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NOTES FROM A POCKET JOURNAL

OF

A TRIP UP THE RIVER MURRAY

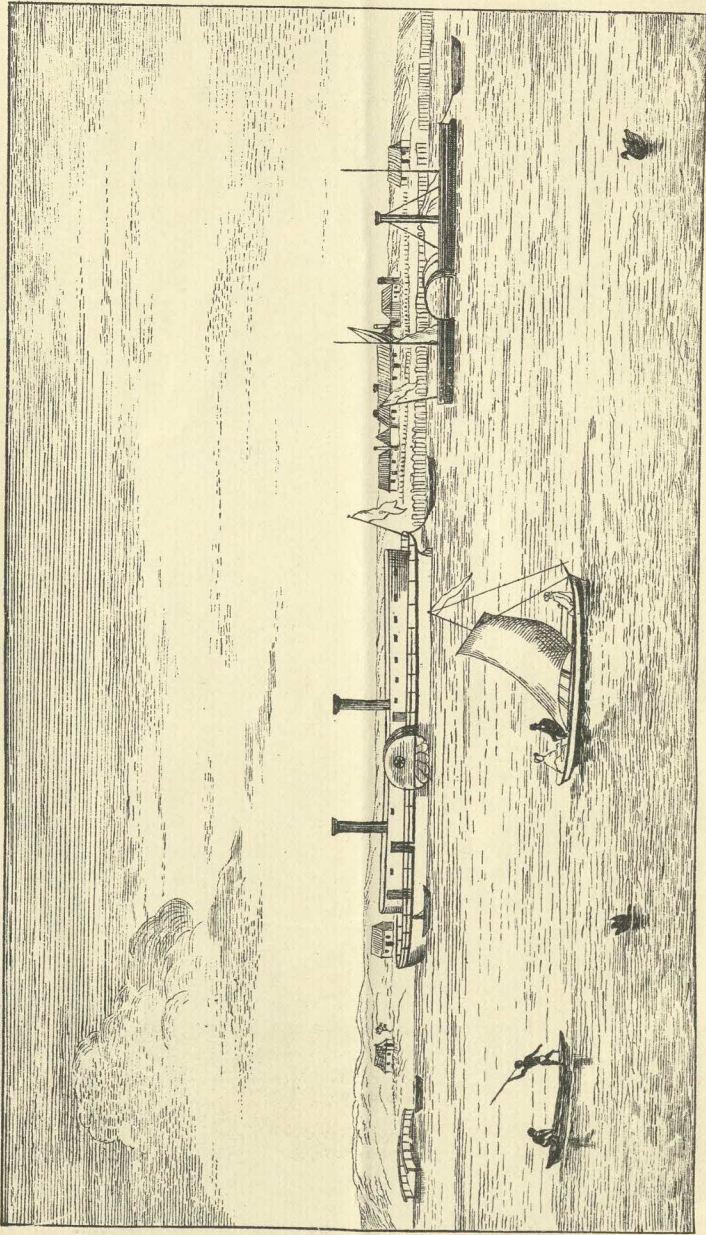
IN 1836.

By SIR THOMAS ELDER, G.C.M.G.

Adelaide:
W. K. THOMAS & Co., GRENFELL STREET.

1893.





SWAN HILL IN 1856.

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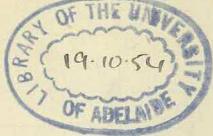
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By SIR THOMAS

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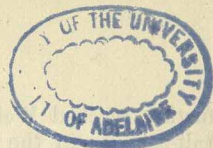
CKET JOURNAL

LIVER MURRAY

36.

LDER, G.C.M.G.

RENFELL STREET.



A TRIP UP THE MURRAY IN 1856.

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Friday, September 5th, 1856.—Having made arrangements with Captain Hall, Dr. Rankine, and Mr. J. B. Hughes, three Members of the Adelaide Legislative Council, to take an expeditionary voyage up the Murray, in order to extend our knowledge of the capabilities of that river, and having secured our passages by the "Gundegai," one of Cadell's line of steamers, now lying at the Goolwa, Captain Hall and I left Adelaide this forenoon, by the mail, full of pleasurable anticipations of the trip which the novelty and interest attached to such an undertaking was well calculated to excite. After remaining for the night at Willunga, we obtained horses and rode on next day to Port Elliot, where we found several vessels had been driven on shore by a violent gale of wind that morning; one of them, a fine schooner called the "Swordfish," loaded with flour by my firm for Sydney, detaining me some time, though the ship and cargo were ultimately got off without material damage. In the evening we proceeded by railway to the Goolwa, and found Mr. Hughes awaiting our arrival at Varcoe's Hotel, where we passed the night previous to our embarkation.

Sunday, September 7th.—We started from the Goolwa this morning at eight o'clock, a numerous party being assembled on the jetty to witness our departure. The "Gundegai" was accompanied by the barge "Wakool," laden with flour and lashed alongside. Under the successful pilotage of Captain Mennie, we passed successively Hindmarsh Island, Currency Creek, and the Finnis, and leaving Lake Albert on our right, made the entrance of Lake Victoria, a distance of twenty miles, about eleven o'clock. The extreme length of this lake is thirty miles and its breadth about twenty-five, with an average depth in the channel of about ten feet. We passed through it successfully; but when in the centre of the lake, the great extent of water around us, and the tossing we experienced, from a stiffish breeze that blew, might well have led us to imagine ourselves on an inland sea, but the illusion would have been immediately dispelled by a draught of its waters which are quite fresh. On leaving the lake we passed into the Murray at Point Pomond, and pursuing our way for ten miles

further, reached Wellington, distant sixty miles from Goolwa, at half-past six in the evening, where Dr. Rankine, the last of our party came aboard. The country we passed through, to-day, was flat and uninteresting, but Mount Barker, one of the finest districts in the province, was visible in the distance, and the sand-hill on which the unfortunate Captain Barker, whose name it bears, was speared by the natives in 1831, was pointed out to us. On the left margin of the river, near to Wellington, there is a large marshy field of reeds, swarming with wild hogs, whose extreme ferocity we were told renders them safe from hostile invasion. The depth of the stream at Wellington is forty-five feet, and the breadth from 150 to 180 yards. Our party at breakfast mustered a goodly number. It consisted of the gentlemen already mentioned, with Mr. and Mrs. Livingstone from Adelaide, Mrs. Hughes, the lady of a settler on the Murray, and her family, a young gentleman of fortune who had come out from England expressly to visit the interior of Australia, and several others whose names I forget. The saloon is raised above the deck with windows on both sides, a large and airy space, used as a dining and sitting room during the day and as a sleeping apartment for the gentlemen by night, curtains extending from the roof ensuring the requisite privacy. Several state cabins at the stern were reserved for the ladies and children. One of the first things passengers do on coming on board is to select the place where they propose to sit at table, which is kept during the voyage; and our party made choice of a locality at one end of the saloon, which was never afterwards interfered with. Considering the small sum charged for passage money from Goolwa to Albury, a distance of 2,000 miles, namely £15 including provisions, we had abundant reason to be satisfied with our fare and steward's attendance. We all know that the slightest touch of sea-sickness takes away the poetry of the ocean, but here, on the unruffled surface of the Murray, we had three excellent meals a day, which all could enjoy. We were indeed a party of kindred spirits, pleasure seekers released from the trammels and anxieties of business, and bent for the time on thoroughly enjoying ourselves. A whist party was organised and kept up during the voyage, but we never commenced till after tea, never played for money, and invariably ceased at ten o'clock. During the day, the changing scene and constant novelty was one continual feast. When the vessel stopped to take in wood, we usually landed to pay a visit to the neighbouring settlers, or enjoy a walk in the shady glades or through the silent woods. Sometimes we obtained horses and rode across the country to places where the steamer picked us up, the circuitous course of the river affording ample time for such pleasant deviations. The roof of the saloon at all times afforded us a healthful promenade, varied occasionally by the deck of the barge, which was sufficiently roomy for pur-

poses of recreation. Altogether, ship-life on board the "Gundagai" was the most enjoyable that can be conceived, and nothing occurred, so long as we remained, to mar the harmony or diminish the delightful sensations of our novel situation.

September 8th.—Having remained but one hour at Wellington, we continued our voyage and steamed all night, the Captain being resolved to lose no unnecessary time. Our passage up the river was made without the slightest obstruction, and everything proceeded in the most agreeable manner. On the banks of the river, to our right, the native pine-tree grows in great abundance; on our left, the land is low and marshy, as indicated by the reed-beds before mentioned. About twenty miles above Wellington the stream becomes much narrower; and, from the steep banks on either side throwing a confusing shade over the river, the passage at times seemed perfectly blocked up. We however pushed on, steaming with full power at times, and at others only just creeping along. The passage of the river at this point is perfectly clear and free from all obstructions; but having only a faint light from the stars, and the shadow thrown by the dense foliage on either side of the river leaving our course indistinct, the necessity for caution was apparent. At daylight, this morning, we passed Mr. David Taylor's station. The appearance of the country at this spot is strikingly beautiful, and no one but those visiting the Murray can imagine the splendour and magnificence of the scenery. The banks on either side are clothed completely with a yellow flower, very much like and of the same genus as the groundsel at home. The hills, on our right, increase in height and are thickly wooded, with, at times, a rocky appearance. Lagoons appear on both sides of the river, forming peninsulas on which stock-yards and fences for the security of the cattle grazing thereon are formed. The weather was delightfully warm, and we amused ourselves in promenading the upper deck the whole day. As we proceeded up the river, flocks of wild fowl, alarmed at the appearance of the steamer, fled in shoals to the right and left; and musk ducks, which from their inability to fly were less expeditious in their movements, flapped along the water on each side of us in alarm—an alarm not groundless, as weapons for their destruction, if opportunity offered, might be seen peeping from the sides of the vessel. Black swans and white cranes were also seen in great numbers, but they prudently kept beyond the reach of our muskets. At noon we were fairly within the far-famed Valley of the Murray. The hills recede on either side, and the land in the neighbourhood is undulating with luxurious vegetation. Herds of cattle feed on the slopes around and give a homely appearance to this exquisite landscape. Towards evening, high sand-stone cliffs rising abruptly from the water's edge appear on our right, covered with the species of groundsel already referred to; on the left, low

undulating land slightly wooded. The magnificence of the scenery—so difficult to describe—is perfectly enchanting. At half-past six we met the steamer “Albury” returning from the Upper Murray, and received from Mr. Coke, one of the passengers, the latest news from the diggings. Continuing our course, we reached Moorundee at eleven, 200 miles from the Goolwa, where we anchored for the night.

On rising next morning, we found the bank alongside the steamer covered with furniture and live stock, which the crew were busily engaged taking on board. Mr. E. B. Scott, the Inspector of Police and Protector of Aborigines at this place, lately resigned his situation, and was now removing his whole establishment to Mootherie, a sheep station he had purchased, 370 miles further up the river. The greatest difficulty was experienced in getting some young bulls on board, which broke away into the woods several times; but by nine o'clock everything was shipped, including the family of Mr. Scott, when we proceeded on our voyage. Before starting, several of our party proceeded in a boat to the house of Mr. Eyre, the previous Protector of Aborigines at Moorundee, which has been dismantled since his departure. The only buildings now remaining here are Mr. Scott's house, built by the Government as a soldiers' barracks; a police station, and two or three small houses. The scenery around Moorundee is very beautiful and of much the same character as that passed through on our passage from Wellington. The river here is fully 200 yards in width, bordered on the right by steep sandstone cliffs, which rise from 80 to 100 feet above the level of the water; and on the left by low lands thickly wooded. The average depth of water is two fathoms and a half. Having stopped for wood about seven miles above Moorundee, we landed on the Pound, paid a visit to Mr. McBean's house, and walked some distance into the interior. Eight miles further on there is an extensive flat, stretching seven miles along the bank of the river. It is a special survey comprising 4,000 acres, selected by Governor Gawler in the early days of the Colony. This flat, about half-a-mile in width, and covered with great quantities of polygamun scrub, is bounded by a low range of hills on which there is good pasturage extending some miles back, and which is taken advantage of by the herds of cattle now stationed there. On Gawler's Flat, as it is styled, there is some good arable land, but the greatest proportion of it seems to be sandy and unfit for cultivation. Our average speed to-day, owing to the current, has not exceeded five miles an hour, consequently we did not reach the North-West Bend, a distance of forty miles from Moorundee, till seven o'clock in the evening. The sandstone cliffs continued with us all the way, appearing alternately on the right and left-hand side of the river, and presenting an exceedingly bold and picturesque appearance, resembling at times, in the distance, some

ancient ruins. This constitutes a principal feature of the country throughout the whole length of the Valley of the Murray. The vegetation along the banks and the surrounding hills is most luxuriant, and affords splendid feed for cattle. During the summer season, however, the feed is completely parched up, with not a blade of grass to be seen for miles; but a good substitute remains in its stead,—this is the salt-bush, resembling very much the sage-bush, which cattle are extremely fond of and feed on during the summer months, and on which they thrive as well as on the choicest grass. In the winter months, at the close of which we have now arrived, there is an abundance of feed.

Started at six o'clock the next morning, and on passing Mr. Wigley's station that gentleman came on board and kindly supplied us with fresh milk and butter. We are still in what is called the Valley of the Murray. It commences near Wellington, and is formed by the steep sandstone cliffs rising on each side, averaging in their distance apart from two to three miles. From Wellington they gradually increase in height until they reach Moorundee, where their elevation above the surface of the water is about 100 feet. Between these two cliffs the River Murray flows, and the appearance of them on either side of us is naturally caused by the different turns or bends of the river, in its windings to the right or left; only fancy the singular effect of sailing up a river, 100 miles and more, with cliffs now on one side and then on the other, 100 feet high. Fossil formations are found all through the cliffs, and not a bit of the sandstone of which they are formed can be broken without the appearance of sea shells and fossil remains in it. This would lead us to infer that the whole of the intervening land between the cliffs had been immersed in water at some distant period, and that the natural level of the river formerly was the top of these cliffs which are now upwards of 100 feet above the valley, and that in the course of past ages the river has gradually worn the valley down to its present level. The intervening flats between the cliffs, though liable in many places to inundations, contain a large amount of rich alluvial soil, suitable in every respect for cultivation, and which is enriched annually by the deposits carried down the river. When settled and cultivated properly, the Valley of the Murray may yet (who knows?) rival in productiveness the far-famed banks of the Nile. We found the current very strong to-day, running fully three miles per hour, and it required great caution in turning the different bends of the river, which in some places are very abrupt, turning at acute angles with violent eddies. After making seventy miles without stopping, we moored alongside the bank at two o'clock in the morning, a little beyond Overland Corner.

September 12th.—We reached Paringa to-day at noon, 200 miles above Moorundee; and Captain Mennie kindly halted for a few

hours to give me an opportunity of visiting Mr. Chapman's family, with whom I chance to be acquainted. They were expecting our arrival, and gave us a cordial welcome, all the cabin passengers who chose to land having lunch at their charming cottage on the margin of the river. Mr. Chapman with his son and two daughters afterwards embarked with us and proceeded a few miles up the river, returning in their own boat; and the weather being beautiful we enjoyed this pleasant episode very much. Yesterday we met the "Lady Augusta" returning to the Goolwa, and went on board to see the pioneer steamer, which is not so large as our boat nor so handsomely fitted up. Our evenings have been delightfully diversified since Mr. Scott's family came on board, Mrs. Scott having her piano placed on the upper deck, on which she and Mrs. Livingstone "discourse sweet music" to us every night. Scott himself is a remarkably fine specimen of an Australian squatter; active, enthusiastic, and extremely amiable, and gentlemanly in his deportment. He accompanied Mr. Eyre in his overland journey to King George's Sound, some fifteen year ago, and succeeded him as Protector of Aborigines at Moorundee. Eyre is now Governor of St. Vincent, and they still keep up a friendly correspondence. Yesterday Mr. Scott presented me with a blue kangaroo dog, which was much admired for its size, symmetry and peculiar color. It is most amusing to see Mr. Scott talking with the natives as we sail along the banks. They are very numerous here, and as he knows them all, the conversation is carried on by signs or movements of the fingers, similar to those adopted by the deaf and dumb. We are well supplied with fish by the natives, who on our approach paddle out to us in their canoes and exchange their fish for a little flour or tobacco. Their canoes are of a very primitive construction, being simply formed of an oblong piece of gum tree bark, with embankments of mud at the end to prevent the influx of water. The fish are similar to our golden perch, about eighteen inches long, and superior in flavor to what are to be got in Adelaide. The river was very circuitous to-day, and we cleared with difficulty the very acute bends which it makes in some places. Hitherto we have met with no obstruction from the snags or sunken trees, about which so much apprehension was entertained; they are generally situated close in by the side of the stream, and are easily avoided.

Continuing our upward progress, we passed, next day, the boundary line that separates South Australia from the other Colonies, and have now the territory of New South Wales on our left hand, and Victoria on our right. The natives are here a much finer race of men than those in the vicinity of Adelaide. We have had frequent interviews with them, and some appear (for the Australian aborigine, it must be remembered, is a very low species of humanity) pretty intelligent, but they wear very little clothing, and have all the outward attributes of savages. The sides of the

river have now the appearance of artificial embankments, generally from three to four feet in height. The timber here is extremely fine, consisting principally of gum of very large growth; and the banks for hundreds of miles are fringed with lofty trees, the size of which would put our English notions to the blush. At Home, we are accustomed to fancy some of our forest trees very large, and the famous specimen at Kippenross is visited by strangers from far and near; but it dwindles into insignificance when brought into comparison with those of other countries. In California, for example, in the Mariposa Grove, within forty or fifty miles of San Francisco, there are 650 giants within a space of one mile by three-quarters, several of which were measured three years ago and found to be upwards of 100 feet in circumference! One of the group was 102 feet, two 100, one 97, one 92, one 82, one 80, two 77, and three 76 feet in girth, and from 250 feet to 300 feet high. The mammoth tree, the bark of which may now be seen in the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, was taken from this group, and was 327 feet high and nearly 80 feet in girth. It was called the "Mother of the Forest," and though the bark had been completely removed to the height of over 100 feet, the tree itself flourished for two years after the spoliation. The circumference of the Kippenross tree near Dunblane is, close to the ground, 42 feet, 7 inches, and its height only 100 feet. If the age of this tree is correctly stated at 460 years, what will the age be of those Titans in California? The lowest estimate of them is 1,100 years; but the commencement of the Christian era, or even further back, is more likely in my opinion to have been the period of their birth. What perhaps is more marvellous than this, has been the discovery of a petrified cedar, near Honey Lake in California, which measures 42 feet in diameter, *i.e.* 126 feet in circumference, at the butt, and is 700 feet long at least. By pacing, the trunk measured over 660 feet as it lay on the sloping ground, the diameter at that point being 4 feet, and the residue, 40 feet probably, being hidden by the sand. Think, now, of a tree 700 feet high! Reared by one seed, out of air and cloud, and then turned to solid stone! In the neighbourhood of Adelaide I have seen very large trees, much larger than that at Kippenross: in some of which, scooped out by the bush fires, a good-sized family might lodge, but their actual dimensions I have not with me at present. Those we are now passing on the banks of the Murray are not a whit inferior to them. For sixty or eighty miles back, on the South Australian side of the boundary, there are some admirable spots for the erection of saw mills, and timber cutting might easily be turned into a profitable employment. The timber could be floated down the river to the shipping depot at very little expense, and the example of the Canadian and American boatmen, with their floating rafts, will I trust soon stimulate our settlers to the commencement of such a trade.

Sunday, 14th September.—After steaming all night, favored by the moon, we arrived this morning at Mootherie, Mr. Scott's station, where our friends left us. Captain Mennie having resolved to remain here till to-morrow, Mr. Hughes and I walked across the country to Moorna and dined with Mr. Perry, the Crown Commissioner, whose acquaintance we had made in Adelaide. Mrs. Perry and her sister Miss Fletcher were present, and extended to us the rites of hospitality. On returning in the evening, Mrs. Scott had already got her house, on the margin of the river, in tolerable order and invited us to tea; and we parted from them at ten o'clock with much regret. It rained heavily to-day, but we managed to enjoy ourselves as well as circumstances would permit.

On the following day at 5 p.m. we reached the Darling junction, and, after sailing half-a-mile up the stream, cast anchor for the night, opposite McLeod's public house, in three fathoms of water. The country we passed through to-day was, I think, the finest we had yet seen, and the grandeur of the woodland scenery as we approached the Darling was perfectly indescribable. We are now 600 miles from the Goolwa, which we have taken nine days to accomplish: an average of nearly seventy miles a day. Dr. Rankine landed with me in the evening, and had a stroll in the vicinity, after visiting the incipient township at this spot. The River Darling is a more important stream than is generally imagined. During three months in the year it is navigable for a considerable distance; and when the Murray trade is fairly developed there is every probability of the Darling being settled for 500 miles up, as far as Fort Burke or onwards, till the stations unite with those formed some years ago from the northern points, and thus open up a large tract of country, the produce of which, by the aid of the steamer, will in all likelihood be conveyed to the South Australian capital. At present there are numerous sheep and cattle-stations, 200 miles up the Darling; one settlement in particular, named Minindie, at which there are several native reserves. With regard to the main stream, the Murray, it is pretty well established that it is navigable in ordinary seasons, for nine months of the year, and this embraces that period during which the greatest amount of produce will require shipment. This river at its lowest season, near its junction with the Darling, is reported to be up to a man's waist, which, allowing that to be four feet, would be a perfectly adequate depth for its navigation. In this respect the Murray possesses even greater advantages than some of the American rivers, which are only navigable, from being frozen over, for six months of the year; and it is a well known fact that the mighty Ganges may be forded by a horse and cart at certain seasons of the year.

We left the Darling next morning at six o'clock, and in fifteen minutes reached the junction of the Murray, when we resumed

our passage up the main stream. The country still improves in appearance, thickly timbered on the New South Wales side, and more hilly on the Victorian. At two o'clock we met the "Gemini" proceeding down the river, when Mr. Randall brought his vessel alongside and came on board to dinner. We sent letters to Adelaide by this opportunity. At six we reached Mildura, but unfortunately found Messrs. Jamieson, with whom all our party were well acquainted, both absent. This station consists of three or four substantial huts facing the river, the owners' residence being better furnished with books and other domestic comforts than the general run of settlers' houses on the Murray. We remained three hours here and met Mr. Symons, the Commissioner of Police, who kindly placed horses at our disposal to ride sixteen miles across country and overtake the steamer next day, which His Excellency the Governor had done on his passage up the river, a few weeks ago, but we declined the offer. As a means of amusement, we are frequently in the habit of lighting bonfires on shore, after the vessel is moored for the night, there being abundance of waste timber for this purpose left over by the wood cutters. The magnificent appearance of half-a-dozen bonfires within twenty yards of each other, the flames towering up to fifty or sixty feet in height, and sometimes consuming whole trees under which the fuel has been placed, may well be imagined; as also the agreeable excitement it affords to the bystanders. The distance from Mildura to Euston station is 183 miles, which occupied the next three days, with stoppages at the various stations along the line. (McGrath Brothers, and Orr & Gools' are the most important). The appearance of the aborigines paddling in their bark canoes, in this part of the river, was highly picturesque. The men are armed with long wooden spears and stand upright when they use them, their lubras crouching before a fire in the middle of the boat. Several of them came alongside, and the natives jumped on board; but the swell from the paddles obliging the canoes to sheer off, the savages (both male and female) after getting a little flour, jumped overboard and swam ashore, holding the flour above their heads in their left hand and swimming with the other. They were always ready to supply us with fish in exchange for flour.

EUSTON, *September 19th.*—We arrived at this place, a Government township on the New South Wales side, at three o'clock this afternoon, and were received with great politeness by Mr. Cole, the Resident Commissioner of Crown Lands, and one of the constituents of my firm in Adelaide. He immediately proposed to furnish us with horses and an escort of mounted police to take us on to Mr. Ross's station, a distance of twenty miles, where the steamer would pick us up next day; but as Mr. Edward Morey kindly invited us to spend the evening at his station, three miles on the way thither, we walked over there and remained his guests

for the night. This gentleman's establishment was certainly the best in point of comfort, luxury I would almost say, in cuisine and everything else, that we had met with on our trip ; and the situation of his charming villa on the margin of a billybong was quite unique.

Next morning Mr. Cole joined us at breakfast, and conveyed us for several miles on our journey, leaving our party all deeply impressed with his kind and hospitable treatment. After passing Lake Benanee, a fine sheet of water about seven miles from Euston, where we had lunch under some trees to shelter us from the sun, which was very hot, we rode quickly across an open country, and reached Mr. Ross's station by one o'clock, finding an excellent dinner prepared for us at the house of that gentleman, and all our passengers who had arrived by the steamer invited to partake of it. The river at this place is so circuitous that the distance across a narrow peninsula on our land route was only a quarter of a mile, whereas by the curve of the river it was fully ten miles. We embarked at two o'clock, and reached Mr. McCallum's station at seven in the evening, where we remained six hours, and at one in the morning started again to make up for lost time.

At nine o'clock on Sunday morning we crossed the entrance to the Murrumbidgee, which flows into the Murray at this place : a noble stream which will be navigable for a great distance into the interior, when the snags are cleared away, although there are falls to encounter in this river, as well as snag-obstructions to remove. It forms the highway, however, to numerous sheep and cattle stations and to a rich pastoral country, and its navigation will bring a great accession to the river trade. In the afternoon we stopped at Windomal, Messrs. Phelps and Chadwick's head station, for a couple of hours, where several of our passengers left us, and we moored to the bank for the night.

Proceeding betimes next morning, we reached the junction of the Wakool, at seven o'clock : a river, judging from its appearance at this point, nearly as large as the Murray ; at least it is 100 yards broad at its mouth, and averages four to five fathoms in depth. Passing Mr. Coghill's cattle station, at two, we brought up, in the evening, at a pile of wood which the men in charge churlishly refused to give us, and we had to move further on in search of fuel, greatly to the annoyance of the Captain.

September 23rd.—We left very early this morning, in order to reach Swan Hill before dark ; the river being exceedingly tortuous, the getting round many of the curves was attended with difficulty and some danger. On turning an abrupt bend, about eight o'clock, the barge got snagged and began immediately to fill with water. All hands were set to work to remove the flour on board the steamer, but a good deal of it was damaged, and it took some time to repair the injury to the barge, the branch of a large

sunken tree having penetrated her bottom. At noon, we got the length of Mr. Beveridge's station, where the country undergoes a complete transformation: the forest glades we have been sailing through for the last fortnight all at once giving place to an open country with extensive plains, principally flooded, and the river banks covered with dense beds of reeds, instead of trees to which our eyes have been so long accustomed. The river here has quite the appearance of a canal, and the Captain, to save time, deviated from the main stream and took a narrow channel, called the Ana Branch, to Swan Hill, which cut off ten miles in distance besides avoiding the current, which is more powerful in the river. On again, entering the Murray, we pushed on at full speed and dropped anchor off the landing place at half-past five.

Swan Hill is a Government township, situated on the Victorian side of the river, and distant from Melbourne 210 miles; but although the length of the journey to Adelaide by water is 1,100 miles, the settlers can get their wool and stores conveyed by the river at a cheaper rate, with more expedition and less risk than by the land route, and consequently the navigation of the Murray is considered by some a great boon, though others, from various causes, refuse to avail themselves of these advantages. The settlement contains at present a good inn, with several buildings attached; a police station composed of six men and a sergeant; a court of petty sessions with a resident police magistrate; a post office, with weekly mails to Melbourne; and some six or eight private houses. We spent some hours on shore, but there is little to interest strangers here. Half-a-dozen houses, situated a few hundred yards from the river's bank, among which the inn takes a conspicuous position, with a stock-yard or two immediately adjacent, comprise the whole that is to be seen; and yet this mite of a settlement will, in all probability, before many years have passed over our heads, become an important township; and, from its central position as affecting the Murray, will form the nucleus of commerce for an almost illimitable space around. Much of the land adjacent to the river is flooded over, and covered with dense beds of reeds, fifteen to twenty feet in height. This does not apply to the township, which is sufficiently elevated to protect it from the water. The land in the neighbourhood is considered favorable for agriculture, but at present no advantage in that respect has been taken of it. Lake Tyrrell, twenty miles in circumference, is situated near Swan Hill, from which the settlers are supplied with salt of very good quality. I may here notice a most extraordinary phenomenon which appeared at Swan Hill, some years ago, and which has been so well authenticated both by the natives and the settlers in the district, as to leave no doubt as to its occurrence. About a month previous to the Christmas of 1851, a small dark cloud was seen to rise above the horizon towards the

north-west. Immediately after its appearance it emitted a flash of fire, succeeded by a rumbling noise like thunder, or the trampling of a large body of horse, but considerably louder, and passed over to the east, dispersing itself like smoke. The day was remarkably bright and clear, with a perfectly unclouded sky. Its passage occupied from four to five minutes, and the noise resulting from the discharge of the flash was most terrific. The natives were dreadfully alarmed, and even to this day have a vivid recollection of the circumstance. This well established fact may furnish food for speculative minds and convey some interest to such as are fond of the marvellous. There are great numbers of emus in the neighbourhood of Swan Hill, which furnish good sport to the settlers; and numerous black and white swans may be seen resting gracefully on the river and lagoons—whence the name of the place is derived.

September 24th.—The “Gundegai” got under weigh this morning, and shaped her course for the Upper Murray, which takes a winding course past the township, and averages in depth, at this season, from three to four fathoms. It is about 120 yards in width. The river is extremely circuitous above Swan Hill, bounded on each side with dense beds of reeds, which in some places had been set fire to by the blacks. The dark figures of the natives, paddling their canoes through the reeds, fishing, had a very singular appearance, their heads only being visible, and floating along without any perceptible support. The country all round is flat and without the vestige of a tree to be seen.

At nine o'clock next morning, we stopped at Goun, Captain Caple's station, and walked over to his woolshed where the men were busily engaged in shearing. The country has again become wooded, but not to such an extent as in the lower part of the river. It has here a very singular but perfectly un-English appearance: the low banks being covered with reeds, and is said very much to resemble Indian scenery. The width of the river has increased to an average of 150 yards.

ECHUCA, September 29th.—Last evening, we reached this place distant 236 miles from Swan Hill, and found the “Leichardt,” which being a faster boat had passed us on the way up, lying alongside the bank. For the last three days we sailed through a rich and fertile country, teeming with flocks and herds and the most luxuriant vegetation. Barracouta station, some forty miles lower down, was lately purchased by Mr. Maiden at £13,000, for the run alone without stock, besides £6,000 paid for the fences! This will give some idea of the value of sheep runs in this rich and desirable locality. Echuca is a rising township, at the mouth of the River Campaspe, with a good hotel where we found plenty of newspapers; a smith's shop; storehouses; and other incipient buildings. It is the nearest point on the river to Bendigo

diggings, from which it is only distant sixty-one miles, and the diggers are largely supplied with stores by the steamers. Mr. Hopwood, the hotel keeper, very kindly placed a conveyance at our disposal, for which he would accept no remuneration; and Dr. Rankine accompanied me in a drive for ten or fifteen miles round about the country. Having a considerable portion of the cargo to land here, our steamer was detained a day and a-half, which gave us an excellent opportunity of thoroughly examining the place, and acquainting ourselves with all its surroundings. Mr. Maiden, above-mentioned, the largest stockholder in the district, spent some hours with us on board the steamer.

We resumed our voyage on the 30th *September*, and in half-an-hour passed Maiden's Punt, an important ferry, largely used in crossing over stock, from the profits of which our friend of yesterday, I doubt not, was enabled to become a stockholder. At five o'clock we passed the mouth of the Goulburn, another fine river flowing into the Murray from the Victoria side, and already navigable for 400 miles. Next day the steamer "Leichardt" passed us again, at the entrance of Lake Moira, and three hours later we crossed the entrance of the Edwards River, another large and important tributary to the main stream on the New South Wales side. In this district, the Valley of the Murrumbidgee it may be called, a very extensive sheep country exists, which is occupied by numerous settlements. On the day following, we halted at the stations of Messrs. McLaren and Macdonald, two thriving Scotch settlers. The scenery hereabouts is very beautiful. From the deck of the steamer we can see the kangaroos skipping across the country, and inviting us on shore to join in their pursuit. The runs in this part of the river and further up, are chiefly devoted to cattle feeding; but at no distant period the best of them belonged to the Royal Bank of Sydney, and were then used as sheep stations. When that establishment became insolvent under the management of the notorious Ben Boyd, these runs were sold at a ruinous sacrifice, and their fortunate possessors are now reaping a golden harvest from them. They are, I think, the finest runs on the river, and are suitable for either sheep or cattle.

Nothing particular occurred during the next few days, until we arrived at the station of Mr. Hughes, when Mrs. Hughes and family left us. Shortly after this, we were hailed by a small boat in the stream, which pulled alongside, when, to our surprise, Sir Richard Macdonnell, in a shepherd's suit, with fowling piece in hand, jumped on board. He had left the "Melbourne" taking in wood, a few miles up the river, to enjoy some shooting, and returned with us to meet that vessel. On reaching her, we met Lady Macdonnell and a number of Adelaide gentlemen who had been on a visit to the Owens Diggings and were now on their way back to Adelaide. Captain Hall, one of our party, returned with them; and after an exchange of courtesies the steamers soon separated.

The 8th October completed the voyage, so far as our party was concerned, when the "Gundegai" arrived at Ford's, the nearest station to the Ovens Diggings. We remained here one night, and were provided with horses to take us on to Albury, a distance by land of five-and-twenty miles. Next morning, after bidding adieu to our fellow passengers, Dr. Rankine, Mr. Hughes and I swam our horses across the Murray, and being joined by a young Irish gentleman, Collector of Customs at Albury, who had accompanied the Governor part of the way down the river and was now on his return, we started on our journey. After travelling some distance through a richly wooded and beautiful country, my two friends rode forward by themselves, to examine some cattle on a run that was for sale, leaving the Collector and me to follow, and as they supposed keeping them in sight. But being engaged in earnest conversation at the time, we somehow or other lost company, and all that we could do, by riding hither and thither and cooeing until we were hoarse, we could not fall in with them again. This was an awkward predicament to be in, for neither my companion nor myself knew in what direction to proceed in order to extricate ourselves. We were in a dense forest, which prevented us from seeing the sun above our heads. There were no roads. Where were we to go, or what were we to do? We had, in fact, fairly lost ourselves in the bush, and it wasn't long ere this unpleasant conviction forced itself upon our minds. For hours and hours we wandered about, in the hope of something turning up: climbing up trees to see if any landmark or anything to lead us to the river's side could be discovered, but all in vain. We had no provisions with us, and didn't relish the idea of indefinite starvation; but there seemed no help for it, and my companion at last began to discuss with me the possibility of being compelled to slaughter a young foal that followed the mare he rode, for we knew that people were frequently lost for days and weeks in the bush, and driven to sad shifts for want of food: a fate which our fears and inexperience almost led us to anticipate. Just as the sun was going down and our minds were fully prepared for passing one night at least in the bush, we providentially stumbled upon a log hut, tenanted by a solitary shepherd who kindly directed us on our way, and after considerable hardship we reached Albury at midnight, where we found our friends waiting for us in the greatest anxiety, and resolved to start off an expedition to search for us at daylight, knowing as they did, from their own experience as bushmen, the perils we were exposed to. Happily our adventure was attended with no worse consequences than this.

ALBURY is a town of considerable size and importance, as a commercial centre of all the three leading colonies. It belongs to New South Wales and is within 400 miles of Sydney, to which there is mail communication twice or thrice a week. This place

will probably be the terminus of the Murray navigation for some time to come—though the upper river, here called the Hume, is navigable for 500 miles further, making the total distance to the sea about 2,500 miles. There are several good hotels here, but the charges were monstrously extravagant. The day after our arrival we met Captain Cadell, who kindly accompanied us on horseback to shew us the surrounding country. The romantic beauty, the fertility of soil, the temperature of the atmosphere cooled by the snowy mountains visible in the distance, and the picturesque variety of the landscapes in this favored region charmed us exceedingly. On our return we found the “Gundegai” had come up during the night, and was discharging cargo alongside the wharf. Captain Cadell afterwards dined with us at our hotel, the expense of which was £2 a head! for a dinner that in England would have been considered dear at 5s.

From this place we procured horses and proceeded to the Ovens Diggings, where we remained for several days, in very good quarters in the town of Beechworth. The operations of the diggers were being actively carried on in the Ovens Creek, in the neighbourhood of a large canvas town called The Woolshed; and we saw the process of excavation and washing the soil, every bucketful of which seemed to yield more or less of the precious metal. The fortunate owner of one claim, Johnston by name, had shortly before removed to Melbourne with £70,000 worth of gold in his possession (conveyed in horse pails, it was said), stating to his assistants who told us the story: “There mates, I have as much as I want. You may have the rest, and I know that I am giving you a present of £20,000 at least!” Of course this must be looked upon as an exceptional case: the prize as it were amidst numerous blanks! But the Ovens Diggings upon the whole have hitherto proved very productive.

From the Ovens Diggings Dr. Rankine and I proceeded, by easy stages, across the Colony of Victoria to Melbourne, and from thence returned to Adelaide by steamer after an absence of little more than two months. Mr. Hughes preceded us, being anxious to get home a little sooner. We had satisfied our minds fully as to the main object of our excursion, viz., the perfect adaptation of the Murray for steam navigation. We had witnessed the valuable character of the country through which it flowed, and been favorably impressed with the prospects of extended commerce which it held out. We had travelled some 2,000 miles upon the parent stream, the Australian Mississippi, as it has been justly called, and were convinced that a few years more will see the other large rivers furnished with the means of transport by steamer for thousands of miles into the interior. And all this had been accomplished with ease and comfort to ourselves, and a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment greater than we had bargained for or anticipated when we inaugurated “Our trip up the Murray.”

