

Notes of an Overland Journey to the Ovens and Melbourne.

A series of articles that appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald between October 1853 and June 1854, which detailed the experiences of four men travelling from Sydney to the Ovens and Melbourne, during the months of February and March 1853.

NOTES OF AN OVERLAND JOURNEY TO THE OVENS AND MELBOURNE.

As this is a subject of some interest at the present time, I have thought it advisable to lay before your readers a few memoranda of an expedition in which myself and three others were concerned, in the months of February and March of the present year. To those who have not travelled the road the little incidents and adventures of a party of gold-diggers must necessarily possess some interest, if not information; whilst to those who have travelled the road, the subject will be fraught with recollections of an agreeable and amusing character.

Having purchased a horse and cart, together with the necessary supplies, myself and three worthy companions left Sydney on the 16th of February, for the purpose of trying our fortune at the Victoria gold fields. Like most others in the same situation, we indulged in very pleasing anticipations as to the novelties we were about to witness, and were full of high hopes as to the result of the expedition. This was, perhaps, more particularly the case with myself, as I was the only one of the party who had not been at the diggings before, and to me, therefore, the prospect of seeing and mixing in those scenes which had so revolutionized society during the last two or three years afforded peculiar and inexpressible delight. Amidst all our sanguine expectations, however, we had still a vivid if not a clear sense of the difficulties we were about to encounter, and it is very likely that we should never have prosecuted our journey had we not been nerved by confident and brilliant hopes of future success.

As the weather was very warm, and the roads dreadfully dusty, we did not feel disposed to go far the first day, particularly as it was late in the afternoon when we started. It so happened, moreover, that we knew very little of the horse, having purchased him only two or three days previously, and we were anxious therefore to initiate him as gradually as possible into the arduous work which he had to perform. Having travelled rather slowly until seven o'clock, we camped in an accommodation paddock at Irish Town, a place distant about eight or nine miles from Liverpool. During this day nothing of interest occurred. The scenery or appearance of the country between Liverpool and Sydney is by no means romantic, as most of your readers are doubtless aware, and we consequently found very little to relieve the tedium of travelling in warm weather, and in one unbroken cloud of dust. Our first business when we camped was to attend to the feeding and hobbling of the horse, and it was not always that this could be done to our satisfaction, owing to the scarcity of grass, especially in the accommodation paddock. At this place both the water and the pasturage were bad; the latter in fact could hardly be used and this we found was a difficulty which attended us throughout the journey. Fortunately however we had provided ourselves with a very simple remedy in the shape of a supply of alum. Even the muddiest water can be made as clear as crystal by mixing with it a small portion of this mineral pounded very fine, say a pennyweight to the bucket. In less than a minute after the alum is applied all the clay and other impurities held in solution coagulates and falls to the bottom, leaving the water above perfectly clear. We found

this in all cases a very effective remedy, except where the water had the taste of the gum leaf or some other vegetable substance - a circumstances which but too frequently occurred. Still it was very consolatory to know that we could procure clear water on all occasions, and I am disposed to think that if this remedy were generally adopted and practised at the diggings, dysentery and other diseases of that kind would not be more prevalent among the diggers than among any other class of the community. With respect to camping, our usual custom was to sleep under the cart, with the tent thrown loosely over it. In the summer time this mode of camping is comfortable enough, but in the winter season, when the ground is wet or damp, it is attended with very serious inconveniences. The business of cooking was, of course, very simple, and devolved upon each member of the party in rotation.

In the morning we resumed our journey, and reached Liverpool about midday. Here we stopped for about half an hour to purchase supplies. We always made it a point (with a view not to burden the horse more than we could help) to purchase at one township only as much provisions as would last us until we reached the next. This, although the most convenient method for us, turned out very expensive, as the prices of nearly all articles of consumption rose higher almost every mile we advanced.

Liverpool is usually a very dull and sombre looking place, but at the time I speak of it appeared to be all life and activity. The number of persons constantly passing through it, bound either for the Ovens or Sydney, had occasioned a very large increase of traffic, of which the inhabitants were all eager to avail themselves. The township itself did not exhibit any signs of improvement. Its appearance, then, was much the same as it was ten or twelve years ago ; but I believe there were several parties about to build, and were only waiting for the necessary supply of labour. Should the existing traffic to the southward continue, there is every probability that Liverpool will yet become a very flourishing and important township. It already contains some brick buildings of a very superior character, among which the old Government Hospital unquestionably takes pre-eminence.

On leaving Liverpool the appearance of the country begins to improve, and you gradually lose sight of the sandstone formation. Instead of the dull thickly-wooded forest, which prevails along nearly the whole line of road between Sydney and Liverpool, a fine open undulating country, adapted to every kind of agricultural purposes, gradually rises into view, and increases in beauty and grandeur as it approaches the dividing range. On both sides of the road you behold the evidences of former cultivation ; but in many cases you look in vain for the traces of produce having been raised from the ground at a recent date. Long grass and weeds had usurped the place of wheat and corn, and there was nothing but the furrows and the circumstance of the ground having been cleared of trees to indicate former cultivation. Upon making enquiry into the cause of this apparently retrogressive state of things, I found that it was attributable, almost exclusively, to the gold discovery. Many of the small farmers had abandoned the pursuit of agriculture for that of gold digging, and those who had not done so were unable to procure labour from the same cause. Thus a very large quantity of the richest and most available land in the colony was allowed to lie idle, and hence the anomalous state of things that whilst all kinds of grain realised the highest prices, but few thought it worth their while to embark in the business of agriculture - a pursuit which in all other countries is considered the chief source of national wealth and greatness.

As one of our party took ill in the course of this day we were obliged to camp early in the afternoon, on the banks of a small streamlet about six or seven miles the other

side of Liverpool. Fortune was more favourable to us this evening than on the previous one, for we had not only plenty of pure water, but also plenty of good pasturage for the horse ; and the place where we camped was private property, at that time occupied by a blacksmith, who, also, made a little money by selling fruit. The charge for the use of the paddock was only sixpence, and as we considered this very reasonable, we determined to patronise his grapes, for which effort of generosity he thanked us very cordially, and expressed a wish that we might all return with fortunes.

During the same day we met several return diggers from the Ovens diggings, all of whom gave widely different accounts, which, as is generally the case, did not tend to enlighten us, or in any way to alter our previous notions. From all we could learn, however, it appeared that the majority had been at Reid's Creek, and had done remarkably well, but they contended that they had taken the last of the gold away, and that it would be folly for any one to go thither after them. Others, again, who had evidently been unsuccessful, denounced the place as a miserable failure, and insisted that all the brilliant accounts which we had heard were promulgated by interested and designing parties. We were of course prepared for these conflicting statements, and were therefore determined that nothing we might hear on the road should deter us from our original design.

The next morning (18th February,) we resumed our journey, the weather being very warm, and the road, as usual, very dusty. The country of the Cowpastures now burst on our view in all its beauty and diversity of scenery its long gentle slopes, and rich alluvial flats which in the distance, in a robe of blue mist, rose majestically that series of gigantic mountains composing a part of what is called the Dividing Range. I now beheld, for the first time, though rather indistinctly, the irregular and somewhat curious features of the famous Razorback. It was with something like a mingled feeling of delight and pain that I contemplated this noble prospect. We had made one serious mistake in the fitting out of our expedition. We had taken with us a supply of tools, which we found could have been purchased more advantageously at the diggings. The consequence was that our horse was over- loaded for so long a journey; and as the roads began to get very bad, we were apprehensive that he would knock up at the first really trying " pinch." I had often heard of the difficulties and hardships of getting a loaded team over the Razorback mountain, and under the circumstances I could hardly expect that we should be more fortunate than others. The first thing that suggested itself was to purchase another horse, but then we were told horses were very scarce along the road, and about three times the price they were in Sydney. This was chiefly owing to the great demand for them by diggers both going to and coming from the Ovens, who were continually knocking up their horses, or finding like ourselves that they had started with too great a load. We therefore determined to go on as long as we could, intending if a good bargain offered to avail ourselves of it.

Passing through Narrellan, we crossed the Nepean River and entered the beautiful village of Camden, about one o'clock. The sight was certainly one of the most gratifying I ever beheld. Never either before or since did I witness an inland town to equal this either in point of picturesqueness or in the regularity and neatness with which it is laid out. It is situated in the centre of a gently undulating country capable of producing in perfection nearly all kinds of agricultural products, and is surrounded by neat little farms and extensive cultivated fields. In the back ground you

occasionally behold a large estate very tastefully laid out, in the middle of which is a large and well built mansion with extensive parks, gardens, and orchards. On the one side is the river just mentioned, remarkable for its flat verdant banks, and clumps of drooping willow which serve to veil its waters from the sun's rays. On the other side, at some distance off, is the range of high mountains of which Razorback is one. They seem like a mass of hills piled one upon top of another, and reach as far as the eye can see both southward and northward. They are the source of a large supply of water which in its numerous courses to the Nepean seems as it were by a gentle process to irrigate the whole of the adjacent land. Altogether the country about Camden is the most lovely and picturesque I ever saw.

In the township every species of business was brisk, and the hotels were crowded with return diggers, who were parting with their money as if they never knew the value of it. None of the buildings are particularly large, but they are generally well built and neatly arranged, whilst the regularity and width of the streets give point and effect to their appearance altogether.

Having lunched at one of the hotels, and written to our wives and friends, in accordance with our usual custom at every post town, we proceeded onward, determining if possible to get over Razorback before camping. The road now began to assume a very ominous appearance, from the number of water courses and deep ruts by which it was intersected, and our apprehensions as to the ability of the horse to execute the journey increased accordingly. To make the matter worse, one of our party became so ill that he was obliged to ride on the cart, a thing which we had agreed not to do, unless in such cases. In about two hours we reached the base of the mountain, and soon saw what we had to contend with from the large number of heavy saplings and logs which were strewn about on both sides of the road. These I found had been used as drags to the teams coming down, in order to prevent a too rapid motion and to ease the burden on the shaft horses. The road is very narrow, and being a sideling it takes a half circuitous half zig-zag course, and is about two miles in length. Large fragments of trap rock crop out at short intervals throughout the whole length from the top to the bottom, causing a sharp rattling sound as the dray or cart passes over them. Sometimes the team is abruptly brought to a standstill from the inability of the horses to pull it over one of these large stones, and the consequence is that the driver has either partially to unload the dray, or to punish his horses to such an extent that they get over the difficulty by an effort of desperation which endangers the safety of the whole concern.

After having well weighed the pros and cons of the matter, we commenced the ascent, two of us pushing behind the cart, and myself driving. To our great astonishment the horse never once jibbed, but lest he should do so, we made it a point to let him rest at the worst parts once every two or three minutes. By this means we managed in about two hours' time to reach the top of the mountain, and I need not say that both ourselves and the horse were pretty well sewed up for the day. The shades of evening had already begun to settle, and as we had travelled since morning about eighteen miles, we determined to camp at the first most convenient place that appeared. This was in a paddock on the summit of the mountain belonging to Mr. Botton, the keeper of the Razorback Hotel. The place is very wild and rugged, and what, seemed rather singular to me was, a somewhat large and luxuriant crop of grain growing on the very pinnacle of the mountain. The

sides of the mountain are exceedingly steep, and are thickly covered with trees and brushwood, and large masses of very hard rock. The view presented of the surrounding country is exceedingly grand in consequence of the vastness, diversity, and beauty of the scenery which are thus brought at one turn within the scope of vision. On the one side you have a most interesting view of the town of Camden, with its extensive fertile and cultivated fields, and its numerous small but neatly built habitations. On the other side you are struck with what appears to be an infinite succession of mountain ranges with occasionally an open space, which from experience you can detect to be either plains or thinly timbered tableland, such as is frequently found along the line of road between Sydney and Melbourne.

As it was a beautiful moonlight evening we amused ourselves until nine o'clock trying to shoot an opossum with a pistol, but after many ineffectual attempt, we were obliged to let him go with his life. The place literally swarmed with these animals, and the noise which they kept up during the greater part of the night was anything but harmonious or agreeable.

The air was rather cool and bracing, owing no doubt to the great elevation of the land, and to this circumstance I think, combined with the fatigue and heat of the day, I owe one of the best night's rest I ever enjoyed.

The next morning, Saturday, the 19th of February, we resumed our journey not a little elated from having so successfully got over Razorback. This circumstance led us to augur favourably as to the practicability of making the journey without purchasing another horse. Razorback is generally represented as being among the most difficult pinches along the whole line of road between Sydney and the Ovens, but although it is certainly bad enough it cannot be compared with many other parts over which we had to pass in the course of our journey.

Before we got quite over the mountain we met the Sydney escort, and as I had a few weeks before witnessed their departure in Sydney for the first time, I was anxious to learn what success had attended the expedition. Upon inquiry I was informed that the quantity of gold brought down on that occasion was 11,000 oz, besides a considerable sum in specie. This, although a large amount compared with the results of subsequent journeys, was not by any means what I expected when I remembered the extravagant hopes that were entertained by many gentlemen concerned in the enterprise. It was very obvious from all we could

see and hear that the system was too good and too costly to work satisfactorily - that unless the most rigid economy were exercised the undertaking would be a failure. To a certain extent I believe the company have profited by experience, and should the Ovens Diggings revive they may yet make a handsome time of it.

The road on leaving Razorback descends into a deep hollow, and for a considerable distance is comparatively level. On both sides are high ranges of mountains, rather thickly wooded, and presenting every diversity of scenery. We could see from the varieties of trap rock, and occasional fragments of quartz which were to be found on the slopes of the mountains, that we were rapidly entering on the gold formation, and the country had therefore a degree of interest for us which might not be experienced by travellers generally.

About mid-day we halted opposite a neat little farm house on the road side, where we procured a drink of pure milk, which to us was a treat of very great value, although we only paid at the rate of sixpence a pint for it. We also met with a person

here who was just returning from the diggings. According to his own account he had been at both Adelong and the Ovens, and his experience was such as to make him regret that he was "ever born." The latter diggings he represented as being perfectly exhausted, and as for Adelong, all that we had ever heard about it was pure fiction. In short our only course was to turn our horse's head and go back. He told us that he had travelled on foot about thirty miles a day, and made a great point of having beaten the escort. On asking him a question as to the geographical position of the Adelong Creek, he gave us to understand that it was nothing more or less than the Tumut River, which we knew to be untrue, and we did not therefore place much reliance on any of the information he had afforded us. In a few hours afterwards we reached Picton, where we stopped for a few minutes to purchase supplies. Picton has no pretensions to be called a town beyond the mere fact of a few houses being grouped together in a very irregular manner. Even these are anything but attractive - the only buildings worthy of the name being a couple of hotels, which completely throw the others into the shade. The situation, however, is rather pretty, and as it appears to be the centre of an important agricultural district, I have no doubt it will go ahead. The place has something of a business-like appearance about it, and when we passed through this was particularly the case in consequence of the increased traffic occasioned by the gold diggings. Soon after leaving Picton we had a very bad road to contend with, there was no evidence of anything having been done to it in the shape of repairs for years past, and the rains had worked deep into it, which rendered the travelling very unsafe for laden teams. At nearly all the bad places along the road we noticed the carcass of a bullock or a horse that had evidently been worked to death and it very often happened that the first intimation we received of our approaching a pinch was conveyed through the nasal organ. About this place we fell in with a party of four, who, like ourselves, were bound for the diggings, and during the greater part of the time kept company with us. It consisted of a man and his son, and a man and his wife, who, it appeared, had been small farmers near Windsor, and had sold out for the purpose of raising sufficient money to fit them out for the diggings. They were all "old hands," and, like most persons of that class, they were full of anecdotes relating to men and things in the good old days of convictism. They detailed to us from time to time a great deal of information which if not very useful was certainly very amusing, and tended much to relieve the tedium of the journey. One of them, who was decidedly the most loquacious of the four, if we except the lady, could give a full and connected history of nearly every prominent man in the colony. Nor, did he hesitate to give his own history, although, it was not such a one as could bear the strictest scrutiny. He made no secret of the cause of his being sent to the colony and seemed to speak with a kind of proud satisfaction of the times when he was "in trouble". There was one point to which he referred with peculiar pleasure, and I considered it a rather favourable indication of his general character, namely, the great length of time he had served as an assigned servant under one master. Like ourselves, they had simply a horse and cart, the latter being an tilted one, and although, they had not so great a load as we had, yet it was evident that the horse had quite enough to do to get over some of the pinches. The lady acted as driver, and I must certainly give her the credit of saying that she performed her duty most admirably. Sometimes the horse would jib, and in that case "Jew," who appeared to be the leader of the party, would step in and inflict severe punishment, accompanied with a volley of oaths. On remonstrating with him for his cruelty, he invariably replied that it was the horse's "roguery," and he was determined to "beat it out of him". After

travelling with them for some time they gradually got ahead of us, and we lost sight of them until the next day.

We reached Myrtle Creek shortly after mid-day, and as this was the only place where we could get water for some distance, we availed ourselves of the opportunity to take lunch and give the horse a feed. The creek at that time had the appearance of being almost dry, and the little water it did contain was hardly fit for use. It had a green sickly hue as repulsive as the taste was nauseous. Still, it was the best that could be got, and when used in the shape of tea it was not by any means so unpalatable as it seemed at first. As for grass, there was hardly any to be found along the road side, and if it had not been for a fine patch of long green grass that we happened to discover under the bridge, the horse would have fared very poorly indeed. The banks of the creek are thickly lined with myrtle, from which circumstance I infer it has received its name. In point of soil or scenery there is nothing very remarkable in the appearance of the country about here.

After having spent an hour or so at this creek, we proceeded on our journey, and camped in the evening in an accommodation paddock at Horne's Inn, Bargo.

THE next morning, Sunday, 20th February, we resumed our journey through Bargo at the usual hour. The day was rather sultry, although the sun only poured forth his effulgence at intervals. Fortunately, however, the road for many miles was a remarkably good one. We passed over a hard gravelly country, thickly covered with iron and stringy bark, and a great variety of underwood. It reminded us very forcibly of the kind of country we had passed over between Sydney and Liverpool. Although rich patches were to be met with here and there, we did not on the whole consider the land adapted to agricultural purposes. Indeed we found it as a general rule, that where the iron and stringy bark abounded to any great extent, the land for the most part was poor and thinly grassed, the surface being hard clay mixed with gravel or sand.

About mid-day we reached Bargo Inn, and being rather fatigued we availed ourselves of the opportunity to stop and dine. The place has a neat cottage-like appearance, and is admirably provided in the way of accommodation.

Having rested an hour here, we proceeded on our journey and camped in the evening at a place called Natti on the banks of a small stream, our distance from Sydney being then 71 miles. Close by was a large and tolerably well-built house, which we were told had once been used as an hotel, but which was now used by Mr. Robert Campbell, M.L.C., as a country residence. Soon after camping this gentleman paid us a visit, and as one of our party was still very ill with lumbago or rheumatism, he kindly furnished us with a bottle of ointment, which proved of considerable service in alleviating the complaint.

The sky was very cloudy during the whole of the afternoon, and in the evening we had a few light showers of rain, which compelled us for the first time to erect our tent. This had to be done after dark, in consequence of the lateness of the hour at which we camped. Had we been even so disposed, it would have been impossible to camp earlier, owing to there being no water within a convenient distance.

Some of the land about here had the appearance of having been once under cultivation, but it was then over-grown, the young trees or saplings and the place altogether had something of the air of a deserted village.

The next morning was ushered in by a cool southerly wind, which had a very grateful influence after the heat of the previous day. The sky was cloudy, but no rain fell ; and the travelling on the whole was rather pleasant. The road, however, was very bad,

and in some places, especially where it was sandy or rocky, a thing which not unfrequently occurred. The scenery although by no means romantic, was more diversified than that which we passed the previous day and the soil was richer and more adapted to agricultural purposes. We could not help noticing, however, what we had often noticed before - the almost total absence of cultivation. Abundance of available, land was everywhere to be met with, but, with the exception of supporting sheep and cattle, it had never been devoted to the uses of mankind.

Occasionally a neat little farm opened upon the view, but the ruined hut, and fields covered with weeds, showed that for two or three seasons at least it had failed to produce its quota of human food. Remembering that we were bound for the diggings ourselves, we could well appreciate the cause of this general desertion and dilapidation.

In a few hours the somewhat novel and neat little town of Berrima burst upon our view; strange to say, the most imposing, if not the most ornamental building in it, is a brick gaol of considerable size. It is situated in the centre of the town, and has a red glaring appearance which cannot fail to attract notice. It is the fruit of the old penal times, and was constructed for the convenience of the Assizes, which were formerly held at Berrima, but which have long since been removed to Goulburn. It is therefore useless, as a gaol "Othello's occupation's gone," - and in passing through the town, I could not help thinking that, with the Court House, it would make a very good establishment for a National school. Some of the other buildings are far from inferior, especially two or three of the hotels. The town altogether is very well situated, and the streets are laid out with something like regularity. The Berrima River, which in a semi-circular form encloses nearly one-half the town, affords an abundant and permanent supply of excellent fresh water. At the time I speak of, there was a good deal of business being transacted in consequence of the number of diggers who were passing to and fro. All kinds of stores were exorbitantly high particularly maize and oats which we could hardly procure at any price.

Having stopped an hour at Berrima, we resumed our journey through a country which, for the first three or four miles, was any but picturesque. As we progressed however the scenery changed, and in the course of the afternoon we passed some fine agricultural land, but as usual there was very little of it under cultivation. This may be owing to the scarcity of water along this part of the road, - a fact to which I can bear practical testimony. We had to travel until near nine o'clock at night before we could meet with sufficient water to enable us to camp. And this was at a wild dreary looking place called Black Bob's Creek, in every respect unsuitable for camping were it not for the water. To add to the unpleasantness of our situation, a person, whom we afterwards found was a National Schoolmaster, came up and informed us that we could not be allowed to put our horse on any part of the adjacent ground. He told us that the property was under his management, and that if we attempted to trespass he would impound the horse. In vain did we plead fatigue and point out the inconvenience of having to travel further in the dark. He was inexorable, and, being driven to desperation, we at length defied him to do his best, and informed him boldly that it was our intention to remain whatever the consequences might be. We were also informed that the property belonged to a person locally known by the appellation of the "Blocker," and who was described to us as a most formidable character.

Having made up our minds to stop at Black Bob's Creek for the night, we determined to put up with all that our friend the schoolmaster could do. The only thing we feared

was the impounding of the horse, for this to us would have been a serious inconvenience, not on account of the expense, but from the fact that there was no pound within a reasonable distance, and we should consequently have been compelled to lose the greater part of the next day to release him. The same consideration also weighed with us in another shape. Notwithstanding the threats alluded to, it did not seem very probable, looking at the badness of the road, that anybody would take the trouble to travel so long a distance in so dark a night, for the mere purpose of impounding a horse. The result proved the correctness of this surmise, for in the morning I found the horse depasturing not exactly in the place where he was put, but in a small paddock adjoining the school-house, a few hundred yards distant. How he got there it was difficult to imagine, seeing that there was hardly a blade of grass in the paddock for him to eat, and looking at the circumstance moreover that he had to go on to the road, and across the bridge over the creek. This little incident brought me into conversation with the teacher, whom I found in far better temper than on the previous evening. He allowed me very courteously to inspect the interior of the school-house, or rather hut, for it is a most miserable rookery to be set apart for so noble a purpose. It is a small slab building, put to-ether in real bush fashion, the daylight being discernible between every slab. I do not remember exactly whether it contains one or two rooms; but, however, this may be, it assuredly does not afford any accommodation as a school-house. It is also used as a teacher's residence, and in this respect the interior economy presents a somewhat amusing spectacle, at all events it did at the time I speak of.

Amidst the scanty array of books, slates, forms, &c., I could occasionally detect a stray frying pan, pint pot, kettle, and other useful articles of the same class. As might be expected, the attendance of pupils was not very numerous, but this is probably no fault either of the teacher or of the school house, as the surrounding; country does not appear to be very thickly populated, and many of the children have a long distance to travel. On the whole therefore, the school does not reflect much credit on the Board of National Education, at the same time I am free to confess after considering the thing in a broad and comprehensive point of view that it is much easier to find fault than to show wherein the efforts of the Board might have been more successful. It seems absolutely necessary, however, in order to ensure the complete success of the National System that some plan should be adopted for facilitating the attendance of children in the country districts. In no country in the world is the population so isolated and dispersed as in this, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that a system adapted to the state of such a country as Ireland should be inadequate to meet the requirements of one like New South Wales. However good the National System may be in principle and in theory, its merits after all can only be appreciated by the extent its practical utility and the amount of education which it is capable of affording. I have no doubt that even with its present limited operation it may fairly compare with any other system on the score of general utility, but this is not enough. In order to deserve the praise that has been heaped on it, to realize the high expectations that were entertained of it, the National System must not only rival but surpass every other system hitherto adopted. How, and by what means, this can be accomplished is a matter for serious consideration, but it appears to me pretty certain that the Board will yet be compelled to fall back upon some cheap and enlarged system of boarding schools for the country districts. This would get rid of what is at present, and always has been, the chief obstacle to education in the interior, namely the distance which children have to travel daily for the purpose of attending school.

The creek near the bridge is a wild rugged looking place, the banks being steep and the stream running over a series of small rocky falls. The surrounding country is somewhat mountainous, and is studded at intervals with large masses of trap-rock, such as are to be found in the channels and banks of the creek.

Notwithstanding this, there is abundance of rich agricultural land in all directions. Although only a very small portion of this land was then under cultivation, it was very evident from the number of small habitations that were to be met with on both sides of the road, and the extensive cleared fields, that it had once been the scene of a considerable population.

Before resuming our journey (Monday, 22nd February) we availed ourselves of the opportunity to purchase a fowling-piece of a party of gold diggers who were returning from the Ovens. Robberies were there of very frequent occurrence along the southern road, and as we had only a couple of pistols amongst the four of us, this additional expenditure was very cheerfully assented to. Fortunately, however, the gun was never required to be used for the purpose of protection, and the only use to which we applied it was that of procuring for us at times a very acceptable meal of wild fowl, thus enabling us to save something for butchers' meat. Pigeons were to be met with in nearly every scrub and stubble field along the whole line of road and as for parrots the forests literally swarmed with them. Wild ducks, although not so numerous, were seen in nearly all the creeks and rivers which we passed. There was, therefore, no lack of sport, but as it was our object to get to the diggings as soon as possible, we did not spend much time in shooting.

The first few miles of the road after leaving Whittle's Inn, near Black Bob's Creek, were worse than any we had travelled previously.

Large ruts or water-courses intersected the roads in all directions, which, combined with the hilly nature of the country, and the large masses of rock which were constantly cropping out, made the travelling this day most difficult and painful. About midday we reached Paddy's River, and took advantage of the abundant supply of pure water to stop and dine. The stream has now very little pretensions to be called a river; at some points a man may easily step across it. But the natural appearances demonstrate that this has not always been the case. The broad flat channel and water worn banks, now covered with grass, show that at one time a large river must have rolled where at present only a small rivulet flows. I am told that it is still subject to very great inundations during the rainy seasons, and yet, strange to say, there is very little provision made for enabling teams to cross it. The miserable structure presented in the shape of a wooden bridge hardly reaches across the channel, and the consequence is that in times of flood a considerable portion of the river must be waded in crossing.

I understand that some parts of the river have been prospected, and small quantities of gold obtained. In some respects the natural indications seem to favour the supposition of its being auriferous, but I could not learn that there were any parties actually digging, or that there was any prospect of a gold field being immediately opened up. I am inclined to think, however, from all I saw and heard, that extensive and profitable gold fields will yet be discovered in many parts of the country along the Southern Road, which are at present hardly dreamt of. But this is a matter which of course must be left to the operation of time. The last two or three years have startled us with wonders - it is not too much to expect that the next two or three will reveal others quite as startling.

After resting an hour on the banks of the river we proceeded on the journey, and camped in the evening at the White Horse Inn, Wingello, having had to travel after nightfall to reach water.

The country about Wingello is rather picturesque, and the land well adapted to the purposes of cultivation. It struck me that the geological appearances here were more indicative of the presence of gold than at any other place along the road we had passed. They are such as I had frequently noted at Spring Creek and many other parts of the Victoria gold fields. Long sloping hills, literally whitened with fragments of quartz, and large granite ridges present themselves in very tempting array to the gold seeker. Like all other gold seekers, however, we were too intent upon our ultimate destination to lose any time in giving the place a trial. The far-famed wonders of Reid's Creek had only just then been revealed, and I believe that even if we had struck upon a moderately profitable gold field here or elsewhere along the road, we should not have been deterred from prosecuting our journey to the Ovens so great was the attraction in that quarter. At the same time I do not think that this was by any means a wise policy, as from my experience I am satisfied that there are hundreds of places along the country over which we travelled, where gold is to be found probably in as great abundance as at any of the gold fields yet discovered. But until parties can be induced to prospect and thoroughly explore these regions, it is not likely that anything will be done in the way of actual discovery.

At the usual hour in the morning we resumed our journey. The road for the first three or four miles was particularly good - a fact which we did not fail to notice after the wretched travelling of the previous day. The next township on the road is Marulan, a miserable looking place with only about half a dozen houses to denote its existence. Were it not for one or two public-houses, which have a rather imposing effect, it would be difficult to trace any reason for calling it a town at all. At the time we passed, however, it had every appearance of doing a thriving business. The stores and public-houses especially were thronged with customers.

The road on leaving Marulan passes over a very hilly country, a good deal of which is remarkable for beautiful and diversified scenery. This is particularly the case at Towrang, where the road passes over a high mountain, and descends through a deep cut into a finely grassed and comparatively level country. On the one side is a series of high mountains, thickly wooded, with numerous creeks and watercourses, whence the beautiful stream of the Wollondilly receives its supply. On the other side is a fine open park-like country, with numerous neat little farms and homesteads, bespeaking an air of comfort and prosperity which we seldom saw equalled during the previous part of our journey. Although you could occasionally meet with a deserted habitation, bearing all the signs of premature decay, yet there was not that general, that lonely and desolate appearance of desertion, which in many other instances we found to be the only characteristic of what were once well tilled and profitable farms. Even at the time I speak of there was a considerable quantity of land under cultivation on both sides of the Wollondilly. The green luxuriant aspect of the land had a very pleasing effect, contrasted with the pure limpid appearance of the stream.

The place where we camped was on the banks of a deep blind creek, which intersects the road at the base of the mountain. It is passable by means of a large wooden bridge, tolerably well-built when compared with the generality of bridges in the interior. Although dry at the time when we crossed it, the channel of the creek has every appearance of being the receptacle of a large volume of water in times of

wet weather. Schistose rocks and fragments of quartz are to be found in considerable quantity in the bed and sides, as also on the slopes of the mountain. On a broad woody flat, a few hundred yards lower down, nestled as it were in the very bosom of nature, is a neat little enclosure which upon examination I found to be the last resting

place of the older settlers and inhabitants of the district. The sight of a grave yard is at all times a subject of melancholy interest to the contemplative mind, but when met with in the wilds of a comparatively uninhabited country - where "all nature dies and lives again," unattended by any of the arts of civilization, the scene is one which awakes the sweetest and most elevated affections.

The next morning (February 24th) we again proceeded on our journey, and in a few hours the beautiful little town of Goulburn burst upon our view. We could see its red brick buildings and the broad plains with which it is surrounded long before we had the pleasure of entering its streets. The road for several miles before reaching Goulburn is nothing but one continuous descent, so that the township at the first glance has the appearance of being situated in a very low flat country, wholly different from anything that precedes it.

Goulburn is admitted on all hands to be the largest and prettiest inland town in the colony, and so far as my humble opinion goes, it well deserves the reputation. The streets, are straight, broad, level, well laid out, and the houses for the most part are neatly and substantially built, some of them are even beautiful in point of architectural arrangement and design. Tho whole place has an air of business activity which at once indicates the extent and importance of the traffic of which it is the chief centre. It is, in fact, the great entrepôt of supply for the whole of the agricultural and pastoral districts or the southern division of the colony.

As we knew there was no other town along the road nearer than Yass (which is distant from Goulburn about sixty miles), where we could make sure of getting supplies, we determined to remain during the remainder of the day in order to make the necessary purchases. We found the stores generally well supplied with all kinds of stock, with the exception of maize and fodder for horses. The former was not to be had at any price, and the latter was so exorbitantly dear as to be almost beyond the reach of persons with limited means.

There was no alternative, however, but to purchase, as we were told - what we afterwards found to be perfectly correct - that nearly the whole country for hundreds of miles along the line of road had been completely denuded of pasturage by the bush fires, which we had already seen raging with fearful violence in different parts of the country between Camden and Goulburn.

Having camped at Goulburn all night we resumed our journey in the morning as soon as we could get our things packed. The road from Goulburn in the direction of Yass passes over a fine open level country, highly adapted to every kind of agriculture.

The trees, which are chiefly box, are proportionately very few in number and generally very large, whilst the pasturage is abundant and of the best description.

There is generally a good supply of water, although at the time I speak of many of the holes were dry, or the water in them was so impure as to be hardly fit for use. In the evening we camped at a large pond, close to the junction of the Maneroo and Yass roads. The grass about here was not very good, as is generally the case in the vicinity of water holes where sheep are in the habit of being depastured. But as the shades of evening were rapidly setting in, and as we did not know where to find water further on, we thought it wiser to remain here than risk the chance of being

compelled to camp without water. Our only course was to give the horse a double feed of oats to make up for the deficiency of herbage.

ON Saturday, the 26th February, we again proceeded on our journey, and in an hour or so after starting entered upon Breadalbane Plains, splendid tracts of level country without a tree, covered with abundance of luxuriant pasturage, and extending for many miles in all directions. They have the appearance of having been at one time the basins of very large lakes, long since filled up by detritus and decayed vegetable matter washed down from the adjacent ranges. Even now some of the lower parts of them are covered with a few inches of water, almost hidden from the view by long rushes and reeds, the resort of hundreds of wild ducks, swans, and other waterfowl. The road over these plains, although very good in the summer time, is almost impassable in the winter, owing to the swampy nature of the ground, which is a black vegetable soil of great depth, and of great tenacity when wet. We heard some very lugubrious accounts of the winter travelling here from a bullock drive whom we happened to meet about half-way across. He told us that he had been many years on the road, and he had seldom or never travelled over those plains in the winter time but it was either snowing or raining. Nothing of this sort however occurred with thus, owing no doubt to the favourableness of the season, although I must confess the travelling was rendered somewhat difficult from a strong south westerly wind, which at times swept with great violence across the plains. There being nothing in the shape of trees or hills to intercept the progress of the wind, we had quite enough, to do to bear up against some of the gusts, much less to make any considerable headway.

On crossing one of the ridges soon after leaving those plains I saw, for the first time along the road, a large vein of quartz, in conjunction with the schist, the lamina of the latter being nearly vertical, as is the case with similar rocks at all the auriferous localities. Granite, trap, and other rocks of a like character were to be found in the neighbourhood. In fact, the general indications were such as to favour the supposition of a gold deposit, but whether in workable quantity is a thing, of course, which can only be guessed at. We had no time, however, to satisfy our curiosity by prospecting, so we passed on, after a brief delay, leaving to those who might follow us the honour and glory of practical discovery.

We travelled until late in the evening in order to reach water, and eventually camped at Dead Man's Creek, a dreary looking plain, being thickly wooded, but fortunately containing abundance of pasturage. The water, however, for which we had travelled so late, was dreadfully bad - in fact, almost stagnant, and was confined to two or three small holes on the eve of becoming totally dry. There was very little evidence of camping, and this was probably the cause of the pasturage being so good, parties always preferring the vicinity of good water for their bivouacs; and to the diggers' horses, who are invariably hobbled close to the camps, is attributable the frequent absence of grass, which distinguishes the water-holes on the road side. On this occasion we had the company of two other parties, who pitched their tents close by. In the course of the evening one of them came over to our fire for the purpose of having a "yarn," and on observing that we were using clear water, he expressed his astonishment, and desired very importunately to know where it was got. He was still more astonished, however, when I told him that the water was taken out of the muddy pools in the Creek, and was purified by the application of a few grains of alum pounded very fine and mixed with the water as I have described on a former occasion.

In the course of the night our neighbours lost their horses, which had strayed so far that they were unable to find them up to the time we left in the morning. Whether indeed they ever found them seems problematical, as horse stealing at that time was very common along the road even in cases where the utmost diligence was observed by the owners.

Soon after resuming our journey in the morning we came upon a steep creek, called the "Black Springs," where to our great surprise we found abundance of pure spring water, the drainage from numerous high mountains to the northwest. This creek was only two miles from our last camping place, and it was only ignorance of its existence that prevented us from choosing it for our camping ground on the previous evening. The bed as well as the surrounding country has every appearance of being auriferous. The ridge and slopes of the mountains are studded with huge masses of granite, and the creeks and water courses are replete with quartz and slate gravel. On the whole, the country has very much the appearance of some parts of the Braidwood diggings, especially as to its mountainous character and granite indications. I never saw any place where the mica abounded to such an extent as in the clay and detritus in the bed of this creek. The sand has a bright glittering appearance, as if it had been strewn with gold dust. I do not mention this fact as being very significant of the presence of gold but merely as indicating a peculiar characteristic in the locality. Although mica is undoubtedly one of the indications of the gold formation, yet, practically, it forms no guide to the gold digger in mining for alluvial gold; in fact, it is regarded as a rather unfavourable sign, particularly in cases where it is met with in abundance. At the same time, I never knew of a gold producing locality in which mica of some kind, and in more or less quantity, was not to be found. The result of my observation and inquiry at this place is such as to impress me with the conviction that, sooner or later, a gold field will be discovered in the neighbourhood of the Black Springs.

Having watered and rested a short time here, we continued our journey, and reached Gunning about midday, and dined at Mr. Grovenor's inn. We found our host very communicative and were highly amused at a variety of anecdotes which he related to us respecting the early history of the township of Gunning, which at present consists of two or three houses, and about as many huts, with a wretched apology for a bridge. The worthy had informed us, en passant, that he was a relation of the Marquis of Westminster, and then proceeded to narrate very carefully the steps that had been taken towards peopling the important township of Gunning, and the surrounding territory, pointing out that he himself was one of the first to open the way in this region to the Anglo-Saxon race. He also informed us of the many vigorous efforts he had made to have Gunning Bridge put into a passable state of repair, and the numerous bitter disappointments he had met with. He had written numerous letters to the Herald on the subject, and he had on one occasion produced a satirical poem on the warden of the district, which had gained him a very extensive celebrity among the townspeople. He rehearsed the poem to us in a manner which could not fail to arrest the attention, if not excite the admiration, of the most unpoetical mind. The only portion which I can at present recall to memory is the following couplet:
Gunning Bridge is broken;
Has his Wardenship come to town?

We had no reason to complain of the accommodation and attention we received at this inn. It was all that could be desired, and it is with feelings of thankfulness that I remember a little net of kindness I received at the hands of Mr. Grosvenor on parting, namely, the present of a few apples, which, although very poor specimens of

fruit, were a great treat to us under the circumstances. Fruit and vegetables are at all times a scarce commodity along the road, and at the time I allude to they could not be purchased at any price.

Gunning, as I have implied, has by no means a very imposing appearance. It is destitute of both streets and houses, and consists of some half-dozen miserable looking buildings thrown together in pitchfork fashion on both sides of the road. Gold, we were informed, had been found in one or two of the adjacent creeks, but whether in sufficient quantity to pay had not been proved. In the evening we camped at a place called the Chain of Ponds, about 165 miles from Sydney. As was frequently the case, we had to travel after dark in order to reach water. The last five or six miles of the road were in a very dilapidated state, and it being pitch dark the walking was anything but safe or pleasant, particularly as the country is very uneven, the road sometimes dipping into a deep ravine and at another time winding precariously up the side of a mountain.

On Monday, the 28th February, we again set out on our journey, determining to reach Yass before dark, which from the Chain of Ponds is reckoned to be 21 miles. We saw a great number of dead bullocks and horses, which had evidently been worked to death by unmerciful drivers and riders. As usual, the carcasses were in the possession of an immense number of crows, who certainly render a great service in ridding the country of such nuisances.

The road for the first few miles passes over a very mountainous country, enriched with every diversity of scenery, presenting at times the most magnificent views of long chains of mountains, high table lands, and rich alluvial plains, disposed in beautiful array, in the blue distance. The day was rather cloudy and the sun only poured forth his brilliancy at intervals. The consequence was that some parts of the landscape were thrown into a deep shade, whilst others were bathed in a bright yellow sunshine, which, when contrasted with the dark and mottled sky above, added greatly to the grandeur and interest of the scene. After crossing these mountains the road descends into a comparatively low country, almost level, and covered with the most luxuriant pasturage. The appearance was more like that of a field of wheat at harvest time, the grass being three or four feet high, and quite yellow with age. On one side of the road, however, the grass had been recently burnt, and there was nothing but the thick black stubble to show that the land had once been equally rich in herbage.

We dined in one of the gorges of the mountains, but having no water we made but a very poor meal, and set out on our journey again with as little delay as possible. The road from the mountains to the Yass River, a distance of five or six miles, is extremely good, and, being a gradual descent, we got over in a very short space of time, and camped on the banks of the river about an hour before sundown. The particular locality is called "Hume's Crossing Place," and is so called from the fact that all the traffic passes over it at this point. The river at different parts is perfectly dry in the summer time, and has more the appearance of a chain of ponds. There is no bridge over any part of it, and if it were not for a few stones which are thrown together in a very rough manner, at the crossing place, the river would have to be waded in nearly all seasons. The country about here is all that the squatter or agriculturist could desire. Splendid table lands and gently undulating plains abound in every direction. As usual, however, about the time I allude to, there was very little of the land under cultivation, although there was abundant evidence of the occupation of the place in the number of small farm houses, and occasional well laid

out homesteads, which were to be met with along the banks of the river. The residence of Mr. Hume, the well-known companion of Captain Hovell, in the explorations which revealed to us the splendid agricultural and pastoral country of Victoria, is particularly worthy of note, both on account of the delightful position which it occupies on the banks of the river, and the judgment and taste with which the grounds are laid out.

The place where we camped is about three miles this side of the township of Yass, and as it afforded every convenience in the shape of water and pasturage, we had no wish to proceed farther, although we might easily have got into the town that evening. There was another consideration which weighed with us. Had we gone into the township, we should have been obliged to put up at one of the hotels, which, in these times involves a very serious expenditure. As it turned out, however, it would perhaps have been, better for us had we adopted this course, for in the morning, when we awoke, the horse was nowhere to be found. For the first time we had put him out unhobbled, thinking from the excellence of the pasturage and openness of the country that he would not be induced to wander far, and if he did, that it would not be very difficult to find him. Unfortunately for us, our anticipations turned out to be ill-founded, and the first thing that suggested itself to us was, that the horse had been stolen, having been informed that the district was celebrated for horse-stealing. Having spent the whole of the day in making an elaborate search, extending over five or six miles, in every direction, we at length gave up all hope of finding him except through the medium of a reward, which we at once offered, thinking that it would be far better to give two or three pounds in this way than to expend £20 or £30 in the purchase of another horse, besides incurring a great loss of time. We were advised to do this by Mr. Hume, who gave us some valuable advice, and who kindly offered to assist us in every way that he could. He also informed us in the course of conversation that gold had been discovered at a place called Blind Man's Creek, about fifteen miles distant from Yass. This information was afterwards corroborated by the return to Yass of two or three parties who had been digging at this creek, and who had brought with them several very fine specimens of coarse gold. The accounts, however, were not sufficiently encouraging to induce us to give up our design of going to Adelong Creek, and eventually to the Ovens, both which diggings were then in the ascendant. The autumn had already begun to set in, and it was a matter of great moment to us to get to the Ovens before the commencement of winter. We felt, therefore, that it would be worse than useless to attempt to stop at any diggings on the road, unless we could do so with a full certainty of finding it advantageous to remove. Such I believe are the considerations which weigh with most people in our position, and it must not be wondered at if rich and extensive gold fields should yet be discovered in tracts of country over which thousands of experienced diggers have travelled before, without ever once attempting to elucidate the fact.

The next day came, but still the horse was not forthcoming, and to make the matter worse, it appeared that there was no horse to be purchased in the district, even at any price. Our only course, therefore, was to wait patiently until fortune favoured us either with the return of the lost one, or with an opportunity to purchase one. In the course of the day myself and one of the party went into Yass, for the purpose of giving information to the police, and whilst doing so we took occasion to examine the pound, in the hope that someone might have done us the kindness - for such under the circumstances it would have been - to place the animal in custody. But no such luck was in store for us, and we were obliged to return to the camp as wise as when

we left it. The township of Yass is much larger than I expected to find it. On the whole it has a very pretty appearance and contains some neat brick buildings and well furnished hotels. On the one side are extensive undulating plains, and on the other very high hills, thinly timbered, but evidently very fertile. It is watered by a bend of the Yass river, which passes in a northerly direction through one part of the town, and then runs in a very serpentine course towards the east, On the third morning of our stay at the crossing place the horse was brought to us by a stockman, to whom we gave the promised reward, I need not say that we were all highly delighted, and lost no time in resuming our journey.

Having reached Yass, we determined to stop there during the remainder of the day for the purpose of getting some repairs done to the cart and providing ourselves with sundry stores, there being no other township of any importance along the road nearer than Gundagai, which is distant from Yass about sixty-five miles.

In the morning we again set out on our course, and about midday arrived at a small picturesque village called Bowning. It is distant about nine miles from Yass, and seems to be a kind of depot for the use of the squatters. It is situated at the foot of a conical mountain of great height and beauty, from which it takes its name. This mountain I was also told forms one of the boundary marks between the settled and unsettled districts of the colony.

The place where we camped in the evening after leaving Bowning was on the banks of a small creek, or rather a chain of ponds. The water was tolerably good, though slightly impregnated with the taste of the gum leaf. The spot which we chose for our bivouac was a considerable distance off the road, well shaded and secluded by the thick spreading foliage of a number of large box trees. Our object in making this selection was partly to procure good pasturage for the horse, and partly to avoid observation from the road, as robberies about this time were of everyday occurrence, especially between Yass and Gundagai. It was only the day before, that we were told by the Yass police of a party of gold diggers on horseback and well armed, having been robbed at Reedy Creek, about fifteen or sixteen miles ahead. The party, about four or five in number, were returning from the Ovens, where they had managed to procure a good deal of gold dust, which they foolishly carried on their persons. On the night previous to the robbery as we were told they paid a visit to a public house, and whilst under the influence of intoxication made a very free exhibition of their wealth. The locale of this public house, as well as of N.- B'-s. a notorious sly grog shop a few miles this side, was very generally regarded at the time as the snug and convenient haunt of a dangerous gang of bushrangers. Whether justly or unjustly, a very strong suspicion was entertained at the time that the robbery was designed and arranged at one of these places, and the circumstances which followed seem to confirm this suspicion. Reedy Creek has now the appearance of a dry water course or a gorge in a chain of mountains, and on the whole has rather a lonely and dreary appearance. In point of secrecy it seems very well adapted to the commission of crime. It is about three miles from the public home. As is usually the case with diggers travelling, several of the party galloped ahead, leaving one, who preferred to ride slowly, to catch them at leisure. Whilst crossing Reedy Creek the party who was behind was suddenly confronted by a gang of armed bushrangers on horseback, who presented their pistols and demanded his gold or his life. The digger however, with a degree, of courage which does more honour to his heart than his head, instantly drew his revolver, and prepared to defend himself at all hazards. The bushrangers finding that the business was not to

be managed so easily as they expected, immediately retreated behind tree, and began to fire upon the unfortunate digger, who defended himself courageously, though unsuccessfully. After discharging the whole six chambers of his revolver without disabling any of his assailants, he was at length brought to the ground by a ball lodged in his thigh from a double barrellled gun. Of course further resistance was impossible, and the robbers immediately rushed upon and rifled him of all he possessed in the shape of silver and gold. Having procured a goodly booty, they lost no time in making a retreat, leaving the wounded man to die on the road. In a short time after, the remainder of the party returned, and had him conveyed to the public house in order that he might receive such treatment as his wounds required, and the nature of the place could afford. From thence he was taken to the Yass hospital, where for some time his life was despaired of, but according to the last accounts we heard of him, he was in a fair way of recovering. Whether the robbers were ever taken, I have not since been able to learn; but I am rather inclined to think they were not, unless indeed the two men now in custody for the murder of Mr. Marcus are a part of the same gang. This murder was committed only a few weeks prior to the robbery I have alluded to and there is good reason for believing that both crimes, as well as most others of the kind which took place about the time I speak of, were perpetrated by one and the same gang.

Soon after camping in the evening one or two of our party set to work to make a fire, and heaped so much dry wool together, that, in a few minutes, the flames might be seen for many miles round, and consequently all effort to conceal ourselves was vain. But as there was another party camped close by us, we did not feel so apprehensive as we might otherwise have been. In the course of the evening, whilst we were seated comfortably round the fire partaking of our evening meal, two stout able-bodied men suddenly came up to us, and requested to be informed how far it was to Bowning. They were dressed principally in diggers' costume - had on high boots, such as are worn by diggers who work in water, together with belts, and were armed with a revolver and a brace of pistols each. The spurs which they wore on their boots evidently showed that they had been riding and that their horses were not far distant. Having been enlightened as to the distance to Bowning, they very deliberately took a survey, first of our- selves, and then of what we were eating, and at length one of them very coolly said, " Mates, we have had nothing to eat all day, and we shall therefore take a little of your supper before we proceed any farther on the journey." I told the fellow quite as coolly that I thought he might have added the words " if you please," or, "if you have no objection," or some expression indicative of a slight sense of politeness, and with this I quietly gripped my pistol, in the full expectation that something serious was about to follow. In fact the same feeling was shared by the whole four of us, and each prepared himself for a defence, if such should be necessary. After having made a kind of indirect apology for "his rudeness, our guest proceeded to inform us - whether truly or not, we never could learn - that he and his mate had been robbed on the previous night at N - B -s', of all the money and gold which they possessed about them, so that they had not the wherewith to procure even a single meal. He stated, however, that they had a deposit receipt at Yass for a large quantity of gold which they had forwarded to Sydney by the private Escort from the Ovens, and that so soon as they arrived at the former township, they would be enabled to raise the necessary funds to carry them to Sydney, whither they were bound. As their story seemed probable enough, under the circumstances we did not feel justified in refusing them such relief as it was in our power to afford, and we accordingly invited them to partake of our humble fare, which they did right

heartily. After supper they drew their horses close up to the camp, and the same gentleman who acted as spokesman in the outset, again addressed us in the following terms:—"I say, mates, its rather dark to travel to night, and we have, therefore, come to the determination of taking a snooze at your fire." Before we had time to say anything in reply, he and his mate threw themselves down by the fire, and addressed themselves to sleep. As the case stood we did not know how to act. It was quite true that the night was exceedingly dark, and we knew, from experience, that the road was not such a one as could be easily traced after night fall. It was therefore determined to let them remain, although we could not but feel that the whole affair was rather mysterious. In the course of the evening one of our party recognised the person who spoke to us first, as a digger he had seen working on the Braidwood gold fields, and although he knew nothing of his general character, still this circumstance tended materially to allay our suspicions. In the morning our friends, after having breakfasted, took a cordial leave of us, expressing themselves very grateful for the kindness they had received, and hoping the day would arrive when they would be enabled to return the compliment in like manner, an act of kindness which we hoped our circumstances would never require.

In about half an hour after we also set out on our journey, and reached Reedy Creek early in the afternoon, where we availed ourselves of a good supply of water, to stop and dine. On resuming our journey, we saw Mr. Thompson, the landlord of the Sun, who confirmed nearly all the particulars we had heard of the late robbery, and also told us of other robberies having been committed near Gundagai. In the afternoon we crossed Jugyong Creek, which at the time was perfectly dry, but its broad sandy channel clearly showed that in seasons of wet weather it conveys a large volume of water into the Murrumbidgee, which is distant about half a mile from the crossing place, in a direct line. In the evening we camped on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, which was the first really noble river we had seen along the whole line of road.

With the return of morning, we again set out on our journey, keeping the beautiful stream of the Murrumbidgee on our left. The road for several miles is remarkably good, passing as it does over a series of broad flats which line the banks of the river. The scenery at different parts is exceedingly fine, and the land is all that the squatter or agriculturist could desire. I had long heard of the rich alluvial flats on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, but I was not prepared to witness the large basin, which many parts of the river present. Its course, like that of most rivers, is extremely serpentine. Occasionally it passes through a country as level as a bowling green, and at other times it winds its way through immense mountains, so closely piled together, as to render the course of the river wholly undistinguishable even at a short distance. Such is the case along the line of road which we were now travelling. In two or three hours after starting, we noticed the river take a sudden turn to the left, and apparently became lost in a maze of mountains. Immediately after we found ourselves ascending a very abrupt ascent, called Cooney's Hill. This was unquestionably the worst part of the road we had yet travelled, and for the first time after crossing Razorback we began to doubt the ability of our horse to make the journey. There could not have been fewer than a dozen different roads over the mountain, but they were all so dreadfully steep, and so cut up by the rains, that it was utterly impossible to decide at a glance which to adopt. At length we managed, by dint of great exertion, to get about three parts of the distance up, when the horse suddenly came to a dead stop and obstinately refused to go any further. This is undoubtedly the most critical part of the ascent, as the road passes over a narrow

ridge of the mountain, one side of which is extremely precipitous, and had the horse made a false movement it would inevitably have fallen, cart and all, into the river. As it was, we had a very narrow escape, through the horse backing in a sidelong manner. Indeed, I feel persuaded that, if it had not been that three of us were pushing behind with all our might, we should never have brought either the horse or cart to the Ovens. All our whipping and shouting was fruitless, and it was not until we had spent a good half-hour, in testing practically the various modes of driving, that we succeeded in getting the horse and cart to the top of the hill. In the evening we camped about five miles from Jugiong town, which consists simply of one public-house. In the course of the next day we crossed another hill, called Money Money. The road is very bad, but the pinch is not nearly so sharp as the one on Cooney's Hill. The scenery along the whole of this road is highly picturesque, and the land in many places equal to any I have seen. The rocks which indicate the gold formation are to be found in great abundance in many of the creeks and watercourses near Money Money, but I am not aware that gold has been found in any of them, though there were traces of some of them having been prospected.

Towards evening, we again came in sight of the Murrumbidgee, and ultimately camped on its banks, within half-a-mile of the ill-fated township of Gundagai, which had recently been reduced to ruins by the flood. It rained heavily during a great part of the night, and as the ground was consequently very damp, our situation was by no means pleasant. It was, therefore, with pleasure that we hailed the return of morning, although it was still raining. Towards noon, however, the clouds began to break up, and in the afternoon we had a few hours of sunshine.

Whilst passing through the township of Gundagai we could not help noticing with some degree of interest the ruin and devastation which had been occasioned by the flood. On every hand were to be seen deserted and roofless habitations, dilapidated fences, trees torn up by the roots, &c, all bearing testimony to the dark and dreary night on which so many human beings, including whole families, had perished. What struck one as being somewhat remarkable was the fact that some of the places swept away by the flood had been re-built, and were actually occupied as stores and residences. One would have thought, after the memorable catastrophe referred to, that the inhabitants would have profited by the lesson, and selected safer ground for their habitations. The flood of last year, which I am told rose three or four foot higher than the previous one, must I imagine have convinced them of the folly and danger of adhering to the old site. The only wonder is that such a place should have been ever dreamt of as the site of a township; where the houses have been chiefly built is a broad flat, situated between the main body of the river, and an arm by which it is completely enclosed. It has all the appearance of being periodically subject to inundation, and the highest part of it cannot be many feet above the level of the water when in the driest seasons. Although, as I have said, a few of the old habitations had been reconstructed, and were in actual occupation, still the majority of the inhabitants appear to have adopted a more prudent policy, for at the time we passed several new houses had been built on the slopes of the hills, and others were in course of erection. It is strange, however, that some of the most prominent business places were still on the old site, such, for instance, as the post office, kept by a highly respectable storekeeper, and one of the most frequented and best conducted inns.

The river at Gundagai is a fine broad stream, though rather shallow at some places. The current is rapid, though not remarkably so. We crossed by means of a large punt, for which we had to pay 10s., a charge which appeared to us rather exorbitant.

The punt, however, is kept by a private party, who, of course, has a right to make any charge he thinks proper. But, it is a matter well worthy of consideration, whether the Government ought not to follow the example of the Victoria Government, and take the management of these punts into their own hands. It seems very unjust and impolitic that the traffic of the great Southern road should be subjected to so heavy a taxation for the mere purpose of private aggrandisement. As an instance of the economy practised about these matters on the Victoria side, I may observe that it did not cost us more than 1s. for crossing the Goulburn, a river quite as wide as the Murrumbidgee at Gundagai.

The road, after crossing the river, passes over a very low swampy flat country, which in wet weather renders the travelling extremely difficult. In the evening we again camped on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, about three or four miles from Gundagai. The night was exceedingly wet, as was also the greater part of the next day. All our things were literally drenched, and it was with very great difficulty that we could manage to make up enough fire to boil our tea in the morning. We waited until about noon in the hope that the rain would abate, but finding that it was likely to increase, we at length determined to proceed. The result, however, was such as to convince us of the imprudence of attempting to travel a road like this in wet weather. The ground was so slippery that the horse could scarce keep his feet, and the consequence was that he jibbed at nearly every little pinch. On one occasion we found it utterly impossible to get him up the banks of a small water course, and we were at length obliged to unload the cart and take the things up ourselves. This was done, too, whilst the rain was pouring down in torrents. On looking over the notes jotted down at the time, I find it took us five hours to travel five miles. Fortunately the weather cleared up about five o'clock, and having reached the junction of the Tumut and Port Phillip Roads, we resolved to camp, in order that we might have sufficient time to get up a largo fire and dry our bed clothes before retiring to rest. The junction of the two roads takes place almost where the Adelong Creek joins the Murrumbidgee. I shall reserve any description of this creek and its diggings, for a future number.

ADELONG CREEK.-In consequence of the very flattering accounts which we received of the new diggings but recently discovered on the Adelong Creek, we were induced to pay them a visit, more especially as the distance from where we were camped did not exceed thirty miles.

The road to the Adelong Diggings, or more properly speaking, the Tumut road, turns off from the main line about five miles beyond Gundagai. For a considerable distance it passes along the banks of the Adelong Creek, which for several miles from its junction with the Murrumbidgee, is lined with fine broad alluvial flats, very richly and abundantly grassed. On some of these flats are small farms, rather neatly laid out, though by no means extensively cultivated. I could not help thinking, as I had often thought before, that there must be something radically wrong in the system which allows so much valuable land to lie idle, whilst we are mainly dependent on foreign countries for our supplies of bread stuffs.

About six or seven miles onward the road turns off suddenly to the eastward, leaving the creek to the right. The country along here is very hilly, but the land is fertile and covered with abundance of good pasturage. In all directions high mountains burst upon the view, and you begin to wonder how it is possible that any vehicle can pass over such a country. After travelling uphill for several hours, we found ourselves descending gradually until we reached the Gilmore Creek, a tributary of the Tumut

River, with very high and, at some places, precipitous banks on each side. Near this the road to the Tumut township takes a sudden turn to the right, and the road to Adelong follows up the course of the Gilmore for a few miles, and then falls into a broad watercourse, which takes its rise in the Adelong mountains to the north-west. Having travelled for three or four miles along this watercourse, we arrived shortly before sunset on the second day after leaving Port Phillip road, at the base of a very high mountain, or rather range of mountains which overlook the principal part of the diggings. Here we camped for the night, as we could see no possibility of getting the cart over the mountain without assistance. The road is almost impassable even for an empty vehicle, owing to its sidling character, and the abruptness of the ascent. We were not certain, moreover, whether we should find these diggings sufficiently attractive to induce us to remain, and as we were only a mile distant, it was ultimately arranged that the horse and cart should remain where they were and that two of us should proceed to the scene of operations on the following day and report upon the best course to be adopted. The accounts received from different parties during the day were by no means favourable, but as similar reports had been circulated of some of the richest diggings, we were determined to satisfy ourselves by personal inspection. The night was rather showery, but as we managed to get our tent pitched, we did not experience much inconvenience in consequence.

In the morning, myself and another of the party proceeded to the Adelong Creek, where we found several tents pitched, and two or three groups of parties at work. Most of the tents had been but very recently pitched, and on making inquiry we found that most of their occupants, like ourselves, had only visited the diggings for the purpose of acquiring information, and had very little hope of being induced to remain. Of those persons whom we saw, very few were actually at work. Of the remainder, some were washing their clothes, some baking or cooking, and a few prospecting or looking out. Judging from outward signs, we could discover no disposition on the part of any of the diggers to remain. Everything wore a transitory and unsettled aspect. The information we received from the first two or three parties we spoke to was far from encouraging; but learning that there were groups of parties working at short intervals for five or six miles upwards, we resolved to proceed a little farther, and judge for ourselves.

Adelong Creek at the diggings is very different from what it appears near its junction with the Murrumbidgee. Very high precipitous banks on both sides forming an angle with the bed of the creek, take the place of those low, broad, and well-grassed flats, which mark its course in the outset. Rugged mountains, studded with large masses of granite rocks, tower in thrilling grandeur on both sides, and the small but rapid current of the Adelong wanders over an extremely rocky and uneven bed, more in the form of a cataract than a stream. Large boulders of granite and slate, that is large masses of rock worn into an oval or circular shape by the water action of ages, frequently choke up the channel, and give to the stream a zig zag shape, which is not without its advantages to the gold digger, inasmuch as it is in these angles or points, thus rescued from the bed of the creek, where the richest deposits are generally found.

Having travelled for about five miles up the creek, and procured all the information which it was possible to get from the various parties at work, and from a careful inspection of what was being done, we satisfied ourselves that the Adelong, whatever it might be in the summer time, was not the place where we should winter. The diggings then (March, 1853) were all in the bed of the creek, and would therefore be subject to inundations during the rainy season, and in the absence of dry

diggings, we of course foresaw that mining operations would at times be entirely suspended. That dry diggings would sooner or later be discovered, either on the Adelong or its vicinity, was by no means improbable, as the indications in some of the gulches and watercourses in the ranges were generally admitted to be exceedingly favourable. It was our impression at the time, however, that no dry diggings of any importance would be discovered on the banks of the creek, owing to their steepness ; and I am not aware that anything has occurred since to alter this impression.

The next day I and another of the party returned to the diggings, for the purpose of taking two or three prospects, the issue of which was to decide whether we should remain or not. For this purpose we selected what were generally reputed to be the richest localities; and although we found gold, it was in such small quantities as to give us no hope of our being able to make it yield more than ordinary wages. It is true that a few parties were said to be doing remarkably well, and I have no doubt that the majority were making good wages ; but the character of the diggings, on the whole, was not such as to induce us to remain, especially as we had already made preparations for persecuting our journey to the Ovens. At the same time, I would be sorry, upon these limited data, to express any adverse opinion of the general capabilities of the Adelong as a gold bearing district, seeing that the diggers at the time I allude to were merely in their infancy, and the surrounding country had not even been explored. On the contrary I think it is highly probable that a rich gold field will yet be discovered in that neighbourhood. The facts already made known of gold having been discovered not only at the Adelong, but on the Gilmore, the Tumut, and several other places between Tarcutta and Adelong, go to prove that the whole of this country, for hundreds of miles, is auriferous - a conclusion which I believe is also borne out by the scientific explorations of that eminent geologist the Rev. W. B. Clarke.

The next morning we resumed our course, and on the evening of the second day camped once more on the beautiful alluvial flats of the Adelong near its junction with the Murrumbidgee, and at the point where the Port Phillip Road crosses it.

Having spent a week in visiting Adelong Creek, we determined to proceed to the Ovens with as much despatch as possible. Accordingly, on the 18th March, 1853, we resumed our journey on the main road, and travelled along the course of the Murrumbidgee until the evening, when we camped for the last time on its banks. The country over which we passed along in the course of the day is, in many parts, the most beautiful and picturesque I ever beheld. The broad level banks of the Murrumbidgee, covered with a rich green sward, which ever and anon meet the eye, appear more like tastefully laid out parks and lawns, in some magnificent estate, than the wild unreclaimed lands, such as the traveller might reasonably expect to find in the interior of this country. The river itself is lined on each side with swamp oak trees - whose tall straight trunks and dark green foliage bending gracefully over the channel, and sheltering its waters from the burning rays of the sun, have a splendid effect in the general view of the landscape. The stream on the whole is broad and deep, and to all appearances could be easily made navigable for small steamers. The bars which are occasionally met with, and the large trees which have fallen into the river in the course of time, might render the navigation difficult, if not impracticable in the outset ; but it appears to me that these are difficulties which might be removed without much labour or expense.

At some of the angles, the beach, (if we may so call it) is covered with pebbles of every variety of shape, texture, and colour, all bearing the traces of long and powerful water action. The immense quantity of slate and quartz fragments, to be found in some of the long bars, induced us to believe that the river in many places contained gold, but want of time precluded us from giving it more than a superficial trial.

After we had dined, about twelve o'clock one of our party swam across the river and back again for a wager. The task was more than he was well able to perform, and in consequence he was ill nearly all the afternoon.

We camped at a place called Mundarlo, where there is a tolerably neat verandah cottage which we were told was to be opened as an inn. The situation is a good one, and as public-house accommodation, is very much required along this part of the road, I have no doubt the venture will prove a profitable one. Within a few yards of our camp was a, small enclosure, which, upon enquiry, I found to be the grave of a woman who had died from the effects of injuries received from the bolting of a horse and cart. When the accident occurred, she was taken into the house referred to (then occupied by Mr. Mitchell, the proprietor), where she received every attention which it was in the power of that gentleman to bestow. Unfortunately, however, no medical practitioner could be induced to attend in consequence of the great distance of the locality from any place where a medical man could be found, and, she, therefore, lingered in intense agony for four or five weeks, when she died.

After tea we had a long chat with a very old hand, who had been with Hovell and Hume, when those gentlemen first explored the country over which we were travelling. His account of the difficulties and dangers to which they were subjected was highly interesting, and not a little so from the fact, that it was given in a very quaint and homely manner. His description of the country, as it appeared, when he first saw it, at once convinced us that there had been no material alteration in its general features; saving an occasional squatting station, or an isolated farm there is nothing in the whole of this part of the interior to remind one of civilization, or to indicate that its primeval wildness had ever been intruded on by the footstep of the white men.

In the morning I saw the proprietor of the station, who told me that gold had recently been found at a place called Ellis's Creek, about four or five miles distant. He admitted that as yet nothing very wonderful had been done, but he was very sanguine that the place was rich in the precious metal, and that it only required population and enterprise to develop it. I have no doubt that this statement was perfectly true, for we afterwards learned that there were several parties at work at the new diggings, all of whom had fair prospects of doing well. We had to cross the creek in an hour afterwards, and could not help noticing the auriferous character which it presented. Still, as we had passed many other creeks and gullies quite as favourable in appearance, and as we had already made one unsuccessful adventure in our trip to the Adelong diggings, we did not think it would be prudent to make a second attempt, more especially as the winter was approaching, and our only hope of being able to do anything at the wet diggings on Reed's Creek depended on our being able to get there in the summer time.

The road from where we camped to Tarcutta is exceedingly mountainous, and in a shocking bad state of repair. Fortunately the weather was dry when we travelled it, otherwise I do not think it would have been possible for us to have got the vehicle over many of the ravines and mountain ridges which intersected our course. What seems remarkable is that all the creeks and watercourses have to be waded, or

scrambled across just as nature may direct. There is hardly the sign of a bridge, cutting, or an embankment throughout the whole line of road for nearly two hundred miles. When once you leave Goulburn, you bid good bye to all bridges and all works of art in the way of road improvement.

The township of old Tarcutta, which is about 330 miles from Sydney, consists of three or four houses, and a few sheds. The principal house is an inn, though it has no pretensions whatever to architectural beauty. The accommodation however is tolerably good, and the host and attendants are inclined to be obliging. The situation of the township is on the banks of a large creek, with very steep sides. The scenery is very beautiful, and the place altogether well adapted to the purposes of an inland town. After camping in the evening, we amused ourselves fishing in Tarcutta Creek, but one cod was all the sport which we secured.

The post-office is kept by Mr. Mates, at New Tarcutta, a place about five or six miles further on. As regards the buildings and the amount of business transacted, the new township of Tarcutta far exceeds the old one, though I cannot say that there are more than half a dozen decent houses in it.

One thing which struck us as being very remarkable was the dearness and scarcity of vegetables along the whole line of road. With abundance of land, rich as any in the world, and with every facility for cultivating it, one would have thought that the residents on the road side, especially the occupants of small farms, would have found it not only convenient but profitable, to grow vegetables for sale to the passers by. But so far from this being the case, I think I can venture to say, that not one out of every fifty of the residents on the road ever think it worth his while to grow even a potato for his own use. With the exception of a few very rare occasions, we were compelled to live upon nothing but damper, beef, and mutton, during the whole time we were on the road. Upon making inquiry into the cause, I found that the same reasons were assigned for the non-cultivation of garden produce, as were assigned, for the almost total absence of every other branch of agriculture. In some instances we were told that labour could not be got to till the ground, in others that the occupants of small farms found the pursuit of gold digging more congenial to their notions of life ; but the chief and most convincing reason was the want of a cheap and rapid means of transit. Without this important desideratum, the richest and most beautiful lands in the colony are of no avail for agricultural purposes. Like most other inhabitants of towns who have not had an opportunity of judging from personal observation of the difficulties attendant on the conveyance of produce to market, from the interior of this country, I was full of crude and romantic ideas with respect to the happiness of being the possessor of a small farm on the alluvial flats of the Murrumbidgee, or in some other part of the interior equally fertile and beautiful. I confess, however, that those ideas underwent a considerable change, when I beheld the number of uncultivated farms and tenantless habitations which present themselves along the whole line of road, the most of which are rendered unprofitable from the enormous cost of carriage, which in the winter time rises to as much as £60 and £100 per ton. There can be no doubt that it is this one consideration which so materially restricts our progress in agriculture, and renders it cheaper for us to import our bread-stuffs from foreign countries, than to raise them from our own magnificent resources. Knowing these things, I can easily understand the origin and the cause of our earlier colonists falling back upon what may be called the nomadic pursuit of squatting, and can also understand how vain - how suicidal is the cry of those who would wrest the lands from the squatters for the purpose of subdividing

them into small farms to be scrambled for by all classes of the community. So long as the country remains destitute of railways, or other cheap and rapid means of transit, I believe that no greater calamity could befall the community than would be the subdivision of the squatting runs into small farms, for this would indeed amount to nothing less than a "locking up" of the lands of the colony - a virtual consignment of them to uninterrupted sterility. It is true that by such a system every man might have "a stake in the country" - that is if a "stake" implies a few acres of land, but of what use would such a possession be, if the possessor could not turn it to account for agricultural purposes in consequence of the high price of carriage. It would be altogether too small for grazing, and I do not know of any other pursuit to which it could be applied. The only result would be that the main staple of the colony - the chief source of our past, if not present, prosperity would suffer complete annihilation without any countervailing advantages being substituted. Every one of the 60,000 or 70,000 inhabitants of Sydney might have the honour and glory of calling himself a landed proprietor, but it does not follow a bit the more for this that he could ever realise those poetical enjoyments, that refined social happiness, and respectable worldly prosperity which are understood by the words "living under the shade of one's own fig tree." Nine hundred out of every thousand would find themselves in the position of some of the competitors in the celebrated Bank Lottery, who got for their prizes a few allotments of land on the Hastings, which upon examination were found to be perfect blanks, so far as they were available to their owners for any useful purpose.

The country after leaving Tarcutta presents very little in the shape of variety of scenery. Splendid level table lands, thinly timbered with box, richly grassed, extending for twenty or thirty miles in all directions, with an occasional range of mountains form the chief feature in the country between Tarcutta and the Murray. On Wednesday, March 23rd, 1853, we reached the Little Billy Bong, a beautiful small stream, running through a magnificent open country, covered with the most luxuriant pasturage. Finding one or two parties encamped here with their tents neatly pitched, as if they intended to remain for some time, we took occasion to enquire the reason, and found that they were prospecting. As is usually the case with persons so circumstanced they were not very communicative, but we learnt enough from them to satisfy us that they had found gold, though not in sufficient quantity to pay. We saw the holes, they had dug, which were all confined to one spot and therefore could not afford a fair criterion of the general character of the place as a gold field. The indications however are favourable, and I think there is good reason to believe that if the place were well prospected rich and extensive diggings would be discovered. But like most other people under the same circumstances we were too intent upon reaching our destination to spend any time in prospecting, more especially as the other parties had informed us that it was their intention to proceed on their journey the next day.

On Thursday we passed what is called "Table Top Mountain," a spur of a very high range of mountains. In the distance it presents a very remarkable and interesting appearance, from what appears to be a large square tower or battlement placed on the highest part of it. The top of this singular eminence is perfectly level, from which circumstance no doubt the mountain takes its name. In consequence of the great elevation, and strongly marked character of the table, it may be seen at an immense distance off, and the scene altogether is one of exceeding grandeur and sublimity. In the evening we camped at Mullingandry, which consists of an inn and two or three scattered farm houses. We were now about 18 miles from Albury, and about 40 from

the Ovens diggings. Fatigued and worn out by a long journey over wretched bad roads, it was with no small degree of pleasure that we reflected upon the short distance which we had now to travel. It was therefore with renewed vigour that we resumed our journey in the morning, determining, at all hazards, to camp in the evening on the banks of the Murray, the boundary between the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. The road from Mullingandry to the Murray, is almost a continuous though gradual descent, and passes over some of the most beautiful and fertile land in the colony. We noticed several refreshment tents and one or two farm houses on the road side, all of which reminded us that we were on the outskirts of a town of considerable importance. Accustomed as we had been for many days past, to travel through a dreary and almost uninhabited wilderness, I felt some degree of gratification when I again beheld the signs of civilization which were presented in our approach to the town of Albury. We arrived at this place about six o'clock on Good Friday evening, and camped on the banks of the Murray close to the punt.

Being Good Friday, nearly all the stores and other places of business were closed, but there was no lack of evidence in the general appearances of the place to convince us that Albury is one of the most populous and flourishing of our inland towns. It is situated on one of the broad flats of the Murray River, and can boast of several well built and commodious brick hotels, besides a number of very respectable looking stores or shops. It has one draw-back, however, there is no church, so far as I could learn, although the population cannot be less than from 1500 to 2000. It is frequented by a great number of the Murray black fellows, and on the occasion alluded to, I saw about thirty or forty of them nearly all of whom were drunk, as were also I regret to say, not a few of the towns-people. After dark the camp fires of the blacks could be seen in all directions on both sides of the River. Many of them camped within a few yards of us, and kept up a corrobory all night, much to our annoyance and disgust.

In the morning, I observed within a few yards of our bivouac, an old box tree enclosed by a neat fence, and on going up to it, I found that it was one of the marked trees of Messrs. Hovell and Hume, when they discovered the Murray in their overland expedition to Port Phillip about thirty years ago. It bore the following inscription, "Hovell and Hume, 17th November 1824." The letters are cut into the wood, and although age has done something towards defacing them, they are still quite legible, and likely to continue so for some years to come. The tree, however, is very much defaced, the butt being cut and chopped all over in a most unsightly manner. Many of the branches have been lopped off for the purpose, no doubt, of prolonging the existence of the tree ; but it is very clear from the faded and sickly aspect of the few green boughs which adorn it now, together with the signs of decay in various parts of the trunk, that the period of dissolution cannot be many years distant.

It therefore becomes a question whether the people of Albury ought not to mark the spot, by, erecting on it a more enduring monument, in commemoration of that noble and chivalrous spirit of enterprise which opened up for them so valuable and so splendid a country.

On the 27th, we again started on our course, and were in a few minutes conveyed by the punt into the colony of Victoria. The Murray is certainly the finest and longest river I have ever seen in either of the two colonies, although at one place near Albury it can be forded in the dry season; still the river generally speaking is very broad and deep, and apparently quite navigable for small steamers. In the winter time, the water rises very high, and inundates its low swampy banks for about a mile on the

Victoria side of Albury. At many other points of the river, the same process of natural irrigation occurs, so that in reality the Murray may be looked upon as a second Nile, whence large and beautiful tracts of country derive extraordinary fertility and richness.

Soon after crossing the Murray, we came upon the Wodonga Creek, over which there was a large and substantial wooden bridge in course of erection, in the room of one which had been carried away by the flood of the previous year. The ground between this creek and the Murray is very low and swampy, and exceedingly difficult to travel over in wet weather. At this point, the road to the Yacandando, the first of the Ovens diggings, turns off from the old Port Phillip line, leaving the latter to the right.

After two days of difficult and tedious travelling, over a rough and mountainous country, we had the pleasure of finding ourselves safely encamped on the main point of the Yacandando diggings, where we determined to try our fortune at the bed claims for two or three weeks.

References:

- Part 1 – SMH, 22nd October 1853, p4c6-7.
- Part 2 – SMH, 31st October 1853, p3c1.
- Part 3 – SMH, 10th November 1853, p5c1.
- Part 4 – SMH, 26th November 1853, p5c1.
- Part 5 – SMH, 10th December 1853, p4c3-4.
- Part 6 – SMH, 31st December 1853, p5c6.
- Part 7 – SMH, 5th January 1854, p7c2-3.
- Part 8 – SMH, 20th January 1854, p3c3.
- Part 9 – SMH, 6th February 1854, p5c2-3.
- Part 10 – SMH, 7th March 1854, p2c7.
- Part 11 – SMH, 15th April 1854, p4c7-p5c1.
- Part 12 – SMH, 26th April 1854, p5c3.
- Part 13 – SMH, 9th June 1854, p2c1-2.