the open air. The reason we had been so long left to ourselves was that one of the drays had nearly gone over the precipice, and every man was required to help to save it. It was ten o'clock before all got safely down, and our tent was put up. The next morning my spirits gave way. I suppose it was from the fatigue and fright of the day before that had overcome me. I sat in the tent and cried and sobbed like a child. They all left me to myself for a little time and I recovered. I went outside the tent ; it was a most lovely morning ; everything looked bright, and the children all cheerful and happy. At a little distance seated on a hill were two gentlemen, and my husband went to them ; one was Mr. Marsden, the chaplain of the colony, returning from his first visit to Bathurst. "Oh," he said, "I congratulate you ; you are all going to the land of Goshen." Again we started, and at length arrived at O'Connell's Plains ; a woman who was there very kindly gave the children milk and such food as they wanted. It was such a comfort to see a house and a woman in it. We next reached Bathurst Plains, and what joy we felt, what spirits it put us all in to see an open country and home in view ! It was nearly dark when we arrived at the River Macquarie, which we had to cross ; this was rather a serious undertaking, the banks on each side being steep and the water rather deep. I believe everyone in the settlement came to witness the sight ; we crossed in safety and got to our "Home" ; and such a home after a six months' voyage and eighteen days' travelling over the mountains ! It

consisted of three rooms—brick floors—two rooms in front, a skillion room behind one and a pantry behind the other; the front door opened into the sittingroom, the back door directly opposite with a ladder between that led up to a loft. It was the former storekeeper's residence, and my husband had come to take charge of the Government stores.

“Our family consisted of my mother, 70 years of age, and eight children—the eldest $12\frac{1}{2}$ years, the youngest one year—my husband and myself, and a woman servant. How we all that night got supper, or how we all slept, I really cannot tell. Mr. Lawson was at that time the Commandant; he came to see us the next morning, and promised to do all he could to make us more comfortable, and this he did by adding two rooms, one in front and the other at the back, but it took seven months to finish them. In the meantime we gave my mother the front room and put two beds in it, and as many of the elder children as possible. I had the skillion, and when the winter came we suffered much from cold, as it was not ceiled but open to the shingles. Little Ann had a cot in the loft, and the woman took charge of her; Tom and George had the sitting room. When the new ones were finished we gave up ours to the boys, but we had to pass through that and the one for the girls to get to our own. I mention all these trifles, my dear children, that should you ever in your journey through life have similar hardships to encounter you may bear them as well as I did. I never looked on these things as a trouble. In England I had always had a comfortable home, and I came here to seek one for my children. I made the best I could of it, and was contented.

“The settlement, as it was then called, at Bathurst, consisted of Government House of four rooms, our own of three, a courthouse, barracks for a few soldiers, Government stores, and a good garden from which we were well supplied, huts for some prisoners who were employed by Government about their land and stock, and a good barn. Here it was Sir Thomas Brisbane, the Governor, Major Goulburn, Mr. Oxley, Dr. Douglas, and the principal people in the colony came to see us in our humble home. We had a grant of 2,000 acres of land on the other side of the river, about two miles from the settlement, which we named Blackdown, and after two years we went to live on it. There I lived for nearly 18 years, contented and happy, and brought up eleven children.

“ My letter home, I believe, ended with my safe arrival at Bathurst, so I will end here as my life since is known to all my family. I will only add that my troubles then began. I lost my husband, my home and three sons, but I have never felt the want of kindness from all connected with me, and whatever I might have thought at the time, it has pleased God to spare my life until I can now say from my heart, all things have been wisely ordered. I am now in my eighty-ninth year. I have 7 children, 44 grandchildren, and 59 great-grandchildren living in many parts of the world—England, Denmark, India, New Zealand, New South Wales, Victoria, and the Fiji Islands. This day the marriage of one of my grandsons is being celebrated and he takes his bride to the Fiji Islands. The God who has protected me through all these long years, may He be the God of them all, protect and bless them for ever.

“ (Signed.)

ELIZABETH HAWKINS,

“ 19th October, 1871.”

“ MEMO.—I have stated what the settlement of Bathurst was in 1822. I will now say what it was in 1871. It is a city, and has its Bishop, several churches, its Mayor and Corporation, sends its member to the Legislative Assembly, has its banks and fine buildings, its School of Arts, its market; it will soon be lighted with gas, and the railway from Sydney is within 30 miles of it. Surely this is great progress, showing energy, wealth, and enterprise.”



Norton, Albert. 1904. "Notes on Travel: 1859-1860. From Sydney westwards, and down the Darling River." *The Proceedings of the Royal Society of Queensland* 18, 81-107. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.351346>.

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