

LIFE  
OF  
CHARLES  
STURT

SOMETIME CAPT. 39TH REG<sup>T</sup> AN AUSTRALIAN  
EXPLORER

BY  
MRS NAPIER GEORGE STURT

'One equal temper of heroic hearts  
Made weak by time and fate,  
but strong in will To strive, to  
seek, to find, and not to yield'

Tennyson: *Ulysees*

*WITH PORTRAITS AND MAPS*

LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER, CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
1899

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Wm. K. B. 1842

*Charles Stuebe*  
Aetate suae circa 54.  
From a painting by Crossland.

The Rev. Charles Stuebe, D.D., of the University of Michigan.

120°

130°

140°

150°

10°

10°

# AUSTRALIA

## DIAGRAM OF STURT'S EXPLORATIONS

Scale of Miles  
0 100 200 300 400

Tropic of Capricorn

Sturt's  
Northwest

Brisbane

Perth

30°

30°

Sydney

Adelaide

Melbourne

Port Phillip

PACIFIC OCEAN

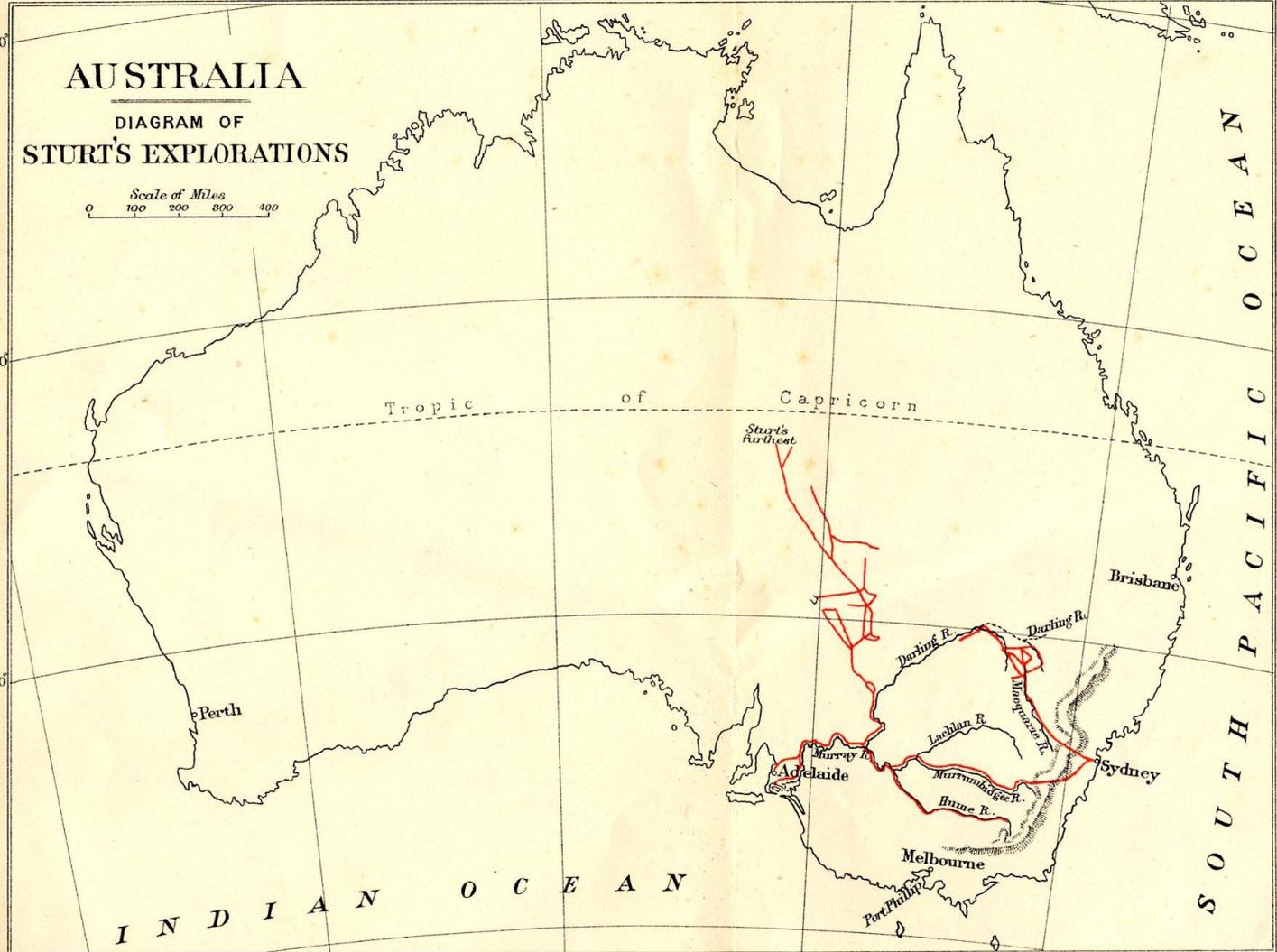
INDIAN OCEAN

110°

120° Long. E. of Greenwich. 130°

140°

150°



TO THE  
MEMORY OF CHARLES STURT

## PREFACE

'Every work of man,' says the Saga, 'needeth the helping hand'; and but for many a helping hand, the story of Charles Sturt's life must have remained untold.

The losses by wreck and by robbery of Sturt's drawings, diaries, and letters, and the disappearance of writings which occupied him in his last years, have caused a dearth of written document which is not compensated by the usual amount of oral tradition.

It is difficult to believe how little known to his generation was a man whose long life had been so eventful. Still more incredible seems the ignorance of his own family about many details of his career. The explanation lies in Sturt's extreme reticence on his own history. He was wont to say that no man who was good for anything ever talked about himself. So consistently did he carry out this theory that Canon Spens, who at Dinan felt for him a boy's warm hero-worship, and describes the zest with which he joined in young folks' pursuits, yet laments this extreme reserve on personal matters. Of himself he never spoke. . . . Often have I longed to hear from his own lips something of his experiences, but never once did I hear him speak of his life or travels.'

In his own works however the 'Two Expeditions' of 1828-30, the unpublished Overland Journey of 1838, the 'Central Expedition' of 1844-1846), Sturt has unconsciously laid the foundation of his life-story.

With these works, on perhaps too low an estimate of the reader's patience, every liberty has been taken, even to the suppression, except for emphatic passages, of inverted commas and asterisks which, in the face of wholesale yet abridged quotation, become a mockery. But the books and despatches, though ruthlessly shortened, are also supplemented by fragmentary MS. notes which, with sundry letters, recollections, and family stories, are contributed by the explorer's three surviving children, Colonel Napier George Sturt, R.E., General Charles Sturt, and Miss Charlotte Eyre Sturt. Lady Sturt in her last years often talked of her early Australian experiences; and the stories of those days and of the voyages to and fro were mostly told by her, though without any idea of ultimate publication. For some of these stories, as well as for the letters to Sturt's brother William, we are indebted to that brother's children, the Misses Charlotte and Emily Sturt of Hillside, Wimborne, and Mr. Neville Sturt of the India Office; useful papers are also contributed by Mrs. Napier Sturt, of the Priory, Folkestone.

To Mr. Burke-Wood of Moreton Hall, and to Mrs. Howard of Broughton Hall, son and daughter of Archdeacon Wood, and emphatically to the Archdeacon's grand-daughter, Miss Stephanie Burke-Wood, are due our thanks for the loan of the Wood and Wilson papers, saved by them from destruction. Such a framework as those archives furnish to the opening pages, the conclusion owes to the letters kindly lent by Lady MacLeay, Lady Cooper, and Mr. Frederick Peake.

To Lady Fox-Young, to Miss Gawler of Quarndon, Derby, to Mrs. Nichols, and to Mr. James Smith (of Adelaide) we are obliged for the loan, and in some cases

the gift, of pamphlets, letters, and scarce old papers, as well as for valuable recollections of early colonial days.

Among the kind friends in South Australia who have helped to gather material for this memoir, Sir Samuel Davenport, K.C.M.G., and Sturt's old comrade and fellow-explorer, Mr. John Harris-Browne, have worked unweariedly to verify important facts and dates, and to supply information not to be obtained elsewhere. But for Mr. Harris-Browne's recollections of talks over the camp-fires of the Central Desert, Sturt's share in the Pyrenean Campaign would have remained unknown. To the Misses Harris-Browne we owe the negative of a portrait by Crossland in the Art Gallery at Adelaide, from which, by kind permission of Mr. Gill, curator of that gallery, the frontispiece is taken.

To Mr. H. C. Talbot, of the South Australian Survey Office, we are beholden for much troublesome research on the obscure question of offices and salaries in the early days of the colony, as to Mr. A. T. Magarey, of the Australasian Geographical Society, for enlightenment by maps and photographs on the mysteries of the Murray Mouth, and on the results of his zealous but not yet successful search for the bottle buried at Sturt's lowest camp on the Goolwa.

To no one are we more indebted than to Mr. James Bonwick, who, in volunteering his skilled aid as an archivist, expressed his eagerness 'to serve the memory of so great and good a man,' and whose researches, assisted by the courtesy of Mr. Hubert Hall of the Rolls Office, have been unexpectedly fruitful.

Copies from old South Australian papers we owe to the diligent labours of the late Mr. J. R. Austin of Adelaide labours which he declared were lightened to

him recollection of Captain Sturt. Our thanks are also due to the sons of the late Mr. Charles Bonney for courteously allowing quotations from their father's unpublished diary ; to the Survey Office in Sydney, and to Mr. F. Campbell of Yarralumla, Queanbeyan, for information about the land grant in New South Vales; to Mr. O'Halloran, Secretary to the Colonial Institute, for ready help and information at all times; also to Mr. Shillington, librarian of the Auckland Public Library, for copies of all original letters by Sturt now in that institution.

This goodly roll of names stirs a feeling of grateful privilege, yet deepens our sense of inadequate performance. The portrait we present is at best a feeble sketch, yet if its outlines, however faint, be but true to life, the helping hands have not been stretched forth in vain.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED.

*Two Expeditions into the Interior of Southern Australia during the years 1828, 1829, 1830, and 1831.* With observations on the colony of New South Wales. By Captain Charles Sturt, 39th Regiment, F.L.S. and F.R.G.S. In 2 vols. (Published by Smith, Elder & Co. 1833.)

*Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia during the years 1844, 1845, and 1846.* With a notice of the Province of South Australia. By the same. In 2 vols. (Published by T. & W. Boone. 1849.)

Manuscript journal of an overland journey down the Hume and Murray in 1838. By the same. Original despatches and reports hearing on all the above expeditions. By the same. Accounts of the above journeys communicated by Captain Sturt to the Royal Geographical Society's Journals; see vols. xiv. and xvii. of those journals.

Sturt's original Maps and Charts of all his expeditions.

Maps and Memoranda by John Arrowsmith.

Files of Sydney and Adelaide newspapers for certain years. Some in British Museum, some at Adelaide.

*Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia.* With description of the recently explored region of Australia Felix and of New South Wales. By Major 1<sup>st</sup>. 1., Mitchell, Surveyor-General, F.G.S. and F.R.G.S. In 2 vols. (Published by T. & W. Boone. 1838)

*Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia during the years 1837, 1838, and 1839.* With observations of several newly explored fertile regions. including Australind, &c., &c. By George Grey, Esq., late Captain 83rd Regiment, Governor of South Australia. In 2 vols. (Published by T. & W. Boone. 1841.)

*Description of the Colony of New South Wales.* By W. C. Wentworth, Esq. (Printed for G. & W. B. Whittaker. 1820).

*Life of General Sir Charles James Napier, G. C. B.* By Lieutenant - General Sir W. Napier, K. C. B. 4 vols. (Published by John Murray. 1857.)

*Colonisation, particularly in Southern Australia.* By Colonel Charles James Napier, C. B. (Published by T. & W. Boone. 1835.)

*History of South Australia.* F.. Hodder. 2 vols. (Sampson Low, Marston & Co. 1893)

*Dictionary of Australasian Biography.* P. Menzell, F.R.G.S.  
Abridged edition. (Hutchinson & Co. 1812.)

*Picturesque Atlas of Australasia.* Andrew Garran. 3 vols.

*Hume and Howell's Overland Journey of 1824.* (Reprint of 1897 of  
this scarce work, published at Sydney.)

*Cannon's Historical Record of the 39th Foot.*

*Address at Inaugural Meeting of South Australian Branch of  
Geographical Society of Australasia.* Sir Samuel Davenport,  
K.C.M.G. (Published at Adelaide. 1886.)

*Australasia*, edited by A. R. Wallace. (Stanford 1884.) Henry  
Kingsley's collected works, vol. xii.

Sundry articles in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

Of many text-books on Australian history and exploration, a small  
school history of Australia, by Alex. and George Sutherland,  
published by Robertson at Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide  
(8th edition) in 1884, has been found the most accurate and  
useful.

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# LIFE

OF

## CHARLES STURT

### CHAPTER I

1795-1813

#### LINEAGE -PARENTS-CHILDHOOD- SCHOOLDAYS-BRANKSEA-COMMISSION IN 39TH REGIMENT

THE name of Sturt occurs in Dorset annals as early as 1392, when Humphry Sturt figures in Parliament as Knight of the Shire. Of this worthy's parentage and descendants indeed nothing certain is known; but direct ancestors of the Dorset Sturts were by the end of the sixteenth century living on their own land at Yateley in Hampshire.

In their family good marriages played an important part, and early helped them to property at Heckfield and at Ripley. Nor did their cadets disdain mercantile pursuits. The titles of Leather-seller and the like in the pedigree show their worthy pride in belonging to the great City guilds. By 1687 Anthony, youngest of a large family, by shrewdness and energy had risen to wealth, and had twice been Navy Commissioner and Sheriff of London. Two of his sons were knighted; his grandson Humphry, by marrying Diana, heiress of the Dorsetshire Napiers, crowned the fortunes of the family. These Napiers, an early branch from the Merchiston stem, appear from 1490 in the county records; great in power and in property, staunch to Church and King.

Diana's only son Humphry, grandfather of Charles Sturt, was a notable sportsman.<sup>1</sup> He diligently improved the large estates of More Crichel and Middlemarsh, which in 1765 fell to him from his cousin Sir Gerard Napier. By judicious plantations he transformed the bare island of Branksea into an ideal resort where for months at a time his numerous children ran wild and happy; while his wife, heiress of the Pitfields, in London or at Weymouth would indulge her fatal taste for gambling. The story runs that she and other great ladies, sometimes honoured by the presence of royalty, were wont to meet for high play in secret at a lonely old house near town, where the whole bevy was once arrested.

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<sup>1</sup> Shooting Extraordinary. Extract from 'Reminiscences of an Old Sportsman' in a sporting paper of about 1840:  
'In Dorsetshire, about seventy years ago, a party of sportsmen were (lining together, and the conversation turning on snipe-shooting, one of the gentlemen said he would bet fifty guineas he would find a sportsman who would be able to kill twenty-five brace of snipes in one day in Dorsetshire. On this Mr. Humphry Sturt, my old esteemed friend, said he would take the bet. "That you cannot do," said the gentleman who offered the bet, "for you are the person I intend should perform this feat." "Then," said my friend, "to convince you I will do my best, allow me to take half the bet with you." One of the company accepted it, and the terms were these that Mr. Sturt might choose his day for snipe-shooting, but if he fired one shot he must go on with his engagement. Mr. Sturt went two or three times to a favourite marsh much frequented by snipes, but, observing they got up rather wild, he did not fire. Going again on a warm, muggy day, with a nice breeze from the south-west, a snipe got up, and I heard him say it looked so large he could not resist firing, and down it came. The snipes were numerous and lay well, and Mr. Sturt killed his first seventeen birds; on which the gentleman who had taken the bet and witnessed this excellent beginning gave a cheque for the fifty guineas, saying he was sure he had lost his money, and that he could remain no longer, having important business to transact at home. This naturally produced confidence in Mr. Sturt that he should be able to accomplish his task. He got sixty shots, killed his twenty-five brace of snipes, two woodcocks, and a bittern, missing only seven shots. This exploit, I venture to affirm, could not be excelled by any of the best shots of the present day, although they have a considerable advantage in the detonating gun, the discharge of which is more rapid than the flint gun.

This lady, though so fond of cats and dogs that visitors would find every chair beset by them, showed little tenderness to her fifteen children. Twelve of the tribe however grew to maturity, the three daughters being noted for charm and beauty. Good looks, fine manners, a fatal knack of debt distinguished all the family.

No exception was the ninth child and fifth son, Thomas Lenox Napier (known to his generation as Napier Sturt). Born in 1767 and early sent to India, he became puisne judge in Bengal under the East India Company. Through the haze of family tradition the puisne judge looms cold and stately, though not devoid of kindly impulse. Doting on his infants, unjust to his growing sons ; unable to provide for his own family, yet adopting and dowering a sister's child; ever hiding his distresses under a brave show, Napier Sturt is truly described as inconsistent. With characteristic inconsistency, before he was twenty-four, he flung prudence to the winds and married a dowerless girl of nineteen. Nor had he ever cause to regret this marriage of romantic impulse. No maxims of worldly wisdom could have led him to a better choice.

Youngest but one of a large family, and midmost of a trio of sisters known as the 'Three Graces,' Jeannette Wilson is described to us by her brethren as an 'incomparable sister'; by her children as the most perfect of mothers. For forty-five years of clouded fortunes she was in every sense her husband's good angel.<sup>1</sup>

A close correspondence among the Wilson sisters testifies to their rare gifts of heart and of head.

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<sup>1</sup> Her father, Dr. Andrew Wilson, a physician of repute at Bath, and author of some dull theological pamphlets, had made a runaway match with Miss Susan Scott, said to be daughter or granddaughter of a baronet, and certainly of near kin with the Border families of Elliot and Ker.

Susanna, the eldest of the three, early married Captain Young, aid by writing his despatches gained his promotion to a brigadier-generalship. Youngest was Annabella, married in her twentieth year to Mr. Wood of Newton Hall, Middlewich, but suddenly bereft of her young husband by a hunting accident, and doomed to outlive all her brothers and sisters. To judge from the Wilson letters, Susan Young excelled in spirit, Anna Wood in wisdom, Jeannette Sturt in sweetness. Nor must we leave unmentioned Margaret, older by many years than the other sisters, the helpful counsellor of them all.

This sketch of Charles Sturt's parentage reveals no clue to the development of his special character and talents. In his case, as is usual, hereditary influences were too various to cause either despair or exultation. Yet in the parents a fine balance of certain contrasted qualities must have favourably influenced their offspring. Undoubtedly most of their large family did well in life; and, had opportunity offered, several of Charles Sturt's brothers would have made their mark. Of the Napier Sturts' thirteen children, the eldest fell a victim in his first year to the climate of Bengal. Early in 1794 a daughter, Susan, appeared on the scene; Charles was born at Chunar-Ghur on April 28, 1795. Mrs. Young writes home May 4, 1795: 'I have news that will give you all delight; our dear Jane has again experienced the mercy of the Almighty in the safe and happy delivery of a fine boy, the strongest child she has had. Our sweet little Susan is grown the most interesting darling you ever beheld, and has just got over the small-pox.

To the same fluent pen we are indebted for continued reports of Charles's progress: 'Chunar, October 5, 1795. Jane's dear little ones fully employ her time and thoughts, particularly our little Charles. He was born strong though thin, but very soon after fell off; and for more than two months was not at all promising.

But now, thank God, he is in charming health, and the most engaging, smiling, good-humoured baby I ever saw. He is not by any means so beautiful as poor Humphry was, but he is the most animated, intelligent looking little creature in the world. His fair hair is daily growing a light brown; he promises to be like Sturt, but has finer eyes than either father or mother; indeed all Jane's children have beautiful bright blue eyes.' And again from Cawnpore in January 1797 'The dear boy had a very narrow escape in the smallpox; but now he has, I hope, surmounted all danger from most infantine disorders. At a year and nine months old he has almost all his teeth, and is grown as fine a child as ever was seen.'

In 1799 the parents decided to part with their two eldest children, and in a few broken words written 'out at sea, in the Company's yacht-very sick,'-the mother commits her darlings to her kinsfolk in England. The note is dated December 27, 1799; the voyage proved exceptionally long and perilous, and not for six months did the babes reach England. Newton Hall, Middlewich, now became their home; and from their aunts, Mrs. Wood and Miss Wilson, they received the most motherly care.

In July 1800 Mrs. Young expresses 'delight on hearing of the safety of the dear pets. There is something very striking in Susan's expression of the Big Water coming over the ship-is it not poetical? Sweet Charley greatly surpasses my hopes. He will prove a fine fellow, and I hope not grow up so monstrous handsome as he now promises; it never does a man any good. I feared he would have been too delicate and timid from the terrible attack he had experienced, but the fine cold air has braced him up. I like to hear of the ride round the park which frightened his grandmother.' A few months later 'I am charmed that they make progress in reading and dancing; I think I see you, dear Peggy, walking in the garden with a most matron-like air, and the dear boy and girl skipping before you with the grace and agility of little antelopes.

School plans however were already in the air. In June 1801 Mrs. Wood writes to the Rev. J. Heptinstall at Astbury: 'I am much gratified that you will be able to receive my little boys at Midsummer 1802. My little Isaac and his cousin Charles Sturt both have sweet amiable dispositions.' And in her diary of August 28, 1802, she records that 'My dear little Isaac and his cousin Charles Sturt went to school and both behaved extremely well.' This diary contains quaint entries of schoolboy outfit of the period: Nankeen jacket and trousers, nightcaps, &c., varied by such items as 'whips and tops for Isaac, Charles, and Cholmondeley,' and a whole pound of gingerbread when poor little Charles's sudden illness on the liver calls his fond aunt post-haste to Astbury. After the same attack, Mrs. Heptinstall in March 1804 inquires if the boys are to continue when the weather becomes warmer to take *two* glasses of port each daily as heretofore? 'I believe both the little tipplers are inclined to repose themselves and not disposed to much exertion after their cordial.'

The summer holidays were varied by trips to the sea at Lea Hall and at Parkgate, with occasional visits to town, where other little brothers and sisters, in batches of two and three at a time, kept arriving from India to be quartered in the comfortable home of their uncle, Thomas Wilson (of the Navy Pay Department). In prospect of one such meeting in the winter of 1803, 'Charles is promising himself a merry Christmas; he loves laughing as well as ever;' and Captain Henryson, a friend of the Wilsons, describes the little fellow at that time as the most entertaining boy he ever saw. Schoolboy letters of Charles, still existing in 1880, were described by their possessor as 'most characteristic of the future naturalist and explorer at the age of nine.'

Jackdaws were the subject of one letter; in another he mentions that by spending 4s. on *maps* he has drained his resources. At Astbury the boys had gardens—a topic of unfailing interest to Charles. One specimen of his early school work survives: 'a map of Germany divided into Circles,' bearing the date 1808, and showing remarkable accuracy for so young a boy.

The family letters of 1808 flutter with the hoped-for return of the parents from India. Pleasing tidings! writes Miss Mary Sturt from her sister Lady Milner's home at Nun-Appleton. 'Be where I will, I should rejoice in joining your family to witness your happiness on greeting all your children in perfect health. The fraternal affection inculcated in the nursery can never be too much encouraged. It appears so strongly in your darlings, that I cannot but place it to the early bias they received whilst under your care. Such children should never be separated long from their parents; it is to them a decrease of happiness Nature never intended. Dear Charles I have not seen these four years, but we correspond; and I am happy to say he sometimes adds a postscript of *this is private!* for which I feel so much obliged that, if some day I can thank him in person by adding fifty miles to my journey, I shall not miss the opportunity.'

Not however till 1810 did the Napier Sturts return to England. Charles—sometimes spent his Christmas holidays at Nun-Appleton, and probably there, in 1809, met for the first time his 'Uncle Charles' who, bred to the sea, but succeeding unexpectedly to the family estates, had for the last six years been lost to

his friends as a detenu in French prisons.<sup>1</sup> This uncle, fresh from adventure by sea and land, deeply impressed the boy, who, on returning to school, pours forth to Isaac the absorbing topic.

I was very unhappy to find you had not recovered. I assure you it made me very uneasy. Let me hear from you very often.

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<sup>1</sup> This Uncle Charles' never lost his love of the sea, a taste which led him to live almost wholly at Branksea, where he figured in sundry exploits. The *St. James' Chronicle* of September 24, 1800, records his narrow escape when racing his cutter against that of Mr. Weld. The sea ran so high that his men demurred to take ashore the dingy, which impeded the cutter. He himself sprang into the boat, which, by the sudden parting of the hawser, drifted away and was swamped. 'In this perilous situation, at the mercy of the waves, he had the presence of mind to pull off all his clothes except his nankeen trousers, and to put into a diamond-studded watch-case (a present from his lady) the label, "Charles Sturt, Brownsea, to his beloved wife." From the keel of the upset boat he was often dashed off by a tremendous wave, and compelled to swim and regain his hold. But here may be seen the all-protecting care of Divine Providence. Some transports had passed unnoticed him; when from the last of them he was espied by a mate.' The rescue was not easy from a vessel 'three miles to the windward in a heavy sea; but four resolute fellows, in a boat from which the quarry was only occasionally visible, after near two hours came up to him, now almost worn out.' On being lifted into the boat 'he grasped his kind deliverers, lifting his hands to Providence in gratitude, and burst into tears. A few moments would have fatally closed the scene, it being nearly dark, with a heavy sea.' The same paper (November 29, 1800) tells of the presentation of the Humane Society's medal, 'with every mark of respect, to the member for Bridport for having at imminent hazard rescued several of his fellow-creatures from a watery grave, when a vessel was driven ashore near Brownsea Castle.'

*Inscription*

CAROLO STURT, ARMIGERO,  
SENATORI BRITANNICO  
VITAS OB MULTAS  
EX FLUCTIBUS  
1799.

Within a year the hero of this ovation was driven by domestic calamity to seek change of scene in France, where, on the outbreak of war, he was treacherously seized, and exposed to hardships from which his health never recovered. The book referred to by his nephew, *The Real State of France in 1809*, describes graphically the horrors to which Bonaparte subjected his English prisoners of war. [This Charles Sturt was grandfather of Henry Gerard Sturt, created in 1876 Baron Alington.]

When my Uncle Charles escaped from France, he met with many misfortunes, such as being driven into port again when his gig broke down. The gates of Mon were locked when he came, for which reason he bribed the man to let him go through. He could hardly get a passport from Paris to Mon ; but, considering all, he made his escape quite safe with his faithful dog Coco. He is going to publish a book, which he says he will send me as soon as published. I will send it you as soon as I have read it myself. Will you send me some mustard and cress seed, and one of the stoutest trees in Read's garden? Tell my dear Aunt Wood that I have got a nicer knife for her than that I sent her, with four blades; it has a tortoise-shell handle with a silver edge.

Show this part to no one but my Aunt Wood. I am sorry to tell you that the school is got to such a pitch now that three or four boys come home drunk every night, and I now wish to leave the school. My uncle wants me to go to Harrow. I should be very glad, but for leaving you. If I go, I hope you will go too. I am very well, but not happy now.

I am, dear Isaac,

Yours ever,

C. STURT.

To Harrow accordingly the boy was moved in the course of 1810;<sup>1</sup> and some memorable summer holidays were spent in company with his cousin Henry at Uncle Charles's favourite yachting quarters on Branksea (in old letters always `Brownsea ') Island. No wonder that Branksea fascinated the boy with a spell that no vicissitudes of life could break.

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<sup>1</sup> Of Harrow Sturt always retained a fond recollection. Yet the only recorded incident of that time hardly suggests pure enjoyment. He was fag to that Duke of Dorset best known by Byron's verses, and by his early death in the hunting-field. This youth sent him to the top of a high tree for rooks' eggs, and thrashed him because one broke in his mouth as he came clown. Sturt retaliated by throwing a brickbat at the bully ; but for this heinous breach of schoolboy custom he had to run the gauntlet of the whole school, each boy in turn shying a hard crust at him!

Lying in the entrance of Poole Harbour, and dignified by a massive Tudor keep of weather-beaten brick, this island with varied hues of pine-wood, heath, and sand shows gem-like in a setting of rich coast scenery. Nor is the charm dispelled on landing. From under the firs of the southern slope, the eye wanders across the sea to the range of Purbeck and the ruins of Corfe, while beyond the land-locked waters to the north-east cluster the redroofed houses of Poole. The very changes of that inland sea have a special interest. At spring tide the lower shores of the mainland are flooded far and wide. In the ebb, a wilderness of mud flats covered with wildfowl threatens Poole with the fate of Rye.

The old keep, built by Henry VIII against French invasion, had, under successive Napiers and Sturts, developed into a small but commodious dwelling, where Uncle Charles now followed to his heart's content the sea-faring pursuits in which his nephew delighted to join. But within two years, in the spring of 1812, the sudden death of this uncle closed a pleasant page of Charles Sturt's boyhood. 'He was ever kind to me, and I loved him,' writes the lad; 'his anxiety for my comfort and happiness made him very dear to me.'

In February 1812 Charles was sent to read with a Mr. Preston at Little Shelford, near Cambridge. The loss of a small sister at this time caused the first break in the large party of brothers and sisters. How keenly Charles felt this trouble appears from an aunt's letter: 'You will readily imagine the feelings of our dear Charles. A schoolfellow, going in search of him, discovered his agitation and told Mr. Preston, who immediately went to the poor afflicted boy and consoled him with the utmost tenderness. He gave him to read the admirable reflections of Lady Rachel Russel written under heavy affliction. Charles thoughtfully sent me dear Susan's tender letter; and to-day Mr. Preston considerately sent the dear boy to dine and spend the evening with us.'

He is in excellent health; and yesterday he had the honour of obtaining, as a prize for the manner in which he performed an exercise, a copy of Cowper's beautiful poems.' In August 1813 Mrs. Sturt, writing from Blackheath to Mrs. Wood, gives a hint of clouds on the family horizon In this world there is no perfect happiness, I therefore submit without repining to the disappointment of many pleasures once hoped for. Why, my beloved sister, should we increase the troubles in this vale of sorrow by anger that all things and people are not exactly as we wish Disappointments in all his most sanguine expectations have greatly changed the social disposition of Sturt. He withdraws from his friends, because he cannot enjoy them in the way that he likes and had hoped to do. All his relations complain of it; but he acts on what he considers the best principles, and for the good of his numerous family. The invitation to Charles, pressed with so lively a warmth, comes at an unpropitious moment; else his father would gladly have indulged him. But his absence just now might be of serious consequence to his future prospects. We expect a visit from Col. Cavendish Sturt. It is our earnest wish to get Charles into the regiment commanded by his uncle and now at Weymouth. He, poor fellow, has been too long patiently waiting till his father could effect this desirable object.'

At this crisis Miss Mary Sturt came to the rescue; and to august ears thus pleaded her nephew's cause

Nunappleton, Tadcaster: York  
Aug'. y<sup>e</sup> 6th (1813).

It is with the utmost diffidence and fear I am venturing on a request to your Royal Highness for a favour, I am most solicitous to procure for a brother, lately returned from India, with eight sons-the eldest of which he wishes to place in the army-and I pray for the power of assistance-the gift of an ensigncy in the 39th Regiment, when he would be under the protection of an uncle in the petition I have presumed to entreat,

I am sensible how great the liberty is that I am taking, and would willingly find some apology. The name of my much lamented sister Milner, who was so often indebted to your esteem and friendly aid, may perhaps induce you, sir, to confer the obligation. The character your Royal Highness possesses of readiness to assist the unfortunate, may possibly make me one of many candidates, in which case I must withdraw my hope. But trust the application will not offend, or bear the appearance of forwardness, being with every sentiment of respectful duty,

Your Royal Highnesses  
Most faithful and obedt. servt.,  
(Signed) MARY STURT.<sup>1</sup>

This artless appeal was not unheeded, and on the 9th September, 1813, Charles Sturt was duly gazetted Ensign in His Majesty's 39th Regiment of Foot.

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<sup>1</sup> The letter bears no superscription, but was presumably addressed to H.R.H. the Prince Regent, who in earlier years had been a frequent guest at Crichel.

## CHAPTER II

1814-1828

THE PYRENEES—CANADA—IRELAND—THE WHITEBOYS—SYDNEY  
—PLANS FOR EXPLORATION

THE letters which tell of Sturt's earliest years fail us entirely at the outset of his military life. Army Lists show him to the end of the year 1813, and again in April 1814, at Weymouth with the 2nd Battalion of his regiment. Yet, on excellent authority,<sup>1</sup> he is said to have joined, in February 1814, the 1st Battalion then serving under Hill in the Pyrenees, and to have fought through those eventful weeks from mid-February to the end of March which saw the night assault on Garris<sup>2</sup> the fording of the Gaves; the battles of Orthez and Aire; the hot skirmish at Garlin.<sup>3</sup>

In a life whose special work belongs to later years this strange lack of early document matters little. Sturt must at some time have served under Hill; for to Hill he confidently appeals in his memorial of 1843 (see p. 217).

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Harris-Browne heard from Sturt that he joined Hill's division in the Pyrenees a few days before the battle of the Hill of Harris and fought through the remainder of the campaign, returning to England through Paris when the Allies entered it in 1814.

<sup>2</sup> For the gallant achievement of the 39th at Garris, see Sir Wm. Napier's *Peninsular War*, vi. 530; also a detailed account of that important but forgotten fight by Colonel W. Hill-James in the *Pall Mall Magazine* for January 1897.

<sup>3</sup> Hill's piquets at Garlin, were suddenly attacked in the night by the French in overwhelming numbers and eventually driven in; but their stout resistance gave Wellington time to reinforce Hill and to check Soult's plans of larger operations. Sir Wm. Napier's *Peninsular War*, vi. 609, and Sir John Jones *Account of the War in Spain, Portugal, and the South of France*, ii, 261. To this affair Sturt refers below, p. 143.

Hill indeed he admired with a warmth partly due to affinity of nature. That gentle-hearted chief inspired officers and men alike with an enthusiasm very different from their colder homage to the Iron Duke. No private letter or journal throws light on these experiences, but the prominent part played throughout the campaign by the 39th Regiment is a matter of history.

While young Sturt was quartered at Weymouth, a small craft in which he was sailing with his cousin Henry was run down and capsized. Henry rose to the surface at some distance, but, unable to swim, was about to sink for the last time when Charles, who swam well, managed by a supreme effort to save him and to keep him afloat until they were picked up by a passing ship. At the time this affair created no small stir in Weymouth.

On June 13, 1814, Sturt embarked at Portsmouth for Quebec, whither at the same time, from Bordeaux, sailed the 1st Battalion of the 39th. Canada was just then sore beset, having for more than two years kept at bay an American army which, on the plea of asserting neutral rights, sought to annex that loyal province. But the French agents who stirred the quarrel knew not the mettle of the Canadians. Those staunch patriots rose to a man; they enrolled and drilled the Red Indians; and in volunteer companies led by Generals such as Brock and Drummond gallantly held the boundaries against overwhelming odds. The unnamed pilot who met his death steering to destruction a party of the enemy; Laura Secord, who faced perils by foes and Indians in a twenty-mile tramp through wild forest to warn her countrymen; patriots of every class rose to defend their homes. With them and with their homebred leaders rest the honours of this war. The long-expected help from England came late and availed little, A weak naval force on the Lakes bungled sadly;

and made of none effect much gallant fighting at Chazy, at Plattsburg, and on Lake Champlain, though a series of heavy skirmishes throughout September culminated in victory at Chambly. here Sturt nearly lost his life, an American marksman who was aiming carefully at him from behind a tree being only just in time shot dead by a devoted colour-sergeant. But success was not followed up with spirit; divided counsels paralysed action, and too soon the Peninsular veterans found themselves rusting idly in winter quarters. Officers and men alike, ill-provided against the rigours of the climate, suffered terribly. Of the 39th Regiment alone a tenth was in hospital. This heavy sick-list was partly due to the depressed spirits of troops on whom their forced inactivity weighed like disgrace. The peace patched up by the end of the year pleased them no better. To men in such a mood the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba rang as a trumpet call. Joyfully they hurried to embark, and early in June all had left for Europe.

Ere they could arrive, however, Waterloo had been fought and won; already Paris was bristling with the Allied Armies; and for the next three years the 39th Regiment formed part of the Army of Occupation in the North of France. Sturt did not waste in idleness this long spell of garrison life. Drawing, music, and natural history were always favourite pursuits with him; but graver studies were not neglected. A well-worn copy of 'Norie's Linear Tables,' with his name and the date 1815, shows him unconsciously training for his future career.

A family letter of April 1817 mentions 'poor Charles still with his regiment in France and doing well. his good temper makes him a general favourite.'

He moved with the 39th to Ireland towards the end of 1818, a year which brought him a sad heartache in the death of his favourite sister Susan.

The interests and the difficulties of this period of his life lie between the lines of three letters to his cousin Isaac. The first, dated September 3, 1820, introduces John Harris, the soldier-servant who later bore so prominent a part in Sturt's early explorations.

I hate Dublin; we are so harassed that we have scarcely a moment to ourselves. The regiment was yesterday reviewed by Sir David Baird, and the result was most gratifying. After the review, Sir David with five other generals, and all the staff in garrison, rode up to my uncle, and taking off his hat, said loud enough to be heard by all; "Colonel, I have to return you my thanks for the manoeuvres the regiment has performed. I have no fault to find; the men are clean and steady; they perform their movements with accuracy, and in some particular ones I have never seen them surpassed. I am perfectly satisfied; and when I consider the late scattered state in which you have been, I am surprised to find your regiment in such perfect order." Thus, my dear Isaac, is the character of our regiment established on the firmest basis; on the approbation of a man who has the name of a martinet, but who knows every minutia of his duty. We are allowed to be the best-drilled regiment in garrison; and on field-days are always made the regulating battalion. They tell of Sir David's mother, that when informed that her son was in the Black Hole of Calcutta, where the poor wretches were chained two and two, she exclaimed: "God help the child wha's chained to oor Davy!" The same might well be said of the regiments that fall into his clutches.

My servant's period of service expires on the 13th of this month; but, poor fellow, I cannot persuade him to leave me. I told him that my slender finances would not enable me to retain him as a private servant, and that I would find him a comfortable place. I reasoned and argued. He would not leave Inc at any rate; he would enlist again—hoped he had done nothing to offend me—and left the room to conceal his emotion.

I wish I could persuade him to serve you. He is an excellent 'groom, and a good, hard-working lad'. He has been with me when sick and unable to help myself; when I have been comparatively rich, and when I have not had a penny in my pocket or a shoe to my foot.'

A month later there was no relaxation of work: had hoped ere this to have appeared in person; but we are- at present in purgatory without a moment to our-selves; and Sir David Baird would think that man mad who should apply even for three days' leave. In the midst of this drilling I am ordered, with a detachment of 'forty-five men, to the Pigeon House (in the centre of Dublin Bay). You will be sorry to hear that I have been sadly disappointed in an expected promotion. A captain of the 81st, ordered to Halifax, wanted to sell out for 2,000*l.* McArthur of ours entered into negotiations with him; and my father kindly promised to help McArthur in making up the difference. But alas! alas! the story became known, and a senior ensign put in his claim. He cannot afford more than the difference; so, like a dog in the manger, will not allow me to have that which he cannot get. Is it not hard? Yet I feel grateful to my father for his kindness. In his last letter he stamped and stormed because I had drawn on him for 15*l.* How very inconsistent he is! My mother says, don't delay giving your letters of introduction, but she does not consider the consequences. My old dress-coat is worn out; a new one 7*l.* 7*s.*, for I won't have it laced; there goes one month's pay—to say nothing of items innumerable.

I drew a most beautiful portrait of the D— of W — n ; and Sir David happening to see it was quite delighted, as they are friends, so I gave it him. Horton, his A.D.C., is a friend of mine, so I am great at headquarters.

I drew a caricature of the brigade-major which kicked up a deuce of a dust. He is now stuck up in every ginger-bread shop in Dublin.

'Heigh-ho, ho ho ho! What do you think? My *ci-devant* flame is going to be ma-ma-ma-married. Heigh-ho, ho ho! Don't quiz me, for I am scarcely tangible on this subject. But I suppose I may mope away my sulks in the Pigeon House "far from the haunts of man." I shall not die this time, I believe.'

To the signature of this letter is added: 'Ensign in His Majesty's 39th Regiment of Infantry, and likely to be Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, heigh-ho! ! Yet Sturt could hardly suppose that nearly three more years would elapse before in April 1823 he would gain the desired step! The hitch was due partly to his father's financial straits.

The elder Sturt had not escaped the fever of speculation which in the years after the great war raged with dire effect. Brought to the verge of ruin by the failure of an Indian bank: yet strenuous to keep up appearances, Napier Sturt visited on his sons in capricious harshness the fret of losses unconfessed. Even allowing for the Byronic manner of the period, we clearly learn from Charles's letters the trouble which clouded his youth.<sup>1</sup> In April 1821 he appeals to Isaac as 'a friend, the kindest, the dearest that friendship ever boasted,' to write and tell all he knows of the family. 'Why this sudden resolve to go abroad? Has any domestic calamity happened? and why may I, their eldest son, not share their confidence? To you, Isaac, I can open a heart full of the most painful apprehensions. Oh, I would my heart was bared before the world, that every thought, every wish might be known. Believe me, Isaac, I would rather lose my life than forfeit your esteem or your mother's affection.'

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<sup>1</sup> A despairing letter from Mrs. Sturt to Mrs. Wood about this time shows that Charles was involved in a debt of 151. His uncle Cavendish also urges (vainly) on the father that the lad's should be increased to 80l.

Trust me, Isaac, you shall rather feel a pride in what I do than ever condemn the conduct of your

Attached Cousin, (Signed) C. STURT.'

Life however had not lost all charm when, in October 1821, Isaac Wood, visiting his cousin at Skibbereen, writes in raptures about the scenery, the bathing, and the society. 'Never was such hospitality. Before I came, Charles in two months had not dined at home; and indeed we have rarely done so since my arrival.' A friend's boat was always at the young men's disposal; and they made good use of it in excursions to 'Cape Clare (vulgarly, Clear), to Bantry Bay, and elsewhere. Sandy O'Driscoll too is a very good fellow, whose heart Charles has completely won, and at whose house we dance on the carpet most evenings. To his family all this country be-longed; but though, from adherence to the Catholic religion, they lost the property, he retains all the influence, and even in Pat's severest rows goes among them and promptly disperses them, often using blows for that purpose.' The cousins would not admit the supposed danger of living in a Catholic district of Ireland: 'If you make yourself obnoxious to the lower orders, you may certainly rouse the Irish spirit of revenge and get into peril; but if you live among them quietly and kindly, they will do anything to serve you. So great is their honesty that Mr. Merritt hangs all his meat in a tree; and the house doors are usually left unlocked. There is scarcely a case of robbery on the road by a footpad. Pat may attack in a body a coach known to contain booty, but never molests a single traveller; you may with safety take the most dreary road at any hour of night— not so in England.'

One day at this time Sturt was at dinner with his cousin and a few guests when suddenly a favourite dog jumped in at the open window, showing unmistakable symptoms of madness. All present instantly took refuge on the table.

Sturt now called to Harris in the next room to throw him through the window a strong and supple cord, of which one end must be held by two men outside, while a third must stand ready with loaded gun. He then, cord in hand, descended from the table; and, calling the dog by name and riveting upon him an unswerving gaze, he quickly but firmly fastened the cord to the collar, and, with eyes still fixed, beat a leisurely, but not too leisurely, retreat (*festina lente*) were his words). No sooner was he at safe distance than he signalled for the men to haul; when, in response to the first drag upon the cord, with wild glare and yell, and barely one moment too late, the frenzied beast sprang at him.

No disturbance occurred to mar Isaac Wood's pleasant visit, but too soon a change came o'er the spirit of the scene; and private joys and troubles were forgotten in the rising storm of discontent. The famine of 1821-22 brought matters to a crisis; and riot, arson, and murder became the order of the day. Sturt, while still at Skibbereen, was roused one night by an urgent message for succour from a farm attacked by Whiteboys. The place was notable for the beauty of its surroundings no less than for the thriving industry of its occupants, whom Sturt, and his friends knew well. Hastening with a small party to the rescue, he was horrified to find only smoking ruins, among which lay dead a lovely young girl and other members of the lately happy family. No lapse of years, he said, could efface the horrid impression left by that scene.

Such experiences dispelled all false sympathy with Irish patriotism. Yet to quell disorder among misguided peasants was neither easy nor congenial; and no less hate-ful was the task of watching smugglers and seizing illicit stills.

Sturt however, with characteristic fearlessness, never hesitated to ride alone about the country. Losing his way one evening in a cheerless expanse of bog, he turned his horse towards a distant light which led him to a low house resounding with many voices. Cold and tired, Sturt threw his bridle to a lad and entered a roomy forge full of Whiteboys and of rude weapons. He walked calmly to the fire and warmed himself with an unconcern which took the queer company aback; then, without undue delay, he called for a hot drink, threw a coin to mine host, remounted his horse, and, realising now his whereabouts, rode off at a smart pace.

During the years 1821-22 various bands of malcontents—generally known as Whiteboys---combined into a formidable array under Denis Chevane, the notorious 'Captain Rock.' In January and February 1822 a series of lights between these rebels and the 39th ended in the capture of Captain Rock, barefooted and barelegged, at the head of the Whiteboy cavalry, and in the suppression of the rising. Miss Wood writes: 'I cannot help think-ing with great terror of Charles Sturt's situation. I hope he will be removed to a more humanised place. It is worse than fair fighting in an enemy's country.' The risks were not quite imaginary. An armed force of banditti who attacked the town of Millstreet were beaten off by the 39th, not without loss. A party of fourteen soldiers under Major Carthew, beset in a pass near Bantry by 500 Whiteboys, were forced to retreat. Some thousands of persons were dispersed by the 39th near Killarney ; others were defeated near Tralee.

Not till April 7, 1823, was Sturt gazetted Lieutenant; his promotion to be captain followed comparatively soon, on December 15, 1825. About the same time he was sent to Chatham; whence, throughout the year 1826, successive detachments of the 39th, with convicts in charge, sailed for New South Wales. In December 1826 Sturt in his turn embarked on the 'Mariner,' and now, indeed, brighter prospects dawned upon him.

Yet he was dazzled by no high hopes, no bright dreams, when on May 25, 1827, he first landed at Sydney. To guard convicts would be yet more hateful than to harry Irish rebels; the six months' voyage strengthened the sense of banishment from home and friends. But he tells how, on fuller insight into the new surroundings, this first distaste yielded to enthusiasm: 'I went to New South Wales highly prejudiced against it, both from the nature of the service and the character of the great body of its inhabitants. I am aware that many object to that colony as a place of residence, and I can easily enter into their feelings from a recollection of what my own were before I visited it. I found, however, that my prejudices had arisen from a natural objection to the character of a part of its population, from the circumstance of its being a penal colony, and from my total ignorance of its actual state, and not from any substantial or permanent cause. On the contrary I speedily became convinced of the exaggerated nature of the reports I had heard in England; nor did anything fall under my observation during a residence of more than six years to justify my preconceived opinion of the colony.... My feeling in its favour arises not from the special services in which I was employed, but from circumstances in the colony itself. I embarked for New South Wales with strong prejudices against it ; I left it with strong feelings in its favour, and with a deep interest in its prosperity.'

Sturt also describes graphically his first impressions of Sydney:

'With mingled feelings I gazed for the first time on the bold cliffs at the entrance to Port Jackson, nor did I anticipate anything equal to the scene as we sailed up that noble bay; for, I had not conceived from anything I had read or heard that, in that remote region, so extensive a town could have been reared in so brief a period.'

It is the very triumph of human skill and industry over Nature. Cornfield and orchard have supplanted wild grass and brush; on the ruins of the forest stands a flourishing town; and the stillness of that once desert shore is now broken by the bugle and by the busy hum of commerce. Not only Sydney Cove, but the whole eastern shore of the more capacious Darling Harbour is crowded with warehouses, dockyards, mills, and wharves which would do credit even to Liverpool. Where, thirty years ago, the people flocked to the beach to hail an arrival, it is not now unusual to see from thirty to forty vessels from every quarter of the globe riding at anchor at one time.'

Nor was Sturt insensible to the magic influence of Australian sun and air:

'In a climate so soft that man scarcely requires a dwelling, and so enchanting that few have left it but with regret, the spirits must needs be acted upon, and the heart feel lighter. Such, indeed, I have myself found to be the case; nor have I ever been happier than when roving through the woods or wandering along one of the silent and beautiful bays for which the harbour of Port Jackson is celebrated.'

Sir Ralph Darling, then Governor of New South Wales, early formed a high opinion of Sturt's tact and ability, and appointed him major of brigade and military secretary, letting him also act for some time as his private secretary.

The first few months of Sturt's residence in Sydney were spent busily enough in these staff duties. In June 1827 he was at King George's Sound; in September at Paramatta. But the average routine of garrison life was little to his taste. Far more congenial to him were the speculations then rife as to the unsolved problems that lay beyond the Blue Mountains.

Fascinated by this absorbing topic, he formed close friendship with such notable explorers as Oxley, Cunningham, Hume and King.

On the first proposal of an expedition into the interior, Sturt eagerly volunteered his services, and Sir Ralph Darling, struck by his peculiar qualifications, and supported in this choice by the approval of the dying Oxley, appointed him leader of the party. So early as November 10, 1827, Sturt writes to Isaac Wood :

‘I have hardly time to write. The Governor-General has appointed me his military secretary, but in February I take an expedition into the interior to ascertain the level of the inland plains, and to determine the supposed existence of an inland sea.<sup>1</sup> This will not be unattended - with danger; however, it is a most important trust, and if I succeed, as I anticipate, I shall earn some credit.’

Of the motives which prompted him at this crisis, he says:

‘A wish to contribute to the public good led me to undertake those journeys which have cost me so much. I should exceedingly regret if it were thought I had volunteered hazardous and important undertakings for the love of adventure alone. The field of professional ambition is closed upon the soldier during his service in New South Wales; though in no case could a career more honour-able than that of discovery have been open to me when in 1827 I landed on Australian shores. I sought that career, not, I admit, without such a feeling of ambition as should ever pervade a soldier's breast, but chiefly with an earnest desire to promote the public good, and certainly without the hope of any other reward than the credit ‘due to successful enterprise’.

The interest roused by any exploration schemes when

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<sup>1</sup> The delay in the first scheme of exploration was caused by the removal of all soldiers snit convicts from Port Macquarie, and the breaking up of that penal settlement. This responsible task was mitted to young Sturt and ably carried out by him in May and August 1828.

the settlers were still pent between the Blue Mountains and the sea, was in 1828 quickened by one of those periodical droughts to which the colony has ever been subject. Sturt, after speculating on the probable cause of these phenomena, thus describes the visitation of 1828:

The surface of the earth became so parched that minor vegetation ceased. Crops failed even in the most favourable situations. Settlers drove their flocks and herds to distant tracts for pasture and water—no longer, to be found in the located districts. Men at length began to despond under so alarming a visitation. It almost appeared as if the Australian sky were never again to be traversed by a cloud.'

The very drought which caused an outcry for new country also offered a chance to penetrate the marshes by which in 1817 Oxley had been checked. For while the needs of the colony would be first considered, the explorers hoped at the same time to solve the problem of the supposed inland sea. The existence of such a feature seemed a necessary key to the watershed of a country which, around its southern, eastern, and western coasts, showed no large estuary. Flinders first felt the difficulty and broached this disputed theory, which was firmly held by the later voyagers, Parry and King. More recent discoveries pointed in the same direction. No wonder that views shared by Hume, Oxley, and Cunningham, who had examined different tracts of coast and country, were adopted by Sturt, who joined eagerly in their debates. Mitchell indeed, when no sea was found, claimed that he had never believed in one. But his alternative theory, that all westward-falling streams must finally turn to the north-west and enter Icing's Sound, was less logical and led him into the greater error.

The belief in an inland sea was strengthened by native tradition. In 1827 Cunningham met a tribe who reported that to the westward were large waters in which canoeing

natives caught great fish. Oxley's journey of 1817-18 down the Macquarie (already an old story) had been early checked by a vast expanse of water, rightly attributed by him to flood. His experience had therefore by no means laid to rest this vexed question, 'a question,' says Sturt, 'in which the best interests of the colony were involved.' To ascertain the truth as to this sea, and in any case to open up new country, it was desirable to penetrate the marshes in which the Macquarie and all westward-flowing rivers from the Blue Mountains seemed to lose them-selves.

Such then were the objects of the new expedition; and keen was the interest they aroused. A few discordant notes in the democratic 'Monitor' were inspired partly by wrath against Sir Ralph Darling and his 'military despotism,'<sup>1</sup> partly by the wounded feelings of Major Thomas Mitchell. That officer, distinguished in the Peninsula no less by his pencil than by his sword, had, in September 1827, been appointed Deputy-Surveyor-General for New South Wales under Oxley, and on Oxley's death in May 1828 had succeeded to the post of Surveyor-General. He subsequently made his mark by exploring in 1836 part of Victoria, and in 1844—45 an interesting district of Queensland. But his earlier ventures failed from want of discipline among his men, and front lament-able collisions with the natives.

Nor did indomitable energy and varied attainments render him proof against a jealousy almost unique in the record of Australian exploration. To Mitchell's 'indefatigable perseverance in the cause of science,

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<sup>1</sup> No wonder that the military rule entailed by a large penal establish. and was hateful to the average settler. The early laws of the colony recall by a system a system of petty personal restrictions the days of the curfew. So late as in 1820 the barbarous penal code punished the thief by death; and to debar him from securing his booty by murder, could only add the sentimental penalty of being 'anatomised after death' (see Wentworth's rare book on New South Wales in 1820). Never was Governor more keenly imbued with the military spirit than was Sir Ralph Darling, and the distress in the colony had rudely shaken the last vestiges of his popularity.

and in the performance of his earliest journeys, Sturt, in his first book ('Two Expeditions,' vol. i. xxxv, and again in chapter v.) does ample justice. Mitchell however, when following Sturt's very track, ignores that traveller's work, though he notes the broken barometers, the trees burnt as a beacon to a lost man, and a manifest printer's error of 58 for 53 in a bearing. Yet Sturt, with no barometer, formed juster conclusions on the level and dip of the land than did Mitchell with a battery of instruments. Nor was it for the man front whose party Cunningham was lost to blame Sturt's extreme but successful precaution.' As for possible errors of longitude; says Sturt, I am not a professed, but a self-taught observer. I went into the interior to explore, not to survey; I lingered not by the way, and experience has told me how difficult it is to fix a longitude by compass and chronometer in such hurried journeys as mine.'

Mitchell's grievance thus finds voice in the 'Sydney Monitor:' 'Captain Sturt, of the 39th Regiment, is at last going to seek after the great Lake beyond Wellington Valley. In the name of science, and money-laid-out-to-advantage in times when Governor Darling is talked to every ship for the expenses of his administration, what qualification has the Captain, either as a scientific or practical traveller, to justify this appointment? There are persons of both these classes in the colony, and if the former class do not think it worth their while to under-take the expedition, we are sure that Hume, Hovell, and Co. have claims greater than Captain Sturt. A boat—very suitable doubtless for descending Mount York—has been built to sail on the new Australian Caspian. Captain Sturt had no right to be appointed over the head of our surveyors,' &c.&c.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Retributive justice willed that the last duel in Sydney should be fought with pistols by Mitchell and a newspaper editor; wounded honour on both sides being appeased by a ball that passed harmlessly through Mitchell's tall hat!

These passages are a fair sample of the free criticism, bristling with personalities, which distinguished the early press of every Australian colony. The 'Monitor,' let us in justice remark, soon changed its tone and, as the expedition proceeded, expressed distinct admiration of Sturt's perseverance, and of his' businesslike and honest journals.'

As a fact, Sturt was already no novice in bush life. The list of supplies (in his despatch of November 4, 1828) was drawn out, he tells us, 'from the suggestions of experienced men, *dud my own practice.*' Not only had he led detachments of his regiment through outlying districts, but with his friend Cunningham he had penetrated far beyond the settled boundaries. To Cunningham he offered the post of second leader to the new expedition. But that keen botanist had not recovered the fatigues of an arduous journey beyond the Dumaresq, Gwydir, Condamine, and nearly to Moreton Bay. Sturt then turned to Hamilton Hume, who, born and bred in the colony, and possessed of a fine instinct for the bush, had in the years 1824-25 made a notable journey to Port Phillip. The innuendo of the 'Monitor' that Hume should have led the expedition is refuted by Hume's admission that he was unable to take observations. Moreover, to manage a party made up of soldiers and of convicts an officer's authority was essential. Hume's former expedition had been marred by dissensions between him and Hovell, and by consequent insubordination in their followers. Sturt's high opinion of Hume is freely expressed both in his journals and in his official des-patches; Hume's experience, his perseverance, his readiness of resource, his tact with the natives are warmly extolled.

'From Mr. Hume I have on all occasions received the most ready and valuable assistance.

His intimate acquaintance with the manners and customs of the natives enabled him to hold intercourse with them, and chiefly contributed to the peaceable manner in which we have journeyed, while his previous experience was of real use to me,' &c., &c.

And Hume in 1873, the last year of his long life, writes:

'I was specially selected to accompany Sturt, and when with him I so acted as to win the confidence—I think I may say, the affection—of that distinguished explorer. As second to Sturt I found enough of honour, and over and above honour I secured a friendship the memory of which is still deeply treasured by me.'

Scarcely less remarkable, each in his degree, were some of the subordinate members of Sturt's party. Their leader gives them no faint praise: Every individual of the party deserves my warmest approbation; one and all have borne their distresses with cheerfulness, and they have at all times been attentive to their duty and obedient to their leaders.'

First stands John Harris, who in good report and evil report had stood by his master throughout his military career. The best tribute to his merits (apart from Sir Charles Napier's encomium, 'Colonisation,' p. 169) is perhaps in Sturt's definition of the role he filled:

'However well selected the party may be, I still consider necessary a man of general responsibility, who should be somewhat superior to the rest in his station in life. Him I would hold answerable for the discipline of the camp, and for its safety in my absence. This man I would rate wholly independent of the assistant to the leader, who has other most important duties to perform. I should not have felt justified in leaving the camp for a week, or in making the last effort to maintain our position on the Darling, if I had not reposed every confidence in the man to whom I entrusted the camp during my absence.'

Next in order figure the soldiers Hopkinson and Fraser. Both are frequently mentioned in the journals of Sturt's two first expeditions; the latter also reappears in the 'Overland' journey of 1838 down the Hume and Murray. Fraser, eccentric and versatile, by his love of animals, his cheerful spirits, his unperturbable coolness and dogged endurance, did excellent service. Alas! this hero of the Murray—less proof against convivial joys than against the terrors of the wilderness—died untimely in 1843, calling with his latest breath on the name of his beloved leader.

The remaining eight men were 'prisoners of the Crown,' of whom at least Clayton, the carpenter, won freedom by his valuable services on these expeditions.' The convicts,' says Sturt, 'behaved on all occasions as steadily as it was possible for men to do. Yet the two soldiers with me increased my confidence. However well disposed the prisoners may be, the beneficial example of steady discipline cannot be denied. The success of all expedition depends so much on the persons of whom it is composed, that too much attention cannot be given to the selection even of the most subordinate.' Sturt had *carte blanche* to choose his men, and to make out his own list of weapons, tools, and supplies. This list contrasts strangely with the elaborate needs of later travellers. Sir Ralph Darling wrote to Sir George Murray: 'Though at a very trifling expense, I have furnished the expedition in a manner likely to prevent its failure.... Captain Sturt, from his scientific knowledge, appears to be fully competent to the undertaking, and being ardently devoted to it, he has every chance of success.'

With unconsciously prophetic pen, the mother in Cheltenham writes at this time: 'Charles is acting as aide-de-camp to the Governor.'

He is delighted with the country, and Napier,<sup>1</sup> if he does not soon get preferment, will turn his thoughts to that quarter. In short, you may expect to hear by-and-by of some of our family becoming *great* men in that rising settlement.'

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to her second surviving son, the Rev. Napier Sturt, who proved an exemplary country rector.

## CHAPTER III

NOVEMBER 1828-APRIL 1829

FIRST EXPEDITION - THE MACQUARIE - THE MARSHES - THE  
DARLING-THE CASTLEREAGH

On November 10, 1828, Sturt took leave of his brother officers in Sydney. But the Blue Mountains were not yet spanned by good roads;<sup>1</sup> a week was spent in final preparations at Wellington Valley, and not till December 7 did the explorers strike into the wilderness. They followed the Macquarie, whose dwindled stream already roused misgivings as to its ultimate fate.

'As we neared Mount Harris, the Macquarie fell off so as scarcely to deserve the name of river. The excessive heat increased. The thermometer, seldom under 114° at noon, rose higher by 2 P.M., and, owing to the absence of night dews, had a trifling range in the twenty-four hours. The plains, bare and scorched, were rent by large fissures dangerous for travelling.' With the natives friendly relations were early established. 'As they were treated with kindness, they soon threw off all reserve, and assembled at the pool to fish. At a signal from an elderly man, they dived and quickly rose with the fish transfixed by their short spears. The seven fine bream thus taken they insisted on giving to our men; while they sat down very contentedly with some mussels which they soon procured.'

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<sup>1</sup> Until 1832, 'the ascent to the mountains from Emu, and the descent from them at Mount York, especially the latter, were so extremely bad, that a grant of land was offered by the Government to any one who could point out a better pass.' Mitchell, *Three Expeditions &c.* (published 1838), i. 152.

Even more characteristic was the next encounter with these singular people-an episode which for want of space is here much abbreviated.

December 16.-When riding in front of the party I came upon a numerous tribe, very different from those at the river, and apparently assembled on purpose to meet us. I was saluted by their chief, an old man who had stationed himself in front of his tribe. Behind him the young men stood in a line, and behind them were the warriors seated on the ground. A young native with me explained who and what we were, and the old chief seemed quite reconciled to my presence, though he cast many an anxious glance at the long train of animals approaching. The warriors, hideously painted with red and yellow ochre, and with their weapons at their sides, never lifted their eyes from the ground. Their countenances were fixed, sullen, and determined. To overcome this mood, I rode up to them; and taking a spear from the nearest, gave him my gun to examine. This mark of confidence was not lost upon them, for they immediately relaxed from their gravity and rose up and followed us. To obviate a difficulty in crossing the stream, steps were here cut in the steep bank. I was amused to see the natives voluntarily assist; they carried across the river flour-bags weighing a hundred pounds each. They worked as hard as our own people, and with a cheerfulness for which I was quite unprepared.' (The zeal of these volunteers was dearly paid by the breaking of a barometer.)

By December 20 the prevalence of reeds and coarse water-grass showed that the marshes were near. Riding that evening to reconnoitre from Mount Harris, Sturt and Hume found traces of Oxley's camp of ten years earlier.

These decaying vestiges of a former expedition naturally suggested to my mind the reflection whether I should be more fortunate than the leader of it.

To follow up the discoveries of Oxley, a man of uncommon quickness and of great ability, was a task no less enviable than arduous. At that point which might be said to mark the termination of his journey, and only the commencement of mine, I knew not how soon I too should be obliged to retreat from the marshy exhalations of so depressed a country.'

Several of the men were in fact already suffering from inflamed eyes; and, as they pushed further into the marsh, this trouble increased so much that Sturt withdrew to higher ground and allowed a day's rest while he sent back despatches to the Governor.

So keen was the interest excited in Sydney by those despatches, that even the hostile 'Monitor' praised Sturt's manly report and his attitude towards the natives.

Meantime the sick men had recovered sufficiently for the party to move directly on the great body of the marsh, which soon spread in desolation before them. To trace the river at this point was so important that Sturt from the next camp deep in the reeds decided to launch the boat, while Hume should skirt the marshes to the northward, each leader taking two men and a week's provisions. After severe work in lifting the boat over fallen trees and in patching with a tin plate a gash from a sunken log, the boat party got into a more open channel so wide as from thirty-five to forty-five yards. High reeds closed in the view. 'After about three miles,' says Sturt, our course was suddenly and most unexpectedly checked. The channel which had promised so well, without change in the breadth or depth of its bed, ceased altogether; and while we were yet lost in astonishment at so abrupt a termination, the boat grounded.' Close examination of the banks revealed two very small creeks, of which one branched to the north, the other to the west. At about thirty yards the former, at twenty yards the latter, failed entirely; and in each case Sturt made a point of walking round the head of the vanished creek.

An exhaustive study of the reed thicket between these creeks revealed trickling water sometimes ankle-deep, sometimes scarcely visible, which eventually turned northward; but this he attributed to the temporary effect of a recent thunderstorm. Hume at the same time had found, about twelve miles to the northward, a serpentine sheet of water, undoubtedly the channel of the river. On patient investigation this also was found to lose itself completely in a second expanse of reeds. 'From the extreme flatness of the country I should have been led to believe that the Macquarie would never again assume the form of a river; but from the direction of the marshes I could not but indulge a hope that it would meet the Castlereagh, and that their united waters might form a stream of some importance.' For six days from the last day of the year, Sturt and Hume, each with two men, carried out separately journeys full of interest, to Oxley's Table Land on the one hand, and to New Year's Range on the other. New Year's Creek (the Bogan of Mitchell) was discovered by Sturt on the first, by Hume on the third of January.

Sturt, during six days' absence from camp, rode about two hundred miles over plains gradually rising from the marshes, which, though bare from drought, were reported by the explorer as full of promise, 'the soil, though red, being extremely rich.' On January 2 he and his two men found themselves at sunset obliged to bivouac without a drop of water. 'The day had been extremely warm and our animals were as thirsty as ourselves. Hope never forsakes the human breast; so, after securing the horses, we began to wander round our lonely bivouac. It was almost dark when one of the men was led by a pigeon to a puddle, small indeed, yet sufficient for our necessities, and I thanked Providence for this bounty.' On the uninviting appearance of the country at that season—the height of the Australian summer—he remarks: 'From experience I had learnt that it was impossible, as in other countries, to form any opinion from previous appearances as to the probable features of this singular region.'

In a geographical point of view my journey had enabled me to put to rest a question of much previous doubt. Of whatever extent might be the marshes of the Macquarie, they were evidently not connected with those of the Lachlan. A knowledge of more than one hundred miles of the interior showed me that no sea and but little water existed on its surface. Passing over much barren ground, I had also noticed soil that was far from poor and on which in ordinary seasons the vegetation would have borne a very different aspect.'

Not less fruitful, though more perplexing, were the results of Hume's journey. That gentleman's object was to ascertain the extent of the marshes towards the northeast and, if possible, to gain the Castlereagh on that tack. Should he fail to do so, he was to regain the Macquarie on a westerly course. In carrying out this general plan, he crossed in succession Wallis's Ponds (now the Marthaguy) and some lesser creeks. Morrissett's Ponds (now Meri-Meri) he followed northwards for thirty miles. Here the creek trended eastward, and Hume, unaware of his near approach to the Castlereagh, struck out to the west, reaching on January 2 'Duck Creek' (now the Marra). New Year's Creek he crossed on the 3rd; but, failing to discover from New Year's Range any sign of the Macquarie or of other water, and now running short of provisions, he made for the camp, which he regained one day later than Sturt. Both explorers continued to search thoroughly the second great marsh, still puzzling over the fate of the buried river. By January 12, so completely had they connected their principal tracks that Sturt was able to state: 'We had now got to the bottom of the great marsh; and it was clear that at a distance of twenty-five miles to the north of us the river had not reformed.'

Hume and several of the men suffered from camping in the marshes; the swarms of mosquitos and of flies were unendurable; Sturt was disappointed of supplies promised at Mount Harris, and, in addition to these troubles, water now failed.

'To have remained in our position would have been impossible, as there was no water for ourselves or the animals; to have descended again into the reeds for a more minute survey would have been imprudent. Our provisions were running short; and if a knowledge of the distant interior was to be gained, we had no time to lose.' Further examination of the marshes was therefore deferred till the return of the travellers, who now set their faces westwards. On January 13, 1829, they quitted the marshes; and as they gradually rose to a higher level of alternate plain and brush, the health of the party improved. Hereabouts occurred an incident noted by Sir Charles Napier no less for the tact of the white leaders than for the courage of a native chief.

Sturt, unarmed, was riding ahead with Hume, when they surprised a hunting-party of natives, two of whom were cutting out honey from the lower branch of a tree. At sight of the horsemen all ran away but one, who wore a cap of emu feathers. 'He stood looking at us for a moment, and then, very deliberately, dropped from the tree to the ground. I then advanced towards him, but he darted away. Fearful lest he had gone to collect his tribe, I rode quickly back for my gun to support Mr. Hume. On my return, the native was standing about twenty paces from Mr. Hume, at whom (as being the nearest) the savage, on seeing me approach, immediately poised his spear. Hume then unslung and presented his carbine; but as it was evident that my appearance had startled the savage, I pulled, up, and he immediately lowered his weapon. His coolness and courage surprised me.

He had evidently taken man and horse for one animal, and as long as Hume kept his seat, the native remained upon his guard; but on seeing the rider dismount, he stuck his spear into the ground and came up. When we explained our search for water, he pointed to the west. He gave information in a frank manly way, and when the party passed, he stepped back without the least embarrassment to avoid the animals. I am sure he was a very brave man, and I left him with the most favourable impression.'

Under New Year's Range (the first elevation westward of Mount Harris) the party was detained from January 15 to 19, in consequence of the temporary loss of one of the men. He was missed on the night of the 16th, and; after vain search for him next day, Sturt, returning to camp in the dark, set on fire the cypresses (*Pines callitris*) on the range, 'and thus illuminated the country for miles around.' This bonfire had the desired result of bringing back to camp the exhausted wanderer.

Hereabouts, even at that scorching season, the open forest country was not at all deficient in pasture, but too soon this tract of good soil gave way to a region of utter desolation.

'The creek on which we depended gave alarming indications of total failure. The water when found would in boiling leave a sediment nearly equal to half its body, and was sometimes so bitter as to be quite unpalatable. At best, it was scraped up from small puddles, in which occasionally were putrid frogs.' Sturt told a friend that more than once on finding a little mud, he squeezed it through his handkerchief to moisten his mouth.

Scarcely a living creature met the eye; only at dead of night the wild dogs with mournful howl would break the solitude of the desert.

'There is no doubt of the fate that here must have overtaken any one who might have strayed away;

and it was well that Norman's narrow escape had duly impressed his comrades.' In the hope of intersecting some stream, or of falling upon better country, the main body and the bullocks were now halted for some days near grass and water at Oxley's Table Land, while Sturt and Hume thoroughly reconnoitred D'Urban's Group,<sup>1</sup> forty-five miles to the south-west. Here the sterile scrub, full of wombat burrows, was varied by luxuriant grassy plains like one continuous meadow. 'In ordinary seasons we should no doubt have found water in abundance, but now it was so slimy as to hang in strings between the fingers, or so putrid that the horses refused it! From the hills the view revealed no glittering light, no smoke to betray a water-hole, or to tell of a single inhabitant in the wide region we were overlooking.' This excursion therefore proved the risk of pushing to the south-west, the direction wished by the travellers. Retreat could only be avoided by still hugging the channel of New Year's Creek, notwithstanding the easterly trend which had driven them from it.

That channel they accordingly regained at about fifteen miles on a north-north-east course, when on January 31, with men and beasts much refreshed, they broke up the camp at Oxley's Table Land. The creek 'had, however, undergone so complete a change, and had increased so much in size and in the height of the banks,' as to be unrecognisable. These better signs, together with the re-appearance of large flooded-gum trees,<sup>2</sup> such as had not been seen to the westward of the marshes, raised more sanguine hopes. Still not a drop of water was to be found when after sunset the camp was pitched. Sturt, anxiously searching the creek-bed, to his joy, within a hundred yards found a pool. Another day westward over thirsty plains, another waterless camp sorely perplexed the leaders.' Signs of the natives assured me,' says Sturt, 'that water was at hand, but in what direction it was impossible to guess.

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<sup>1</sup> So named by Sturt in honour of Sir Benjamin D'Urban, K.C.B.

<sup>2</sup> *Eucalyptus saligna*

Not being delayed by any breakfast, the horses were saddled and the cattle loaded early on February 2. Following a native path on a northerly course, we had not proceeded for more than a mile when we suddenly found ourselves on the banks of a noble river.

The party drew up upon a bank forty to forty-five feet above the level of the stream. The unbroken sheet of water in the channel, seventy to eighty yards broad, was covered with pelicans and other wild fowl. Our surprise and delight are better imagined than described. Our difficulties seemed at an end; for here, to reward all our exertions, was a river whose importance increased every moment to the imagination. The capacity of its channel (coming from the north-east and flowing to the south-west) proved that we were as far from its source as from its termination. The native paths on either side were like well-trodden roads; the overhanging trees were of a beautiful and gigantic growth. The banks were too precipitous to allow of watering the cattle; but the men eagerly descended to quench a thirst increased by the powerful sun.

Never shall I forget their cry of amazement, nor the terror and disappointment with which they called out that the water was too salt to drink ! The discovery was a blow for which I was not prepared. Our hopes at the moment of their apparent realisation were annihilated. The cup of joy was dashed from our hands before we could raise it to our lips.' The cattle were now in sorry plight; had not a small pond of fresh water been found to serve their pressing needs, the travellers could not have remained on the river.

No wonder that the phenomenon of the salt water re-awakened dreams of the inland sea. Sturt, standing on the banks at sunset, and watching the water-fowl and the leaping fish, doubted whether the river, without help from some mediterranean sea, could supply itself with such constant abundance as this teeming life seemed to indicate.

But again, he wonders where were the people of whom signs appeared everywhere? Had they been driven away by an abnormal state of the river? 'The water was not by any means so salt as that of the ocean, though of precisely similar taste.' As the party, in spite of constant distress to the animals from thirst and from rough ways, pushed down the river, they found the water at some places so much less salt than at others that the cattle sometimes drank of it sparingly.

Sturt has been accused of underrating new country; but he repeatedly points out that in the melancholy circumstances of the drought, it was impossible to form a correct opinion. 'The country has appeared barren where, in even moderate rain, it might show very differently. No doubt we passed over much of both good and bad land; our animals have thriven on the herbage, this argues well.'

The tribes of the Darling were considered warlike by all later travellers. When Sturt first encountered them, the question of peace or war hung nicely in the balance, and was not adjusted without a remarkable display on both sides of coolness and of tact.

'Early on February 4 we passed a group of seventy huts, each capable of holding twelve to fifteen men. They all fronted the same point of the compass, viz. north-west (see 'Central Expedition,' i. 254, 255). In them were two beautifully made nets about ninety yards long; one with larger meshes was probably to take kangaroos, but the other was evidently for fishing.<sup>1</sup> In one hut, swept with particular care,

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<sup>1</sup> The natives make their twine and rope for nets from the fibre of a rush packed, like the native cress (see p. 151), in layers of wet grass, over a pit paved with red-hot pebbles. A yam-stick thrust through the mass makes a hole, down which water is poured on to the hot stones, producing steam, which renders the rushes soft and pliable. They are then chewed by the women; the woody matter being thus broken up, is easily removed when dry. The men spin into yarn the fibrous residue by rolling it with the hand on the naked thigh, and by a repetition of this process make up the yarn into twine and rope. The nets are very neatly and well made without the use of any mesh or gauge. The severe task of chewing early wears down the women's teeth to the gums; but they are too conservative to adopt the suggestion to beat instead of chewing the rushes.'-[From letter of Mr. J. Harris-Browne.]

lay a number of white balls as of pulverised shells or lime. A trench round the hut to keep out rain, and other details, showed more than usual attention. Near this village we came suddenly upon three or four natives who, owing to the nature of the ground, were not aware of us until we had ascended a little ridge within a few yards of them. The crack of the drayman's whip first roused their attention. They gazed for a moment, and then started up in horror and amazement that seemed to increase. We stood immovable, until, with a fearful yell, they darted out of sight. Their cry brought some dozen more natives, who proceeded to fire the bush, always a warlike symptom. As however this could not injure us on the narrow ridge, we held our good position very patiently. Soon the fire drew pretty near us; and overhead rose dense columns of smoke. A native now advanced a few paces from the bush; and bending till his hands rested on his knees, he fixed his gaze upon us for some time. Seeing us still immovable, he now threw himself into most extravagant attitudes, shaking his foot from time to time. When all his violence had no effect, he turned his rear to us in a most laughable manner, and absolutely groaned in spirit when this last insult failed of success. He stood perplexed, not knowing what next to do, when Mr. Hume seized the opportunity to call out to him, and with much address, he at length got the savage to come to meet him at a short distance from the animals. As soon as the man had recovered from his alarm, I went up to him with a tomahawk, the use of which he promptly guessed.

This savage was an elderly man who, as his tribe gathered round him, threw on them a melancholy glance, and showed signs of affliction. The people were dying in numbers from the ravages of a violent skin disease.

The use of the white cones observed in a hut now became apparent. Most of the natives present were marked with what was no doubt a sign of mourning. Others, however, were painted with red and yellow ochre, literally warpaint smeared on since the appearance of the white men. The distribution of a few trifles completed the good understanding, and some of the tribe escorted their new friends for a short distance.'

On the 5th a stronger current in the river led to the discovery of brine springs in its very bed. These deposits of salt at once dispelled Sturt's hope of approaching an inland sea, and convinced him of the imprudence of advancing further.<sup>1</sup> The last pond of fresh water was left eighteen miles in the rear; whether we should again find any was doubtful, and I hesitated to run the risk. The animals, from the effects of the river water, were already so weak that they could scarcely carry their loads.' Sorely against the grain therefore Sturt now returned to the nearest water supply. Leaving the men and cattle there, he and Hume with two men followed the course of the river to a distance of forty miles from the camp, a fearful distance under the circumstances. But as the water continued salt, notwithstanding the increasing size of the river; as moreover the horses were trembling from exhaustion, while the water brought in a barrel was reduced to a pint; and as by no means could the cattle have come so far, Sturt, with extreme reluctance, gave up the further pursuit of the river, which he now named after Governor Darling.'

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<sup>1</sup> On Mitchell's authority, it was afterwards said that, by persevering for a few more miles, Sturt would have passed beyond the influence of the brine-springs. But this cannot be proved by the experience of Mitchell, who struck the river in a season of normal rainfall.

In dejected mood the travellers turned from the fine river whose spreading reaches, alive with wild fowl, lured them with potent spell. Overpowered by thirst, they boiled tea in the nauseous river water; and while so engaged were threatened by a large body of natives, who 'from the opposite side dashed into the river with great uproar. The horses, taking fright, galloped away. Determined to fire at once if the blacks pressed up our bank, Hume and I angrily beckoned to the foremost to stop. They mistook our meaning and advanced, but laid all their spears in a heap as they came up. We then sat down on the bank, and they immediately did the same; nor did they stir until we beckoned to them after the horses had been secured. Having stayed with them about half an hour, we remounted, and struck into the plains; while the natives, about twenty-seven in number, went up the river banks to rejoin their hordes.'

On regaining the camp Sturt found that there too the natives had paid frequent visits; but the men had kept on the best of terms with them. Yet near this very place many of the same tribe, after a lamentable affray, were slaughtered by the next white party, under Major Mitchell.

During February 7, a day of much-needed rest for man and beast, Sturt and Hume, tracing the chart upon the ground about 3 P.M., were startled by a loud report like 'the discharge of heavy ordnance,' at an apparent distance of five or six miles to the north-west.' I sent one of the men immediately up a tree, but he could observe nothing unusual. Whatever occasioned the report, it made a strong impression on all of us; and to this day the singularity of such a sound in such a situation is a matter of mystery to me.' Two similar phenomena are recorded by Sturt during his central expedition (see *infra*, p. 263, and 'Central Expedition,' ii. 24).

Both occurrences are explained by modern observers as caused by the fall of rocks split off from the ranges by the action of alternate extremes of cold and heat. It is noteworthy that from this camp on the Darling no high ground was nearer than between 100 and 200 miles; the Grey and Barrier Ranges were distant fully 230 miles.

The retreat from the Darling entailed sundry forced marches—first caused by the drying up of some water-holes even since Sturt's advance, and later by the alarming sight of dense masses of smoke at the head of the marshes, near Mount Foster. Fearing for the reinforcing party, who must ere now have reached Mount Harris, Sturt hurried forward. The knowledge that such conflagrations meant mischief from the natives increased his apprehensions. Nor did he arrive an hour too soon. At the earliest dawn (on February 23) we pushed for the hill. As we approached we saw traces of cattle, but no animals. Under Mount Harris however we could see a hut; and it is impossible to describe our relief when a soldier came forward. The party was safe, and welcomed the returning travellers. The natives however had tried to surprise the camp, and had probably fired the marshes to collect the distant tribes for a second attack; so that our arrival was most opportune.' The reinforcements, in fact, consisted of one soldier in charge of the supplies, and one drayman! A week's rest for the jaded animals was partly devoted by Sturt to despatches, partly to observations on the changes in the country since he had last quitted Mount Harris.

The Macquarie now consisted of a chain of ponds. Such vegetation as had escaped the fires had perished from the extreme heat. The *Polygonum junceum* seemed to be the only plant that had withstood the drought. Yet the animals from Wellington Valley were in the best condition; too fat, indeed, for effective labour. It might, therefore, be presumed that herbage affording such nourishment in so unfavourable a season would under the influence of moderate rains be of the richest quality.

Under the dreadful heat of the Macquarie plains at this time the sugar melted in the tins, and all the dogs died. The aspect of the country was truly melancholy; not a flower, not a green object to be seen. The natives continued to fire the great marshes, probably to seize for food any snakes, birds, or other animals that might issue from the flames. Every fish in the river, every mussel in its bed they had consumed, and they were consequently in a pitiable state of starvation. Quite recently this very tribe had killed two Irish runaways, in order to seize 'and eat their dogs.'

From this camp Hume was sent southward 'to report if, through the well-watered Bogan district, there were any chance to make for a lower reach of the Darling (there being a probability that it ultimately joins the southern waters,' writes Sturt in his despatch of March 5, 1829). But Hume, though he crossed some excellent country, found the general conditions prohibitive to advance.

Sturt meanwhile did a notable day's work, crossing the river at daylight and not returning to camp till past 10 P.M.; nor did he in that interval procure any water. His object was to carry on the survey of the southern extremity of the marshes, and to complete the circuit of them by joining his former line of route. This he effectually accomplished by turning their south-west angle, and then, on a northerly course, working to the bottom of the first great marsh (the more northerly one).

Sturt had much at heart this thorough performance of his task; and to ungenerous insinuations of Mitchell he has left in manuscript the following reply: I trod every foot of ground round those marshes. As they formed the principal feature I was sent to examine, they were studied by me with the utmost nicety. After passing round the bottom of the greater (or northern) marsh, and intersecting my own track to the north-west, I returned to Mount Harris, and, crossing the Macquarie, descended on the marshes close to where that river enters them.

I skirted them round the south-east and south-west angles, riding down their western limits until I again connected my tracks; and if a gutter had been in my path I must have seen it.'

On March 7 the explorers started east-north-east for the Castlereagh, which (after camping on Wallis's and on Morrissett's Ponds, the Marthaguy and Meri-Meri) they found 130 yards broad, but absolutely dry.

This discovery baffled the leaders, and damped the ardour of the men. To trace this river it would be necessary for Mr. Hume and myself to undertake those fatiguing journeys in search of water which had already so much exhausted us.' Great indeed were the trials faced by all the party, but especially by the two leaders, for nearly three weeks from March 11 spent in a thankless journey down the Castlereagh, and in patient investigation of its network of tributary creeks. The natives were generally in small parties, and reduced to such straits for food that they were found making cakes of mimosa-tree gum,<sup>1</sup> though some of them offered the travellers honey, and even ducks. One tribe came down upon the camp with hostile demonstration, but when they were within 150 yards of the tent Sturt and Hume went to meet them.

Seeing us advance, they stopped; and forming two deep, they marched to and fro to a war song, crouching with their spears. When we advanced they stopped, and we did the same.

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<sup>1</sup> Grey charges Sturt with 'error and ignorance' for supposing so choice a luxury as mimosa gum to be a last resource of starving natives. But though the gum when helped out with tasty grubs and mussels may be delicious, the case is different when, as in the drought of 1828-29, the mucilaginous diet is unvaried by any animal food. The point of Sturt's remark is therefore unaltered by Grey's comment. (See Grey's *Two Expeditions in Western Australia*, 1837-38, ii. 259-261.)

Hume then broke from a tree a short branch-even with this rude people a token of peace. The natives on seeing this at once laid aside their spears; and two of them advanced twenty paces in front of the rest, who sat down. Hume then went forward and sat down, when the two natives came up and sat close to him.

Now it is evident that to ensure kindly intercourse with any people a little insight into their customs is necessary. The importance of so gradual an approach is not only to avoid alarming their natural timidity; among themselves they observe the same ceremony. These eighteen men came to the tents, where they conducted themselves very quietly, and they soon left us with every token of friendship.'

Another day some twenty to thirty natives accompanied the party for many miles, and earnestly invited them to stay at their huts by a fine pool. 'Within sight of their camp, we came upon their armoury. Numerous spears were reared against the trees, and on the ground lay heaps of boomerangs. The spears were very heavy and half-barbed; and it is singular that three were marked with a broad arrow. I would not permit any of these weapons to be touched.'

No wonder that by this time the men became despondent. Sturt and Hume were daily absent on long rides, from which they returned exhausted, and not always successful in finding water and forage ahead. 'All showed depression of spirits; nor did success rouse them to any such satisfaction as they would have displayed earlier in our journey.' By a long ride on the 26th the leaders ascertained that for a distance of five and forty miles the bed of the Castlereagh was waterless.

At last, on March 29, they had barely travelled two miles, when, in crossing what seemed a bight of the Castlereagh, they were checked by a broad river-at once known to be the Darling.

At a distance of more than ninety miles nearer its source, this singular river still preserved its character so strikingly that it was impossible not to recognise it in a moment. The same steep banks and lofty trees, the same deep reaches alive with fish, its very waters were unchanged and had not lost their saltness.'

The next move was a difficult problem. Sturt and Hume, by a long day's ride beyond the Darling to the north-west (a day during which not a drop of fresh water nor a blade of grass was seen), realised that to stay where they were was impossible; to advance would be ruin. 'During the short time of our journey, I had seen rivers cease to flow, and sheets of water disappear. Vegetation seemed annihilated; the largest forest trees were drooping, and many were dead. The emus, with outstretched necks, gasping with thirst, in vain searched the river channels for water; and the native dog, so thin that it could hardly walk, seemed to implore some merciful hand to despatch it.' The natives were reduced to the utmost scarcity. The travellers in following the Castlereagh had owed their safety to certain pools still remaining in the Morrissett. While on that branch channel, they had observed a certain unknown creek joining it from the south. Being now north of the marshes, and being anxious to ascertain the origin of this creek, they resolved to follow it up, as their shortest way back, taking their chance for water. To have returned by the Castlereagh would have entailed the severest distress, and, as it was, the water supply was most precarious and generally of abominable quality. Moreover, on reaching the marshes, they failed to find a drop in holes and channels that had formerly supplied them, and were thus obliged to push on by forced marches for very life. But to Sturt and Hume the result of the journey up this small creek was particularly satisfactory. It cleared up every shadow of doubt regarding the actual termination of the Macquarie and enabled them to connect the flow of waters at so interesting and important a point.

A reference to the chart will show that the waters of the marshes, after trickling through the reeds, form a small creek which carries the superfluous part of them into Morrissett's chain of ponds. The latter again falls into the Castlereagh at about eight miles to the west-northwest; while all three finally, in a west by north direction, join the Darling at about ninety miles to the north-northwest of Mount Harris, and at about an equal distance of where we first struck upon the Darling. Thus it is evident that the Darling had considerably neared the eastern ranges, though it was still more than 150 miles from their base. It appeared to come from the northeast. Whether its sources lie in the mountains behind our distant settlements or still further to the northward is a question of curious speculation.' Sturt expresses his own opinion that 'none but tropical rains could supply the furious torrent that must sometimes rage in it.

It would be presumptuous to hazard any opinion as to the interior to the westward of that remarkable river. Its course is involved in equal mystery. Does it make its way to the south coast, or exhaust itself in feeding a succession of swamps, or does it fall into a large reservoir in the centre of the island?'

Returning to Mount Harris on April 7, and moving by leisurely stages up the Macquarie, the party, after an absence of four months and two weeks, regained Wellington Valley on the 21st.

The bed of the Macquarie was now dry for more than half a mile at a stretch. The lower tribes were actually starving. We left the interior in a still more deplorable state than when we entered it, and it is certain that, unless rain fell in less than three weeks, all communication with the Darling would be cut off.'

## CHAPTER IV

*NOVEMBER 1829-FEBRUARY 1830*

OBJECTS OF SECOND EXPEDITION-THE MURRUMBIDGEE-THE LACHLAN - THE MURRAY-JUNCTION OF THE DARLING - LAKE ALEXANDRINA

STURT had found no inland sea, but, tracing to their last drop the Macquarie, the Bogan, the Castlereagh, he had discovered in the Darling a main channel of the colony's western watershed.

'To determine the further course of that river, it would be necessary to regain its banks so far below the parallel already attained as to leave no doubt of its identity.' In order to carry out this object without risking the want of water, Sturt proposed to follow the line of the Murrumbidgee, 'a river of considerable size and of impetuous current.' By the end of September 1829 he was authorised to prepare for a second expedition. His general orders now were to trace, as far as practicable, the Murrumbidgee or its tributaries, whence (in the event of failure of those streams) it was hoped to regain the Darling on a north-westerly course.

'It became my interest and my object to make the expedition as complete as possible, and, as far as in me lay, to provide for every contingency.'

Sturt's foremost precaution was to build and take with him in pieces a whaleboat of dimensions and strength fit for rough work. 'I likewise constructed a small still, in the event of finding the water of the Darling salt. So little danger had been apprehended from the natives in the former journey that three firelocks had been considered sufficient.

On the present occasion however I thought it well to provide arms for each individual.' Sturt at once wrote to Hume; in a first cordial letter he sketches his plan of action, and urges his former comrade to join him ; in the second he regrets Hume's decision that harvest work must detain him till too late. Mr. George MacLeay (later Sir George MacLeay, K.C.M.G.), then a lad of twenty, went with Sturt 'as a companion rather than as an assistant,' and of the Macquarie party, Harris, Hopkinson, and Fraser were again chosen. Another old friend was Clayton the carpenter ('What could such a fine fellow have done to deserve transportation?' exclaims Henry Kingsley), and two new convict recruits, Mulholland and Macnamee, made up the immortal eight of the Murray crew. The Governor watched the preparations with anxious interest; he arranged for a relief party to meet the travellers on their return, and ordered a vessel to St. Vincent's Gulf in case they should succeed in making that coast.

On November 3, 1829 (almost exactly a year since his former departure from Sydney), Sturt rode forth on this new quest. The morning was perfectly serene, nor was I ever lighter at heart or more joyous in spirit. My mind forgot the storms of life, as Nature at that moment had forgotten the tempests that sometimes agitate her. The scene is vividly impressed upon my mind. My servant Harris, who for sixteen years had shared my wanderings, led the advance with Hopkinson. Nearly abreast of them stalked the eccentric Fraser, wholly lost in thought. The two former had laid aside their military gear, substituting the broad-brimmed hat and bushman's dress; but Fraser's full regimentals were little suited to protect him from heat or damp. He carried a gun, and his double shotbelt was brimful of shot, though there was not a chance that he would expend a grain during the day.

At his heels followed the dogs, as if they knew his interest in them. Further behind, the drays and pack animals came on slowly in charge of Robert Harris, and the heavy Clayton brought up the rear.'

Sturt's buoyant spirits are evident from the cheerful description of his early progress among hospitable settlers, and of his pleasant riverside camps. At Juggiong a generous farmer presented the party with eight fine wethers. 'The sheep gave no trouble; they followed without attempting to wander, and at night were secured in a small pen. Nor did they lose in condition so much as was expected from being driven ten to fifteen miles daily.' No doubt this experience induced Sturt to take on his Central expedition the flock of sheep to which his party then largely owed their lives.

On November 23 the journey from Underaliga to the banks of the Murrumbidgee lay through wild and romantic scenery; and this region, denounced by the settlers as of the very worst description,' surprised Sturt by richness of soil and pasture. 'A country under cultivation is so wholly different from one unbroken by the plough as to render difficult a decided opinion on its capabilities. A stockman is sure to condemn new country unless it affords most abundant pasture. Accustomed to roam from one place to another, these men despise any but the richest tracts. At Juggiong Sturt stood by the Murrumbidgee and beheld, in contrast to the Macquarie, a stream with strong current, whose waters, foaming and eddying among rocks, gave promise of a reckless course.' Seldom, indeed, did his path lie among fairer scenes than along the upper reaches of this river. To cross and recross the stream with heavy stores was however troublesome. By way of ferry a punt of tarpaulins was fixed on an oblong frame, and worked backwards and forwards by a running cord on a rope fixed to a tree.

Already on December 1 a change of soil and of vegetation was apparent; the country was becoming more level, the grass more scanty and burnt. A few days later the river ran muddy between reedy banks, and from the nearest hill an expanse of dark plains spread westward. 'Strong as was my hope,' says Sturt, 'I yet feared the river might lose itself in the vast flat before us.'<sup>1</sup> On the 10th an old native spoke of another large river flowing to the southward of west, to which the Murrumbidgee was as a creek. That such a feature existed I thought extremely probable, because it was only natural to expect that other streams descended from the mountains in the south-east. ... Considering the concave direction of those mountains, I even at this time hoped that the rivers falling from them would sooner or later unite in one important and navigable stream.' From the last settled station the party had been attended by two native guides, who proved both serviceable and amusing. One of these blacks displayed great skill and courage in dislodging an opossum from a burning tree. Having kindled 'a raging fire with dry grass in a trunk so hollow that its total destruction seemed imminent, the black fearlessly climbed to the highest branch amid dense smoke, and seizing on the half-singed, half-roasted victim, flung it down in triumph. The effect of the scene in so lonely a forest was very fine. The roaring of the fire, the fearless attitude of the dark figure enveloped in smoke, still dwell on my recollection.' As the party moved on, the tree fell with a loud crash.

These guides, in deference to an unwritten land-law, seldom accompanied the explorers for more than five days' march. On reaching the tribal limit they became Timid and uneasy, and would either hand on their white friends to the next tribe, or would simply flee by night, leaving them to their own resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Here horses and bullocks sank deep in a lighter and sandier soil, which however, Sturt, notwithstanding the scanty vegetation, pronounced to be 'of the first quality, though probably fitter for agriculture than for grazing'.

Their language differed from that of the Macquarie clan; the younger men were better favoured. But in no material point were they unlike the natives of the coast and of the Darling.' Both sets share alike in the characteristic sunken eye and overhanging eyebrow, high cheek-bone and thick lips, distended nostrils, nose either short or aquiline, stout bust and slender limbs, hair sometimes curled, sometimes smooth. Alike, they extract the front tooth and lacerate their bodies, scars being their chief ornament. They procure food by the same means, paint in the same manner, and, so far as the productions of the country allow, use the same weapons. But the tribes west of the mountains where the grass tree (*Xanthorrhœa*) is not found, make for distant combat a light reed spear which they carry in bundles, and by means of throwingsticks hurl with unerring precision to a great distance. For close fight they have a heavy spear, and others of different sizes for the chase. Old men only have the privilege of eating the emu; and so submissive on this point are the young men, that if from pressing hunger, when hunting, one of them should break through this regulation, he betrays his guilt by his manner, sitting apart, and at the first question confessing the misdemeanor ; upon which he undergoes a slight punishment. The policy of this law is evident, for the emus, if slaughtered indiscriminately, would soon become extinct. In this instance civilized nations may learn a wholesome lesson from savages. For similar reasons, perhaps, married people alone are here permitted to eat ducks. Alike on the shores of Jervis Bay and on the banks of the Macquarie they hold their corrobories; and in both places, during these strange ceremonies, the same melancholy ditty breaks the stillness of night. These performances,

varied by dances and sham fights, are partly dramatic.<sup>1</sup> Like all savages, they treat their women as beasts of burden, making them carry the very weapons, and leaving them to procure food as they can, while to the men only are reserved all privileges and benefits of the chase.'

Sturt, hearing native reports of bullock tracks to the north-north-west-surely those left by Oxley's Lachlan expedition'-and eager to 'connect surveys,' now rode twenty to thirty miles northward. He approached certain hills from the south as near as Oxley had approached them from the north, and he later found that his own and Oxley's bearings of their highest points exactly tallied. 'The natives caught eagerly at the word "Colare," a name they give to the Lachlan. They pointed to the north-north-west, and, making a sweep with raised arm, seemed to intimate that a large sheet of water lay in that direction. This, they added, joined the Murrumbidgee more to the west.' The country- now daily showed more gloomy; broad reed-belts appeared by the river; soon the dreaded polygonum spread far and near like a dark sea, while the ground became so rotten that the teams knocked up.

On December 25 Sturt and MacLeay again rode northnorth-west to examine the Lachlan marshes. Among the bulrushes and reeds they found a network of 'little drains,' so like the ground at the bottom of the Macquarie marshes that Sturt confidently predicted a larger creek, which indeed proved to be the actual outlet of the Lachlan.

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<sup>1</sup> I was highly delighted to witness at a corrobory on the Murray an exhibition of Captain Sturt's first passage down the river. The actor had been at the time engaged in snaring wildfowl, and was standing motionless, up to his chin in water, among the reeds, with a cap of green leaves on his head, when to his alarm he saw in the middle of the stream "a great beast with plenty heads and legs." Dropping rod and net, he remained immovable, till he thought it safe to dart out of the water and hide in the scrub. See Bull's *Early Experiences in South Australia*, p. 85

The junction of that river with the Murrumbidgee, at ten to fifteen miles below the camp of the 25th, was therefore noted and correctly laid down by Sturt from his boat a few days later, and he justly names the Lachlan<sup>1</sup> among the streams whose fate he had ascertained.

Meantime, the survey of the 25th, on the whole, revived Sturt's hopes that 'the Murrumbidgee would not fail'--hopes rudely shaken next day when MacLeay from the front sent a man at full gallop with the news that no river was to be found, and nothing to be seen but a vast expanse of reeds ! This message did not lighten the severe toil caused by foundered drays, nor the exhaustion due to a hot wind; and Sturt 'for a moment or two was stunned.' Turning sharp to the right he finally gained the river, but was too weary and anxious to sleep that night. The moment was critical and called for prompt action. Rising at daybreak (December 27), Sturt ordered Clayton to fell a tree and to prepare a sawpit, while he and MacLeay rode down the river. The waters, though turbid, continued deep, the current rapid, the banks high. The fall of country was plainly to the southward of west. Sturt was strengthened in his faith that the river would hold on. 'Besides, I daily anticipated its junction with some equal or larger stream from the south-east.... About noon, to the surprise of my companion, I told him that I had resolved on a bold and desperate measure--to build the whaleboat and to send home the drays.' No less surprised were the men at their leader's sudden return and at the change of plan. 'I had to study their characters in order to select those best qualified to accompany me.' The keel and planks already prepared for a smaller boat were left for the time, while all hands were turned on to the building of the whaleboat, which, after four days of arduous labour, was painted and in

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<sup>1</sup> *Central Expedition*, ii. 2

the water,<sup>1</sup> and alongside her within three more days lay a small consort of half her dimensions.

In the intervals of hard work during those seven days Sturt wrote dispatches to the Governor, and on January 4, 1830, an interesting letter to Hamilton Hume

'I was checked in my advance by high reeds spreading as far as the eye can reach, under which the soil is so soft that the drays stuck fast and the cattle knocked up. . . . The Murrumbidgee kept up its character and is a magnificent stream. I do not yet know its fate, but I am obliged to abandon my cattle and have taken to the boats. Where I shall wander to God only knows. I have little doubt, however, that I shall ultimately make the coast. Where do the Hume and the Hovell (Goulburn) and the other streams flow to? . . . To the south-east of the Murrumbidgee there is a very lofty country, and I have no doubt a fine one. We have passed over granite masses only.... We have seen about 200 blacks on the river, and they had the confidence to bring their wives and children to the camp. . . .'

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<sup>1</sup> This whaleboat, built by Mr. Egan (master builder of the Sydney dockyard), carried 2½ tons of provisions, independently of a locker used for the arms which filled the space between the after-seat and the stern.

She was first put together loosely, her planks and timbers marked, and her ringbolts &c. fitted. She was then taken to pieces, carefully packed, and thus conveyed in plank, without injury, to a distance of 440 miles. She was admirably adapted for the service, and rose as well as could be expected over the seas in the lake. She would have been, however, much safer with another Breadth across seventh timber aft, 5 feet ½ an inch outside. plank, for she was undoubtedly too low. Her dimensions were as follows:

Breadth across twelfth timber, 5 feet 11¼ inches. Breadth across seventeenth timber forward, 5 feet.

Length inside, 25 feet 8 inches.

Curve of the keel No. 1, from the after side of each apron, 3 feet ¾ inches.

Curve of the keel No. 2, from head to head of the dead wood, 13½ inches.

Curve of the keel No. 3, from one end of keel to the other inner side, 3 inches.

Curve of the keel No. 4, round of keel from the toe of each dead wood, ⅞ - ⅙ inch.

The timbers were marked, beginning from the stern to the bow on the starboard side, and from bow to stern on the larboard.

We have passed over granite masses only . . . We have seen about 200 blacks on the river, and they had the confidence to bring their wives and children to the camp.

It now only remained to select the six hands and to load the boats. Of the soldiers were chosen John Harris, Hopkinson, and Fraser; of the prisoners, Clayton, Mulholland, and Macnamee. The rest of the party, under the command of Robert Harris, were to remain stationary one week' for fear of accidents; then to fall back on Goulburn Plains, and there to form a depot for the travellers return.

By the evening of January 6 all was complete; flour, tea, and tobacco being fortunately stowed in the larger, meat-casks, tools, and still in the smaller boat. At 7 A.M.

of January 7, 1830, Sturt and his party embarked on their memorable voyage. That first day, with only two oars, they made rapid progress. 'In the bow sat Fraser, gun in hand, to fire at any new bird or beast. The skiff was fastened by a painter to the stern.' At a distance of twelve to fifteen miles from the depot, they passed the junction of the Lachlan<sup>1</sup>-the more noteworthy from the absence of other tributaries; and, after making some thirty miles of a very tortuous westerly course, they encamped among dense reeds. Soon after starting on the 8th, they suffered irreparable loss by the wreck of the skiff upon a sunken log. By ceaseless exertions in diving, everything but the still-head and a cask of paint was by nightfall recovered; though the pork after immersion only served for the dogs. Even the still-head, after much toilsome effort, was on the 9th successfully fished up.

The channel gradually narrowed; and great trees swept down by floods made the navigation intricate and dangerous. More than once the whaleboat fouled a sunken log or a reef, but she fortunately escaped serious damage. On the afternoon of the 13th the banks closed in alarmingly; the current increasing in strength, while the stream became blocked with trunks, and the voyagers plunged into darkness under closely arching trees.

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<sup>1</sup> See Sturt's despatch of April 2, 1830, and conf. *Two Expeditions*, ii. 73.

On January 14 we rose,' says Sturt, 'with great doubts lest we should thus early witness the wreck of the expedition. The men so placed themselves as to leave no part of the boat undefended. By extreme care and caution we passed this formidable barrier (of snags). More than once, to save the boat, Hopkinson leapt from her on to apparently rotten logs to push her off. The trees had been generally carried by the current roots foremost, and at the rate at which we were going, had we struck full on any one, it would have gone through and through the boat.' After a short noontide rest from severe toil and anxiety, 'about one we again started. . . . On a sudden, the river, while sweeping round in tortuous course to every point of the compass, took a general southern direction. We were carried at a fearful rate down its gloomy and contracted stream. . . . At 2 P.M. Hopkinson called out that we were approaching a junction, and within less than a minute we were hurried into a broad and noble river. It is impossible to describe the effect upon us of so instantaneous a change. The boats were allowed to drift at pleasure, and with such force had we been shot out of the Murrumbidgee that we were carried nearly to the bank opposite its mouth, while we gazed in silent wonder on the large channel we had entered. I can only compare our sense of relief to that felt by a seaman on weathering the rock on which he expected his vessel would have struck.'

This discovery not only confirmed Sturt's theory about the Murrumbidgee and justified his embarkation, but assured him of ultimate success. 'I could not doubt that this river was the great channel of the streams from the south-east angle of the island, either to the south coast or to some important outlet.

Mr. Hume, in 1823, had crossed three very considerable streams, the Goulburn, the Hume, and the Ovens. As I was 300 miles from his track (towards Port Phillip), I considered it more than probable that those rivers must already have formed a junction above me. This opinion was strengthened by the capacity of the new stream. With a medium width of 350 feet, with a depth of 12 to 20 feet, its reaches were from half to three-quarters of a mile in length, and the views upon it were splendid. . . . The Murrumbidgee at the point of junction had narrowed to some fifty feet, and looked like a mere creek. Had I been making my way up the principal streams, I should little have dreamt that this gloomy outlet concealed a river that would lead me to the haunts of civilized man, and whose springs rose in snow-clad mountains.'

A break had occurred in the intercourse with the natives. None of these people were seen on the Murray till late on January 17. Scarcely were the tents pitched that evening when, on the opposite bank, 'their wild notes rang through the woods as they advanced to the river. It was fine to see them breaking into view, fully armed and painted for battle.' Sturt, however, branch in hand, pacified their hostile demonstrations; and though he thought it well to make an impression by firing a gun in the air, he soon established friendly relations with this first Murray tribe. A few days later, a large body of natives ran along the bank with spears in rest. As the river was broad enough to steer wide of them, this mattered not. But when another party appeared upon the left bank, it was high time to prepare for action. The necessity for strong measures was fortunately averted by the two bands uniting on one bank. They continued, however, to threaten the white men with dreadful yells, and with beating of spears and shields. Sturt and MacLeay walked alone from the camp, taking guns, but determined not to use them till the last extremity.

A long pantomimic dialogue across the water, aided by the olive branch of amity, induced two or three natives to cross; and after the usual slow advances and careful ceremonial, some thirty-five of the tribe paid a friendly visit to the camp, and three old men slept soundly by the white men's fires. 'MacLeay's extreme good humour made a most favourable impression; I still picture him joining in their wild song. They named him Rundi, and pressed him to show his side; as if the original Rundi had been killed by a spear-wound in that place.' A native of notable strength and stature with three of his fellows now volunteered to act as escort. These savages were much impressed by the white men's descent of a foaming rapid.

Unaware of this obstacle till too near to retreat, Sturt on a hasty survey steered for what seemed the only clear channel. 'Under the sense of impending peril no one spoke. The natives, anticipating disaster, stood leaning on their spears on the high bank above. . . . The boat struck on a sunken rock, and, swinging round as on a pivot, presented her bow to the rapid. She seemed doomed. Fortunately however she merely stuck fast, and, by two men with a rope from the upper rock, was safely lowered into still water. The natives that evening helped with alacrity to pitch the tents, and were rewarded by a banquet on the contents of Fraser's game-bag, which, in dainty variety, offered a crow, a kite, a 'laughing jackass' (*Alcedo gigantea*, whose destruction Sturt rarely allowed), a duck, and a tough old cockatoo. 'All these our friends threw on the fire without the delay of plucking, and, snatching them ere they were well singed, devoured with relish.' Near this camp (of January 22) was a deserted native village of huts facing north-east, and in every way resembling those on the Darling.

To that river Sturt's thoughts were now turned. According to the chart he saw that, had the Darling kept a south-westerly course, he ought already to have struck upon it. 'The natives here pointed to the south of west as the course of the river; but they wished to explain something more which I failed to comprehend. Large flocks of whistling ducks and other wildfowl flew overhead to the north-west, as if making for some favourite waters. . . . The four natives rose and crossed the river, at daybreak.' Sturt was vexed to find them gone, little thinking that on their swiftness of foot hung the lives of his party!

Eventful indeed was that 23rd of January. To save the men's strength, sail was hoisted for the first time, and progress was more rapid than usual. About nine miles below the camp, at the end of a reach, appeared 'a long line of magnificent trees of green and dense foliage. Under these trees a vast concourse of natives, bedaubed and armed for deadly conflict, stood yelling a war-song. Sturt,' supposing the four envoys to be with these people, steered directly in for the bank ; and, only when almost too late to turn into the next reach, found that landing must entail loss of life. The natives, some with ribs, thighs, and faces marked with white, others daubed with red and yellow ochre, held their spears quivering ready to hurl. In the front ranks dead silence prevailed, but a great clamour was kept up by those in the background, as well as by the white-painted women laden with supplies of darts.' To avert conflict, Sturt lowered the sail, 'and, putting the helm to starboard, passed quietly down stream in mid-channel. Baffled by this sudden manœuvre, the natives ran along the bank, flung themselves into extravagant attitudes, and by loud shouting worked themselves into frenzy.' Sturt now with much apprehension observed the river fast shoaling to where a huge sandbank projected nearly a third way across the channel. To this sandbank with tumultuous uproar they ran, crowding on it in a dense mass.

Some of the chiefs in warlike fury advanced to the water's edge. To avoid a fight was impossible; yet so fearful were the odds that the result must be doubtful. In spite of the appalling spectacle, my little band preserved their coolness. . . . I now explained that their only chance of escape would depend on their firmness. I desired that, after the first volley, MacLeay and three of the men would defend the boat with bayonets only, while I, Harris, and Hopkinson, being more used to guns, would keep up the fire. No shot was to be fired till after I had discharged both barrels. As we neared the sandbank, I stood up and made signs to the natives to desist, but without success. 'Sturt therefore cocked and levelled his gun.' A few seconds more would have closed the life of the nearest savage. But at that very moment-my hand on the trigger, my eye along the barrel-MacLeay called out that other blacks had appeared on the left bank. Turning round, I saw four men at the top of their speed. The foremost, when just ahead of the boat, threw himself from a considerable height into the water. He struggled across to the sandbank, and in an incredibly short time confronted the savage at whom I had aimed. Seizing him by the throat and pushing him back with all who were in the water, he trod its margin with vehement agitation. Now pointing to the boat, then shaking his clenched hand in the face of the most forward, he would stamp with passion; his voice at first clear and loud, now lost in hoarse murmurs. Two of the four natives remained on the left bank, the third followed his leader, the remarkable savage previously noticed,<sup>1</sup> to the scene of action. Our own feelings may be imagined; they cannot be described. So wholly were we absorbed, that the boat, left to drift at pleasure, struck upon a shoal that reached across the river.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 62

As they pushed the boat into deeper water, the explorers perceived a new and beautiful stream coming from the north. On the narrow tongue of land formed by the two rivers, the bold savage was still in hot dispute with the hostile tribe. They already seemed of milder mood, the middle-aged warriors alone holding out against the peacemaker. To make a diversion in favour of that eloquent savage, Sturt now ran the boat ashore; and telling the men to push off to a little distance, he and MacLeay landed quite unarmed among a smaller party of some seventy natives on the right bank of the new river. Fortunately this stratagem quite succeeded. The blacks, on seeing us land, ceased from wrangling and came swimming over like a parcel of seals. Thus within less than a quarter of an hour from the moment when a disastrous fray seemed inevitable, we were peacefully surrounded by the hundreds who had so lately threatened us with destruction. They cannot have numbered fewer than 600. My first care was to express to our friend as well as I could our gratitude-making him at the same time a suitable present. But to the other chiefs, notwithstanding their earnest solicitations, I positively refused all gifts.

Thus freed from pressing danger, Sturt at once turned his boat's head up the new river. A second pair of oars was necessary to breast the strong current. For many miles the river kept a breadth of 100 yards and was over twelve feet deep. It flowed between sloping grassy banks overhung by fine trees-'quite an English river', exclaimed the men. The water, though sweet, was turbid, flavoured with vegetable decay and tinged with green. The natives kept abreast of the boat, following its progress with evident anxiety, the cause of which was soon apparent in a net that stretched right across the stream. This, says Sturt, checked our course; to have passed over it, disappointing the numbers who depended on it for their day's food, would have been unfair.

The moment was to me one of intense interest. As the men rested on their oars awaiting further orders, my mind was full of the conjectures I had formed as to the course of the Darling. Were they indeed realized? An irresistible conviction impressed me that we were now sailing on that very stream. I directed that the Union Jack should be hoisted, and, yielding to our satisfaction, we all stood up in the boat and gave three distinct cheers. This ebullition of English feeling our circumstances and situation will excuse. The eye of every native was fixed upon that beautiful flag as it waved over us in the heart of a desert. Till that morning they had been particularly loquacious; but the sight of the flag and the sound of our cheer hushed the tumult, and while they were still lost in astonishment, the boat's head shot round, the sail was sheeted home, and, wind and current favouring, we vanished from them with a rapidity which surprised even ourselves.

Sturt now named the larger main stream after Sir George Murray, then Colonial Secretary.

The Journal here gives the well-reasoned arguments on which Sturt based his conviction of the identity of this broad fresh-water tributary with the salt and shrunken Darling discovered by him at a point 300 miles distant. So far from proven was this question when his book was published in 1833, that even in 1835 Major Mitchell contended that the Darling would turn to the north-west coast for its outlet.<sup>1</sup> Sturt however, quite satisfied about the new river, now broke up the skiff and destroyed the still, using the copper for crescent-shaped badges to propitiate the natives. Already the loss of the meat-casks was felt, and forced upon all an extreme economy of victuals. Flights of wildfowl passed overhead, but well out of range. The men at first had caught many fish; but for that food surfeit had given them an invincible distaste.

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<sup>1</sup> See Mitchell, *Three Expeditions &c.* (published in 1838), i. 146, 148.

Friendly relations with the blacks were re-established. Ambassadors went forward regularly from one tribe to another—a custom that saved much time and great personal risk. These deputies took short cuts while the boat followed the bends of the river. But though this system worked so smoothly that Sturt expresses a doubt whether he could have pushed forward but for this assistance of the natives, yet daily intercourse with some 200 savages was beset with difficulties. It is true they were generally quiet; but with each new tribe we were in some measure obliged to submit to be pulled about and fingered over. They would measure our hands and feet with their own, count our fingers, feel our faces, besmearing our shirts with grease and dirt.' Sturt indeed drew the line at his pockets! into which he never allowed a native to pry.<sup>1</sup>

But under any limitations this was no agreeable ceremony, and on repetition became quite revolting. Whether we were getting impatient or soured in temper, even MacLeay, at first excessively partial to the natives, now grew weary of them. They would frequently crowd round us, and without regard to remonstrance would lay hold of the boat to detain us with them. Indeed, in several instances, we were obliged to resort to blows ere we could disengage ourselves. This always called forth the most sullen and ferocious scowl. Yet to ensure our safety, apart from every other consideration, it was absolutely necessary to keep up the chain of communication. I was careful to cause them no alarm, nor to allow any liberty to be taken with them, and our motions were so rapid that they had no time to form any concerted plan of attack had they been so inclined.

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<sup>1</sup> *Central Expedition*, ii. 78.

Below the Darling junction the river took more decided runs to the south-west; and, though sometimes forced by rising ground into its old direction of west-north-west, struggled henceforth so resolutely towards the south as to confirm Sturt's ideas of the land's general dip and of the river's destination. The heat now became oppressive, seldom under 104° Fahr. at noon. The country varied from alluvial flats to sterile waterless desert, and again to excellent soil with rich pasture, thickly populated by natives and by kangaroos. A little tributary from the north, named by Sturt the Rufus, in honour of MacLeay's red head, was really the outlet to a lagoon, later called Lake Victoria. In like manner a larger stream, the Lindesay, from the south-east, was afterwards found to be merely the channel to Lake Wallah-Wallah, another of the overflow lagoons of the Murray.

In his appendix Sturt describes minutely the varied formations displayed by one remarkable cliff of 120 to 130 feet high, which, just below the Rufus, rises sheer on the right bank of the Murray, flanking that river for about 200 yards and then receding in the form of an amphitheatre. About January 28 the left bank became very lofty, rising to 100 feet straight from the water. 'Here the banks assumed the most beautiful columnar regularity as of Corinthian pillars and capitals; there they showed like petrified waterfalls; elsewhere they resembled the time-worn battlements of a feudal castle. At their base the river swept along in broad and noble reaches. Had the country corresponded to the fine stream, we should have been proportionately elated; but it was impossible to be blind to its generally inhospitable character.' Stormy weather made uncertain the observation on January 28 of about 34° 4' latitude, 'still 115 miles from the coast, but considerably to the south of the head of St. Vincent's Gulf,' reckons Sturt.

On the 29th he remarks: 'We had now been twenty-two days on the river. I began to feel anxiety about the men, and could not but regret the scantiness of the remaining provisions. We had little but flour to eat.'

Fish no one would touch; even the natives, says Sturt, 'at this time seldom ate the fish when they could get other food,<sup>1</sup> and of wildfowl there were now none to be seen. The men's eyes were sore from the perspiration that ran into them; and the poor fellows were much reduced. Yet we were still at the easiest part of our task, going down with the stream.' Every sign of cheerfulness was encouraged by Sturt and MacLeay; 'Fraser, while employed in skinning birds, enlivened his comrades by whistling tunes.'

On January 31 the party narrowly escaped from a hostile tribe; yet one old man<sup>2</sup> followed them, and within a few days, while passing the remarkable fossil cliffs of the Murray, joined them in the boat, and gave much useful information. The glen-like reaches of the river here held on to the north-west, and the old man showed by signs that not till next day would a change occur. He then pointed due south, and concluded by describing the roaring of the sea and the height of the waves. He had evidently been upon the coast; and we were highly delighted at the prospect thus held out to us. In confirmation of the first prediction, the party on February 3 turned the 'Great Bend' of the Murray; and, after doubling back till opposite their morning's starting point, they found themselves at last speeding south.

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<sup>1</sup> Surely some of the fish must have been out of season ? See, however, *Two Expeditions*, ii. 236, *Central Expedition*, ii. 281, and the following MS. fragment by Sturt: 'The evening was lovely and cool. The stream swept past the little encampment without a murmur over a sandy bed; and the river was so inviting that the men threw out their hooks and caught a number of the cod peculiar to most fresh-water rivers of Australia. On these they feasted without restraint. The consequence, however, was that they had a surfeit; and, singular as it may appear, they never again fished during the whole of the long and trying journey that was before them'.

<sup>2</sup> Tinbury. See *Central Expedition*, i. 86.

‘The river at the same time changed its character. It lost its sandy bed and its current, and became deep, still, and turbid, with a muddy bottom. It increased considerably in breadth, and stretched before us in magnificent reaches from three to six miles long. The cliffs towered over us like maritime cliffs, and against their base the water dashed like sea-waves. They shone like dead gold in the sun's rays, forming for a mile or two an unbroken wall on both sides of the river. In these cliffs the eagle finds a sanctuary ; and eagles, cockatoos, and other birds soared as mere specks above us, while the natives on the cliff-tops showed as small as crows.’

During the whole voyage Sturt was carefully laying down his chart of the Murray, of which the original sheets still exist. ‘Every bend was laid down by compass, and I regularly marked the bearings of the angles as they opened, so that not a single winding or curve of the Murray is omitted in the large chart. The length of some reaches may be erroneous, but their direction is strictly correct. As I sat in the boat I always had before me a sheet of paper and the compass, and I marked down not only the river line, but the most minute changes of the stream, its cliffs, its flats, the kind of country near to and back from it; the assemblies of tribes, the lagoons, the junctions, tributaries, and creeks. Thus, on our return up the river, the chart proved of infinite service, enabling us to judge of our distance from our several camps as we gained them day by day against the current. Often, weary and exhausted, we should have stopped short had we not known that two or three reaches more would end our labour for the day.’

The river ‘might now be said to run away to the south’ through beautiful scenery and most promising country. As the fantastic cliffs gradually gave way to undulating hills, no pleasure-ground could have been more tastefully laid out than the fair landscape through which rolled the stream, now 400 yards broad. Sea-gulls overhead were hailed as messengers of glad tidings.’

On the 5th, sixty miles below the Bend, gales from the south-west sent a heavy swell up the river and drenched the rowers in spray. From natives they learned that the sea was near; and experiment showed already a tidal rise of eight inches.

On the 9th Sturt noted 'a solitary rock of coarse red granite;' a formation, he remarks, which, though nowhere else visible, may probably be the basis of the surrounding country. On the granite, 'he elsewhere says, the best grazing is found.' A few miles lower he landed to survey the country.

'We had at length arrived at the termination of the Murray. Immediately below was a beautiful lake, now ruffled by the breeze. The western ranges were more distinctly visible, stretching from south to north, and certainly forty miles distant. In unbroken outline they declined gradually to the south, but northwards ended abruptly at a high mountain. I had no doubt that this was the Mount Lofty of Captain Flinders, nor that the range was that immediately to the eastward of St. Vincent's Gulf.<sup>1</sup>

Between us and the ranges, in continuation of the river's right bank, a fine promontory shot into the lake. Over this promontory the waters in an extensive bay stretched to the base of the ranges. To the northwest distant peaks were just discernible. Beyond a bold headland to the south-west, through a strait between this headland and an opposite projection, there was visible to the westward a clear and open sea. Even while gazing on this fine scene I could not but regret that the Murray had thus terminated. For the lake was evidently so little influenced by tides that I at once foresaw our probable disappointment of practicable communication between it and the ocean.'

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<sup>1</sup> Captain Barker, in 1831, found this mountain to be one not before laid down on the charts; ; and Sturt afterwards named it 'Mount Barker.' See *Two Expeditions*, ii. 234.

## CHAPTER V

*FEBRUARY--MAY 1830*

THE LAKE-THE GOOLWA-SEA MOUTH OF THE MURRAY-UP THE STREAM-AN AWKWARD RAPID-TREACHEROUS NATIVES-A NIGHT ALARM-A WORN-OUT CREW-TIMELY SUCCOUR

ABOUT 2 P.M. on February 9, 1830, Sturt and his party entered the lake; but, unable to make sail against the strong south-westerly wind and heavy sea, they were obliged to land on the low eastern shore till the gale should abate.

‘Since we had left the depot on the Murrumbidgee thirty-three days had now passed, of which twenty-six had been spent upon the Murray. At length we had reached the grand reservoir of those waters whose course and fate had hitherto been veiled in obscurity. It remained for us to ascertain whether this extensive lake had any communication with the ocean, and whether the country near the coast would correspond in richness with that behind our camp, or would be sandy and sterile. Our greatest difficulty now was to make head against the wind, for the men were too much reduced to be equal to violent or prolonged effort. With extreme anxiety I listened to the gusts, more subdued after 8 P.M., but not wholly abating till 2 A.M. About three, however, a light breeze sprang up from the north-east.’ No time was to be lost; by four the party had embarked, and with a flowing sheet scudded before the favouring breeze to the west-south-west. Sturt chose this course because on his first view of the lake he had observed ‘waves breaking on the distant headland and enveloping the cliff in spray.’ The clear horizon to the south-west and the course taken by the river further made it probable that in that direction the outlet would be found. Off the extreme point of the western promontory (Pomundi) the waters of the lake suddenly became brackish.

The transition from fresh to salt was almost immediate, and was fortunately discovered early enough to prevent us from losing ground. As it was, we filled the casks, and stood on without for a moment altering our course. A cool and refreshing breeze now carried us on at between four and five knots an hour under a cloudless sky. The men, relieved for a time from the oar, stretched themselves at their length in the boat, and commented on the scenery or discussed the future. Their conduct had throughout been most exemplary. Not a murmur had escaped them and they now cheerfully filled the water-casks, even while tasting the disagreeable beverage on which for the next three or four days they would be obliged to subsist.' On clearing this point, the full view of a fine bay that swept in a beautiful curve under the ranges led Sturt to suppose that to the north-west the lake communicated with St. Vincent's Gulf.<sup>1</sup> An attempt to land on the eastern head (now Point MacLeay) being defeated by the extreme shallowness of the water (in no part of the lake more than six feet), a noontide bivouac was made on the low western shore, where, amid rich herbage, numerous kangaroos baffled the pursuit of the weakened men and dogs. A native signal-fire, lit at the sight of the strangers, was promptly answered from every point, till within ten minutes fourteen fires were seen, most of them near the ranges. As the boat stood across from one shore to the other a remarkable mirage suddenly started up above the waters to the south, in semblance like an isolated castle. Behind it a dense column of smoke rose into the sky. On a nearer approach the phantom disappeared, leaving again to view a clear and open sea. The refractive power upon the coast had raised above their true position the sand

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<sup>1</sup> *Two Expeditions*, ii. 230.

hillocks which alone separated the lake from the ocean. It is singular that this very hillock was the one afterwards ascended by Captain Barker immediately before his tragical death.<sup>1</sup>

On re-embarking the party sped due south towards mud flats which told of an ebb-tide, though the scenery of the western shore was beautiful. Steering again southwest past a rocky island, they struck the mouth of a channel running to the west-south-west (the Goolwa). About half a mile wide, it was bounded on the right by open flats; on the left by a line of hills sixty or seventy feet high, from which a large body of natives in full battle array came down with terrific yells and the most violent threats. Sturt, anxious to communicate with them, stood right in for land. In vain, however, did he hold up a branch and a tomahawk. Seven or eight of the blacks crept into the reeds with their spears shipped to throw at us. I therefore took up my gun to return their salute. They were evidently aware of this weapon, for on seeing it they dashed out of their hiding-place back to the main body. Yet the unarmed old man who had directed them walked on steadily, and I on my part laid down my firelock.' At about a mile lower down the channel the party camped on a flat bounded by hills, a position carefully chosen to avoid the possibility of surprise.

Sturt describes in glowing terms the beauty of the channel down which they dropped in the light of a glorious sunset. The open country was charmingly broken by wooded knolls ; and rocks shaded by drooping trees were reflected in waters from which rose thousands of wildfowl 'with a noise as of a multitude clapping hands. The full moon rose as we were forming the camp, and, notwithstanding the vicinity of a warlike host, the stillness of the night was only broken by the roar of the ocean, now too near to be mistaken, or by the silvery note of black swans winging their way over us.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Two Expeditions*, ii 239-243.

Thanks to a favourable wind, the boat had made in one day a run of not less than fortyfive miles, which, with the eight miles traversed on the previous evening, would give the lake a length of fifty-three miles. The natives kept aloof during the night. The sound of the surf fell gratefully on our ears, for it told us we were near our goal.'

The dawn of February 11 found all astir. 'A fresh breeze from the north-east took us rapidly down the channel, and a seal that rose close to the boat was looked on by all as a good omen.' Too soon, alas! the way was barred by shoals. The falling tide exposed broad flats over which it was hopeless to haul the boat. The channel now turned south ; but Sturt and MacLeay from rising ground saw it finally take up an east-south-east direction. To the south of the channel was a flat backed by sand hummocks; and beyond them, at not more than two and a half miles from where the explorers stood, 'the sea was distinctly visible.' Though they awaited high water to re-embark, they were soon entangled among shoals and quicksands. In vain they dragged the boat over mud flats a quarter of a mile broad; in vain they made a last good run of five miles. They were still nine miles short of the red sandhill at the end of the channel when darkness finally baffled their efforts, and with great labour they hauled up their boat and pitched the tents. Sturt and MacLeay with Fraser meantime crossed the hummocks behind the camp to the sea-shore.

'We had struck the south coast deep in the bight of Encounter Bay, Cape Jervis bearing by compass south 81° west, distant from nine to ten leagues.' The leaders quickly returned in order 'to give the men an opportunity to go to the beach, whence, after bathing, they brought back a load of cockles which Clayton amused himself by boiling all night long.' The whole party were up and doing by three next morning. By Sturt the few hours of rest were spent in serious consideration of his difficulties.

Our situation was one of peculiar excitement and interest. To the right thundered the heavy surf; to the left echoed voices of the natives, while through the bush their large fires blazed to the very end of the channel. While the men were enjoying their kettleful of cockles, MacLeay and I were anxiously weighing over what remained of the provisions. Flour and tea with six pounds of sugar were the only articles left, so the task was not a long one. Nor had we sufficient of these supplies to last till we should reach Wantabadgery, where first we might expect relief. Thus our circumstances were really critical.

To await on the coast the promised ship was impossible. Disappointment would have sealed our fate. Nor in that deep bight could I hope that any vessel would approach near enough to be seen by us. No vessel would venture into Encounter Bay at a season when the south-west winds prevailed. To cross the ranges to Gulf St. Vincent on the chance of there finding the ship was impossible, for the men had not strength to walk ; and in the presence of numerous and hostile natives the division of so small a party would have been madness. So eager was I to examine the ranges and the country at their base, that, had our passage to the sea been uninterrupted, I should have determined to coast it homewards or to steer for Launceston. Most assuredly, with my present experience, I would rather incur the hazards of so desperate a step than contend against the evils that beset us on our homeward journey'.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, ordering all to be ready for departure by eight o'clock, Sturt with MacLeay and Fraser set out on foot by moonlight at 3 A.M. Crossing the sandhills at a mile below the camp, a hasty and distressing seven-mile walk brought them by

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<sup>1</sup> So Sturt wrote in 1833; but his later survey of the Murray mouth in 1838 convinced him that to have attempted that passage in his whaleboat must have meant certain destruction to all the party. (*Conf.* p. 69).

daybreak to the spot where the channel, immediately below the bright sandhill known later as 'Barker's Knoll'<sup>1</sup> actually enters the sea. The tide was again setting in. The entrance appeared rather less than a quarter of a mile wide. Under the sandhill the water is deep and the current strong. The mouth of the channel is defended by a double line of breakers dangerous to face except in calm summer weather ; and from one end to the other of Encounter Bay the line of foam is unbroken. Thus were our fears confirmed by the impracticable and useless channel between the lake and the ocean'.

With keen regret Sturt now found himself compelled to turn his back on the beautiful country between the lake and the ranges. The prospect of the home journey was appalling. These eight men, already 'very weak from poverty of diet and from bodily fatigue, must now, with diminished strength and disappointed feeling, contend against the united waters of the eastern ranges. The provisions had been calculated to a nicety; and only in the event of pulling up-stream day after day the same distance we had compassed with the current in our favour, could we hope they would last as long as we continued on the Murray. To reduce our rations of three-quarters of a pound of flour per diem and a quarter of a pound of tea per week was out of the question, or to hope that on less sustenance the men could perform the work necessary for their safety; nor could that task be performed at all unless the leaders were fully to share in the toil. It followed that any slight accident, the staving-in of the boat, or the rise of the river must be disastrous. Moreover, I foresaw great danger from the natives, many of whom had not been over-friendly. Our best security against their attacks was celerity of movement, and from every point of view delay would have been dangerous.

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<sup>1</sup> Barker's Knoll, when sketched by Mr. J. F. Angas in 1843, was still about 100 feet high, and covered with the long fibrous-rooted grass of that coast; when sheep and rabbits destroyed this grass, the sand drifted by degrees, and there now, in 1899, remains only a mound a few feet above the general level. (From letter of Mr. J. Harris-Browne, June 10, 1899.)

The men, though miserably reduced, had not flagged in their efforts, nor did a murmur escape them. They by common consent refused to touch the remaining six pounds of sugar, which they insisted on leaving for the sole use of Sturt and MacLeay. This may seem a small matter; but travellers on short rations best know the nourishing value of sugar.<sup>1</sup>

The explorers began on February 12, 1830, this notable retreat. The south-westerly wind now favoured them so well that on the 13th they re-entered the river; and by the end of the 16th, to their great encouragement, they were one day's journey in advance. Two days later the helpful sea wind failed them; and, under the consequent hard toil and flagging spirits, they lost ground. Moreover, the river had fallen, leaving shallows, over which they were obliged to haul the boat. 'When wet from this process, we could but sit still to dry in the sun. Those at the oars were then envied by the unemployed, shivering in their dripping clothes. The men fancied the boat pulled heavily, and that her bottom was foul. I hesitated not to humour them; and when they had thoroughly cleaned her inside and out, I tried to persuade them that she pulled the lighter. . . . We had now only to make the best of our journey, rising at dawn and pulling till seven and often till nine o'clock. From 11.30 till 12.30 the men rested to take their bread and water. This was our only fare, if I except an occasional wild duck; but to kill these birds was extremely difficult, and cost us too much time. Our dogs had not strength to run after kangaroos or emus, and as for fish, the men loathed them, and were too indifferent or too fatigued even to set the night-lines. Shoals and sandbanks often impeded us; rapids called forth our whole strength. The chart now proved of inconceivable use and comfort.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*, p. 264: 'Sugar had become an absolute necessity to me, and I was unable to swallow my food without sweetening the water.'

It cheered the men by showing them where they were, and gave them conversation. To me it was very satisfactory, enabling me to prepare for our meetings with the larger tribes, and to steer clear of obstacles in the more difficult parts of the river.

By dint of great labour the north-west Bend and the former camp of February 2 were regained on the 21st, the journey to the sea and back having taken twenty days. This was counted an important stage; for the boat's head was now turned towards home. On the 23rd, for the first time, we stove in the boat. Fortunately a piece of the log remained in her side; otherwise she must have filled ere we could reach the shore. As it was, we escaped with only slight damage to the flour-bags; and within less than two hours Clayton repaired her. It was impossible to be more cautious than we were; for the loss of the boat must have sealed the fate of all.'

Hitherto little had been seen of the natives. On the 15th the first tribe on the river, formerly disposed to be troublesome till doubtless pacified by Tinbury, had met the returning boat with every sign of cordiality. But perils from this source thickened round the party.

A flight of the new paroquet (*Paltœrnis melanoma*) had roosted on a quiet island chosen for the camp. The shots fired to secure specimens of these birds caught the attention of natives, who during the night mustered to the number of eighty-eight, and kept up unceasing clamour. At daybreak, Sturt, finding that, in defiance of the guard, they were handling everything and closing round the camp, doubled the sentries. MacLeay, being very tired, got up in ill-humour to check the din which banished sleep. At one particularly insolent fellow he imprudently threw a piece of dirt. The savage returned the compliment with a will, and seemed quite ready to act on the offensive. On learning what had passed, I pretended to be equally angry with MacLeay and the savage, and not without difficulty forced most of the blacks away from the tent.

I then directed the men to collect all the smaller articles, and to strike the tents, while I drew round the camp a line over which I intimated that no native should pass. Observing, I suppose, that we were on our guard, and that I, whom they well knew to be the chief, was really angry, they slunk away one by one. Why they did not attack us I know not; they were certainly quite disposed 'to do so, and the shorter weapons which they carried would in that confined space have been more fatal than their spears.' Just above this island Sturt observed natives scattered like skirmishers over a large shoal, which here left a channel scarcely broad enough for the play of the oars, but of exceptionally strong current. 'As we neared the shoal they pressed so close to the water's edge that our oars struck their legs. I kept my eye on an elderly man, one of the most forward, who, after often beckoning us to stop, threw his spear at the boat.

I immediately jumped up and pointed my gun at him, to his great alarm. Seeing that we were not to be checked, the natives now crossed to the proper right bank, and disappeared among the reeds. Shortly after this, eight of their women came down to the water-side and pressingly invited us to land. Indeed they played their part uncommonly well, and for some time tried to allure us. Hopkinson however observed the men's spears among the reeds. They kept abreast of us as we pulled up-stream, anticipating, no doubt, our inability to resist the bait they had laid for us. Provoked at such barefaced treachery, I should undoubtedly have attacked them had they not beat a hasty retreat on being warned by the women that we were arming.'

The weather now became most oppressive. The stronger current and more frequent rapids increased the daily toil. 'We perspired to an astonishing degree; after a turn at the oars our clothes would be as wet as if we had been in the water. We were thus always chilled after rowing, and suffered the more.

On the 25th the last of the fossil cliffs was left behind; on the 30th the mouth of the Lindesay. To stem a rapid just below that stream was a difficult task even with the four oars upon the boat and exerting our whole strength. At one time we remained perfectly stationary, our force being equal to that of the current. At length we ran obliquely up the stream, but the men were clearly not adequate to such exertion for any length of time. That day, to avoid a tribe of natives, we pulled for eleven successive hours. Hopkinson and Fraser fell asleep at their oars.' Soon after this trying day a south-west wind brought welcome relief. With set sail the explorers eagerly availed themselves of this boon, not stopping for a single moment nor landing till nine o'clock. The next rapid was easily surmounted by hauling at a rope on the canal-barge principle.

Two or three rainy days effectually damped the warlike ardour of the Darling tribes, whose marked hostility had roused Sturt's apprehensions. The scene of his former deliverance was now actually deserted. On March 7, a dark and rainy morning, the party had to face the ascent of the worst rapid in the river. I knew not how we should surmount such an obstacle. We had not strength to pull up it, and our ropes were not long enough to reach to the shore. The only alternative was to get into the water and haul up the boat by main force. In our efforts we got into the middle of the channel; and, up to our armpits in water, only kept our position by means of the rocks. So strong was the current that, had we relaxed for an instant, we should have lost all the ground we had gained.

Just at this moment we perceived that, quite unawares to us, a large tribe of natives with their spears had lined both banks. Never were we so utterly in their power or so defenceless. The hard rain rendered our firelocks useless; and, had the savages attacked us, we must have been helplessly slaughtered. Nothing therefore remained for us but to continue our exertions. To get the boat into still water only one strong effort was needed, but that effort was beyond our strength, and we stood in the stream powerless and exhausted. The natives meanwhile watched us with earnest attention. At length one of them sitting close to the water called to us, and we recognised the deep voice of our former deliverer.' To him the travellers explained their difficulty; the natives lent willing aid, and the boat was soon safe ' under the lee of the rock in the centre of the river. The natives now paddled round us in their bark canoes-their only frail means of crossing rivers. These canoes are formed merely of an oblong piece of bark, the ends of which, being stuffed with clay, are impervious to the water.

We had still to ascend the most difficult part of the rapid, where the rush of water was strongest. Here the blacks could be of no use to us. Had the current at this point been shallow, no man could have stemmed it; but it was extremely deep. After we had crossed the stream, I, remaining in the boat, directed all the men to land upon a large rock-the left buttress, as it were, to this sluice-and to pull upon a rope fastened to the boat's mast instead of to her head. The boat shot up the passage with a rapidity which astonished me and dumfounded the natives, who testified by a loud shout their admiration of this manœuvre. It was certainly very remarkable that the same influential savage, to whom we had already owed our safety, should again have befriended us at this crisis. Having surmounted our difficulties we took leave of this interesting man.

From March 10 to March 15 we pulled regularly from daylight to dark, not less to avoid the natives than to shorten the journey. These people, however pacific, were always troublesome, and whenever the larger tribes slept near us the utmost vigilance was necessary. On the 15th about one hundred and fifty were at our camp; many of them noisy, all very restless. Feeling suspicious I watched them narrowly, even when they seemed asleep. Macnamee, as sentry, with his firelock was walking up and down. Whenever he turned his back, one of the natives rose up gently and poised a spear, dropping again as quietly into his place so soon as Macnamee was about to turn. His spear might not have gone with much force, but I determined it should not quit his hand; for on any actual attempt to throw it I should unquestionably have shot him dead. All the natives were awake, and I was surprised that they did not try to plunder us. At dawn they crowded round the tents. We therefore thought it prudent to start forthwith. All were in the boat, when Fraser, to fetch his powder-horn from the shore, had to push through the natives. On his return, when his back was towards them, several natives lifted their spears. Fearing that they would transfix him I called out before seizing my gun, on which they lowered their weapons and ran away. This was the last tribe seen on the Murray.

On the following afternoon (March 16), to our great joy, we turned into the gloomy and narrow channel of the Murrumbidgee. During the fifty-five days spent on the Murray, considering its sweeps and bends, we could not have travelled less than 1,500 miles.' The tributary had lost none of its terrors; the navigation was most intricate and distressing; and the river, having fallen, now left exposed rocks and logs upon which on the downward passage the keel must have nearly grazed.

So thin were the boat's planks that a forcible blow against any one of the hundred branches that threatened her must have rent her asunder from stem to stern.' Sturt had feared that heavy rain in the hills might have swollen the river, and was rejoiced to escape the calamity of flood. The country hereabouts, which in January had seemed barren, was now clothed with verdure and gay with flowering callistemma. So difficult is it to judge of new country on a hurried survey, and so different does it appear according to the season.

Fortune now favoured us. We succeeded in killing a good fat swan that served as a feast for all. The men rallied in spirits; they had, as they said, broken the neck of the journey. Yet I was sorry that they reckoned with certainty on seeing Robert Harris at the depot, as I foresaw that disappointment would proportionately depress them. One misfortune deeply felt by all was the loss of Sailor, the finer and more active of the two dogs who had shared in every danger and privation. Nor were these faithful companions useless. Since the travellers had first suffered from the pilfering of the natives, the dogs had been tied at night to the boat, which was much coveted by the blacks, who, fortunately, though so fond of their own dingoes, felt a wholesome fear of these larger dogs.

A keener look-out was now kept, because of the marauding tendencies of the Murrumbidgee tribes. Trouble soon began. On the night of the 21st the natives tried to surprise the camp, and were only frightened off by small shot being fired into the reeds. Next day, though kept at a respectful distance by Sturt's threat to shoot any that approached, ' they continued to dog the party from tree to tree. On this narrower stream, indeed, the travellers were in greater jeopardy than they had been when on the broader Murray. Had the natives closed upon us, we, being directly under the banks, must have received every spear; while they in assailing us could easily have kept out of sight.

Weary from a hard day, the men were about to land when they noticed boughs thrown across the river as if to stop their passage. Sturt indignantly pushed on to force the barrier, threatening to shoot the solitary black who showed himself. The poor fellow, without a word, pulled from his belt a tomahawk, which he held towards me by way of claiming acquaintance. The branches had only been placed to support a fishing-net, which was now removed for the boat to pass. The black cut across a bight of the river, and, walking down to the water's edge with a branch of peace in his hand, presented me with a fishing-net.

The camp that night was carefully pitched on a high bank, behind which lay a small plain backed by a wood. The natives, separating into small bodies, formed a regular cordon round the camp. Though this manœuvre was observed, MacLeay took great pains to conciliate them with kind treatment. Our friend with his family posted himself at twenty yards behind our tents and kept quite aloof from the other natives. It happened fortunately that John Harris was the first for sentry. I told him to keep a watchful eye on the natives, and to call me if anything unusual occurred. I was almost asleep when he came to inform me that the blacks had made a precipitate retreat, not one remaining at the fires. I impressed upon him the necessity for attention, and he again went to his post. Before long he returned. "Master," said he, "the natives are coming." I jumped up, took my gun, and followed him, leaving MacLeay fast asleep. Harris led me a little way from the tents; and then, pointing down the river, said, "There, sir, don't you see them?" "Not I, indeed, Harris," I replied; "are you sure they are there?" "Positive, sir," said he; "stoop and you will see them." I did so, and saw a black mass in an opening. I now desired Harris to follow me, but not to fire unless I should give the word. The rascals, however, retreated as we advanced. We then returned to the tents, but scarcely had I lain down five minutes when Harris called out, "The blacks are close to me, sir; shall I fire?"

"How far?" I asked. "Within ten yards, sir." "Then fire," said I, and immediately he did so. MacLeay and I sprang to his assistance. "Well, Harris," said I, "did you kill your man?" (he is a remarkably good shot). "No, sir," said he;" I thought you would repent it, so I fired between the two." This watchfulness prevented any further attempts during the night. I was much pleased at the coolness as well as at the consideration of my servant.<sup>1</sup>

Next morning the natives had all dispersed, leaving their long spears, which by way of warning were destroyed. The friendly savage and his family had withdrawn into the wood, where their presence was betrayed by a thin line of smoke. This man's spears, nets, and tomahawk Sturt restored-an act of discriminating justice which deeply impressed the poor native, and caused his two 'gins' to burst into tears! Sturt admits that he was really embarrassed by so unexpected a scene. Certain it is, he remarks, 'that an act of well-timed lenity has often more weight than the utmost severity'. With savages more particularly it is fatal to exhibit any fear, distrust, or irresolution.'

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<sup>1</sup> On this incident Sir Charles Napier exclaims: 'How noble do the characters of Captain Sturt and his party appear! The soldier Harris, alone outside of the tent-in the desert-at night; a whole tribe armed and creeping upon him through the dusk-within ten yards of him-a dozen spears, for aught he knew, at that moment poised to transfix him, yet he fired not till ordered, and *then* would not shed blood, lest his master should repent of having ordered a fellow-creature to be slain! Harris had lived eighteen years with Captain Sturt, and acted upon a full knowledge of that officer's character. The whole transaction reflects the highest honour upon these two thoroughbred soldiers. Was it fear of provoking the vengeance of the savages that prevented Harris from destroying one of them? Not to fire at all was sufficient to have enraged his opponents; his firing between them exhibited the coolness of a gallant, and the feeling of a good heart. But Captain Sturt ordered him to fire! Yes, he did order Harris to fire, and he did right; but he did not give the order till he had ascertained that the enemy was close upon, and might destroy, his faithful servant. It is in such moments that noble characters appear.' (See *Colonisation* by Col. Charles James Napier, pp. 169, 170. Published 1835.)

These adventures harassed the men; and for nearly a week the camp was like an outpost piquet. The natives, however, made no more hostile attempts.

About noon on March 23, 1830, the explorers regained the depot which they had quitted seventy-seven days earlier. They had made the journey from the coast in thirty-nine days, or seven more than they had spent in going down. A bitter disappointment awaited them. Sturt's anticipations proved too true; the depot was deserted. In vain he tried to cheer the men by reminding them that, in falling back on Wantabadgery,<sup>1</sup> their comrades had but obeyed instructions; the hopes that had buoyed up their spirits now gave way to the most gloomy ideas. The dreaded floods, too, threatened a new danger. In one night the Murrumbidgee rose six feet and poured along its turbid waters with great violence. For seventeen days we pulled against them with determined perseverance; but under privations such as ours human efforts exhaust themselves, and in our short daily journeys we made but trifling head against the stream. The effects of severe toil were painfully evident. The men lost the proper and muscular jerk with the oars. Their arms were nerveless, their faces haggard, their persons emaciated, their spirits wholly sunk. From sheer weakness they frequently fell asleep at the oar. Grieved to the heart at their condition, I became captious, found fault without cause, and lost the equilibrium of my temper. No murmur, however, escaped them. When they thought me asleep, I would hear them in their tent complain of severe pains and exhaustion. The rascals, however, retreated as we advanced. We then returned to the tents, but scarcely had I lain down five minutes when Harris called out, "The blacks are close to me, sir; shall I fire?"

"I must tell the Captain to-morrow," one of them would say, "that I can pull no more."

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<sup>1</sup> The name Pondebadgery, used in Sturt's Journals, is unknown to modern maps.

To-morrow came; and stubbornly they pulled on. Macnamee at length became incoherent in talk and manner, and lost his senses. Amidst these distresses, MacLeay preserved his good humour, and did his utmost to lighten the toil and to cheer the men. His presence was a source of great comfort to me. On April 8 and 9 heavy rain fell; but for us there was no respite. Our provisions would have been wholly consumed but for our good fortune in killing several swans.

A day of severe exertion on April 11 brought the party to their camp of December 12, opposite the rich flat then named by Sturt Hamilton's Plains.<sup>1</sup> Here the leaders took grave counsel. 'In a direct line we were between eighty and ninety miles from Wantabadgery; by water the distance was nearly treble. The men were completely sunk; the provisions could not last; the task was greater than we could perform. To save the men the mortification of yielding, it was decided to send forward Hopkinson and Mulholland - a decision which spread universal joy. The devotion of these two men exceeded all praise, nor did they hesitate one moment to undertake this last trying duty.'

The little party left in the bush made plant-cases of the upper planks of their good boat, and then burnt her! She was no longer serviceable; and Sturt felt reluctant to leave her like a neglected log upon the water. Eight days had been allowed for the double journey of the envoys; but by the sixth day the last ounce of flour was consumed. 'As the morrow would see us without food, I preferred to advance towards relief.' The evening of April 18 was therefore spent in burying the specimens and stores with a view to an early break-up of the camp. But Sturt and MacLeay, crossing the river late that evening, were recalled by a loud shout which announced the return of the two brave fellows.

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<sup>1</sup> From Wantabadgery to this camp nine days had been spent on the downward journey with the teams.

Both were in a state that beggars description. With knees and ankles dreadfully swollen, with limbs so painful that on arriving in camp they sank to the ground, they yet met us smiling, and rejoicing to relieve us so seasonably. On the third evening they had found Robert Harris on the plain of Wantabadgery. Early the next morning they had started with supplies for our immediate wants.

Poor Macnamee had in a great measure recovered. The sight of the drays gave him uncommon satisfaction. Clayton gorged himself; but MacLeay, myself, and Fraser could not at first relish the meat placed before us. Sturt was no sooner relieved of anxiety for his men than, on the one day allowed for rest, he availed himself of the fresh horses and visited some hills eighteen miles to the north. Starting early and not returning till midnight, he succeeded in connecting his line of route with the more distant hills between the Murrumbidgee and the Lachlan already visited.<sup>1</sup>

To Wantabadgery he moved the party by easy stages, and there found his depot with plentiful supplies and in good order. MacLeay was sent forward with despatches. The men were kept for a fortnight on the plain to recover from their fatigues. Instead of returning by Underaliga, they struck homewards straight through the mountain passes and reached Yass Plains on May 12, returning to Sydney by easy stages on the 25th, after an absence of nearly six months.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See p.56.

<sup>2</sup> The results of this second expedition may be thus summarized:

1st. The discovery of a fertile district of South Australia.

2nd. The opening up of two grand channels of water-communication between remote parts of the continent ('over 2,000 miles of water-way given to the world,' says Arrowsmith).

3rd. The final solution of the south-eastern water-system of Australia.

## APPENDIX

On results of sturt's first two expeditions as computed by J. Arrowsmith.

On March 8, 1869, Mr. J. Arrowsmith thus wrote to Captain Sturt:

'My dear Sir,-From calculations which I have made, I think the distance you rowed from the junction of the Murrumbidgee with the Murray to the sea, including its windings. amounts (in English miles) to 850  
The same in returning . 850

I think you rowed about twenty-one miles daily.

The length of the Murray above its junction with the Murrumbidgee is about 900 miles ; below 850 miles.  
Whole length of the Murray. .1,760

I think your whole water-communication given to the world in the South of Australia will exceed . 2,000

Many years ago I calculated that (in your two first expeditions) you had travelled over upwards of . 3,000<sup>1</sup>

Sturt himself has left the following note on Arrowsmith's letter:

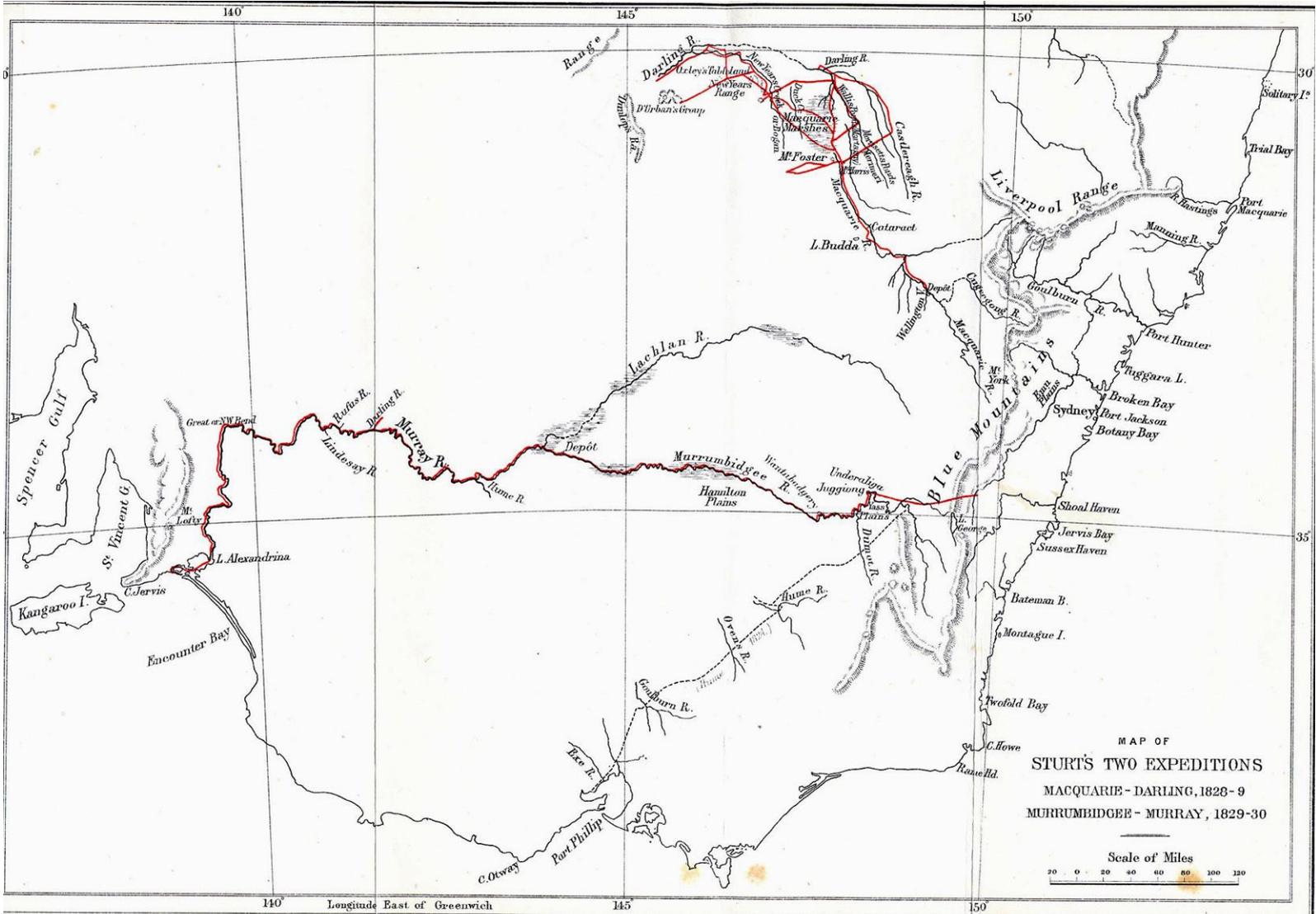
'This, the longest boat-voyage on record in naval annals, was performed in a whale-boat with a crew of eight men, including the officers, who shared in the labour on their homeward return against the current. It took eighty-four days at twenty-one miles a day, from sunrise to sunset, on three-quarters to one pound of flour a day and a quarter of a pound only of tea per week. Moreover, the party succeeded in keeping on good terms with the native tribes as they passed; although it may truly be said that they were never safe for a day whilst on the river.'

The results of this enterprise were:

1. The establishment of South Australia, which has been found to produce almost every ore useful to man, and which grows wheat so fine as to have twice carried off the first prize at the great exhibitions.

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<sup>1</sup> For the conclusion of this letter, see note on *Central Expedition*, p. 281.



MAP OF  
**STURT'S TWO EXPEDITIONS**  
 MACQUARIE - DARLING, 1828-9  
 MURRUMBIDGEE - MURRAY, 1829-30

Scale of Miles  
 20 0 20 40 60 80 100 120

140 Longitude East of Greenwich

145

150

2. The opening up to steam navigation of the Murray and the Darling-two rivers which form the internal line to connect the whole of Eastern Australia, from the Darling Downs of Queensland to the Gold Fields of Victoria and the Goolwa of South Australia.

Even the vast plains of which the Darling forms the western boundary are now occupied by civilised man.

#### NOTE ON LAKE ALEXANDRINA.

In a despatch (April 20, 1830) to Sir Ralph Darling, Sturt explains that the name 'Alexandrina' was given in honour of the young princess then heiress to the throne of Britain. At a later date (March 15, 1843), when proposing to change the name to 'Victoria,' he remarks: 'I was influenced by feelings of loyalty when I first named this lake at a moment when it was doubtful whether I should ever again see the face of civilised man. . . . It will afford me the sincerest gratification to be the humble means of placing Her Majesty's name on the map of a province than which she possesses not one of greater promise or more loyally attached to the Sovereign and to the mother country.'

## CHAPTER VI

1830-1833

NORFOLK ISLAND-MUTINY OF PRISONERS-WRECK OF THE 'QUEEN CHARLOTTE'- DELAY OF STURT'S DESPATCHESILL - HEALTH AND RETIREMENT-PUBLICATION OF BOOK - GRANT OF LAND

THE Murray voyage formed a fit sequel to Sturt's earlier expedition. Both journeys were needed to solve the vital problem of the watershed. To that question his thoughts incessantly turned; and so well did he use his opportunities that the retreat from the Darling taught him scarcely less than did the progress down the Murray. Had he not been baffled by the brine springs, he might never have spelt out the hieroglyph of the Castlereagh creeks. Now at last all was clear. With his whale-boat he had unlocked to the world Australia's largest river system.

That honour is unshaken by the trifling question of prior discovery. Hume lost no time in claiming the identity of the Murray with the stream crossed by him at a point 300 miles higher in 1824, and by him named the 'Hume.' Less correctly he supposed the Lindesay to be his 'Goulburn.' But as Sturt had from the first surmised that the Murray held the united waters of all Hume's rivers,<sup>1</sup> including the Hume,<sup>2</sup> the two explorers were practically agreed.

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<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, pp. 54, 58, 61.

<sup>2</sup> That name Sturt always applied to the upper stream ; though below its confluence with the Ovens, the Murrumbidgee, and the Goulburn he considered that its enlarged and altered course warranted the altered name. In this compromise Hume early acquiesced. He very possibly felt aggrieved by the settlers' gradual extension of the name 'Murray' to the whole river. If so, the grievance would rest solely on his technical right as first discoverer. He never followed his river further than some thirty miles in all (fifteen up and fifteen down) from where he struck it near its source ; whereas Sturt, in his two journeys of 1829-30 and of 1838, thoroughly explored its whole course for a length of at least 1,750 miles. See Arrowsmith's calculations, *supra*, p. 90. See also *infra*, pp. 136, 144, 145.

Between them in any case there arose no bitterness. Hume tells us that his lifelong friendship with Sturt was never broken.<sup>1</sup>

Sturt returned to Sydney full of zeal for the further exploration of the land of promise, which from the sandhills he had beheld at his feet. Finding himself disabled by impaired health and eyesight from this service, he urged Sir Ralph Darling to employ upon it Captain Collet Barker of the 39th, whose interesting journey and tragic fate in the spring of 1831 are graphically told by Sturt's pen.

Meantime Sturt himself, instead of yielding to grave symptoms and taking the rest he sorely needed, threw himself with fresh ardour into regimental work, and was put in command of a detachment for Norfolk Island. Service in a penal settlement was at best unpopular; but of those stations Norfolk Island was supremely disliked.

A den of infamy,' says one writer; 'a hell upon earth,' declares another. Remote from civilising influence, deprived till 1832 of all spiritual ministrations, the hapless prisoners of that surf-bound rock were scarcely more to be pitied than were the gaol officials or the small garrison. Yet, thanks to his taste for natural science, Sturt found in this narrow world of five by two and a half miles no lack of interest. As a connecting link between Australian species and rarer New Zealand types, Norfolk Island has special charms for the student of Nature. Thus, while his brother officers pined in duration vile, Sturt rambled and boated amid the delightful scenery, rejoicing in treasures of bird-life and plant-life.

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<sup>1</sup> See Hume's *Overland Journey*, 1824, 3rd reprint of 1897, p. 73: 'The acquaintance then formed (with Sturt) ripened into a friendship which was never broken'.

An interesting relic of this time is a small MS. 'Flora of Norfolk Island,' inscribed in pencil: From Allan Cunningham to Charles Sturt on Norfolk Island, in which they unexpectedly met in 1830.'

The introduction to Sturt's first published book contains an interesting passage commenting on the extreme fertility of Norfolk Island as contrasted with the barrenness of New South Wales—a contrast attributed by him to the abundance of vegetable decay in the island, and to the want of it on the Australian continent.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, to Sturt's shaken health the change to this moist climate was harmful. He attributes to a residence in Norfolk Island under peculiarly harassing circumstances the final breakdown which drove him home.

The special trials of his position may be inferred from his statement that Sir Ralph Darling sent him, confidentially, to restore to tranquillity Norfolk Island, the state of which at the time was such as to cause the most serious apprehension and alarm. This mission, in the presence of a senior officer, was both difficult and delicate; but I succeeded in it, and on my return to Sydney received the thanks of the Governor in Council for the judgment and prudence with which I had performed my duty. I believe that on that occasion I saved Norfolk Island from falling into the hands of the prisoners, and that it retained for a considerable period the quiet and discipline in which I left it.<sup>2</sup>

The years 1830 to 1832 were certainly years of grave disturbance. To the volcanic unrest of Europe Britain throbbd responsive, and timid judges found in the convict ships a ready safety-valve for much explosive material.

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<sup>1</sup>See *Two Expeditions*, vol. i. pp. xxix, xxx.

<sup>2</sup>Letter of March 9, 1859, to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton from Sturt when a candidate for the post of Governor of Moreton Bay; see *infra*, p. 327.

Many a young demagogue, transported on slight pretext, was by that doom made desperate. Thus the penal settlements were overcrowded with able and dangerous men. The officials and troops were disproportionately few. In Norfolk Island Sturt complains of the mischievous system of employing 'ticket-of-leave' men in responsible offices, even as clerks and storekeepers.

Mutiny was in the air, and from one to another of the prison colonies the - epidemic spread like wildfire. Soon after Sturt's arrival in Norfolk Island, the murder of Colonel Morrisett's overseer proved to be the first thunderclap of the coming storm. The victim of this crime, set upon and slain by a gang employed under him on a plantation, was supposed to know too much of the conspiracy then brewing. He was popular with the prisoners, who, however, finding him deaf to their eloquence, made away with him. They trumped up a story of accident, but the circumstantial evidence was so strong that, at Sydney, four of the gang were hanged. This prompt act of justice and the redoubled vigilance of the garrison for a time kept intrigue at bay.

Enough, however, transpired of the prisoners' murderous plans to excite dire alarm, and these vague terrors were emphasised by the knowledge that the mutineers kept up an understanding with unknown traitors of official position. Early in 1831 six or seven convicts managed to break loose and to secure firearms. They set upon a working-party, whom they released and armed, killing the soldiers in charge. The mutineers then entrenched themselves on a knoll surrounded by a swamp, and proceeded to build a great boat in which, failing their larger scheme of general massacre and pillage, they and their prison friends would make good their escape.

Late one evening they waylaid the gaoler on the prison bridge, and, leaving him for dead, triumphantly seized his keys. The gaoler, crawling half stunned to the barracks, raised an alarm.

Sturt at once locked all exits with duplicate keys, and disposed his small force of fifty men so as to watch the arsenal, the landing-place, and the gaol, detaching a few to mount guard over the party in the swamp. These measures were carried out on Saturday night so promptly and quietly that the Commandant (Colonel Morrissett) took no alarm. In the morning the prisoners offered to give up the names of the ringleaders to any responsible officer who would stand under their barred window. Sturt, on taking this post, was at once saluted with the contents of a water-tub. Thereupon, without hesitation, he went up to the room where were assembled seventy-two convicts, and, with no assistants but the gaoler and the turnkey, had them all flogged. The convicts, cowed by the soldiers outside and taken aback by Sturt's promptness, attempted no violence.

These events Sturt immediately reported to Colonel Morrissett; but they agreed that, as every precaution had now been taken, the public mind and the peace of Sunday should not be disturbed by publishing the affair. As Norfolk Island boasted no chaplain, public worship was conducted by the Commandant, and Morrissett proceeded rather late to perform that duty as usual. Unfortunately a pair of horse-pistols visibly protruding from his pocket excited alarm, which was confirmed by the absence on duty of the garrison. But scarcely had the panic time to spread before danger was already averted. The ringleaders in their swamp, cut off from communication with the gaol, could make nothing of their great boat, and were in time starved out and stalked down. Stern as this doom may seem, by no less stringent measures could the lives and property of the settlers be secured against these bushranging outlaws.

A private letter from Norfolk Island in the ' Sydney Gazette' of August 9, 1831, shows Sturt prominent in another exciting scene. On May 27 at noon, the brig 'Queen Charlotte' was seen off the bar, flying a signal of distress.

The gale was rising fast, and in the tremendous surf on that rocky coast the landing was already dangerous. To launch a boat in such a sea was difficult, yet Sturt's urgent appeal and promise of freedom to any convict who should save life enlisted a zealous crew. Before, however, they could reach the brig, her boat was seen making for the shore, having on board the prostrate figure of a sick or wounded man. Soldiers and convicts lined the rocks watching in breathless suspense, and holding ready ropes and life-saving gear. As the boat neared land she became more helpless in the surf. Suddenly, when close in, she capsized. Foremost of a brave band, Sturt's servant Davenport, of whom more anon,<sup>1</sup> plunged into the breakers and succeeded in bringing to shore the ship's captain, wounded that morning by the accidental discharge of a musket. Thanks to the zeal roused and directed by Sturt, not a life was lost. The unknown writer adds: 'The exertions of Captain Sturt and the humanity evinced by him cannot be too highly praised.' Poor Captain Rennoldson, unfortunately, in spite of every care, succumbed in eleven days to injuries pronounced hopeless from the first. The gale continued so violent, that not till June 17 was the brig able to leave for New Zealand.

To New Zealand about this time Darling proposed to send Sturt as first British Resident, an intention thus announced to Lord Goderich, June 4, 1831: 'It is an object to conciliate and keep in good humour the New Zealanders, and Captain Sturt's disposition and character give him the best chance of succeeding with them.' And Sturt, in August 1846, tells Grey: 'I was once appointed British Resident there (New Zealand); and although illness prevented me going, I yet obtained much information on the character of the New Zealanders. I am much mistaken if they remain tranquil.'

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<sup>1</sup>See below, p. 118.

Elsewhere he remarks that Lord Goderich was of opinion that he might be more advantageously employed in further exploration. Probably both reasons combined to debar him from an appointment which would have given full scope to his best powers. Darling, in September 1831, on the eve of his recall, finally relinquished the project, to the satisfaction of the Colonial Office who knew not Sturt, and who, in his place, promptly appointed Busby.

Sturt's name, indeed, was still unknown in England. From May 1830 till April 1831 his despatches lay forgotten in the Sydney archives. Only on special inquiry from the Colonial Office were they then tardily forwarded, with the strange apology that Darling wished to keep them for the writer's future revision. Thus no official account of the Murray voyage reached England till September 1831. This long delay can only be explained by the troubles which thickened round Darling during the last years of his unpopular rule, and which in 1831 led to his recall. On a searching inquiry, he was entirely vindicated from the fierce accusations of his enemies. Yet he was never again appointed to so responsible a post.

On the arrival in England of Sturt's home-letters of May 1830, his father in September wrote to Sir George Murray: I do myself the honour to mention to you my son... who has been frequently employed by the Governor, and after a recent service on the unknown waters of the Murrumbidgee, - I could hope that Lieutenant-General Darling's report of my son's exertions was perfectly satisfactory.' The brevity of this statement is unsurpassed, even by the modesty of the concluding request for 'favourable recommendation to obtain promotion either by brevet or otherwise.'

To this letter Sir George Murray replied that he knew nothing of the circumstances referred to. Strange irony of fate, that this great man should be so long ignorant of the lately discovered river by which chiefly his name is likely to be immortalised.

The elder Sturt now (October 1830) wrote to Sir Ralph Darling, and official inquiry of about the same date drew forth the missing despatches from a twelvemonth's dust. To the father, Darling replies, April 16, 1831 'I have scarcely a moment to acknowledge your letter on your son's exploration. I can assure you that no one can feel more disappointed than I did at not being able to forward (the account) of his last important discovery before the present opportunity. I have now done so, and I have placed his services in such a light as I trust will induce Lord Goderich to recommend him for promotion. There can be no better proof of the ability and zeal with which he performed this service than the completely successful result.' This private letter accompanied Sturt's long-lost despatches, now introduced to Lord Goderich by Sir Ralph with the formality in which he delighted, and with the excuse about an intended revision of which the careful despatches betray no need. Yet Sir Ralph would fain do justice to his friend. After briefly recapitulating the chief results of Sturt's Expeditions, he adds:

'These important services have been performed by Captain Sturt in a manner highly creditable to his zeal and talents. Both expeditions were conducted with skill; and the management he has shown in inducing his people to submit to fatigues and privations of no ordinary character proves him to be well qualified for such undertakings.' He then pleads for a step of promotion, 'as well merited in the present instance as it could have been on any occasion. Such a mark of favour would not only be gratefully appreciated by the individual in question, but would act as a stimulus to rouse others to exertion. I need not, my Lord, point out that when individuals find their services disregarded they become indifferent. That

is an essential quality in the character of the Government officers of such a colony as this, and it is highly desirable that they should feel assured that no important service will remain unrequited.' The sting of 'benefits forgot' in these last remarks was probably lost on the unresponsive 'Goody Goderich,'<sup>1</sup> as much as were the stronger praises of Sturt urged in a private letter within the despatch, and the suggested expediency of carrying out further explorations with camels : an idea which had also occurred to Sturt.

The despatch closes with a statement of the expenses incurred in equipping Sturt's parties, viz.:

	£	s.	d.
Cost of 1st Expedition .	209	15	9
"    2nd    "	265	19	4
	47	15	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub>
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But Goderich's ears were not closed to Darling's calumniators ; the Governor was under a cloud, and his long letters met with scant reply, beyond rebuke for his delay in reporting other discoveries besides those of Sturt. How about Hume's Journals of 1824-25? bottled up at Sydney so long that by the end of 1830 they had not yet reached Downing Street. Just as were these reproaches, Darling was at the time so beset by a hornets' nest of foes as to excite pity rather than blame.

Foremost among his detractors was Mitchell, loud with grievance. The cause of quarrel appears from Darling's defence, which moreover throws light on Mitchell's attitude towards Sturt.

'I am aware,' writes Darling, March 28, 1831, to Sir George Murray, 'that Major Mitchell was very much displeased at not being employed in exploring the interior, . . . but. . . the suspension of his immediate duties would, from the state of the Survey, have been attended

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Napier*, i. 440

with the most serious inconvenience both to the Government and the colony. . . Major Mitchell has at least as much to attend to as he is capable of superintending. . . . How, after his reiterated representations of the backwardness of the Survey, and his earnest appeals for additional means to bring up the arrears, how could he with consistency, or with common regard to the interests of the colony, have been absent, as was Captain Sturt on one occasion for five, on another for six months? I thought I had myself rendered some service in inducing Captain Sturt and Mr. Cunningham . . . to perform their most important explorations of two considerable tracts of hitherto unknown country.'

He then refers particularly to Sturt's 'most persevering determination,' and to the 'severest privations' by which he had injured his health. 'I do not hesitate to say that Major Mitchell would not have performed these services in a more complete and advantageous manner.' Then follows the enigmatic remark: 'I leave you to judge of my disappointment in finding that I was not authorised to express on the part of His Majesty's Government one word in commendation of the important services Captain Sturt and Mr. Cunningham had rendered.' In one brief sentence he touches on Sturt's more recent 'very important' discoveries, and urges that immediate attention be given to carrying out 'much that remains to be done in that quarter.'

Allowing for the few opportunities and for the slow course of post from the antipodes at that time,<sup>1</sup> this letter would hardly precede the despatches to Goderich and the private letter to Sturt's father. The latter, never a lengthy writer, now merely reminds Goderich of his former appeal, and adds (September 2, 1831): 'The circumstances which prevented the object being now removed, I shall content myself with submitting for your lordship's personal information the enclosed extract of a letter from General Darling.

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<sup>1</sup> Thirty weeks instead of thirty days, as now,' writes Sir Samuel Davenport.

Nearly two months elapsed before a note signed 'Howick' informs the father that copies of Darling's testimonials 'have been forwarded for the information of the General Commanding-in-Chief, with the recommendation of the Secretary of State.

Meantime the further discoveries and tragic death of Captain Barker furnished Darling with a new text. He had not, he said (June 4, 1831), before pointed out the dangers incurred by Sturt, supposing them to be sufficiently obvious and that his services would be duly appreciated. . . . The fate of Captains Logan<sup>1</sup> and Barker will show the personal hazard at which Captain Sturt's important discoveries have been made.' The same despatch mentions the proposal to employ Sturt in New Zealand—an intention which, as we have seen, was relinquished in September. This was followed by Darling's return to England, an event which perhaps explains that, excepting the formal note to Sturt's father, the explorer was for a time again forgotten.

At last a glimmer of light penetrates the fog of Downing Street ; and on November 19, 1831, Goderich, while allowing the expenses of Sturt's equipment (stated at 475*l.* 15*s.* 1¾*d.*), urges on the attention of Bourke, now Governor of New South Wales, the early solution of two problems, viz.:

1st. The identity of the Darling with the great tributary of the Murray.

2nd. The connection between Lake Alexandrina and St. Vincent's Gulf. (The latter question had already been solved by Barker; but the official fog, though illuminated, was not yet dispersed.)

To obtain the necessary information without any great expense, an expedition may be equipped; a concession which was but the prelude to a larger scheme detailed in Goderich's despatch of March 18, 1832, to Bourke.

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<sup>1</sup> Killed at Moreton Bay.

In tracing the Darling, whether 'up in the north-easterly direction' or down 'from the point where Captain Sturt fell in with it in 1829,' the first efforts were to be directed to the *southward*. Yet it is suggested that from Sturt's original point on the Darling, or from that latitude, 'the traveller . . . might pursue a *north-western* course for three or four degrees of latitude, till he reaches the long. of 140, . . . and then bend his steps to Moreton Bay,' so as to join up Sturt's discoveries with those of Cunningham. At the same time this ubiquitous traveller was never to forget 'the importance of ascertaining the nature of the country near all the settled districts.'

The rules appended to this document and impressed on the attention of all explorers show quite a fatherly solicitude, and omit neither the keeping of a journal nor the winding of a watch. For the performance of this vast scheme Sturt is named as the most fitting candidate; but, failing him, power is given to Bourke to name a substitute.

Alas for Sturt, these orders came too late! For a year and a half he had struggled against ill-health ; he doubtless felt himself forgotten ; and after his forced refusal of the New Zealand post, he could bear up no longer against blindness, pain, and disappointment. About January 1832 he brought to Sydney the good news that Norfolk Island was in a state of complete tranquillity; and for his active help towards this desirable result he 'received the thanks of Government in Council.'

But he was soon obliged to go on sick leave to England, bidding what proved to be a last farewell to his regiment, then under orders for India. Sturt had not left his post till driven to do so by temporarily losing the sight of one eye, and during the voyage home the other eye failed, and for a time he was all but blind.

The only tidings of him during this dark time of his life reach us in scanty references.

Mrs. Young writes to Mrs. Wood, from Weymouth, September 18, 1832: 'Of course you would hear of poor Charles's return to his - native land, with broken health- and threatened with blindness. I trust this last blow, through mercy, may be averted, and that skill and general care may do more for him than his desponding temper seems disposed to expect. His dear mother was greatly distressed with his first letter.' And on May 19, 1833, we hear from his mother ' Charles is full of difficulties, created in a great measure by his extreme diffidence. He has too much delicacy of feeling to push his own interest sufficiently. I hope he will now take courage to bestir himself a little.' Surely neither in his own country nor among his kindred was this hero duly honoured! He had bestirred himself to such good purpose that, under prohibitive conditions, his first book was on the eve of publication. During the summer of 1833 (illustrated with his own maps and drawings) the record of his 'Two Expeditions,' &c., saw the light.

To the difficulties of this task he thus touchingly alludes: 'I feel it due both to myself and to the public to state that during these expeditions my health had suffered so much that I was unable to bear up against the effects of exposure, bodily labour, poverty of diet, and anxiety of mind. . . . After a succession of attacks I became totally blind, and am still unable to read what I pen, or to venture abroad without an attendant. . . . The reflection that I have been unassisted in this work in any one particular will, I hope, partly excuse its imperfections. A wish to contribute to the public good led me to undertake those journeys which have cost me so much. The same feeling actuates me in recording their results.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'total blindness' was fortunately soon lightened; the dread of its final return henceforth darkened Sturt's life; yet he never spared to work such eyesight as remained to him.

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<sup>1</sup> *Two Expeditions*, ii. 5

For two years he now submitted to treatment from a leading oculist of the day, who put him to excruciating torture at a cost of over 200*l.*; and who yet, according to later advice, entirely misunderstood the case. This worthy shook hands at parting and blurted out his regret at being unable to do any real good, adding: 'but *I will* say that you have borne your sufferings like a man.'

Gradually, however, the sight improved beyond expectation; and although again almost extinguished for a time by the arduous labours of the Central Expedition,<sup>1</sup> yet a twilight glimmer of wonderful working power was granted till the last: 'This trouble,' says Sturt, 'obliged me to relinquish a profession to which I was ardently attached, and in which I had gained an honourable name.' His retirement in fact took place July 19, 1833, and seemed to deal a death-warrant to his hopes.

In August he paid a visit to Ireland, where, says the mother, 'his friend O'Driscoll received him as the fondest father would his dearest son,' only allowing him to depart 'with the utmost difficulty, and with the promise of returning to spend the winter.' Charles was meantime to try the effects of the Aix-la-Chapelle springs. But, alas! on recrossing the water he caught a severe cold, and in town was seized with a violent inflammation. A kind friend was happily with him, one whom a gracious Providence has before sent to him when helpless and almost totally blind, and who on this occasion paid him the attention of a brother.<sup>2</sup> With good medical aid the disease was soon subdued; and as soon as he could leave his room, Jane (his sister, Mrs. Venables) took him down to Hendon. . . . We expect him here immediately (September 25). I hope dear Isaac has perused his book with pleasure; it has been very well treated by the reviewers and public journals.

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<sup>1</sup> See *infra*, pp. 283, 288.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Samuel Batten, see *infra*, p. 337.

Notwithstanding the cares they have cost me, my heart rises in gratitude to the Lord who has blessed my old age with a sight of the sons I had considered as banished to us in this world. To behold Charles, William, and Frederick again part of our domestic circle repays for all.'

Sturt's book appeared in the nick of time to inspire and guide the zeal of certain reformers whose thoughts were turned to colonial subjects. Above all, to the eager visions of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, Sturt undoubtedly gave 'a local habitation and a name.' The perusal of his book led that colonial reformer to choose South Australia for his experimental settlement.<sup>1</sup>

Not less interesting is the fervour roused by Sturt's book in the fiery soul of Sir Charles Napier. The two men were quite unknown to each other and never met. This generous tribute of praise does the more honour to both. To quote at some length becomes irresistible, and may be forgiven on the plea that Napier's book has been long out of print and is difficult to obtain:<sup>2</sup>

It is impossible to read without much admiration the account of Captain Sturt's expedition down the Murrumbidgee and Murray. . . . An intrepid enterprise! unanimated by the glory of battle, yet accompanied by the hardships of a campaign, without splendour and without reward. These undaunted men knew that ... perils from men and from water and from starvation threatened, and that if they fell, no fame would attend their memory; their courage would be unknown, and their death only mourned by a few friends! Nor was the fortitude with

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<sup>1</sup> See the details of Barker's report of South Australia supplemented by the accurate information as to harbours, &c., gathered by Sturt from sealers and others. *Two Expeditions*, ii. 229 et seq.

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviated from Sir C. Napier's *Colonisation*, pp. 122 et seq.

which they extricated themselves from these dangers less to be admired than the boldness with which they faced them. It is not easy to express the anxiety with which we read of Sturt's determination . . . with the strength and provisions of his party nearly exhausted, to remount a thousand miles of river, to repass a thousand hostile natives. . . . If to descend with the stream, in full enjoyment of strength and of ample food, was difficult, what must have been the toil of ascending an opposing current, under severe privations and with exhausted powers! . . . No words of mine can be of service to these intrepid explorers; but it gratifies my own feelings to express my admiration for their conduct, and to spread the record of their names. . . . We cannot doubt but that General Darling reflected honour upon his own character by rewarding such high-spirited men to the utmost of his power. . . . And it is to be regretted that Captain Sturt has not concluded his unassuming narrative by a statement of the well-earned honours and rewards which must have been bestowed upon himself and his companions. For we cannot suppose that the frigid " Government order " in the appendix of his book was the only notice taken of this zealous and successful performance of public service by eight determined men. I will finish these remarks by expressing a hope that His Majesty may order the Governor of the South Australian Colony to erect a lighthouse column on the shores of Spencer's Gulf in commemoration of the achievement of Captain Sturt and his Companions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This suggestion was probably forgotten when, sixteen years later, in August 1851, a Governor of South Australia (Sir Henry Fox Young), in opening the new Legislative Council, thus referred to the completion of a lighthouse at Cape Willoughby, on Kangaroo Island : ' This lighthouse, the first erected in the province, as it guides seafarers from the South Australian coasts, may serve as a memorial of the services of him who, as the discoverer of the Murray, opened up a great water-communication between our colonies, and I have therefore named it " The Sturt Light."

The 'honours and rewards' hung fire for nearly five years after the Murray voyage.

'For these services my two companions each received a grant of 1,250 acres of land, valued at five shillings per acre. As I was serving with my regiment, such a reward would have been useless to me. When, therefore, Sir R. Darling spoke to me on the subject, I expressed my desire that he would recommend me for a majority. The Governor, however, gave me a quarter of an acre of land near Sydney to reimburse the expenses I had incurred on the expeditions. This plot I sold for 300*l.*, a sum which barely covered my outlay (which, though I had not asked repayment, had been considerable). From a French cruiser I had purchased expensive instruments not then procurable in the colony, and I had employed my own horses, which were afterwards of little use.

'Owing to the effects of hardship and exposure, I lost the sight of my right eye; and when ordered home by a medical board, during the voyage my left eye also failed, and for more than twelve months I was blind. During that time I was under Dr. G - , to whom I paid more than 200*l.*, who told me that I must not hope for perfect recovery of sight. This trouble obliged me to relinquish a profession to which I was ardently attached, and in which I had gained an honourable name.' On application to Lord Ripon, Sturt finally received a settler's grant of 5,000 acres, to 800 of which he was entitled as a retired captain.

This grant was in February 1837 gazetted to Sturt 'in part recompense for his great services.'<sup>1</sup> But free grants

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<sup>1</sup> Sturt delayed for some time to select his land, whereupon the Sydney Survey office (ruled by Mitchell) warned him that they would cancel his right if he did not exercise it within a given time. This notice found him lying ill at a friend's house (Yarralumla - then occupied by Terence Murray, afterwards knighted and President of the Council) ; so, on hearsay and in haste, he chose his grant at Ginningdera, Queanbeyan-a block surrounded on three sides by the water of the Murrumbidgee, the Queanbeyan, and the Ginningdera. The land, however, is not good, and has suffered heavily from floods, &c. 'If he had been allowed more time,' writes Mr. F. Campbell the present owner, 'he would probably have chosen lands worth five times the value of these.'

when all Government land was put up for auction. Even those entitled to f had been abolished on January 12, 1831; since ree grants now had the value of their claims estimated in money (at five shillings an acre) and that amount deducted from the sum which they bid at the auction.<sup>1</sup>

Sturt apparently sold his uncleared grant at its auction value, and with the proceeds bought a small but ready-fenced property at Varroville which, on his sudden departure to South Australia in 1839, he was forced to sell at so great a loss that the final outcome of the grant dwindled to less than 450*L*.

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<sup>1</sup> Jenks's *History of Australian Colonies*, p. 62.

## CHAPTER VII

1834--1838

MARRIAGE - FARM IN NEW SOUTH WALES -- DEATH OF  
PARENTS-ASSIGNED SERVANTS-GEORGE DAVENPORT-  
BUSHRANGERS

STURT'S visit to Mrs. Venables at Hendon was rich in happy results. He then first met his sister's friend, Charlotte Greene, who within a year became his wife. Nor could he have chosen a more courageous and devoted helpmate. The friendship between the two families probably originated in India, Colonel Sheppey Greene having been Auditor-General at Calcutta in the days of Napier Sturt's judgeship. In any case the Sturts, during their years of exile at Boulogne, saw much of the widowed Mrs. Greene and of her three accomplished daughters. Charlotte Greene and Jane Sturt more particularly formed a close intimacy which, thus begun in girlhood and early cemented by closer ties, lasted warm and steady to the end of life.

In those days the motives for a sojourn at Boulogne were so various that in the best circles they were not openly inquired into. But on that score Mrs. Greene could defy scrutiny. Her shrewd sense had withstood the speculation fever of the early twenties; no dun ever darkened her door. Going first to Boulogne to see friends, she had suffered so dreadfully while crossing the Channel in the sailing-ship of the period that she vowed nothing would induce her to repeat the experience. And being a woman of spirit she kept her word, and never again quitted Boulogne.

Brilliant in conversation, fastidious in dress and cookery, Mrs. Greene shone as a leader of society, no less than as a devoted mother. Her one son was well launched in the army. Her three daughters were brought up to be right-minded and sensible; adepts at needlework and at housekeeping, they were also well grounded in general knowledge. French was to them as a native tongue, and for music they had special skill and talent. Of Charlotte an old master once remarked 'Mademoiselle s'interesse à tout,' and in that brief phrase he shrewdly characterised his pupil. Mrs. Greene's experience of Boulogne society had taught her to be difficult to her daughter's suitors, of whom more than one had fled untimely rather than face her scrutiny of ways and means.

Sturt's chance of success seemed indeed doubtful. In broken health, with no patrimony but the price of his commission, with no profession or prospect but the rough and smooth of a settler's life, in a generation which took no count of exploring feats, what had he but his personal qualities to recommend him? To do Mrs. Greene justice, the personal qualities carried the day. She was from the first charmed with Captain Sturt, who inspired her with such implicit confidence that she overcame her objection even to the likelihood of a lifelong parting from her daughter.

The latest arrangements were hurried by a notice from the captain of a Sydney-bound vessel that his ship, then lying in the Downs, must be off within a fortnight. This summons resulted in a very hasty and simple wedding at the little old church of St. James's, Dover, on September 20, 1834. One short week was spent in a parting visit to the parent Sturts and to Mrs. Venables, and then once more, under these altered conditions, Charles Sturt bade farewell to England.

During the voyage Sturt, as was his habit, kept careful observations, comparing notes with the captain's log. On one occasion, finding a discrepancy, and failing on a repetition of his calculations to alter the result, he expressed his conviction that they were nearer the Island of St. Paul than the captain would allow. Towards evening this opinion was strengthened by some change of colour in the water, to which he called attention, urging that soundings should be made. The Captain consenting, to his horror found only forty-seven fathoms. (A shell brought up on the lead was treasured by Mrs. Sturt to her dying day.) Finding himself thus out in his reckonings, and vague as to exact position, the captain kept the crew on the alert all night. Sturt sharing in the anxious look-out for breakers ahead. At length dawn showed the great rock of St. Paul; the bearings were sure, the dreadful danger was past. Mrs. Sturt had heard nothing of the alarm, but coming from her cabin to breakfast she met the captain, who took her by both hands and said 'Mrs. Sturt, we have to thank your husband for our safety!' Going on deck, she saw the huge table-land towering sheer out of the water in the morning light; a sight never to be forgotten.

The young wife was deeply impressed by the approach to Sydney; she described vividly the sudden turn from the open sea into the still water of the straits, between bold cliffs that, higher up the grand harbour, gave place to wooded hills. Sturt left his wife on board while he went to the MacLeays' fine house near the harbour. Presently Mrs. Sturt saw him return in a well-appointed boat, rowed by two stalwart men dressed as sailors. Her husband told her these boatmen and most of the men she would now see were convicts, and that it was important not to make any remark likely to hurt their feelings.

The kind MacLeays welcomed the Sturts most warmly to their paradise of Brownlow Hill. The young settlers however soon took up their abode in a pretty cottage in the outskirts of Sydney, whence Sturt made many long bush journeys in his search for a promising allotment. His hopeful views at this time appear from two letters to his brother William in India.

The first of these letters, dated from Sydney, 'Good Friday (April 17), 1835,' is sent by the ship which had brought the Sturts, and which was to sail on the following Tuesday for Calcutta.

'Try all you can, my dear William, to get some lucrative berth; scrape together, if you can, 4,000*l.* or 5,000*l.* and come to me here. Rest assured there is a wide field for fortune in New South Wales, and that with the capital I have mentioned you might snap your fingers at the weird sisters, and set at defiance the most uncertain of the goddesses. Even with the little I have, I have no doubt but that four years will see me in the enjoyment of every rational comfort. . . . In this colony, my dear William, you will find a home with your brother, who will be too glad, should it be in his power, to shorten your residence in India, or to contribute in any way to your happiness or welfare.

'You are aware that the Government gave me a 5,000 acre grant of land, but I have not as yet made my selection, being puzzled as to the locality. I have, however, determined to purchase a property called Luskintyre, one of the most beautiful on the Hunter River, which I purpose turning into a dairy farm, and which by attention I hope to make profitable. It consists of 2,500 acres, 350 of which are under cultivation. It includes a good cottage, in which there will be plenty of room for you and M. It has a garden which cost 700*l.*, and the most complete stockyards in the colony. The sum asked is 3,000*l.*, which will nearly take my all; however, it is a great point to get into a prepared residence.

If I were to go on my grant, I certainly could not make the same improvements for double the above sum. The views of the colonists are tending southwards from Sydney, and there I shall probably select my grant, as the best grazing and agricultural country. But on the Hunter every tropical production can be raised, and for a dairy farm Luskintyre is admirably adapted. Last year the garden produced six tons of grapes, and it is stocked with the choicest fruits. I intend to take down there 200 orange trees, and to plant a vineyard of eight acres; so I hope when you come to my Tuscan villa you may taste my Falernian. If you are still near Calcutta, make interest for me at the Botanical Garden for seeds and trees. Any of your scarce *fruits* or *plants* or *bulbs* or *seeds* would to me be invaluable, and I would gladly send the Government Botanist anything in return. There are, I understand, to be had in Calcutta China seeds in small pots; in fact, any seed, the rarer the better, will be acceptable. I am an enthusiastic horticulturist, and if you will play your part by exerting yourself to get me also seeds of the beautiful Himalayan trees, you shall one day have the pleasure of walking among eastern groves in a climate surpassingly luxurious. I wish also that, if possible, you will send me a pair of jungle fowl, a brace of peacocks and ducks, some partridges, and, if procurable, some pheasants. These commissions I give because I shall never again have such an opportunity, for whatever you send will be cared for. To Doctor Hartley, who takes you this, I am very much indebted, and any plants you give him will, I know, reach me, for he is a careful, excellent fellow. The steward will take care of the live stock. I have desired him, if possible, to get me a pair of antelopes or such like, for I want to do something here and to have a place worth living at. In the Botanical Garden pull any ripe seeds and mix them together; I'll find out what they are, and the Botanist is said to be a most liberal person.

Give him my respects, and say that I am passionately fond of the garden, and I make no doubt he will be good enough to collect for me. With regard to the animals, I hear that all sorts are in the market; but I should be very thankful if anywhere you could beg, borrow, or steal me a brace of pheasants of kinds or a brace of peacocks, the others being easily procured. The birds must be put in pens, and if the peacocks' or pheasants' tails are too long, cut them off. I arrange for Hartley to defray all expense, as I will not tax your pocket; only humour my fancy.

Remember then that if illness or pleasure should prompt you to leave India for a time, you will, I trust, find a happy home here. By the time I hear from you I hope to have it in order. Ginger<sup>1</sup> and John<sup>2</sup> are both with me. On Tuesday I start for the south to look for land, and I dare say I shall be absent sleeping under the heavens for five or six weeks. What think you of freedom and climate when compared to buff belts and parades? Before I left England our father had rallied and was tolerably well. At best however his life is extremely precarious, and it is as probable as not that he may ere now be gathered to his fathers, near whose graves Fate has so singularly and so gradually conducted him. Our mother was extremely well.'

[The Napier Sturts, after many vicissitudes of fortune and of abode, had settled at Buckshaw House on the borders of Somerset and Dorset. During a visit to Bath, Mrs. Sturt died June 26, 1835, in her sixty-first year; her husband survived till January 13, 1837, when at Buckshaw he, in his seventieth year, also breathed his last.]

Charles Sturt's second letter of this period is dated Sydney, April 21, 1835.

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<sup>1</sup> A nickname for Davenport.

<sup>2</sup> John Harris.

I find Sydney wonderfully enlarged and improved, and am surprised at such rapid advance. Men of capital are coming here, and so great is the demand for land that the colony must be extended to the very south coast. I am on the eve of making a journey to select my acres. The country to the south is described by several people as most beautiful' (i.e. the future Victoria). 'As soon as I get my land I shall stock it with 1,000 sheep and 150 to 200 head of fine cattle. As a beginning that, I think, will do very well; and a trip once or twice a year to see my establishment will be a pleasure to me. I wish with all my heart you had the means to come and do likewise. Rest assured New South Wales will be a most important and favourite place ere long.

'So your rotten Ministry are turned out at last. God forfend that they should ever again hold the destinies of England. And that idol of poor blind Shannon-Brougham—a precious fellow he is!—worthy the Radicals, and worthy the times—an unprincipled, time-serving politician without the decency to cover his faults. A Russian ship in harbour makes us a little gayer than usual, for here men are so busy making money that they scarcely think of pleasure. This man has his head full of wool—that of oil, one of timber, another of grain! Wheat is very high at present, but I think it will fall. Sheep too are likely to lower in price, but cattle, I take it, will become very valuable. So much then for local news. If you can get me the seeds of any shrubs (evergreen or showy for a shrubbery), do. Strive hard for a berth, make 5,000*l.*, and come here, to sit yourself down by your sincerely attached brother

Charles'

Had Sturt kept to his first intention of settling on the Hunter or in the Illawarra district, his career would probably have been less distinguished

but more prosperous.<sup>1</sup> But though his sagacity in counsel led others to fortune, he was not a successful arbiter of his own destinies. He now yielded to the importunity of a friend who was chiefly anxious to avoid so great a separation as the move to Illawarra would imply. He therefore chose a less attractive but fairly eligible property at Mittagong in co. Cumberland, comparatively near Sydney, and settled in a small house of the usual 'lath and plaster' type in a wild bit of country called Bargo Brush. Here Mrs. Sturt underwent her first experience of managing house and farm with a gang of assigned convicts.<sup>2</sup> The Sturts, as may be supposed, showed unfailing generosity and kindness even to the more hopeless of their strange new dependents. In spite of heavy losses from the prevailing dishonesty, and in spite of much disheartening experience, it is pleasant to find that in some refreshing instances their forbearance met its reward in grateful devotion.

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<sup>1</sup> The spot first chosen by Sturt became of importance as an anchorage; and the facilities for transport offered by the Hunter developed with phenomenal rapidity the resources of the district along its banks.

<sup>2</sup> Sturt has left among manuscript fragments a lucid account of the assignment system, which arose from the overwhelming number of convicts to be maintained by Government. Hence they were early lent in 'gangs' to help the settlers in clearing and cultivating their lands. 'By 1826 the prisoners were regularly assigned to the settlers on the sole conditions of maintenance and of clothing. At first sight this system promised benefit to all concerned. The Government was relieved of a costly burden; the settler obtained cheap labour; the prisoner found himself in a better position, and was encouraged by the hope of a 'ticket-of-leave' (to be earned by good service), which would make him independent of his master and entitle him to wages. But the conflict of human passions will destroy any system. Very many of the settlers conscientiously performed their part; but many others only sought to get out of their men as much work as possible. Sometimes well-deserved tickets-of-leave would be withheld solely from the employers' fear of losing good service. The prisoners, on the other hand, looking on themselves as slaves, performed as little as possible, and that in a sullen spirit. Thus a system which might have worked well did as a fact fail. It was rotten at the root; and the contagion spread over the whole land. Both in Sydney and in Norfolk Island I found that the worst evils resulted from the employment of convicts as clerks in public offices, as storekeepers, and as constables. They naturally played into one another's hands. From such abuses it was impossible but that mischief would follow.'

Foremost of these more trusty retainers was George Davenport, who had been Sturt's cook on Norfolk Island, and had won his freedom by gallant conduct at a shipwreck there (see above, p. 97). Mrs. Sturt, looking with interest for this pillar of the establishment in a particular corner at prayer-time, was quite startled by his ugly face. She remonstrated with her husband: 'How could you choose such a dreadful-looking man? he must be a murderer! But Captain Sturt laughed down her fancies, and assured her that Davenport would be a really good servant, as indeed in all sorts of trials he proved.

His story was a strange one. On the charge sheet his crime was entered as Cowardice and desertion from duty on the field of battle. According to his own account, he was subject at long intervals to fits, and feeling the dreaded symptoms when carrying colours at Waterloo, he took down the colours, put them for safety in his pocket, and lost consciousness. After the battle he was found lying far in the rear; dazed indeed, but unwounded. The missing colours in his pocket added a suspicious circumstance, and his ugly face confirmed his guilt. By a board of officers he was promptly condemned to transportation for life. Captain Sturt always believed Davenport's story, which was further strengthened by the occasional recurrence of epileptic fits, though these eventually ceased, and never interfered with arduous work both in the house and in the bush. Years later, when Charles Sturt's younger brother Evelyn was feeling his feet in a squatter's life, Davenport was sent with him as a tried bushman, and at Evelyn's urgent request was allowed to accompany him for good to Victoria. But when, in 1844, Davenport saw a paragraph about the forthcoming Central Expedition, no persuasion could hold him back. He came to Evelyn trouble Sturt in great excitement, the paper in his hand. Regretting the trouble caused by so sudden a departure, he declared that he must be off at once: That good man is going to risk his life! I must go and do what I can for him, and if he die, die with him.'

It was useless to point out that the party was already complete and would have left Adelaide long before Davenport could get there. If he had to walk 1,000 miles to overtake them, he was determined to go. Off he went on what seemed a hopeless wild-goose chase! Yet he managed to come up with the party while they were still on the Murray banks.

Sturt had taken no 'body servant,' and in that capacity allowed his faithful old follower to join him. Davenport as usual proved invaluable; and to his careful attentions on more than one occasion Sturt possibly owed his life. After that expedition Davenport, on his master's recommendation, invested the accumulated pay for the eighteen months in certain sections in Adelaide to such good purpose that for one such section acquired at 2s. 6*d.* to 5s., he was able later to refuse 3,000*l.*

Davenport's fortunes culminated in a lucky hit on the gold-fields, where, after actually throwing up his rights in a digging, he picked up one nugget of 4 lb. 3 oz. weight,' which in the Adelaide mint was assayed at 248*l.* This enabled Davenport to buy more land, and to open a good inn with very successful results. Shortly before the Sturts' final departure from Australia, Davenport, now a wealthy man, paid Mrs. Sturt a state visit, and announced his intention of making her eldest son his heir. 'If you will allow me to say so, you don't know how I love him. Was I not the first to hold him in my arms?' And indeed when, in November 1836, a son was born in the Bargo. Brush Cottage, poor Davenport, in his anxiety, could not leave the bedroom door, and to him therefore, in a general dearth of skilled attendants, the infant was for a time entrusted. Davenport's testamentary plans were in due time modified in favour of sons of his own, but with the stipulation that, should they die before the age of twenty-one, his property should pass to Lieutenant N. Sturt.

That contingency never arose; but not the less touching was the lifelong devotion of this remarkable man, whose chequered career illustrates forcibly both the romance and the horror of the convict system.<sup>1</sup>

Though the criminal element was held answerable for the low moral tone of the community, yet prisoners of the Crown had no monopoly in pilfering. The lad Shepherd, for instance, to whom as the free son of humble settlers the Sturts entrusted their market produce, was found to be stealing the butter. Captain Sturt announced that, in place of the disgraced Shepherd, Turner should undertake the marketing. Mrs. Sturt gently protested; for Turner was a convict of the deepest dye, under lisesentence, and moreover a bad-tempered and ill-favoured man. But Sturt argued cheerily that the poor fellow was always down on his luck and ought to have a chance. There's more good in him than you would think, and the way to draw that out is to place confidence in him.' Turner meanwhile set off in high spirits, proud to be entrusted with 170 lb. of butter and several young pigs in a cart. Unluckily the day was warm, and a stranger who took a lift induced Turner only too readily to quench his thirst by the way. To a man who for long had tasted no spirits the result was disastrous. A night was spent somewhere on the road, but Turner's later recollections were hopelessly blurred. The progress of the cart to Sydney is wrapped in mystery, but in it was found by the market constable (who had to verify due delivery of produce) neither stranger nor butter. Only Turner, dead-drunk, lay among the pigs dead of thirst.

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<sup>1</sup> Captain Sturt within a short time of his death received from G. Davenport, dated 'Ginger Street, Adelaide, Easter Monday, 27th March, 1869,' an affectionate letter enclosing for Lieutenant Sturt, R.E., a gold 'chain, which is by him preserved as a valued remembrance. In the course of the same year Davenport died, hardly if at all surviving his adored master.

A night in the lock-up, followed by fifty lashes in the morning, restored him to sad sobriety and left him a prey to remorse. On hearing the further sentence of a week's imprisonment, Turner in dire straits begged that a certain friend of his master might be sent for. On the plea of the great inconvenience to Captain Sturt, this friend in need put in a good word for Turner, and was allowed to take him to his own house, where he played the good Samaritan, showing him much kindness and speeding him early next morning on his homeward way. Turner insisted on taking back the dead pigs! the only proof he could show in support of his story. His master would at least see that he had not sold the pigs for his own profit. In the hot weather the condition of those pigs ere long may be better imagined than described.

Long before the cart appeared Mrs. Sturt was oppressed by an insufferable stench, which grew worse and worse till the crestfallen Turner came up. The wreckage was condemned to prompt burial, in spite of Turner's entreaties that it might be kept for his master to see. His master however felt no doubt about the dead pigs, for their memory was still fragrant when he came home hours later, wondering what could have poisoned the air! Whether or not on the strength of this convincing smell, Sturt in the main believed Turner's version of the catastrophe: He thought the man from weakness had fallen into a snare laid for him by a jealous rival among the farm servants, but never suspected him of having acted with dishonest purpose.

Another serious cause of trouble and of loss arose from bushrangers, who at that time infested the neighbourhood of Bargo Brush. They would drive off the cattle, or attack the market cart - too often by collusion with the assigned servants. Once when the yearly shearing had been just completed, the six large bales of wool ready for transport to Sydney were, whether from carelessness or design, left for a night in the wide verandah.

Captain Sturt was absent, and at five in the morning Mrs. Sturt was roused by an unwelcome message from the overseer that the drays could not start—all the wool was stolen! This news spread dismay, for on the Bargo farm the yield of wool was the principal source of profit. Sturt, returning that evening, promptly sent for native trackers, who, in spite of the thieves' long start, pressed them so close as to recover one bale of which the fugitives had rid themselves.

On another occasion, in Sturt's second Australian home at Varroville, the powers of native trackers were again called into play. Here in 1838 he was visited by the bird-artist John Gould, who greatly admired Sturt's large original collection of Australian Psittacidæ in watercolour, for which he offered on the spot a large sum. But these paintings had been the delight of Sturt's leisure; he was devoted to ornithology, and had collected the rarer specimens at great trouble and risk, and at no price would he part with his folio. It is supposed that Gould's remarks must have drawn the attention of some dishonest workman to the value of the drawings, for soon afterwards the military chest in which they were kept disappeared and was never again seen. Natives put upon the scent found military accoutrements and other articles thrown out of the same chest, so that the drawings were clearly the object of the theft. The fugitives were traced to Sydney, but there baffled pursuit, nor was the fate of the drawings ever known. The chest contained no property likely to attract a common thief, but with the invaluable folio were also lost sundry treasured letters and early journals.

During these years, both at Mittagong and at Varroville, Sturt was often obliged to make long absences from home. In addition to much necessary clearing and fencing of outlying tracts of scrub, the mere care of boundaries required constant supervision; stray cattle must often be sought far afield and driven home; to camp in the open was a common experience.

On these excursions Sturt frequently came across bushrangers, and of such encounters he could tell many a story now forgotten.

Mr. Harris-Browne vouches for the following incident, which he tells to show how Sturt was esteemed even by ruffians. Riding home one moonlight night, he was stopped by three bushrangers, who seized his horse, demanding his money or his life. While he remonstrated with these men, the one who was covering him with his gun recognised him, and shouted to his mates: 'Stand back, boys, it is Captain Sturt, and we don't rob him. Ask your pardon, sir. Go on, sir, and good-night.'

At that time the dreaded freebooter 'O'Donoghue' haunted particularly the district of Mittagong. He affected a sort of rough chivalry, and professed great admiration for Sturt, not a hair of whose head he declared would he knowingly injure, though he dared Sturt on his side as a magistrate to do his worst. So great a curse to the colony was this man that Sturt used every endeavour to bring him to justice. Having learned that O'Donoghue under a feigned name had taken a room in a good Sydney hotel, Sturt at once warned the police, and took upon himself to arrest the bushranger. With this object he rode quietly to the hotel, which was already occupied by the police, and alone entered the suspected room. At a table, with his back to the door, sat one man writing. Sturt walked up to him and arrested him, but saw at a glance that he had missed his man. 'He whom you seek is no longer here; he left a few moments ago. Had he been where you find me, you were already a dead man.'

But the outlaw, in spite of this challenge, continued to treat Captain Sturt with forbearance. Some of the gang once stopped a dog-cart in which Sturt and a friend were driving to Sydney. On hearing Sturt's name, the robbers would not injure him or take any valuables; but by way of joke stripped the two gentlemen of their clothes and tore out the lining of the gig in which, however, they carefully replaced watches and money. In this predicament, the victims decided to await the dark, and then went to the house of Sturt's companion outside Sydney, where they crouched beneath window ledges while the friend called to his astonished wife to throw out clothes for both!

On another occasion Sturt and a friend, weary with a long ride through the bush, stopped at a solitary inn. For some time their knocks and calls met with no response; but at last a terrified being suspiciously inquired their names and needs. O'Donoghue had just visited and ransacked the place, and the inmates on hearing Sturt's shouts were convinced that the outlaws had returned for further plunder. Of food or forage not a vestige was left; so after a drink of water and a short rest the friends rode on, anxious to cover before nightfall the long stretch of bush that lay between them and the next shelter.

They had not proceeded far ere they were fired at from some dense undergrowth; fortunately without effect. They clapped spurs to their horses and made the best of their way over the rough ground. At the shanty where they slept, the landlord next morning told them that a few hours after their arrival O'Donoghue with three or four followers had called for a drink, keeping their horses saddled and departing before daylight. To particular inquiries if travellers had arrived that evening, the landlord, to intimidate the fellow, had replied that Captain Sturt and a party were lodging there.

On this O'Donoghue had asked anxiously, 'Was the captain wounded?' adding a special message of regret that in ignorance he should have peppered Captain Sturt. Had he known who were the travellers, nothing would have induced him to fire.

In Mittagong the Sturts dwelt for about two years and notwithstanding many troubles and serious losses by drought and flood, by bushrangers and by convicts, they never ceased to look back with fond regret to that first Australian home.

Sturt at this time was on a committee of superintendence of the Sydney Museum and Botanical Gardens. Early in 1837, having apparently sold at a loss some land at Mittagong, and having also sold the Queanbeyan grant, he moved to Varroville, a lovely spot a few miles from Liverpool, co. Cumberland, between twenty and thirty miles south of Sydney. Here Sturt was able to gratify his passion for gardening, as flowers and fruit thrive well.

'On my farm at Varroville,' he says, when urging on the South Australians the importance of *storing* water, 'I made water-holes in every paddock. In a season of severe drought, I not only fed 180 head of stock on 1,000 acres, of which 350 were under cultivation, but I permitted nineteen families to supply themselves from my tanks.'

But no forethought could avert widespread ruin from such a drought as prevailed between 1836 and 1839. Not even Sturt's water-holes could satisfy all demands or supplement the failing pasture. His hay-crop in 1838 was better than that of his neighbours, and he and his wife fought bravely through those terrible years of lean kine. But stock were quite at a discount. Nor could wool be sent to Sydney for want of water by the way. 'The lines of road were unwholesome from the number of cattle and horses that had dropped dead upon them.'

Just when the farmers of New South Wales were thus reduced to the lowest ebb their hopes were revived by reports from the new settlement in South Australia. There crowds of emigrants were said to be starving for want of the sheep and cattle no longer marketable in the older colony. To the settlers and the merchants of Sydney these rumours opened a new door of enterprise. How to convey stock from the drought-stricken region to the better-watered shores of St. Vincent's Gulf was now the question. In the solution of this problem Sturt played a prominent part. Before following him on this new venture, we must however briefly review the course of events which had led to the plantation of the young colony.

## CHAPTER VIII

1830-1838

THE NEW PROVINCE-BARKER-WAKEFIELD -NAPIER  
HINDMARSH-THE FIRST OVERLANDERS

WHILE Sturt was lost sight of in the retirement of private life, his hard-won discoveries did not lie idle. The tide of exploration flowed on. Mitchell, though he did not succeed in connecting the surveys of the Darling and the Murray,<sup>1</sup> yet did excellent work in opening up new country. His notable exploration and his published description of 'Australia Felix' undoubtedly led many settlers to take up their abode in that fertile region.

But even more immediately fruitful was Captain Barker's short survey in April and May 1831 of that 'land of promise' which Sturt had seen smiling before him when further advance was impossible. 'Hurried as was my view of that fine district, my eye never fell on a country of more promising aspect or of more favourable position than that which lies between the lake and the ranges, and stretches away northerly from Mount Barker.' Of the actual shores of St. Vincent's Gulf Flinders had given an equally hopeful description. Barker's examination of this fertile region, though cut short by his tragic death,<sup>2</sup> strongly corroborated these good impressions. That officer, after exploring the shores of St. Vincent's Gulf and the ranges, and describing most favourably the wall-watered plain on which Adelaide was soon to rise, struck across to the south-east, and eventually descended upon the sand-hummocks of Encounter Bay.

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<sup>1</sup> *Central Expedition*, i. &c.

<sup>2</sup> *Two Expeditions*, ii. 230-248.

He soon found himself on the banks of the Goolwa Channel, and close to the mound under which Sturt had encamped. On reaching the outlet, Barker, wishing to take bearings, swam, with a compass fastened on his head, to the high red sandhill noted by Sturt. The channel was one quarter of a mile wide, the current strong; and 'with difficulty did he gain the opposite side. In sight of his anxious comrades he took several bearings; he then disappeared over the hillock, and was never again seen! Having long waited in vain for his return, the party, while collecting driftwood, heard a distant cry; but evening closed in without further sign, as silent and anxious they gathered round their large fire. Soon after nightfall natives lighted on the opposite bank a chain of small fires, round which their women chanted a melancholy dirge. All night did those dismal sounds echo along that lonely shore, thrilling the listeners with too sure a foreboding of their sad loss.' In course of time they learnt that three natives, though at first alarmed by the compass, had closed upon Barker as he was returning towards the sandhill. Seeing them determined to attack, he made for the water and was struck by the three spears severally in the hip, in the shoulder, and finally, as he turned in the breakers and faced his foes, full in the breast. He fell back into the water; the natives rushed in and, dragging him out, inflicted innumerable wounds; then threw the body into deep water, and the sea-tide carried it away. Such was the untimely fate of this amiable and talented man. . . . In disposition as in the manner of his death Captain Barker was in many respects similar to Captain Cook.

Mild, affable, and attentive, he had the esteem and regard of every companion, and the respect of every one under him. Zealous in the discharge of his public duties, honourable and just in private life;

a lover and a follower of science; indefatigable and dauntless in his pursuits; a steady friend and an entertaining companion; charitable, kind-hearted, disinterested, and sincere; . . . in him the King lost one of his most valuable officers, and the regiment one of its most efficient members. Beloved as he was, the news of his loss struck his numerous friends with sincere grief; but by none was it more severely felt than by the humble individual who has endeavoured thus feebly to draw his portrait.

Though Sturt then truly had never stood where Adelaide now stands,<sup>1</sup> his friend Barker had been there, and Barker's notes with Sturt's comments not only describe accurately that site and the inlet of the future port, but give details about soil, pasturage, water, and anchorage which undoubtedly turned men's minds to the new 'Land of Promise.'

It would then appear, writes Sturt in 1833, 'that upon the South Coast of New Holland a spot has at length been found to which the colonist might venture with every prospect of success, and in whose valleys he might build a peaceful and prosperous home. All who have landed upon the eastern shore of St. Vincent's Gulf agree as to the richness of its soil and the abundance of its pasture.'<sup>2</sup>

These words did not fall on deaf ears. In the reaction from the throes of the Reform Bill, alarmists and optimists alike felt that the people's energies demanded a wider sphere. For those pent-up forces our colonies offered the safest outlet. Colonial reform was freely discussed; and, in 1831, Lord Howick<sup>3</sup> boldly adopted for New South Wales a system of selling waste lands for emigration purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> Garnett's *Life of Wakefield*, p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> *Two Expeditions*, ii. 246. But, for a just estimate of Captain Barker's survey and of Sturt's enlightened deductions from that survey, the whole chapter deserves careful perusal.

<sup>3</sup> Afterwards Earl Grey

But the great apostle of that new principle was Edward Gibbon Wakefield, who had meditated for years on enlightened methods of colonisation. Taking for his text both the abuses of the penal settlements and the disasters at Swan River, he denounced, as alike fatal to the due balance of capital and labour, Government monopoly and free distribution of land. To remedy these evils he urged the sale by Government of waste lands at a price to cover the cost of sending from England married labourers and mechanics in sufficient numbers to work the available land.<sup>1</sup> Colonies thus founded were to be self-supporting, and to all intents and purposes self-governing.

From the time when Sturt's discoveries were first whispered, would-be colonists were in the field eager to 'go up and possess the land.' The first hasty schemes fell through. But the leaven was at work, and after each repulse the general plan took more definite shape. The fuller knowledge gained from Sturt's book inspired Wakefield and his friends with fresh zeal; and early in 1834 was formed the South Australian Association, with a committee rich in influential names. Later in the same year was passed with royal assent the 'Bill to erect South Australia into a British Province.' So great, however, was the difficulty of raising the required funds 'on security of the colony' that the first Board of Commissioners resigned on a change of ministry. In May 1835 a new board was gazetted, and certain wealthy merchants serving on it resigned their position in order to raise by means of a joint-stock company the necessary guarantee fund of 200,000*l*. Such was the origin of the South Australian Company, which in the first years of the young colony often played a spirited and useful part.

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<sup>1</sup> Full justice is done to Wakefield's untiring efforts in Dr. Garnett's admirable memoir.

Already in 1835 the Commissioners had chosen Colonel Charles Napier to be first governor of their province. Napier's fitness for the post is best shown by the prophetic clearness with which he discusses the merits and the fallacies of the new project. His reflections are embodied in a remarkable book upon 'Colonisation,' written in the months during which his appointment still hung fire. Full of enthusiasm for Wakefield's enlightened principles, and keen to fill a post well suited to his peculiar bent, Napier nevertheless speaks his mind with a candour fatal to his interests. His shrewd remarks reveal indeed a prophet of no mean order, but in some quarters they gave dire offence. Well had it been for Government, Commissioners, and colonists had they laid to heart these warnings of shoals ahead—had they granted to this brave pilot the only conditions he asked and let him steer their ship. For, with the clearest view of three main difficulties (*viz.* the unsurveyed land, the dilemma between dear labour and scarce capital, and the problem of feeding, clothing, and paying pauper emigrants before the land shall have yielded her increase), Napier made but two conditions.

First, that in view of a forced supply of labour, with no security for a supply of capital to employ that labour, he must 'have the power to draw upon the home Government to the amount of 100,000*l.*

Secondly, that, as a large body of people could not be governed in a desert without a force to protect the good against the bad, he must also ask for 200 soldiers and a ship of war.' Both these demands, supported by sound arguments, and entirely justified by results, were refused alike by Lord Glenelg and by the Commissioners!

As his brother and biographer remarks: 'They chose a new governor, expended actually more money than had been asked for as a reserve, and finally were compelled to send soldiers. . . . Unforeseen difficulties abounded; governor after governor went out, and the self-supporting,

or more truly "loan-supported," colony floundered on amidst debt, discontent, and distress, until the discovery of gold [copper?] changed the aspect of the whole community.<sup>1</sup>

The post of governor was now given to Captain Hindmarsh, a naval officer with a fine fighting record. At the battle of the Nile he had saved the 'Bellerophon' by cutting her adrift from the burning 'Orient.' With the dash and zeal of a true sailor, Hindmarsh plunged fearlessly into a sphere for which the autocratic rule of a ship had not fully prepared him. Determined to lose no time he disregarded Napier's careful notes to sail in August so as to arrive in the Australian summer, when only could the site of a town be fixed with due regard to water supply. With Hindmarsh at the prow and Wakefield at the helm, no such qualms were allowed to delay the enterprise.

The Company now chartered a little fleet of nine or ten vessels which during the early months of 1836 set sail in quick succession for the new colony. The fatal oversight by which three ships were allowed to precede Colonel Light and the survey party ; the miseries and uncertainties thus caused to the first emigrants, and their subsequent removal from Kangaroo Island to the plains of Adelaide, have been often told. On December 28, 1836, Governor Hindmarsh arrived on board the 'Buffalo;' and from beneath a large gum-tree the new colony was formally proclaimed. A salvo of musketry and a cold banquet were followed by toasts of which the most notable was thus proposed by Hindmarsh: 'May the present unanimity continue as long as South Australia exists!'

Unfortunately, on the voyage out, discord had already arisen between the Governor and the Resident Commissioner, Mr. Fisher. Nor was harmony restored when both these officers protested against Colonel Light's choice of the site of Adelaide.

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Sir Charles Napier*, by Sir William Napier, i. 458.

Not even the drowning of Sir John Jeffcott (first chief justice of the province), in an attempt to prove the superiority of Encounter Bay, could quench this deplorable strife. The survey staff was paralysed by a disaffection with which Light, in failing health and spirits, was unable to cope; the surveys fell into arrears, while immigrants arrived in overwhelming numbers. The situation became impossible.

At the end of June 1838 Hindmarsh was recalled; and on July 2 Colonel Light and all his staff resigned. Thus within eighteen months ended the 'unanimity' of the proclamation banquet!

Meantime the settlers thronging to the new colony in excess of the immediate food supply were threatened with famine. It was at this crisis that enterprising merchants of Sydney combined in a venture to drive stock across country for the relief of the starving community. They prayed Captain Sturt to conduct the first party, but he hesitated to undertake an expedition so different from those organised by Government. Yet the scheme promised well for both colonies, and offered an opportunity for gaining clearer knowledge of the intervening country and its rivers.

He therefore finally decided to make the overland journey, taking some of his own cattle with the general 'mob.' While Sturt was making up his mind, others were already in the field. First to start were Messrs. Bonney and Hawdon, who, with 300 head of cattle, left New South Wales in January 1838. Following the line of the Goulburn and the Murray, Bonney only went astray when misled by certain of Mitchell's descriptions. 'The hill he named Mount Hope, because from its summit he saw trees which seemed to mark the course of a large river, was to us Mount Disappointment. . . . His grand river had dwindled to a dry creek. . . . The question was, should we go on to other rivers described by Mitchell, or return to the Murray and trust no more to Mitchell's accounts?

My advice to go back to the Murray was followed. . . . After we left Mitchell's Yarrayne everything went smoothly.' The travellers, when in difficulty on the Murray cliffs, found in Sturt's native friend Tinbury an invaluable guide; and Bonney's party safely reached Adelaide on April 4, after a prosperous journey of ten weeks.

Eyre starting only a fortnight later than Bonney, but, as the latter dryly observes, 'not having had so much experience of Mitchell's inaccuracies, and relying more on that officer's description of rivers south of the Murray,' fared worse. 'After sufferings which led to the destruction of many of his horses and the loss of some of his men, he only regained the Yarrayne some three months after leaving it.<sup>1</sup> He then followed Bonney and Hawdon's tracks and reached Adelaide without further trouble. His stock, however, arrived in a weakened state, whereas Bonney's cattle and horses were in fine condition.

Both these expeditions were still on their way between the two colonies when Sturt left home on his new venture.

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<sup>1</sup> The above extracts are, by permission of his son, quoted from an unpublished diary of the late Mr. Charles Bonney.

## CHAPTER IX

*MAY-AUGUST 1838*

OBJECTS OF THE OVERLAND JOURNEY-TRIBUTARIES OF THE HUME-THE GOULBURN-THE HUME AND THE MURRAY-DROVERS' TROUBLES-CROSSING THE MURRAY-THE RANGES

THE original diary of Captain Sturt's overland journey is closely written in a fine clear hand on several loose packets of small note-paper. A separate budget of like shape and size shows the result of constant careful observations from heights or open spaces. Both documents are adorned by tiny and delicate sketches in pencil and in water-colour. The dainty neatness of these manuscripts is quite unmarred by the rough conditions of bush life or by the weakened sight of the author. The opening sentences are evidently added a few years later.

When, in 1833, I wrote the account of my two former expeditions, I had no idea that I should ever revisit the scenes of former toil and danger. Much less could I have foreseen that in six short years after I had traced the Murray to the ocean, the banks of that river would be inhabited; and that the country, whose fertility I had ventured to predict, would already be a British province and would be found to realise my most sanguine expectations. Yet such are the facts. Circumstances induced me, in 1838, to lead a party overland from New South Wales to South Australia along the line of the Murray. The basins of almost all the south-eastern rivers were known; but, above the junction of the Murrumbidgee with the Murray, the long upper course of the latter river, there called the Hume, had never been explored.

I therefore determined to make my private interests subservient to geographical research by completing on my way to Adelaide the survey of the Hume, and by noting the kind of country through which it might run. In this enterprise I had the further motive to explain my wishes and opinion as to the name which this unexplored part of the river should bear. It was another of those streams which Mr. Hume had crossed on his route to Port Phillip, and by his companion Mr. Hovell it had been named the Hume. I was therefore anxious to explain this, and to confirm the name of the Hume to the river from its sources to the junction of the Murrumbidgee.<sup>1</sup>

With these objects Sturt left Sydney at the end of April 1838, arriving by May 18 at the point (about 270 miles from Sydney) where the main road to Port Phillip crosses the Hume.<sup>1</sup> Near this, at Fowler's station, the men and cattle mustered in full force. Sturt was accompanied by Mr. Giles Strangways (whose brother, Mr. Bewes Strangways, was then acting as temporary Colonial Secretary at Adelaide), by Captain John Finnis, of the Merchant Service, and by Mr. Macleod, a friend of Norfolk Island days. Fraser was of the party, and in charge of the 300 head of cattle went nine men, of whom the most notable was Robert Flood, who later distinguished himself on the Central Expedition. Lomas, though useful and well-behaved under the stimulus of work and discipline, seems to have lapsed later into the erratic ways of the average convict.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> To this spot, some fifteen miles below the point of actual discovery, Hume had, in 1824, followed the river downwards.

<sup>2</sup> After serving time for a time in the Police Force in Adelaide, this man went to England to claim property. Though he failed to establish his title, he qualified for admission to a lunatic asylum, in which he spent some years. He then confessed to having murdered in South Australia a cattle-dealer, whose comrade, though pleading innocent, had on circumstantial evidence been hanged. Facts, though ambiguous, did not fully bear out Lomas, who was therefore left in the asylum. He however soon afterwards made his escape; and, having set fire to the house he had vainly claimed, was tried for arson, and transported for life to West Australia.

The party left Fowler's station on May 22, moving on from one pioneer station to another, till on the 26th the furthest limit of civilisation was reached at Chisholm's run, then only forming. Already the journey had been delayed by the needs of the cattle and by sundry accidents. 'Poor Hero, my fine kangaroo dog, was run over by the cart; two of the herd were left behind. The fact is that ashore as at sea one has to be shaken into his berth. At the beginning of a journey people hardly know their places.' Already the prevalence of box or gobero (*Eucalyptus polyanthema*) and other vegetation peculiar to flooded regions showed a steady descent into the depressed interior. The river flats were bounded by a low sandy embankment, whose summit formed the level of far-stretching plains broken by belts of forest. The river, quite eighty yards broad, trended much to the south. Between banks now steep, now sloping and grassy, its current ran so still and deep that barges might have navigated it with ease. On the alluvial flats no less than in the open forest, feed was abundant.

On May 29 a stream joining the river from the south-east was, from its size and position, laid down by Sturt as Hume's 'Ovens' – the Kaya of the natives. Soon the landscape became more cheerless; and to avoid the dreaded reeds and shallow lagoons, the party betook themselves to the higher levels back from the river. Here the brush was of a scrubby box with thick underwood of *Exocarpus cupressiformis* (cherry tree), and a dwarf acacia, with clumps of old and decayed *Pinus callitris* (cypress). With the undergrowth mingled abundantly the *Fusanus acuminata*, which bears a small, rough, round nut enclosed in a scarlet capsule that hangs gracefully from the slender twigs. Wherever it grows emus are numerous, and the impressions of their feet here gave proof of their presence.

The natives were at first shy and suspicious, but they were soon reassured, and as guides they became invaluable. Round a fire, on the banks of a fine creek, Sturt found a dozen blacks who had been fishing with astonishing success. They had the perch (*Oligorus Macquariensis*), the Dangan (a species of barbel), and a small fish like the roach, with glittering silvery scales. The latter I had only before seen in the Castlereagh at its junction with the Darling.' Each day the travelling now became more difficult. 'We were penetrating deep into a flooded region of greater extent than any I had yet encountered. The natives saved us many a mile and much perplexity in a country so intersected by creeks and other obstructions. They made clear to us that a junction was not far off. They invariably called the Hume Murrumbidjha in contrast to Murrumbidgee, laying a strong emphasis on the last syllable. In successive relays these people prove excellent guides over reedy and channelled ground, in which the cattle were much annoyed. . . .

'All day (June 7) we traversed as gloomy a region as can be imagined, following the native paths between dense bodies of partially burnt reeds fourteen to sixteen feet high, under a dark wood of gum trees scathed by fire to their very tops. To complete these depressing surroundings, the day was cold and rainy. The paths, made only for themselves by the natives who always travel in Indian file, were of course too narrow for the herd, which made a noise like thunder as they rushed impetuously through the reeds. No stronger instance can be given of the native strength of nerve than the calmness with which these people witnessed such a scene. They betrayed not the least emotion, though the cattle would frequently burst through the reeds so near as almost to throw them down.' Progress was hindered by the necessity of bridging a creek directly at right angles to the travellers' course. Shortly after this delay they were more effectually checked by a tributary called by the natives 'Delangen,' a little river from twenty to twenty-five yards wide (now the Gerapna).

To cross near the junction was impossible; a survey along the banks was unpromising; while Fraser, reconnoitering to the rear, found a series of deep creeks, masked by reeds and full of rotten timber, the country becoming more impracticable the further he went. Sturt spent the 'rainy and comfortless evening in laying plans to cross the Hume. The natives, who feel cold most acutely, had early left us, betaking themselves to make yunneahs and fires. At dawn they went away, first for some unknown reason pulling down their huts.' They were however soon replaced by a large body of fine athletic men, who showed peaceful intentions and helped in the work. 'Many were pitted as if by smallpox. The disease, which was raging among them on the Darling in 1828 and on the Murray in 1829, must have committed dreadful havoc, since on this journey I did not see hundreds to the thousands I had formerly met.' June 8 was spent in rigging up a punt and fixing a rope across the river.

'The rain had cleared the air, and as twilight fell the silvery beams of a full moon were reflected in the stream. The camp presented a scene well worthy the pencil of Wilson. The broad expanse in the foreground was covered with cattle grazing or at rest. On more distant flats, against a dark background of forest, the light yellow reeds showed like wheat ready for the sickle; while scattered trees marked with pleasing verdure the course of the river. From our tents the Hume gleamed under the moon, and the blue smoke hanging near showed a native camp whence rose the sound of merry laughter.'

Next morning all were early astir; and, by using as a punt the body of the cart steadied by a rope from bank to bank, they had all the stores across the river by eight o'clock. The cattle gave more trouble. Sturt took them some distance up-stream to a more shelving part of the bank. But even here there was difficulty, and the animals, turning obstinate, refused for a long time to take to the stream.

Not till near sunset were all on the left bank. The country on that side being unknown and darkness coming on, Sturt decided to leave Macleod, Fraser, and Black Billy in charge of the tired beasts at the landing-place, while he should return to camp, cross in the punt, and bring up provisions.

Just then his perplexities were increased by a warning from Finniss. Forty blacks had suddenly left the camp, pilfering sundry things. In the thick brush they defied pursuit. . One old chief, after a long harangue, had led a strong band in the direction of Sturt's small cattle party, for whom therefore Finniss felt alarmed. Sturt had observed these very men making through the bush, but had concluded that an old cow was their object of pursuit. Still he felt the risk of the position, ' the natives being aware that we were separated.' Having therefore with the more speed regained the morning's camp, crossed the river, and snatched a hurried meal, he at once started in the twilight up the unknown left bank, with three men, to relieve his forlorn cattle party.

'We had a precious tramp across creeks wet and dry, and through giant reeds still full of the recent rain. The moon however was bright, and I was most anxious to prevent any collision with the natives.' He found his party seated round a good fire, the cattle secured for the night. ' We were as glad to warm ourselves as were Macleod and Fraser to see us loaded with provisions.'

Sturt places the junction of the Delangen with the Hume in latitude  $35^{\circ} 50'$ , and longitude  $145^{\circ} 16'$ . In spite of the reeds he notes the 'superabundant pasture. The soil, a light, rich, sandy, vegetable earth, probably very deep, is fit for the growth of anything.' The climate at that season was delightful. Light frosts occurred at night, but disappeared by 6 A.M. At 8 A.M. the thermometer ranted between  $33^{\circ}$  and  $44^{\circ}$ , at 2 P.M. from  $56^{\circ}$  to  $65^{\circ}$ .

'Vegetation is so luxuriant that the cattle walk through beautiful green feed, up to their middles in grass. The trees are not so large as those hither up the river. The region is the most swampy I have ever traversed, but, in contrast to the dark green reeds and scanty dead trunks of the Macquarie marshes, here the reeds are like the yellow harvest, and the view is shut in by thick forest.'

On June 11, after a short break across open plains, the travellers were guided by helpful natives of a new tribe, to ford an Ana-branch of the river. The native paths here shortened considerably some puzzling bends of the stream. 'Eight natives fishing on a reedy islet showed much alarm, but at length pushed across in their canoes; they insisted on giving us all their fish, and accompanied us for several miles. They pointed first to the firearms and then to their foreheads, alluding, as we ascertained, to a distant tribe of whom one member (Piper) had accompanied Major Mitchell, and was shot at the Lake of Bata.'

From these high reeds the party emerged on to a district of cold white clay, cracked by solar heat and destitute of vegetation. After two days' trying journey through this dismal region where the very river had taken a vexatious eastward turn, they gained the Goulburn,<sup>1</sup> 'a large river falling into the Hume on its proper left-our bank.' To cross the Goulburn was a day's work, and on its left bank, the feed being good, another day was spent in killing and salting a bullock. Five blacks had hung on to the party from Chisholm's station-facing the terrors of transgressing by a long way their tribal boundaries for the sole joy of gorging on the refuse of that bullock.

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<sup>1</sup> The original name of Hovell was changed by Hume's wish.

The first tribe beyond the Goulburn now inspired these trespassers with abject alarm, and Sturt, seeing them determined to return, committed to the best of the lot, not without apprehension, his letters for home. To ensure respect for 'Jemmy,' the letter-carrier, Sturt intimated to the new tribe that were they to molest this his messenger he would return and kill every one of them. Doubtless this threat was duly reported among the up-river tribes, for the travellers, on reaching Adelaide, heard from home of the safe arrival of these mails.

'At two miles above the junction the Goulburn is about one-third the breadth of the Hume. From the steep banks a fringe of dark-leaved mimosa picturesquely overhangs the stream. The mimosa, though growing so near to the junction, did not extend to the Hume. They were wholly confined to the banks of the Goulburn; an instance of that sudden check to the distribution of plants which I have elsewhere remarked.<sup>1</sup> The current was feeble ; and the waters were darker in colour and six degrees warmer than those of the Hume.' The numerous fresh graves between the Delangen and the Goulburn bore mournful testimony to the ravages of a terrible mortality. 'The natives we now saw showed no signs of disease, such as had obviously thinned the Darling and Murray tribes. Death however had been busy also here; nor could I contemplate without a feeling of melancholy the remnant of these unfortunate people. The hand of Destiny had fallen upon their retreats; the silence of their forests had been invaded. A new era was dawning, and a fearful change was coming upon them, whether for good or evil God only knows.'

After crossing the Goulburn Sturt fell in with tracks of drays and cattle, and on following these to the river junction, he there found the names of Hawdon and Bonney cut on two trees. The wide and verdant plains below this junction were frequented by emus.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Two Expeditions*, i. 70, and elsewhere

Here some natives, who brought fish to the camp, showed symptoms of treachery. Taking advantage of the difficult crossing of a deep creek in which all hands were engaged, a savage was seen with poised spear creeping stealthily upon Howard, who was in advance. But the blacks, finding themselves observed, dropped their weapons and moved on as if they had meant no evil.

On June 17 the first heights seen for many a long day were set down by Sturt as the 'Mount Hope' of Mitchell. At the next camp by the river 'the wild dogs in the night made a charge, like the French Cuirassiers at Garlin,<sup>1</sup> right through our fires, and breaking down the fold dispersed our flock. In the morning one only of thirty sheep remained! Two mangled bodies were found within forty yards; six fugitives stood bleating at dawn on the opposite bank, where we left them to their fate, and of the rest we neither saw nor heard more. The men begged the life of the solitary survivor left to us, who for some time followed us like a dog. But at last by accident he got across the river, and when sought bolted into the low brush.'

In a few days the firm and open plains were quitted for brushes full of kangaroo tracks, through which the travellers descended into a gloomy region of marsh and reeds. Here wood was so scarce that more than one camp was fireless, while the evenings were exceptionally cold. When timber was again seen it was, like the reeds, blackened by native conflagrations. Huge trunks and leafless limbs lay one across another on ground as black as themselves. The soil was rotten under foot, and the drag for our teams was tremendous.'

A small tributary crossed on June 26, and set down as the Yarrayne, proved to be the larger Wimmera or Loddon. At the junction Sturt found it less than five yards wide,

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<sup>1</sup> *Peninsular War*, vi. 530, and *supra*, p. 13.

and describes its general appearance as insignificant.<sup>1</sup> That day brought us on to what I may call the great high road of the interior, for both Mr. Hawdon and Mr. Eyre had here fallen on Major Mitchell's tracks, and had left deep and permanent impressions. We now followed on the same line over hard plains, bounded by sandy cypress ridges, but encamping every evening on the river, until on July 10 we passed the Murrumbidgee, and pitched our tents about eight miles below it.'

Unfortunately, at this interesting point, the original diary fails us. Between the dates of June 21 and July 11, a packet of manuscript is missing. To supplement this gap we have drawn first on a paper communicated by Sturt through Lord Stanley to the Royal Geographical Society ; secondly, on Sturt's letter to Sir George Gipps, Governor of New South Wales, from which we now quote an interesting passage on the question of the river's name.

Having thus traced the Hume downwards for more than 250 miles, I am enabled to state that it receives six tributaries, five on the left and one on the right bank,<sup>2</sup> the greater number falling into it from the south-east, being accounted for by the concave form of the mountain chain in that angle of New South Wales.

I have thus, sir, conducted you to that point at which the Hume uniting with the Murrumbidgee, both rivers cease to bear their respective names, and form the Murray of my second expedition. From its sources to its termination the Hume cannot run over less than 350 or 400 miles. It varies in width from eighty to a hundred yards, with a channel that, if always in the state in which we found it, would be available for boats and barges.

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<sup>1</sup> Near Swan Hill, a landmark of Murray navigation. (Mitchell, *Three Expeditions*, ii. 159.)

<sup>2</sup> These are specified in the rough draught of the letter as follows : ' Five on the left, to wit : between Fowler's and the crossing-place, two small streams, both called "Little River ;" and lower down the Ovens or Kaya ; the Goulburn ; and the supposed Yarrayne (Wimmera) ; and one on the right, the Delangen.' [The Wakool, which falls in on the right, a little above the Murrumbidgee, would be hidden from Sturt by the forest of reeds.]

But the sudden freshes to which the rivers of this colony are subject, and the immense quantity of timber swept into their beds by each successive flood must ever render them dangerous, if not useless as the medium of internal communication.<sup>1</sup>

The Hume is however a noble and beautiful stream, and that it should bear his name is sufficient to satisfy the ambition of any man. I by no means wish to take away from the credit of another, much less from that of Mr. Hume, whose superior talents as an explorer I have ever been ready to admit. When I named the Murray I was in a great measure ignorant of the other rivers with which it was connected. But if my knowledge then had been as extensive as it now is, I should still have considered myself justified in adopting the usage of other travellers, and in giving a name to that river down which and up which I have toiled more than 4,000 miles. It was a task that I humbly conceive fully entitled me to so negative a privilege. The colonists have however continued to the upper branch of the river the name given by me to its lower part only. I trust therefore that this explanation will confine all three (names) to their proper limits. I want not to usurp an inch of ground or of water over which I have not passed.'

Sturt, from the time of his arrival on the Murray proper, made good use of his old chart, and was thus able to shorten the way from bend to bend by many weary miles. Much embarrassment was now caused by the increase of the herd, and by the cows' extreme cunning in hiding their calves or in taking themselves off.

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<sup>1</sup> Sturt's former experiences on the Murrumbidgee (see p. 60) rendered necessary this warning against over-hasty enterprise on the part of the colonists. But in his later report on the Hume, received by Lord Stanley, August 12, 1843, and communicated to the Royal Geographical Society, Sturt distinctly states, without any qualifying remark: 'I am to observe that *the river* (viz. the Hume) *is navigable along its whole course.*'

Valuable time was lost in hunting up the defaulters, some of whom were perforce left behind. These delays became more serious as provisions diminished, and the drays already dragged heavily enough without an additional load of helpless calves.

Sturt and Fraser, after a long and arduous hunt for two cows and a calf left in the scrub and finally lost, consoled themselves with other quarry.' We had the good fortune to come on an emu with nine beautiful young birds. All of these youngsters we caught, and for a time they throve well, though, alas! all died from accident before the journey's end. At so late an hour, with tired horses, it was hopeless to rejoin the main party; so we brought up and kept watch in the bush all night without fire or food.' Next morning at daylight, taking up the dray tracks over the sandhills, they passed a large body of natives, but early reached camp unmolested.

High sandhills soon closed in upon the Murray so as to form its banks for a long way. Here the drag for the team was very heavy. It is singular how these unusually large sandhills can have been thrown up. They give growth to a variety of pretty shrubs, mostly coast plants. They are crowned with *Pinus callitris* (cypresses), but I also observe large beefwood (*Casuarina torulosa*). Among the bushes is a very pretty acacia like weeping willow; there are also beautiful Grevilleas and a large broom.' The junction of the Darling was now eagerly looked for; the river was rising fast, and, with a breadth increased to 163 yards, was rolling down a vast body of muddy water.' I only pray the rain may keep off until we cross the Murray. This I am most anxious to do, but may not attempt above the Darling, as I wish to avoid any second crossing. It would never do to have around us while so engaged a dense and angry population.'

Then in the little diary this strong and tender heart, 'true to the kindred points of heaven and home,' pours forth its inmost feelings. 'In this desert even these pages become friends on whom I may unbosom myself. Would to God I were at Adelaide! Could I have foreseen the tedious length of this journey, I had never left my home. Time is flying on relentless wing, and, oh, I would not be absent much longer! Who will befriend my beloved wife? From my thoughts waking or sleeping she is never absent. Yes, in sleep I have seen her as vividly as if she had been present. But where was my boy? Almighty Father, Thou hast surely not bereft me of him! Oh, I pray I may have been spared this blow! . . .'

As the party approached the Darling, the natives made no sign. 'Instead of flocking round us, they now hold quite aloof. One made a fire on the right bank, and remained, a solitary sentinel, on watch till we went away. A fine bold figure, he stood erect between us and the sky. He refused all invitation to cross; and his words, though few, were firm. To-night two blacks show themselves on the opposite side. We must be on our guard. God knows I want not to injure them.'

Owing to a series of vexatious delays the camp was not till July 24 pitched within two miles of the Darling junction, below which point the first object was to cross the Murray; and the 25th was spent in preparations for that operation. The tarpaulin was spread in the water to soak, and the cart taken to pieces. Having had the punt constructed, I went across the river to fasten the whale-line, so that we might begin work by early dawn.' The bullocks were safely driven over; the horses were taken in batches by the punt ; by half-past two everything was over but the dray. About this arose a difference of opinion, Sturt wishing to take it to pieces; Finniss objecting to the waste of time, and insisting that it could be dragged through the river by main force.

At last he sank the punt; and both he and Burr had to swim for it.' Finally the heavy dray stuck fast, and during the whole of the next day resisted all efforts at recovery. With characteristic patience Sturt rose early on the 28th to try a new plan of action thought out in the night. He coopered up some casks to serve as buoys ; then making six bullocks haul by three ropes on the dray, which was meantime also levered up by men, he finally by ten o'clock had the dray back safe on the left bank. All now agreed to Sturt's first advice of taking it across in pieces.

During this operation the party, while more scattered than usual, had a sudden brush with the blacks. Sturt, leaving four men at work on the dray, had just crossed the river and had sent on by Howard a message to the drovers two miles in advance. 'At that moment some natives near the camp rose and departed. From one of them Scott angrily snatched a stolen tomahawk hidden under the opossum cloak. The man glared fiercely, but, not daring to attack Scott face to face, slunk off after Howard, who in five minutes staggered back to the tent, his face streaming with blood! The savage, failing in his endeavours to get Howard in front of him, had seized the man's fusee, and having in the ensuing struggle laid open his forehead with a blow from a nulla-nulla, promptly made off.' Sturt instantly turned out the camp, but had only four men with him; four being on the left bank with the dray, and seven with the cattle two miles off. For the latter party he felt most alarm ; so, to warn them and to bring up horses, he detached two of his men, keeping only two to face a threatening body of savages at 300 yards distance, who on the first disturbance had seized their spears, and now sat watching us as we watched them. The time of the messengers' absence appeared an age. At last all came in. Seeing his camp thus strengthened, Sturt lost not a moment in recrossing the river, and sending the dismounted dray with three men in the punt ; he and Lomas only staying on the left bank.

Suddenly Strangways shouted that the blacks were coming down upon the camp! In an instant Sturt heard a shot from the camp with barking of dogs and mingled noises. The men in mid-stream hastened to land the dray, and hurried back for their leader. 'The moment was one of intense excitement. We strained every nerve, and on landing ran up the bank to the assistance of the camp. The blacks had retreated, but to no great distance. We worked hard, and quickly putting together the dray and cart, loaded them and formed a stockade for defence. The evening had closed in without blows. What the dawn may see I know not, for the blacks are mustering round us thick as bees, and their signal smoke hangs like thunder-clouds among the woods. A second time is this neighbourhood to me a scene of danger, and I therefore trust in Him who before averted it. I sincerely hope we may not imbrue our hands in the blood of these beings.

My defect of sight is sadly against me, since I cannot use a gun, nor see beyond fifteen yards, much less can I see a spear fly; but for no consideration can I be elsewhere than in the front of danger. And now before I lie down, to be roused perhaps by the war-cry of the savages, let me turn my thoughts to my wife and child. Thank God, she knows not my danger! . . . For the future happiness of those dear ones will I pray, though I may never see them again.'

Good watch was kept all night. There was no fear that the men would nod at their posts; our sable friends were too near for any false security. During the night some of them crossed the river and had a war-dance.' By dawn however all had decamped, and the travellers, starting early, made a long stage unmolested. Yet they were closely watched; and envoys are gone down the river to spread the alarm.

They certainly show a daring for which I was not prepared, and I am convinced that they will soon risk an attack on some party. I have a strong repugnance to take their lives, arguing their case as I do, and knowing the power of our firearms. I trust a few shots would settle any affray, but I shall in any case give the public all caution.'

The diary gives in detail the distinctive features of the country: fine pasture was found by the river, but further back rose barren table-land or sandhills. A new lilylike bulb is described-probably the 'Murray Lily' - a species of amaryllis.

Provisions now ran short: tea, sugar, and salt were exhausted, and of flour only one week's supply remained. The herd indeed yielded beef; but without the relish of salt this diet, though varied occasionally by kangaroo, palled on every one. Our one luxury was a little milk.' Sturt thought seriously of going ahead to Adelaide with Strangways to bring back supplies. To him and to his chart however the whole party looked for guidance; and finding that they were still 170 miles short of the settlement, he decided to remain with the main body.

This decision was strengthened by fresh troubles with natives. Fraser, dispersing a pilfering crowd with the aid of Nelson, was so incensed when a native lifted a spear at the dog, that he and the other men flew to arms, and it was with some difficulty that Sturt settled matters. The natives evidently had an eye to the cattle, for a missing cow turned up with a spear in her thigh and with marks of another through her ear. About August 3 the party reached Lake Bonney. 'The waters glistened in the evening sun, and were covered with gulls, swans, and other fowl. The lake, not only in its lower level but also in the run of its communicating channel (the Rufus), gives evidence of being filled from the river. To-day in the bed of a lagoon our cattle fell foul of a beautiful

green cress which the natives eat.<sup>1</sup> Observing their horror, we at once drove off the cattle. . . . We show them great kindness, but if they seek a quarrel they must take the consequences.' Two days later Sturt, riding in advance, was called back by trouble with the blacks, and intended to be very stiff, when, in a white-haired native attired in a frock-shirt, he recognised the old man who had formerly joined us in the boat. He was not satisfied till I permitted him to sleep at my tent. At his bidding, to allow more space for our cattle, all the blacks left their camp, and the night passed quietly. This old man for several days acted as a protector; 'we parted, good friends, and he deputed two blacks to escort us down the river.'

A few days later however strife began again, other blacks having tried to carry off calves, and having stolen or killed a dog.<sup>2</sup> One fellow raised his spear at me, but seeing me draw up my horse and look steadily at him, he lowered the weapon and walked away. On August 11 the fossil cliffs were gained; that night's camp on a summit 300 feet high was waterless. Sturt now yielded to Strangways's urgent request, and on the 13th sent forward that good friend with Fraser, carrying letters to Adelaide, whence they would return with supplies. The brush is so thick that the men cannot see one another, and the soil so heavy that the cattle are quite jaded, while the dray is daily loaded heavier with calves.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Cardamine hirsute*, or native cress, formerly plentiful on the Murray, was largely used for food by the natives, who cooked it as follows. They dug out and paved with large pebbles a hole about three feet wide and two feet deep, in which a fire was kept alight till the stones were red-hot. The embers were then removed, and over the hole on a framework of sticks was spread a thick layer of damp grass. On this was placed the cress, which was covered with more grass, until the structure was like a large haycock. A yam-stick thrust from the top down to the hot stones made a hole into which water was poured, and the rising steam soon cooked' the cress.'-Letter of Mr. J. Harris-Browne, *supra*, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> A favourite dog belonging to Flood had already been killed by a steer. A loss of this kind cannot be made up to a man. He feels as if he had lost a friend, and on such occasions sympathy is the best doctor.'-Sturt's *Overland Journal*.

The men, all day in dust and scrub, with four hours' watching at night, are fairly worn out.' The welcome sight of Mount Lofty on the 16th inspired general joy. 'That high mountain was hailed by us all as the seaman after a long voyage hails the sight of land.'

At noon on the 17th the north-west angle of the Murray was turned to Sturt another familiar landmark. Till the 21st, over downs covered with the finest herbage, the party followed the line of the river southwards to latitude 34° 26' (now Moorundi). Then they struck westwards' along the summit of the fossil formation. This, at the distance of a few miles, was succeeded by sandstone, and this rock again, as we gained the hills, by a fine slate, which, as we crossed the Mount Barker and Mount Lofty ranges, yielded to a series of igneous rocks. These were of such a character and form as, even to a less experienced geologist than myself, could not but betray the presence of abundant mineral veins.' Meantime, on the 21st, the diary describes the party camping without water in the bush about twelve miles short of the hills. 'Where can Strangways and Fraser be? They may have made too soon for the coast, and so have strayed for a day or two. I pray nothing more serious has befallen them. How lost to me now is all that is new! The wild flowers are in bloom, but I pass them by ; my only thoughts are of my home, my poor Charlotte, harvest drawing on, my affairs needing attention, the unexpected length of this journey.' Next day Finniss volunteered to go with a man and cart to Adelaide for provisions and to gain news of the absentees. At the base of fine grassy hills the rest of the party, after vain search, again encamped without water; the cattle bellowing, the men fairly worn out.

At nine that night a shout heralded the return of Finniss, who had met Eyre and Bewes Strangways on their way from Adelaide to join Sturt.

They brought immediate relief in the welcome form of flour, tea, and sugar, leaving larger supplies to follow next day with Giles Strangways and Fraser. Eyre knew of a good water-hole for the cattle, and, best of all, brought a budget of home letters for Sturt. 'Thank God, both she and my boy are well ! 'and the fervent gratitude of such a moment is gathered into a vow well fulfilled: ' In the quiet of home life will Thy servant remember Thy goodness, O God!'

Giles Strangways and Fraser had, as Sturt feared, struck across too soon from the river, and had spent five days without food in the terrible Murray scrub before they made their way to Adelaide! After one day's rest the reunited party now advanced through beautiful country. ' To the right rose grassy hills broken by picturesque valleys and shady streams; to the left the wellwooded slopes offered abundant herbage. The change is sudden and complete. All is new-plants in endless variety, and birds of different kinds.' The next morning brought heavy rain with cold wind ; and Sturt, riding all day wet to the skin, took a severe chill. Notwithstanding indisposition, he struggled on, his enthusiasm growing as he advanced through this ' lovely region,' among hills studded with trees, and covered with sward thick and green as that of an English meadow. Flowers were here in profusion. ' We rode over Nature's luxuriant carpet studded with gems of every colour and every form, set among rich and waving grass. I could not have imagined a tract so rich and beautiful, so well watered and undulating. In the lightly wooded warm valleys with their good whinstone soil anything would grow.' Here, on August 27, just under Mount Barker and about twenty-five miles from Adelaide, Sturt established his cattle party at a station ' on a clear rivulet falling into a lake amid luxuriant pasture.

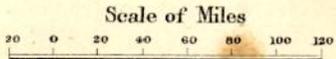
And thus our journey (from May 23 to August 27) has terminated. A journey which to me has been more fatiguing than either of my expeditions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Few, if any, of Sturt's official despatches close without praise of others. Accordingly, in his report of August 29, 1838, on the overland journey, after stating his opinion that liability to inundation made the Hume less desirable as a line of communication than the Goulburn or the Murrumbidgee, and expressing his hope that a better and more suitable road would in time run by Port Phillip as a connecting link, he thus refers to the first overlanders : ' I cannot close this report without bestowing my meed of praise on the gentlemen who preceded me. Messrs. Hawdon and Bonney could not have taken a more direct line or shortened the journey more wisely. Mr. Eyre deserves very great credit for the manner in which, after contending against so many difficulties, he succeeded ultimately in reaching Port Adelaide with so weak a party. I look upon his journey as a most spirited undertaking, and it is evident that he performed it with very great judgment and resolution.' (From Report by Charles Sturt to H.E. Geo. Stephen, Esq., Acting-Governor South Australia, August 29, 1838, as published in *South Australian Gazette* and *Colonial Register* of Saturday, September 1, 1838.)



MAP OF  
**STURT'S TWO EXPEDITIONS**  
 MACQUARIE - DARLING, 1828 - 9  
 MURRUMBIDGEE - MURRAY, 1829 - 30



## CHAPTER X

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1838

RECEPTION AT ADELAIDE-TO ENCOUNTER BAY-THE MURRAY  
MOUTH-BAFFLED BY THE BREAKERS-THE CATTLE  
STATION -IMPRESSIONS OF ADELAIDE-ARRIVAL OF  
COLONEL GAWLER -HOMEWARD BOUND.

STURT marked with a red letter the day of his first arrival in Adelaide. On that 28th of August, 1838, he and his good friends, Eyre and Strangways, rode leisurely among beautiful valleys and over levels of dazzling verdure, bestrewn with flowers in profusion, and refreshed by limpid pools.<sup>1</sup> As we crossed the range within a mile of Mount Lofty, the white houses of the town as yet hardly visible, the horizon was streaked by a sea like molten gold. What would I not have given to have been on its bosom! But this could not be.'

The people of Adelaide welcomed the explorer with a fervour which touched and cheered him. A public dinner was announced in his honour. The very papers laid aside their feuds, and the 'Register' vied with the 'Southern Australian' in delicate compliment to the distinguished guest. Mr. George Stephen (the Acting Governor) showed him great kindness. 'Stephen has offered me the Colonial Secretary's situation; but I cannot take it up so immediately on the eve of Colonel Gawler's arrival.'

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<sup>1</sup> On arriving at Adelaide, I arranged in a book no fewer than ninety three varieties of flowers gathered as I crossed the Mount Lofty range. They were mostly papilionacæus plants, with several beautiful varieties of orchid.'-Sturt's *Overland Journal*.

The unofficial public did not hesitate to express the wish that Sturt himself might be their Governor. I am surprised at the enthusiasm with which I am received by all classes, a proof that they are satisfied with what I have written. The colonists in general have evinced the kindest disposition towards me by making me a magistrate and an honorary member of all their institutions and societies.'

The popular favour so early shown never failed, but shed a grateful lustre over the whole of Sturt's later career. But Sturt was not the man to bask idly in the warmth of these demonstrations. Among the letters first brought out to him by Eyre, one from the Acting Governor proposed a new service of danger. To Sir George Gipps Sturt thus explains the situation:-

I reached Adelaide at a moment when the public mind was agitated by the question of the practicability of the outlet of Lake Alexandrina, and the consequent probability of a change of the capital to Encounter Bay. The buildings in the city were advancing but slowly, since men hesitated to expend money where, in the event of such a change, their property would be so much depreciated in value. The colonists had received me with much kindness and hospitality, and at the request of the Acting Governor I undertook to survey that dangerous outlet and to report upon it.' With a view to this service, on the 29th he was early at the Port, inspecting a boat, which however he condemned as too heavy.

Of the Port his first impressions were unfavourable. There are many houses and the scene is a busy one, but the landing-place is bad and altogether inadequate. There is not room for the vessels to swing. Of the five lying in harbour, the only one for Sydney had broken her back in a gale and could not put to sea. He went a long way down the channel.

Repeated visits to the Port, both at this time and after the survey of the Murray Mouth, resulted in the careful report of September 22, 1838. This report, while condemning the defects of the first old landing-place, suggested improvements which ought to render Port Adelaide 'safe and of sufficient extent for every purpose.' The more urgent of these reforms were in due course adopted, though long delayed by the force of vested interests.

Sturt's three long reports, first on the Hume and Murray, secondly on the Murray Mouth, and thirdly on Port Adelaide, were forwarded by Stephen to Lord Glenelg, then at the head of the Colonial Office. The sole reply (by despatch from London, June 27, 1839) is a general compliment to Mr. Stephen on the satisfactory performance of his duties as temporary governor. Sturt's careful despatches are quietly ignored with the remark that there is no need to enter into details.' In the new colony however these idle details were burning problems. How fully Sturt grasped their importance he shows in his speech at the dinner of Friday, September 7, a feast at which by ill chance he, the guest of the evening, nearly failed to appear.

On August 31 Sturt had returned to his cattle station. A few days before the banquet all his horses strayed, nor did they turn up again till 3 P.M. on September 6. Sturt and Strangways therefore put off till the morrow their ride to Adelaide, but on the 7th started early to allow themselves ample time. Rain fell in torrents, obscuring the landmarks and obliterating the track. Twice the horsemen lost their way, and at half-past three found themselves' under Mount Lofty among the hills, and distant from Adelaide fully eight miles of a difficult track. What was to be done but to gallop the whole way? Steep hills however delayed us, and it was near five, the appointed dinner-hour, when we entered the town.' Dinner was put off an hour, but was not the less imposing in the end.

With Stephen (the Acting Governor), Jickling (the Judge),<sup>1</sup> Mann (the Advocate-General), Messrs. Eyre, Anstey, Strangways, Fisher, Finniss, and many other gentlemen, Sturt entered the room (Beck's large store in Flinders Street) amid vociferous cheers and a salute of guns. His diary pronounces the cold dinner excellent, but agrees with the local press in condemning the wine.

Colonel Light, pressed to take the chair, was unfortunately obliged, by stress of work and broken health, to decline.<sup>2</sup> His pending resignation doubtless influenced this decision. In Light's lamented absence Morphett presided,<sup>3</sup> and, after the usual loyal toasts, proposed Sturt's health in complimentary terms. This was the signal for an enthusiastic demonstration from the 150 assembled gentlemen; and the cheers broke forth with fresh vigour when Sturt rose.

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<sup>1</sup> This dignitary filled the post of Chief Justice of South Australia in the interval between the demise of Judge Jeffcott by shipwreck on the Murray Bar in December 1837 and the appointment in 1839 of Judge Cooper. He was a great stickler for legal forms, and suffered from short sight.

The story runs that, returning late one evening from Grange, he inquired of a tree-stump the way to Adelaide. On getting no reply, he gave the old log a piece of his mind: 'Sir, I think you might give a civil answer to a civil question.' And so rode on his way.

<sup>2</sup> See Light's letter to Finniss (quoted in *Southern Australian* of September 15, 1838)

September 3, 1838.

My Dear Finniss,- I hasten to answer your note, and to request some other Chairman may be appointed. It is not out of disrespect to Captain Sturt's merits and enterprise that I wish to be absent. No one more fully appreciates them than I do, and no one has more reason to acknowledge himself indebted to Captain Sturt than I have. It was his account of the Murray, his conceptions of the country between St. Vincent's Gulf and the Murray, that first led my views so strongly this way. I am now engaged in my survey, and as soon as I get my first points established I shall get on, I hope.' After pleading heavy pressure of work, he adds that ill-health also compelled him to stay away from the dinner.

<sup>3</sup> By an interesting coincidence, Mr. (later Sir John) Morphett when Registrar-General of South Australia presided, October 25, 1853, at a dinner given to Cadell on his return from his successful steam-trip up and down the Murray between Goolwa and Swan Hill.

He spoke for twenty minutes; the speech is fully reported in the 'South Australian Register' of September 15, 1838.

After warmly thanking the colonists for their hearty welcome, 'a kindness felt not only as a mark of public esteem, but as a proof that, in his published opinions of this province, he had not added delusive hopes to the bitterness of exile,' he trusts that 'the periods of difficulty and distress to be faced by every infant colony' may in this young settlement be mitigated by favourable circumstances. Perhaps, foremost of paths to prosperity is the road so early thrown open to New South Wales,' and the easy and certain means thus provided for introducing stock into a country of rare pastoral capabilities. From Mount Barker northward you have lightly wooded, wellwatered hills and valleys, whose herbage reminds me of the English water-meadows in the merry month of May ; and I pray that, as you require land, equally fertile tracts may open upon you in the unexplored parts of the province.'

After dwelling on the all-importance to an infant colony of attention to pastoral pursuits-('firmness indeed is required to submit for a few years to exile, but ordinary care with personal superintendence will ensure success)-he turns to other sources of hope. 'The colony shows promise of future wealth in the ores and minerals of the ranges, in the fisheries of the sea-board. All such resources will gradually develop, though, for want of roads, of markets, of capital, they are not immediately available. But pastoral pursuits are open to all nor could you follow them out in a more fertile or beautiful country.'

He then refers to the vital question of the outlet from the lake to the sea. 'Were the channel available even for boats of a certain class, some fine country on the eastern shore of the lake would be thrown open, and your communication with New South Wales would be facilitated.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Viz. by way of Port Phillip, which till 1850 was part of New South Wales.

A useful link would thus be added to the chain which is gradually encircling this continent, and which surely is one day destined to be without a break.' Announcing his immediate departure for Encounter Bay, he promises to examine every part of the outlet with the greatest care, and to spare no personal exertion to set at rest so important and so interesting a question. Most happy will he be if any effort of his proves of benefit to the colonists.

Finally, touching on the Commissioners' premature schemes for steam navigation of the rivers, and for railroads between Sydney and Adelaide, Sturt at that time pronounces both *utterly impracticable*, and points out that, though the direct distance by the Hume and Murray is not more than 600 miles, those rivers run a course of over 2,000 miles; and to clear the timber from their channels would be the work of years. Nor, if those plans were practicable, are there yet exports to repay so gigantic a speculation. 'I speak thus candidly to save many from ruin. The lake will no doubt ere long be navigated by steamboats, but these will be the growth of public enterprise. No, gentlemen, let the Commissioners turn their attention to the solid improvement of the province; to useful buildings, to roads, to harbours. The returns may be slower, but they would be surer than from any other source. They have a territory as fair as man could wish, and under the Divine blessing it will rise to happiness and power.'

This speech, repeatedly interrupted by cheers, ended with the toast 'Prosperity to the Province of South Australia!'

Unwilling to lose a day in setting about his next enterprise, Sturt spent Saturday, the 8th, in hiring a boat's crew, and in other preparations for Encounter Bay.

He then paid off most of the Sydney drovers, and reduced as much as possible the expenses of his cattle station.

The crew are described as drunken vagabonds who were with difficulty got out of town late on September 11. Sturt followed next day with the two Strangways, Inman, and four of the police. The diary describes in glowing terms the romantic glen of Onkaparinga and the fertile charms of Undinga and Mypunga plains. From the latter bivouac one of the crew, delirious with drink, fled 'at lightning speed towards Adelaide, and escaped the strictest search of two men on horseback. No one felt a doubt of his ultimate safety, but the poor wretch was never seen again.'

From Mypunga a native path led across a marshy scrub, where the waters, hitherto falling to the west, were seen running to the south-east; and soon the party crossed into 'the lovely vale of Mootaparinga, through which meanders the stream of the Hindmarsh.'

Having established the men in a camp as near the shore as allowed of good water supply, Sturt rode the same evening (14th) to the 'Fishery' (the modern Port Victor), to discuss plans with Captain Wright. 'The evening being serene, with sharp frost, after a succession of south-easterly gales, I hoped the equinox had passed, and that the weather would favour me.'

Next morning however Wright, on local experience, decided that the sea was breaking too violently to warrant the enterprise. That day (15th), therefore, Sturt only proceeded to the small boat-harbour at Freeman's Nob (now Port Elliot), intending, if the wind should be off shore, to start next morning by four, 'to reach the outlet at low water by 7 A M., and to enter with the first of the flood. After seeing everything in readiness I lay down to sleep, praying that the day might be propitious, and that, by the speedy performance of a public and dangerous duty, I might be at liberty to return to my beloved wife and child.'

Sturt himself roused the men at 3.30; and, steered by Witch, a whaling captain, and favoured by a mild northerly breeze, they stood along the coast about a mile out in five-fathom water. Sturt now observed outer banks on which, in gales, the sea breaks heavily, and which must always render this bay dangerous.' The boat kept inside this outer bar, and, though the ground-swell was heavy, 'we had no breakers, except on the shore which, even under the fair wind and weather, showed an unbroken line of surf.' By 6 A.M., after they had rowed full seven miles, a bright dawn revealed, some seven miles to the east, the channel of the Murray and the sandhills. Before eight o'clock they were nearly opposite the river mouth; and, being about three-quarters of a mile from shore, they now crossed the stream east-north-east, and, in five fathoms, neared the eastern hummocks.

A line of breakers right across the inlet at once convinced me how difficult and dangerous would be the entrance. Bringing round the boat's head to north-west, and continually using the lead, we again crossed the current and crested the breakers. It was now evident that we could not immediately enter the channel. The breakers, rolling in on a heavy swell from the south, rose full fifteen feet before they burst on the bar right across the channel mouth.' In vain, hoping for a lull, did Sturt run in and anchor as near as he could to the breakers. 'In less than half an hour the wind flew round to the north-west, and a tremendous ground-swell rolling in obliged us to weigh and stand out. The shore was now, to use a sailor's expression, all on fire, and our late anchorage was white as driven snow with foam.'

While at anchor Sturt had thought he could detect, near the eastern head, smooth water or a channel between two lines of breakers. Again, therefore, the boat was headed to the east-north-east; but in vain.

'The surf literally broke from shore to shore in confused and contrary directions, and crushed every hope of success. It was coming on to blow hard. Had there been ever so slight a chance, I had determined to have run the muck; but it was now evident that the boat could not live in the breakers, and that any further attempt would only cost us our lives.'

Sturt then stood to the north-west, intending to beach the boat as near as possible to the outlet, and there to await a calmer sea, but had to run six miles before he could venture nearer to that surf-beaten shore. Wind and sea rose rapidly; the men could hardly hold their own. Were they to beach at once among the breakers, or to run before the wind? 'Shall I run in here?' says Witch, pointing with the steer-oar to a whirlpool of foam. 'Wherever you think best. You know this place,' says Sturt. 'I think we may get in here, although it looks so bad,' is the reply; and, rounding the boat to go with the sea, we soon felt the big rollers driving us in. Pull, my hearties! Give way! Now's your time! "shouts Witch." Easy! Back water! "was his next command, as up came a great roller, followed by two others, threatening to engulf us. "Pull, my boys! Now's your time! Make your oars tell! "And he shook off shoes and pea-jacket, I doing likewise." Easy, boys! Back water! "he said, his eyes all about him; and over a breaker we went." We must turn her nose to this billow," said he, looking behind at a larger one approaching. "Hold fast, sir! Pull three oars! Round with her head, boys!" And, helped by his steer-oar, she flew round just in time to save us. Over the wave we went, and its huge smooth bulk was lost in foam and spray.

"Round with her again! Pull for your lives!" Round came the boat. Smaller waves now followed the monsters we had escaped. Small or large however, we were now too near the shore to retreat.

But when we had got within a few yards of the beach a surge came boiling up and half filled us. "Steady, men!" I cried, speaking for the first time. "Keep your oars out of the water!" Witch was steering the boat end on to the shore, when a big wave, towering over the stern, gave me a thump that well-nigh knocked me over. Pull! pull! " said Witch, as another wave took and bore us clean on to the beach. " Well done, Mr. Witch!" I cried. "Jump out, men, and haul her up." And in less than two minutes we had her safely beached.'

Inman and Strangways, riding along the shore, had been anxiously watching these manœuvres. 'Strangways says it was very pretty to see us run in, and that several times the boat was so balanced atop of the waves that he could see both stem and stern out of water.' Half an hour later it blew so hard as to overturn the boat on the shore. By the next morning (September 17) the wind had moderated; but so heavy was the swell in the bay that Sturt had the boat dragged across the sand and launched in the Goolwa channel, so that he might try the outlet from the landward. Giles Strangways now joined the boat party, replacing a worthless member of the crew.

On arriving at the outlet Sturt observed that 'the line of the current was marked by an unbroken space directly in the centre. Heavy rollers on either side of this smooth. current at a quarter of a mile further out were breaking right across the entrance. To approach these outer breakers as near as prudence would permit, we rounded the western point and stood out southwards, carried on at the same time by a strong current. We passed the mouth of the outlet, and opened the land on either side, the water shoaling from 2½ to 1 fathom as we neared the breakers. So strong was the current that the men had to exert themselves to the utmost to prevent the boat from being swept into the midst of the breakers.

They therefore brought her head round. In rounding however we had wellnigh paid dear for our temerity, and only just escaped. As it was, we got one roller upon us; but, by dint of pulling, we reached a safer berth, and, re-entering the channel, landed on the eastern point just below Barker's Knoll. From the summit of this sandhill it was clear that the bar beyond where we had been was shallower, and must be very broad. The place was rendered most dangerous by the cross seas that were breaking, added to the strong and treacherous under-current.'

Sturt had now thoroughly studied this perilous outlet. He stood where the length of two lines would have taken him over the bar into the open sea, and was nearer than that to his anchorage of the preceding day. That morning he had carefully surveyed and sounded the windings of the Goolwa, a channel which, though of imposing appearance and flowing through fine country, he found sadly choked by sandbanks. 'Add to this the narrowness of the entrance-less than a quarter of a mile-and it is evident that any attempt to form a harbour here must be fruitless. No master of a ship would be justified in exposing her to the constant heavy swell of Encounter Bay. On the other hand, vessels or boats finding the bar impassable have no shelter along the coast, which becomes, as we found it, a lee shore. Even steam would scarcely conquer such difficulties.

On the lake, and for many miles up the Murray, steam vessels might well be available, and barges might convey produce from the river to the coast. From the elbow of the channel<sup>1</sup> to Victor Harbour the road is so level as to offer facilities almost equal to those of direct water carriage. But, though I can now give a decided opinion on this question, I shall not be satisfied till I have crossed the bar. I would not, if possible, leave my work half done, but would secure the means to settle men's minds and to turn their thoughts to other matters.

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<sup>1</sup> Where the town of Goolwa now stands.

The 18th dawning with too heavy a sea to admit of any fresh attempt, was spent by Sturt in taking bearings, and in examining Hindmarsh Island. The work of the 19th was specially valuable in dispelling the theory of Captain Gill, who, when escaping from the wreck of his brig in the Coorong shallows, thought that in the expanse of water eastward of Hindmarsh Island he had discovered a new mouth to the Murray. 'September 19'.— This morning Strangways and I again tried the channel, and again failed, with a narrow escape of being swamped. We passed through the outlet about half a mile right on to the bar. A steady south-west wind now set in; the tide was about half ebb; and on the bar the water shoaled to four and a half fathoms. While we were sounding, a strong current running out swept us into the breakers. For six or seven minutes the boat was stationary, the men being unable to make head against the stream. The seas covered us with foam; a few feet nearer we should have been right under the falling mass.

'Witch knew not what to do. "Throw her into the broken sea to the left," said I. "We shall be filled, but that is better than to remain in the strength of the current." He accordingly put her in, and in a moment a wave was on us; but the men pulled steadily, and we managed to get her up. I then hoisted sail, and ran to the eastward to examine the line of lagoons, and if possible to round Hindmarsh Island on our way home. This indeed we could not do on account of the shoalness of the lake. From the sea-entrance however we steered to east-north-east up a broad expanse of seven-foot water bounded on the south by the coast hummocks, on the north-west by the sandy flats of Hindmarsh Island, and northerly by a high bluff (the central head of the lake, I think).

In mid-channel we passed Gill's steer-oar, and from it stood to the north-east. At about fifteen miles the boat grounded; and after dragging her over the mud for a mile we were obliged to turn back. Captain Gill's lagoons are in fact the overflow of the backwaters of the lake, kept in as by a wall by the strong current that sets round the east of Hindmarsh Island. The only apparent channel in this direction can never be of any use, the depth being only seven feet.' Sturt rose at three next morning, but found wind and sea more hopeless. He therefore took further soundings of the Goolwa, finding a deep channel of three to five fathoms where in 1830 he had dragged his boat over the flats.

By three A.M. on the 21st the boat party set out for a final attempt. At the outlet however the current proved too strong; scarcely could the men stem its force sufficiently to land Sturt on the eastern head, thence to watch for any favourable change. But the outlook was not encouraging. 'We now clearly saw the fate that must have befallen us had we passed the heads. The rush of water from the outlet met the rollers and fairly doubled them up. Our boat would have been inevitably swept amidst breakers that rose full twenty feet before they broke. Still reluctant to give up, I remained watching the foaming waters till, in an hour, the wind shifting to the south-west brought a heavy swell rolling in and destroyed every hope of success.'

In his report to Stephen, Sturt dwells on his disappointment at not having actually crossed the double bar at the Murray mouth. 'If the thing could have been done, . . . rest assured it should have been done, even at a great personal risk, to have set this anxious point decidedly at rest for ever. As a hawk hovers over the quarry, so did we hang over that outlet. . . . A spot so long and so unsuccessfully watched to admit the egress of a small boat cannot be fit for ordinary resort.'

'No doubt the passage can be effected both inwards and outwards, but it must be during a long prevalence of north-east winds and fair weather. . . . Having surveyed the coast narrowly and anxiously, I am still more impressed than when I last stood on these shores with the dangers of the lower part of Encounter Bay. Every thinking and cautious seaman will bear me out in pronouncing it an unfit resort for vessels.<sup>1</sup>

Noteworthy in this report are Sturt's suggestions of future advantage to be derived from steamers plying on the lake and up the Murray, so far at least as to the north-west Bend. He points out the easy land communication between the Goolwa and Victor Harbour, where he says a breakwater if judiciously planned and completed would render the anchorage secure. Then follows characteristic praise of his comrades in the late venture, of both the Strangways brothers, of Captain Wright, of Mr. Witch, to whose skill and coolness I owe much.

As the general result of his observations, he suggests that the level of the lake is above high-water mark, and that the narrowness of the channel prevents the body of water thrown into it by the Murray from being thrown out in the same proportion, a theory which would account for the immense body of backwater in the lagoons. It is more than probable that, had the lay of the country permitted the whole strength of the Murray to bear upon one point, an open and navigable channel would have been worked out.'

The report closes with a devout reference to what Sturt considered a special deliverance from dangers of no common order.

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<sup>1</sup> Our talented visitor, Captain Sturt, has at last set to rest the question as to the existence of a safe harbour at Encounter Bay and a navigable entrance into Lake Alexandrina. . . . Among those believing in such a harbour were Governor Hindmarsh, and Messrs. Strangways, Lipson, and Gilles, with the Editor of the *South Australian Gazette* (Stephenson). Every effort has been made to establish as a truth what Captain Sturt has at last virtually declared to be a *falsehood*.--*Southern Australian*, September 29, 1838.

Sturt considered a special deliverance from dangers of no common order. 'Had we on our former journey found a channel such as now exists, elated with success, and ignorant of the dangers before us, we should most assuredly have rushed to inevitable destruction; for the strong west and south-west winds had at that time raised a tremendous sea on the coast. After a lapse of nearly nine years this providential escape is made clear to me.'

On the afternoon of the 21st Sturt, seeing that further delay was useless, while provisions were running low, and his private affairs were becoming urgent, regretfully broke up the camp, and pushed for Undinga on his return to the settlement. As he approached Adelaide late on the 22nd he had the disappointment of seeing beat out of the gulf a ship by which he had hoped to sail for Sydney.

When will the next vessel sail?' sighs the diary. The "Hope" in a fortnight,' men said. But that fortnight proved one of 26 days, a weary delay to Sturt's anxious affection. Not that the time hung idle on his hands. First, the affairs of his station claimed attention. No sooner had he sent in those interesting reports, which in Downing Street were straightway consigned to the shelf, than he rode up to Mount Barker. The cattle brought overland at such cost and trouble were all well, but unsold. This was the more strange because of the evident lack of both stock and meat in the colony. The anomaly arose from another serious want which just then paralysed the market and caused much hardship to the early colonists--the want of capital.

Had the first overlanders been moneyed men, able to establish their herds on the new pastures and to await the upshot, they could have made their own terms. Ere long enterprising bankers smoothed the way; sale and barter became possible. Other herdsmen were soon on the road; and the later overlanders did well. But neither Eyre nor Sturt found their account in the venture. Eyre had been glad to part with his beasts at a low price.

Sturt's geographical zeal, by prolonging his journey and by now carrying him away from his station, undoubtedly interfered with his private interests.

Delusive hopes raised by an offer to purchase the stock at 15*l.* a head, 140 calves to be thrown in, were checked by the rumoured insanity, and destroyed by the undoubted insolvency, of the would-be purchaser. When of the 400 animals seven bullocks were at last sold, 'Tommy and Spot were not forthcoming. They had been planted,' and though on an offer of reward they were produced, 'the vagabonds in my absence drove them off again.' This theft happened while Sturt from September 26 to 30 was examining the country northward along Gulf St. Vincent and the hills beyond the Para. Here the land was as promising as in the south and east, and 'dropping down on the coast and skirting the mangrove swamps, I found a beautiful boat-harbour' (soon afterwards known as Port Gawler).

Up to October 18, when Sturt left the Province, the sale of his herd still hung fire. It was then agreed that Captain Finniss, remaining in Adelaide, should sell them as best he could in small lots, letting out the teams meantime at 4*l.* a week to pay working expenses. The final result is not known in detail, but was decidedly not a financial success.

Sturt's first general impressions of Adelaide now possess a certain historic interest: 'Adelaide covers 1,000 acres, on which large space the houses as yet seem comparatively few. Not that progress has been slow; for since the first settlement of the colony, land has increased in value from 12*s.* to 125*l.*'

This entry in Sturt's diary may be supplemented by his letter to Sir George Gipps written six weeks later 'The city already contains many good houses and stores. An increased activity in building followed my report of Encounter Bay, and land rose at once 25 to 30 per cent....

While the ordinary price of an acre of town land is from 125*l.* to 200*l.*, they have realised more than 1,000*l.*

'The succession of emigration is regular and rapid. I was informed that 250 German Lutherans<sup>1</sup> retiring from persecution were on their passage, and that hundreds only await permission from the King of Prussia to follow their example. Nothing assuredly will more tend to the future benefit of the colony than the influence of a population which, unvitiated by profligate and drunken habits, will in all likelihood reduce the price of labour and balance the scale of reciprocal assistance. At present it is impossible for an ordinary settler to bear up against the high wages ; five, six, and seven shillings being the daily rate for a labourer, and fourteen or sixteen shillings for a mechanic. . . .

'The Port of Adelaide, though at present inconvenient in consequence of the wharves and stores being so high up the creek, is capable of great improvement. About three miles below the present Port there is a broad channel for vessels to swing, and a deep-water frontage inshore. The Port when moved to this place will afford facilities that do not now exist.'

The diary does not disdain gossip. 'There are here some agreeable families. . . . The society is however severed by faction. . . . Stephenson, the clerk of the Council, edits the Government 'Gazette'; Mann, the Advocate General, edits the 'South Australian.' Being deadly enemies they are always by the ears, and set every one else by the ears too. . . . I like the place much. The climate is good, the soil rich, and the country beautiful.'<sup>2</sup>

An emigrant ship now brought rumours that the new Governor was at hand, and early on October 12 the 'Pestonjee,' having on board Colonel Gawler and his family, slipped almost unnoticed into harbour.

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<sup>1</sup> Query, Moravians?

<sup>2</sup> From notes in the diary, Sturt appears to have purchased at this time the few acres on which two years later his house of 'Grange' was built. An additional 'eighty-acre section,' making up the property to about 500 acres, was presented to him by the colonists when he settled among them.

Among the first arrivals at the Port were Sturt and Stephen; but no boat was at hand; the Governor was quickly on shore, and they could but join the small party which escorted him at full gallop to Adelaide almost before the citizens were aware of his presence.

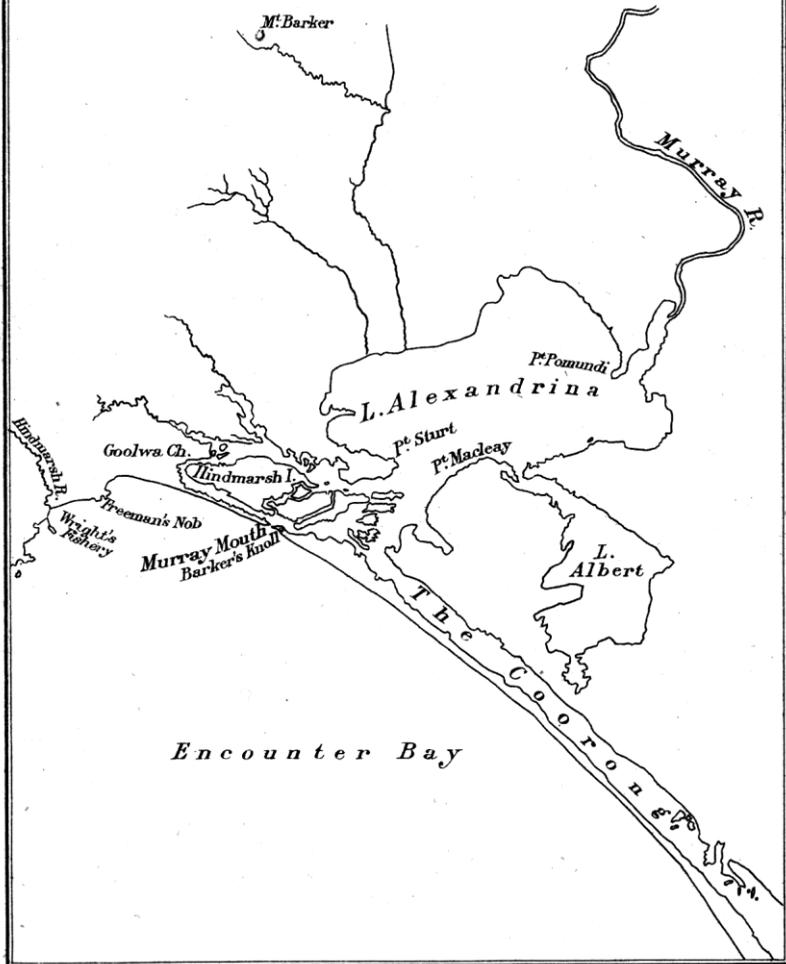
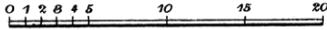
Gawler expressed great pleasure at the unexpected meeting with Sturt. 'We had a long conversation on various matters relative to the colony. The Governor improved very much on close observation. He introduced me to Mrs. Gawler, whom I like very much, and from all I saw of them both I anticipate much good. He pressed me to remain and to take office, but on the news he brought that G-, M-, and B- are to return to office, I declined. Should all three be really reinstated, God help Colonel Gawler! He has now asked Stephen to act as Colonial Secretary till the return of G-. At three, Stephen and I accompanied the Governor on board his ship. When I left, to my great astonishment, the 250 emigrants on board gave me three cheers. They were influenced by my book, which I am told has produced a great effect.'

Sturt was now impatient to be off. October 14 was his last day in Adelaide. 'Going to tea with the Hindmarsh's, I met a man who pulled off his hat to me very respectfully. "Is that George?" said I, taking him for one of the boat's crew. "No, sir." "Do you want me?" I said. "No, sir," he replied; "you only looked like a real old English gentleman." "Thank you, my friend," said I; "I have not seen old English manners for a long time, so here's a shilling for you."

On October 16 Sturt joined the 'Hope' at Encounter Bay, and cleared the land before the night of the 17th.

# DIAGRAM OF SEA MOUTH OF MURRAY

Scale of Miles



The remaining entries in the diary indicate a stormy voyage to Sydney; recording on the 19th 'a strong head wind;' on the 20th and 21st a gale; on the 22nd hard squalls with rain; on October 23' more moderate; ran into Portland Bay. The long despatch to Sir George Gipps already often quoted is dated 'On board the "Hope," Sydney Cove, October 30, 1838.'

## CHAPTER XI

1838-1839

MRS. STURT AT VARROVILLE-A TROUBLESOME HOUSEHOLD-TWO SONS--CAPTAIN STURT'S RETURN-COLONEL LIGHT AND THE SURVEY-STURT TAKES OFFICE-MOVES TO SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

MRS. STURT meanwhile, left alone at Varroville among some score of assigned labourers, found her stewardship no sinecure. Some of her experiences show forcibly the rougher side of early colonial life. The Sturts' retainers were indeed on the whole favourable specimens of the convict class; they had all been gently treated; and many of them responded by a sort of rough attachment. But their moral code at best was doubtful; honour and honesty were to them words of little meaning. Even Mulholland of the Murray crew, though now free and raised to the post of overseer, failed to render due account of the hay-a crop secured by careful irrigation, and of special value in that year of general scarceness.

Mrs. Sturt, confirmed in her misgivings by circumstantial evidence, rose early one morning, rode after the drays already on their way to market, and, by marking the discrepancy between the theoretical and the actual number of bundles carried, proved beyond dispute the overseer's delinquency. As a result Mulholland resigned office, and a younger man named Cole reigned in his stead.

Cole had already by steady conduct, by thoroughness of work, and by his superiority to the rougher herd, won Captain Sturt's approval.

Like the majority of the convicts, Cole was ugly. Mrs. Sturt had a theory that the rare specimens of handsome type were generally ringleaders in mischief. The more faithful of these convict retainers were decidedly plain.

Whether because of his ugliness, his exclusiveness, or his rapid promotion, Cole incurred the deadly hate of his fellows. Our old friend Turner, now acting as cook, first gave vent to his feelings. Mrs. Sturt was told one day that, unless she could pacify them, Turner and Cole would certainly kill each other! In the kitchen accordingly she found the two men, disfigured by rage, fighting like very fiends. The brave lady managed to quell the men's fury, and to remain outwardly calm till she regained her room, though she then fainted from the shock of this horrid scene.

The smouldering ill-will towards Cole finally broke out one day when he was distributing rations. The men drew off, and with muttered execrations refused to take the food, throwing it in his face or trampling it under foot. As they became more violent they began to close upon him, threatening murder. Cole fled in abject terror, the rabble following at his heels.

Mrs. Sturt, wholly ignorant of the rising storm, sat at needlework, her little son playing near. Suddenly the door flew open, and in rushed Cole. White as a sheet, quaking in every limb, he threw himself on his knees, clutching at the hem of her dress. 'I Save, oh save me; they will murder me!' he cried, while the angry hubbub grew louder. With prompt decision Mrs. Sturt barricaded the door; then, seeing the rabble come round by the verandah, she hastily pushed against the window some defence of furniture. Probably her gentle presence was more effectual than any casual rampart in checking the mad outburst.

The leaders hung back shamefacedly. Mrs. Sturt seized the moment to upbraid them with unmanly conduct in thus disturbing her in their master's absence. A spokesman assured her that they had no wish to trouble her in any way. 'We only want that man; give him up to us, for we will have that man's life.' Then a renewed chorus of howls. But Mrs. Sturt insisted on silence. They must be orderly; they must keep their distance; she would come out and speak to them from the verandah.

Now she bade the trembling Cole slip out by a back way, and ride with all speed for aid, while with spirit she harangued the mutineers, and finally insisted that they should take their rations in her presence. She called up each one in turn and asked if he was satisfied, declaring that on any repetition of the riot she would report them all to the magistrate. Taken aback by this firm conduct, the men slunk off to their work, some with awkwardly expressed contrition, and by the time that the magistrate with a posse of constables appeared on the scene, peace was already restored. At Mrs. Sturt's request no summary proceedings were taken, beyond the removal of one or two ringleaders, to be replaced by steadier men.

There was however no further trouble. Mrs. Sturt continued to superintend the serving of the rations and the weighing of the hay, till after a time the arrival of Captain Sturt's youngest brother Evelyn, then a lad of twenty, brought her, in the unexpected prolongation of her husband's absence, a desirable protector.<sup>1</sup> Of the Murray Mouth adventure she fortunately knew nothing until it had been safely achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Sturt followed his brother to South Australia, and spent some years near Adelaide, but eventually settled at Mount Gambier on the Victorian borders, and became Chief Magistrate of Melbourne. Rolf Boldrewood, in *Old Melbourne Memories*, describes him as 'a grand-looking fellow, chivalrous, athletic, adventurous; an explorer, a pioneer, and squatter ... the hero of numerous local legends.'

Home affairs soon became more than usually engrossing, for on that 22nd of September which brought Sturt back to Adelaide lamenting the departure of the Sydney ship, a second son was born to him at Varroville. And a few weeks later, when he was embarking on board the "Hope" the shadow of a grave disaster brooded over his house.

The elder boy one Sunday strayed unnoticed towards a pond, into which, for the joy of the splash, he threw the prayer book in his hand. The some hazy sense of remorse prompted him to walk in after it; and, as he was not yet two years old, the deepish water and the slimy bottom proved too much for him. Turner, busy in the kitchen, was interrupted by his master's favourite retriever, who burst in upon him whining beseechingly, bounding to and from the door, and at last tugging at his clothes. Turner, following, saw the dog rush to the pond and dash into the water, and in an instant a bit of plaid upon the surface told him all. Another moment and he had pulled from the slimy water the unconscious child, whom he thought lifeless as he handed him to the nurse.

She, fearing the effect on her mistress of so great a shock, enjoined secrecy on every one, while she put the child into a hot bath, and tried her utmost to restore him. Mrs. Sturt, passing from her room into the adjoining nursery, found the frightened servants holding in a bath the livid and motionless boy. The women, dumbfounded at her sudden appearance, kept silence; but from Turner, sobbing in the kitchen hard by, Mrs. Sturt learned what had happened, and sending him at once for a doctor, she took on herself the care of the half-dead child. Feeling really no hope, with despair at her heart, she persevered in all possible efforts to revive him. Life returned so slowly and so feebly that the doctor did not expect ultimate recovery; and when after a week fever set in, the boy was despaired of. Yet, wonderful to say, he lived on, and from the first favourable turn in his illness continued to recover steadily. Captain Sturt on returning home heard on his threshold of the birth of one son and of the grave illness of the other,

who then still lay between life and death.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime South Australia was suffering from the deadlock in her survey department. The collapse of that department was foremost of the difficulties which beset Gawler from the day of his arrival in Adelaide. His report on this head to the Commissioners speaks for itself.<sup>2</sup> The surveys had not by a long way kept pace with the demand for land. Nor were they free from errors due to hasty work and inadequate staff, errors of which unprincipled speculators took advantage during the anarchy which succeeded Light's resignation. For these troubles no blame attached to Colonel Light, than whom never was man more loyal to duty, more keen for work, more reckless of danger and of discomfort.<sup>3</sup> But, ill furnished with men and means, worried by the Governor on the one hand, by the settlers on the other, Light from the first felt his task hopeless, and under the continued strain broke down utterly.

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<sup>1</sup> Turner remained in New South Wales, but obtained his freedom through Captain Sturt's representations, and finally appeared at Adelaide, where he bade a last grateful farewell to his former master as the Sturts were embarking for England in 1847.

<sup>2</sup> The surveys are altogether unequal to the demand for land; 21,000 acres of preliminary purchases remain unsurveyed, and, of course, the great mass of subsequent purchases unprovided for, and great disappointment has been experienced. It is my intention, with the consent of the Council, to put on every surveyor that I can procure until the survey comes up, or nearly up, to the demand.' (Letter from Gawler to the Commissioners, as quoted in Hodder's *History of South Australia*, i. 110.)

<sup>3</sup> A story told by Napier (*Peninsular War*, vi. 64) best shows Light's mettle. Wellington's way was barred by a hidden French force, whose numbers could not be ascertained by reason of their fierce fire. 'At last Captain William Light . . . an artist, musician, mechanist, seaman, and soldier, made the trial. He rode forward, as if to force his way through the French skirmishers, but when in the wood dropped his reins, and leaned back as if badly wounded; the enemy, seeing his horse canter wildly along their front, and thinking him mortally hurt, took no further notice. He thus passed . . . unobserved to the other side of the hill, where were no skirmishers, and ascending to the open summit put spurs to his horse, and galloped along the French main line, counting their regiments as he passed. His sudden appearance, his blue undress, his daring confidence and his speed, made the French doubt if he was an enemy, and a few shots only were discharged, while he, dashing down the opposite declivity, broke from the rear through the very skirmishers whose fire he had first essayed in front.... He told Lord Wellington there were but five battalions on the hill.

Time has justified Light of his adversaries; in his quarrels with Hindmarsh, with Fisher, with Kingston, he was distinctly in the right. His choice of a capital-the chief point at issue-was fully vindicated by Sturt's report on the Murray Mouth. The Commissioners did him the justice to give him the option of resuming office, a result confidently expected in the colony, where a petition on his behalf was contemplated.<sup>1</sup> But moral triumph and popular sympathy alike came too late. Gawler on the spot knew, as the Commissioners in England could not know, that Light was now disabled by bad health, while the wrangles thrust upon him had ruined the discipline and paralysed the energies of his staff. Light himself in the depression of failing strength, was embittered by his grievances. Hence he refused Gawler's offer of reappointment rather than retract certain hasty expressions.

Gawler, anxious to lose no time in a matter so vital as the survey, then offered the vacant post to Sturt ; but, still hoping that Light would relent, withheld this letter for three weeks, till on November 8 the sailing of the 'Nereus' for Sydney, and the urgent want of a surveyor general, compelled him to take action.<sup>2</sup> The rival papers took up the matter hotly; their war of words is not unamusing, but neither the unfounded hints of the 'Southern Australian,' nor the indignant rejoinders of the 'Gazette' need detain us. Sturt knew nothing which his name was bandied about. He had definitely declined Gawler's first pressing offer of an appointment.

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<sup>1</sup> See South Australian Register, October 27, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> See Stephen's letter quoted fully in *South Australian Gazette* of March 7, 1839, and a private letter from Gawler to Light of November 21, 1838.

This second urgent request then took him by surprise. He shrank from attempting the thankless task which had proved too much for Light. The official world of Adelaide had been seen by him through no rose-coloured glasses. The turmoil of public life was distasteful to him; party strife he abhorred.

Moreover, the question of income was serious. In spite of loss' from drought he had during the past year fared better in farming than his neighbours. Land and stock had however so greatly decreased in value, that for any chance of ultimate profit he knew his strength was to sit still. Against the ups and downs of a settler's ventures the new opening offered indeed a fixed salary but in South Australia official salaries were absurdly small in proportion to the cost of living. 'Provisions, wages, and house-rent are very high,' writes Gawler; 'all prosper but the servants of Government.'

The Surveyor-General drew 400*l.* a year, to be raised in Sturt's case to 500*l.*, because a committee inquiring into the salary question had just reported in detail the necessary annual expense for one gentleman and his servant as 444*l.* 2*s.* 10*d.*

Finally, Sturt felt uneasy as to his tenure of office, and on duly weighing all these considerations, he again declined an offer which yet had attractions for him. But Gawler would take no refusal. He dwelt more strongly on the urgent need for immediate action. In reply to Sturt's plea that the Home Government would undoubtedly appoint their own nominee as successor to Light, Gawler, relying on the Commissioners' explicit declaration,<sup>98</sup> assured him that with the Governor as representative of the Crown lay absolute power in this matter.

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<sup>98</sup> The Commissioners do hereby place in your hands the fullest and most ample powers to reorganize the surveying staff in whatever manner and to whatever extent may appear to you most expedient, in order to render it efficient, and to remedy ... the interruption and delay which these resignations have occasioned.'-Letter from the Board of Colonisation Commissioners to Colonel Gawler, as quoted in Hodder's *History of South Australia*, i. 113.

Finding himself thus pressingly called to a new sphere of action, Sturt paused no longer. On February 1, 1839, his appointment as Surveyor-General was announced. At considerable inconvenience and loss, he hastily sold land and stock and broke up his home. I was sent for to South Australia on a great emergency, when the resignation of the Surveyor-General and all his staff had stopped the further survey of the land, to the general discontent. . It was to set the machinery again in motion, to reorganise the survey department, and to verify surveys already made, that I was so peremptorily required.'

The Sturts embarked on February 27, 1839, in the 'John Pirie' (the same historic schooner of 106 tons, which in 1836 had first left England for the New Province). Heavy weather prevailed throughout the voyage; for some days the passengers were battened down. Sturt, as possessor of the only chronometer on board, helped by his observations to navigate the ship. At the height of the storm the fine retriever to whom he owed his son's life was washed overboard ; and he could hardly be withheld from plunging into the boiling sea to attempt the dog's rescue.

Shelter was sought under the lee of Preservation Island off the northern coast of Tasmania. To add to the miseries of the voyage, provisions after a time were reduced to small rations of salt pork and ship's biscuit, Mrs. Sturt was in despair about her children : the elder still weak from his illness, the younger a mere infant. A boat manned by natives and containing various articles of fresh food raised the hopes of the storm-bound voyagers; but to their dismay the natives on approaching the ship took fright and made off. Sturt, however, succeeded by signs in dispelling their fears, and persuaded them to come to terms for their coveted supplies.

At the end of that time the arrival of some whalers relieved the necessities of the 'John Pirie,' and a lull in the gale enabled her to resume her voyage.

On April 2 the Sturts arrived in Adelaide, forming no very cheerful impressions of the Port. 'There was something dreary in sailing up the creek with dense and dark mangroves on either side, and no other object visible beyond them save the distant mountains.'<sup>1</sup>

On April 3, 1839, the Governor notifies that 'the Honourable the Surveyor-General, Charles Sturt, Esq., this day took the oaths of office and his seat in the Council of the Province.'

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<sup>1</sup> *Central Expedition*, ii. 171.

## CHAPTER XII

1839-1840

A SHORT--LIVED APPOINTMENT--FROME--STURT ASSISTANT  
 COMMISSIONER--A FATAL MIRAGE--A LAST RESOURCE--DEATH  
 OF BRYAN--STURT ON WATER--STORAGE--A LECTURE--AN  
 APPEAL--DEPARTURE OF EYRE.

THE strenuous nature of the work which for the next fourteen years claimed Sturt's best energies will be better understood when clearer light shall fall on South Australia's early troubles. On that chequered story neither historian nor economist has yet said the last word. Surely one day fuller justice will be done alike to the maligned Gawler, and to such men as Sturt, Frome, and Cooper, who in stormy times saved the colony from shipwreck.

Documents indeed are scarce. Fire has played sad havoc with Adelaide's archives. The successive conflagrations in January 1839 of Light's reed-and-wattle office, and in January 1841 of Gawler's Thatched Cottage, destroyed invaluable maps and papers. The later records, unaccountably removed by Grey in 1845 to Auckland, there met with a like fate.<sup>1</sup>

Broken files of local papers, and stray colonial statistics tell something of the work quietly performed by Sturt during these years. Truly his task was no sinecure. 'On my arrival in Adelaide,' he says, 'my time and my mind were wholly occupied, and I was constantly out in distant parts of the province.'

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<sup>1</sup> See Ree's *Life of Sir George Grey*.

Surveying parties were promptly despatched far and near; while roads and bridges were pushed on apace. Among Sturt's papers, surveyors' reports and replies from Port Lincoln, from Noarlunga, from Spencer's Gulf, and from Kangaroo Island, testify to the sudden energy of the Survey Department.

'Gawler,' says Laurie ('Story of Australasia,' p. 310), 'tackled with rare decisiveness and vigour the difficulties bequeathed by his predecessor. . . . His first concern was to get the country surveyed. . . . Regular roads with branch bush tracks were made with wonderful despatch; and this is fully accounted for by the fact that the new Surveyor-General was the unrivalled Captain Sturt.' Jenks, too, in his 'Handbook to Australian History,' p. 133, praises the exceptional vigour of the South Australian survey in 1839. A comparative table of the yearly land sales in the Province shows for 1839 an acreage of 170,841, as against 48,040 in 1838--a figure not again approached until after the prosperity caused by the Victorian gold-mines in 1853, when South Australian land was sold to the unprecedented amount of 213,321 acres. Some stray notes of an address given by Sturt in the course of 1839 reflect the feelings and views with which he faced his new sphere of work

I would not enter on the duties of so responsible an office without assuring you of my consciousness how much your success depends on the exertions of the Survey Department, and of my anxious desire to push its energies to the utmost that all may secure the advantage of early location. 'He does not hesitate to tell home truths.' My friends, the Province has now been established three years; yet it can hardly be said that the plough has turned up a furrow of the rich soil around you. Still dependent on foreign supplies for the most valuable commodity of life, you feel in its present high price the consequence of the uncertainty of its growth.

The little capital with which you may have landed is swallowed up in the dearness of food, while too many of you make no effort to save yourselves. Land speculations are indeed in active operation, but not by such means are independence and comfort to be secured. Having myself purchased experience dearly, I venture to adopt the tone of admonition and advice-offered with the best intentions advice already offered on my only previous opportunity of addressing you in public, and then I am told followed by many to their benefit. Let me again urge it upon you. Not one of us would leave his native country but to secure an independence or to live on less means with greater comfort. To remain inactive in a town, or to shrink from new pursuits, is not the way to succeed in either object. Never by hanging about a town will the newly arrived emigrant better himself; example leads him to unwonted and dangerous expenses. Already are the prodigal habits of our settlers a by-word in the neighbouring colonies. Should this be? Should you not rather spurn all unworthy objects and steadily pursue the higher aims for which you left Europe? I would rather for a time live in a bush-hut on unsold ground than subject myself to expenses I could not afford, conscious meanwhile of wasting the means for future success. I am aware that the newly arrived emigrant, ignorant of the bush and magnifying unknown dangers, hesitates to move to a distance; but in truth here there is no danger. He who would quietly settle down on his section would find his comforts gradually increase around him. Let him but attend to his garden and his orchard, and expend a certain portion of his capital in stock; that at least will not run from him.'

In the meantime Sturt's misgivings as to the regularity of his appointment were too soon verified. Before that appointment could be known at the Colonial Office,

Lieut. Frome, R.E., was by the Commissioners nominated to the vacant post, That officer, embarking in April 1839, and arriving on September 18, took up his duties as Surveyor-General on October 2; Gawler on the same day appointing Sturt to be 'Assistant-Commissioner of Lands' at a salary of 500*l.*, with a seat in the Council.<sup>1</sup> To carry on the neglected surveys, to cope with the rush for land, to readjust complications which already the letter of the law could not possibly set right,<sup>2</sup> two better men could not have been found. Their transparent integrity inspired confidence and respect in all classes. Of congenial views and principles, they worked together heart and soul for the good of the Province.

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<sup>1</sup> The goodwill and harmony which during Sturt's few months of office had replaced the former discords of the Survey Department found expression in a gift rendered doubly touching by the circumstances and surroundings. The eight principal officers who had worked under Sturt have inscribed on a silver vase the following record:

Presented	
by the	
Officers of the Survey Department, South Australia,	
To Captain Charles Sturt,	
Late Surveyor-General,	
In Testimony	
Of their Esteem for him.	
B.T. Finniss.	John Calder.
John McLaren.	Richard Counsel.
William Pullen.	John Carman.
Frederick Nixon.	George Newenham.

No date appears on the vase ; but it was presented in the course of 1840, as appears from the following fragment of a letter from Captain Finniss to Judge Manning in Sydney.

Adelaide, February 26, 1840. . . . You would, I have no doubt, feel some surprise on hearing of the somewhat cavalier treatment of our esteemed friend Captain Sturt by the Colonisation Commissioners, and that he is no longer Surveyor-General.... On Captain Sturt's supersedure, the officers under him . . . agreed to present him with some small token of their respect. This is to be a vase; and none of them being acquainted in Sydney but myself, I have been requested to solicit your--and, may I add, Mrs. Manning's-judgment....' (here the page is torn off).

<sup>2</sup> Hodder's *History of South Australia*, i. 111.

From their first meeting they were fast friends, and so they remained to the end of life.

In seconding Gawler's endeavours to disperse settlers over the country, Sturt and Frome explored much new land in the outlying districts while pushing on the surveys nearer home. Their first high hopes were disappointed by the barren regions to the north-west and at the head of Spencer's Gulf. Nor did immediate benefit result from an expedition to Mount Bryan, notable for perilous achievement no less than for its tragic ending. Yet that journey inspired Pullen to fresh efforts towards the navigation of the Murray; and the Bryan range, now first visited, was destined within a few years to reveal treasures which saved the fortunes of the colony.

Sturt's account of this excursion in the 'Register' of Saturday, January 4, 1840, is in the following brief narrative much compressed, though at the same time supplemented by certain details related to his sons and by contemporary letters from Gawler to his wife (December 15, 1839), and to Torrens (January 5, 1840).

The plan of campaign was discussed in November 1839 by Gawler and Sturt. They proposed to cross Lake Alexandrina from Currency Creek (near the present town of Goolwa), to proceed up the Murray to the Great Bend, and thence to return overland to Adelaide. The objects in view were 'to examine the land along the river, with the hope of finding fertile country in the northern interior; and also to determine the capabilities of river and lake for inland navigation.' Miss Gawler was eager to accompany her father; and though Sturt, better aware of the arduous work before them, demurred at first to this suggestion, he finally yielded even to Gawler's further stipulation that Mrs. Sturt should join the party. The children were transferred to Mrs. Gawler's care at Government House; and on November 22 Colonel and Miss Gawler, Captain and Mrs. Sturt, with Inman (chief of the police),

Bryan (a young fellow on a visit to the Gawlers), their friend Gell, and two attendants, drove and rode to Onkaparinga, whence two days' journey on horseback brought them to Currency Creek.

Here Sturt and Pullen took charge of the little fleet of four boats, which on the 26th, spreading sail to a fair south wind, sped across the Lake. That night the party encamped on 'Point Sturt' (the western point), whence they enjoyed a fine unbroken view of the lake to where 'seawards the sand-hummocks glittered in the evening sun.' A change of wind hindered them from entering the river proper till the 28th. Near Pomundi the troublesome curiosity of a large tribe of natives showed that Sturt's hesitation to take ladies into the wilds was not groundless. One of these blacks was taken on with the party to tell the native names of prominent points. Sturt's chart was again in request, for Pullen was carrying on his survey of the lake and river; while the other officers were constantly in the saddle examining the adjacent country. Thus the progress up the river was intentionally slow; and not till December 10 were the tents pitched at the North-West Bend.

On the arrival of horses and supplies from Adelaide, Gawler, Sturt, Inman, and Craig prepared to start for the north. Mr. Bryan, however, with the spirit natural to youth, begged so hard to be of the party, that the Governor at last consented to take him also.

With a week's provisions and two barrels of water, this party started on the 11th, making to the north-west for a distant mountain, which Gawler at once named Mount Bryan, after his young friend. Beyond the river scrub, on the higher level of the fossil formation, the sandy plains were not devoid of good grass. But at the first night's bivouac, thirty-two miles from the river, so much water had leaked and evaporated that a quart only could be spared for each horse. At noon next day a distant northerly range was seen rising from a valley with lofty gum-trees.

These hopeful signs Sturt too truly attributed to refraction; and, seeing the failure of the water-casks, and realising that the mountains were far more distant than they appeared, he strongly urged instant return to the river. None of the others, however, could believe that the view before them was unreal. Alas! from the next hill, after a long ride westward, the illusion was at once dispelled. The smiling valley, the fine trees had vanished; the ranges were thrown back to unattainable distance; bare and brown stretched the level plains as far as the eye could see without a promise of water in any direction.

The position was truly critical. A second day of extreme heat had left scarcely a drop in the barrels. Sturt's advice that, after a short rest, the cool night hours should be used for a forced retreat was unanimously approved. Unfortunately at sunset a native fire on Mount Bryan decoyed his companions from the path of prudence. In vain Sturt urged the difficulty of following so slight a beacon on a mountain in the dark; in vain he declared that the twelve miles of apparent distance would be at least doubled before they could reach Mount Bryan. In vain finally, to spare the failing horses, he begged that he and Inman should seek on foot the native camp and should make an unmistakable signal in case of finding water. Gawler hesitated, but allowed less wary counsels to prevail.

At seven the party set out; and at midnight, after riding full twenty-five miles, halted on a high part of Mount Bryan. With daylight began a frenzied but unsuccessful search for water, the eager Governor wearying out both himself and his fine horse in unavailing efforts. All was to no purpose. Impetuous torrents had furrowed the hills; the dry main channel tantalised the searchers. Gawler found ashes near a native hut, but nowhere a drop of water. There may be doubt as to the prudence of the night march to Mount Bryan, but the disappointment was ruin.

Another day of tremendous heat had risen; none of the party had tasted water since the preceding morning; the horses had only had one quart apiece since they left the river sixty-five miles away.<sup>1</sup> They would be utterly knocked up by further work on the mountain; while to climb it on foot under such heat was impossible.

At eleven the Governor, feeling ill, decided to wait till sunset, and then to push for the river. Sturt, anxious that Gawler should regain the camp as soon as possible, persuaded him and Bryan on the strongest of the horses to precede the more heavily equipped party, and gave them careful bearings by landmarks and compass. Gawler and Bryan therefore started at 5 P.M. on the 13th (Friday), fully intending to send relief to their comrades on the exhausted horses.

Sturt, Inman, and Craig did not get away till 7 P.M. They then pressed on all night, only stopping for an hour at 3 A.M. to rest and to take bearings. On Saturday, the 14th, by a quarter past nine the thermometer stood at 92°; and the horses flagged grievously. By half-past ten Inman began to waver from his steady course, and Craig was much exhausted. At twelve a halt was imperative; but Sturt, seeing the value of every moment, and now supposing himself within twelve miles of the camp, dragged on his party again at one - Craig now lying on his horse - Inman galloping forward and throwing himself under a bush for relief. At three Inman and Craig gave in. It was clear that they would not move that day, and it was equally clear that, without some relief, they would never move again.

In this extremity Sturt bled one of the three horses left, rejecting the cart-horse as too much reduced in strength. All partook of this desperate remedy, Sturt very sparingly-more to moisten the parched mouth and throat than from any sensible decay of strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Gawler says: "Our horses had been two and a half days and we one day without water."

Inman, after swallowing a full quart, fell into sound sleep; Craig, who took a larger quantity, was ill from the effects, and only slept from exhaustion. Not till long after sunset did the soil cool down.

At midnight Sturt resolved to go forward, but had difficulty in rousing his companions. Inman felt so much strengthened that he insisted on walking, Sturt giving him a course by two stars from which he was on no account to deviate. At only four miles further by half-past 2 A.M. on the 15th they gained the river! Sturt made his companions halt while he brought them each a bottle of water; nor would he refresh himself till after thus attending to their wants. While tea was being made he also carefully brought for the horses four bottlesful apiece, and let them feed before taking them to the river. Daylight revealed the tents only 400 yards down stream. Sturt, finding to his dismay that Gawler had not arrived, was preparing to start with Inman to seek him when the Governor, ill and exhausted, staggered into camp.

Gawler and Bryan by 7 A.M. on the 14th had come within twelve miles of the camp. The Governor's horse then refused to move beyond a walk; and Gawler, in his anxiety to obtain speedy relief for the main party, consented to exchange horses with Bryan, whom with compass and careful bearings he left, apparently 'strong and in good spirits, eating with his damper a quantity of small wild fruit.<sup>1</sup> In less than an hour after they parted, Gawler, overpowered by a sudden hot wind, dismounted, and, having first fortunately tethered his horse, fell into broken slumber.

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<sup>1</sup> Berries of the exocarpus, which, as well as *Fusanus* nuts and mesembry-anthemum fruit, abounded. The *Fusanus acuminata* is the Quandong or native peach, so called because the convolutions of its stone rather resemble those of a peach-stone. Bryan had also bread, and had shown no signs of exhaustion when Gawler left him, at his own request with good bearings and a compass, and apparently in good health and spirits. He appeared to have the best chance of the whole party. He was so well, so clear about the track, and so near the camp, that I left him without anxiety, writes the Governor to Mrs. Gawler on Sunday, December 15.

He knew not how long it was ere he roused himself and remounted, arriving at the camp to find Sturt's party there before him. Relief was at once sent for the missing Bryan, though no doubt was felt that he would soon rejoin his friends. But in different directions the country was vainly searched; and a boat sent down the river returned with no better result.

On Monday, the 16th, Sturt and Inman with a native lad took up the quest. Tracking back to the spot where Gawler and Bryan had parted, they with difficulty followed a horse's hoof-prints five miles through the bush. Here Bryan had slept, and here he had stripped for a long walk, for they found his blankets, coat, and stockings, and Gawler's saddle, bridle, and telescope. On a scrap of paper the poor fellow had written that he had been detained by exhaustion, but was going to the south-southeast. This was dated 9 P.M. Sunday. A second careful search at this spot disclosed the tree to which he had tethered his horse. The animal on escaping had taken a course due west to the hills with his rope trailing after him, and he eventually found his way back to Adelaide. But no search could disclose even to a native's piercing eye any footprint or other mark in the direction indicated. Repeated efforts were made; they examined every bush, fired at intervals, constantly shouted; but to no purpose, nor was any further trace of Bryan ever found.

Eight days after this lamentable loss, on the 21st, the party was compelled by lack of provisions to break up the camp and to return to Adelaide, where they arrived on December 28. Sinister rumours had preceded them; great, therefore, was the relief at the Governor's safe return, and to express this satisfaction no less than to atone for a neglected Proclamation Day, the colonists insisted on entertaining Gawler at a public dinner on January 10, 1840.

At this festivity it fell to Sturt to propose "The Pastoral and Agricultural Interests of the Province". After paying the Governor a warm tribute of affectionate praise, Sturt strongly urges the importance of peopling the country districts. He laments that circumstances have prevented the more general settlement of the interior, but the field is now open, and the season is before us. He congratulates the many colonists who have betaken themselves to their properties. . . . The streets of Adelaide no longer present a scene of idleness and discontent, of land-jobbing and speculation. Men are now engaged in more laudable pursuits. . . . Disappointed in the western and northern districts, men say that unless available land be found elsewhere, the Province will hardly succeed. I should say that to ensure success rural occupations must be more perseveringly followed up. Dwelling on the ample supply of land ' whether for grazing or for cultivation, he remarks that New South Wales, though half a century old, cannot boast so much as 25,000 acres of land under cultivation.

Gentlemen, the plains and valleys of the south will give you more than quadruple those acres of land as fine as plough ever broke.... Of land, believe me, there is abundance to meet the demands for many a year. But to overcome the want of *water* to the northward will require both energy and skill. Much, however, may be done. On my farm at Varroville, until labour and skill were exerted, one only of many channels held water, and that was brackish. When I passed that farm, every paddock had its proper water-hole. In a severe drought I not only fed 180 head of stock on 1,000 acres (of which 350 were under cultivation), but I permitted nineteen families to supply themselves from my tanks. We must resort to the same means here. . . .

The Sturts on coming to Adelaide, until in 1841 or 1842 their home of Grange was built, occupied a house in East Street, where in 1840 a third son was born to them. In addition to the onerous work of land sales and survey, and of tasks later allotted to a Registrar-General and to a Colonial Treasurer, Sturt at this time, in consequence of the Colonial Secretary's ill-health, fulfilled also many of that official's duties.

On May 29, 1840, he gave, at the opening of the Mechanics' Institute, an interesting lecture on Geology and Geography, reported at great length in the South Australian Register. He refers touchingly to the loss of reading power caused by his weakened sight. There was a time when my pursuits led me to a study of these sciences, and when the habits of thought and comparison were fresh upon my mind. But I have long laid aside books of reference and lost the connecting links between my own experience and that of others, so that it is with diffidence I now address you. After touching on elementary notions of geology, and assuring his audience that revealed religion has nothing to fear from true knowledge, he comes home to the rocks of the Province

The primary rocks are the receptacles of the richer ores. . . . Besides coal, many slates of the carboniferous formation contain also beds of iron ore. . . . The igneous origin of a great portion of our South Australian rocks is indicated, as far as I have observed, by the ironstone ranges to the south and to the north, as well as by other masses. . . . The mountain ranges contain, without doubt, a great proportion of slate, and that of the finest description; and I have always entertained an opinion that some of the richer ores will be found in them.

He reviews the general structure of the continent by the light of his own observation-the prevalent sandstone and whinstone of the Sydney coast and of the Blue Mountains to a range of fifty miles; the richer trap and granite formations which at that distance follow in succession-the former making glad Illawarra and the Hunter, the latter fertilising the pastures of Argyle.

At Moulong and in Wellington valley, in caverns of primitive limestone, are found the bones of several marsupials, some larger than any now existing. No bones, however, occur of any species foreign to the continent. . . . He then describes the great fossil bank of the Murray, which, first seen close to the water's edge, and at first composed almost exclusively of the spiral turritella shell, rises gradually as an inclined plane till in some places it attains a height of over three hundred feet. The bank consists of numberless shells and corals, among which I found several new varieties, and its highest points are covered with oyster shells in every stage of petrification. . . . On my late visit to the Murray I found imbedded a foot above the water, in rocks under cliffs of a hundred feet high, a solitary shark's tooth, and near it a nautilus. Both these remains argue for that formation an older date than the apparent newness of some of the shells had led me at first to ascribe to it. From this Sturt reasons out the probable upheaval of this marine deposit through volcanic agency; attributing to the same force ' the elevation of the interior of Australia.

The reappearance of this fossil formation to the west of Mount Lofty had in 1838 convinced him that Cape Jervis had formerly been an island. Then follows a sketch of his general theory. Supposing the fossil bank covered by the ocean, a line drawn from its summit to the base of the Blue Mountains would skim over the marshes . . . and would strike the ranges at that point at which the channels of the rivers are well defined before spreading into the less distinct creeks of the marshes. This would probably indicate the former sea-level. With this impression strong upon my mind-knowing, too, the great extent of level country westward of the Darling and the singular absence of any tributary to that river from the west-I am led to believe that this continent was once an archipelago of islands.

Our late intelligent visitor, Captain Grey, to whom I mentioned this idea, said that it supplied a key to all that he had noticed on the western coast and threw upon his researches that light which he had long wanted. . . . On the western coast he found the same fossil formation. . . . At King George's Sound the natives had in use as drinking cups large dark fossil shells procured from tribes in the interior. . . . Many other facts incline me to believe that there still is a large mass of water in the interior.' After a masterly *résumé* of the lessons to be learned from the Australian rivers and ranges<sup>1</sup> and from the dip of the land, the lecturer sums up with an interesting appeal on behalf of another explorer.

With the researches of geography our proudest feelings are associated. What names are dearer to us than those of the noble and devoted Columbus, of Cabot, of Cook, of Humboldt, Belzoni, and La Perouse? Where shall we find surpassed the heroic devotion of the African explorers - Denham, Clapperton, Oudeney, and of the many victims to those pestilential coasts and to their ferocious inhabitants? What can compare with the persevering endurance of Parry, of Franklin, of Back, in the regions of eternal snow?

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<sup>1</sup> In truth I had anxiously marked that, unlike the mountains of Europe, the Blue Mountains were . . . almost wholly devoid of the spongy or peaty formation which retains water and contributes so much to the steady flow of rivers. I saw, too, that the descent from these mountains to a very level country was short and sudden, and that the rivers falling from them had not springs of sufficient abundance to support a current. . . . The current of a river depends, first, on the impulse from its springs or tributaries; secondly, on the inclination of its bed. . . . But if a river, whose supplies are not equal to its loss by evaporation and absorption, fall suddenly from moderate ranges into a level country without aid from any tributary, that river will lose its force and spread over the first depression as a morass. Such, I firmly believe, is the origin of the marshes of New South Wales-Sturt's Lecture, *South Australian Register*, May 30, 1840.

Were fame to wreath a crown to the memory of such men, not a leaf in it would be without a name. . . . The shores of every continent have been explored; the centre of every country, save Australia, has been penetrated. On polar expeditions thousands have been expended, while this land, embracing climates both temperate and tropical, and already partly girdled by civilisation, is left neglected and unexplored. Over the centre of this continent hangs a veil which the most enterprising might be proud to lift. I, who have been as far as any, know that the path is full of difficulty and danger. . . . Nevertheless, I shall envy the man who shall plant the flag of our native country in the centre of our adopted one.

There is among us one who is anxious to perform such a task. Mr. Eyre, I trust, will shortly set out on this most interesting journey. To take a party five hundred miles into the interior he calculates the expense at only three hundred pounds and the price of ten horses. About half that sum has been subscribed. His Excellency the Governor has kindly promised to give 100*l.* and two horses, and I think we may very soon make up the remainder. . . .'

In the 'Adelaide Chronicle' of Wednesday, June 3, 1840, is the account of a meeting of the colonists, held June 2, for sending an expedition into the northern interior under the command of Mr. Eyre, the Hon. Captain Sturt in the chair.

Both he and his brother, Evelyn Sturt, are on the committee then appointed. They subscribe 25*l.* and 10*l.* severally to the fund then raised, Gawler subscribing, on behalf of the Government, 100*l.* and two horses, on his own account 10*l.*; Frome and Bonney each 10*l.*; Pullen 5*l.*; and Piesse 1*l.* 1*s.*

Captain Sturt '... had before stated that 300*l.* and ten horses would be required. The Governor's 100*l.*, with promise of two horses, and three horses of Eyre's own, left as still required only five horses and 200*l.*'.

Of this, 120*l.*, had been subscribed for on the evening of the lecture, leaving deficient only 80*l.* and the price of five horses. . . . Mr. Eyre would first proceed to examine Lake Torrens, and then penetrate as far inland in a northerly direction as would be found practicable.

Sturt then again briefly referred to his theory that the continent had possibly been an archipelago of islands, and further expressed his opinion ' that a considerable space of barren land existed between this district and what had formerly been the next island. . . . From what he had seen of Australia he had every reason to believe that at some distance to the northward would be found a large tract of barren country, or perhaps a large body of water, beyond which, in all probability, a good country would exist. The contemplated expedition, he hoped, would set supposition at rest ; and, as the season was most favourable and Mr. Eyre had had much personal experience in exploring, he had no doubt of his success. The eyes of the Australasian colonies-he might say of Britain-are on the colonists of South Australia in this matter. The result would be most beneficial, not only to this Province, but also to New South Wales and the Australasian colonies generally-for the success of one settlement is, in a measure, the success of the others.'

Before leaving the chair Captain Sturt stated that the subscription list, which had been handed round the room, had been augmented by 140*l.*, bringing the funds up to 360*l.*

The colonists who had responded with such prompt generosity to Eyre's modest demands assembled on June 18, 1840, at a public breakfast to wish him 'God-speed.' Few who were present, says Sturt, "will ever forget an occasion which roused the noblest sympathies of the heart, and which dimmed many an eye with tears".

The young ladies of the colony had worked a flag to be unfurled by Eyre in the centre of the continent, and it fell to my lot, at the head of that fair company, to deliver it to him. After this ceremony, and prayers read by the colonial chaplain, Eyre, escorted by Sturt and sixty gentlemen of Adelaide, rode forth on a journey as weird and adventurous as ever fell to explorer's lot.<sup>1</sup>

During the same year Captain Pullen, fired with zeal by Sturt's and his own surveys of the Lake and of the Goolwa, at last succeeded in taking a small cutter, the 'Waterwitch,' through that dangerous passage. Pullen's careful watching of wind and weather and the risks of his noteworthy achievement did but emphasise the perils of the outlet. He however turned his attention to the development of inland navigation, and would almost certainly have forestalled by ten years the opening up of the Murray as a waterway, but for the change of government and the financial disasters of the Province. Clouds had long brooded on the horizon, but none could have foreseen the suddenness of the storm or the widespread ruin that followed.

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<sup>1</sup> See Henry Kingsley's graphic story of 'Eyre's March,' formerly published in *Hornby Mills, and Other Papers*, now republished in vol. x.ii, of H. Kingsley's collected works.

## CHAPTER XIII

1841-1843

GAWLER'S DIFFICULTIES--A PROTEST-GREY ARRIVES-STURT TO  
 MACLEAY-DISTRESS AND RIOTS-STURT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE  
 BENCH-BAD - TIMES-EYRE'S RETURN-MEETING OF THREE  
 EXPLORERS -REDUCTION OF SALARY- REGISTRAR GENERAL-  
 A MEMORIAL-LETTERS TO COLONEL WILLIAM STURT

CAPTAIN GREY (later Sir George Grey) first came to Adelaide in March 1840, ill and wounded from a disastrous exploration which had wellnigh cost him his life.<sup>1</sup> Gawler, untroubled by misgiving, hospitably welcomed this 'intelligent guest,' lavished on him every care, and hid from his inquiries neither the strength nor the weakness of the rising colony. The sequel is well known. Hints of reckless expenditure falling on Lord John Russell's frugal ear, caused the sudden, the fatal repudiation of Gawler's Government Bills, and the appointment of young Grey, then in England, to Gawler's forfeited office. Can we wonder that these hasty measures were resented by settlers who, in the temporary ruin of their

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenants (afterwards Captains) Grey and Lushington were sent in 1837 to penetrate into Australia from the north-west or west coast, but the difficulties of the country were *very* great, their means of transport extremely limited; and in consequence of successive untoward events, they were ultimately obliged to abandon the enterprise without any satisfactory result. Sturt adds that both those officers, more particularly Captain Grey, showed an enthusiasm and courage which deserve the highest praise. (See Sturt's *Central Expedition*, i. 17, and Captain (later Sir George) Grey's published journals of *Expeditions in North-West and Western Australia*.)

Province, paid dear for Russell's ill-timed economies, and who, in Grey's dishonoured Treasury bills, found Gawler's failure largely justified?<sup>1</sup> Gawler's correspondence with the Commissioners in England shows him proof against calumny; the select committee which sifted the whole matter cleared him from all reproach. These judges attributed blame for the financial straits of the colony, first to the disregard by the Board of Commissioners of Gawler's repeated warnings, and, secondly, to the dual control shared by that Board with the Crown.

But in truth the, evils for which Gawler had been held responsible were inherent in the plan of the colony. They had been foreseen by Sir Charles Napier. "While sufficient security exists for the supply of labour, there does not appear to be any security for sufficient capital to employ that labour, comments that shrewd observer in 1835; and undoubtedly the first system of devoting the whole Land Fund to emigration, while ensuring a continual stream of pauper immigrants, tended to drain the colony of capital". The first overlanders found there insufficient capital for market transactions or for agricultural enterprise. What field then lay open to the thronging labourers? Failing other employment, Government was pledged to find work for all. In his efforts to redeem this pledge Gawler was forced to draw more and more heavily on authorities who neither heeded his remonstrances nor ceased to send shiploads of paid emigrants. Already in November 1838 he had warned the Commissioners that a treasury absolutely empty, and considerable public debts' must force him to look for large unauthorised pecuniary assistance.

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<sup>1</sup> Grey in his first year of rigid retrenchment was forced to draw on the Treasury scarcely less heavily than Gawler in his first year of lavish outlay had drawn on the Commissioners. Hodder (*History of South Australia*) states Gawler's drafts for the first half of 1839 at 8,560*l.*; for the second half of that year at 10,600*l.* Grey's total drafts for May 1841 to May 1842 were much larger; but, after deducting various sums as chargeable to his predecessor, Hodder states Grey's independent debt for the year at 14,000*l.* When Gawler left South Australia the total outstanding debt of the colony (May 1, 1841) was 305,328*l.* 2*s.* 7*d.* In June 1842 (after a year of strict economy) 405,433*l.* was the amount of its liabilities as laid before the House. As to the wisdom of Russell's sudden action cf. Fawcett's *Political Economy*, pp. 61 and 498.

The sanction for outlay in the present was in his opinion warranted by the promise of the future—a sanguine view, which was within a few years more than justified. Meantime the faulty system to which Gawler was sacrificed was amended in vital points by the committee which found him personally free from blame.<sup>1</sup>

But though specific accusations were completely refuted, it was more difficult to dispel the groundless myth of general extravagance, which likened the gaieties of Gawler's Adelaide to those of the Noachian world. Yet letters, diaries, local press, all eager for gossip, reveal nothing of this reckless dissipation. The rare gatherings indispensable to civic life were conducted with a simplicity that no Cato could have censured. The 450 vehicles of all degrees, from the Governor's barouche to the coster's barrow,<sup>2</sup> which, perhaps with undue pomp, opened the new road to the Port, presumably paid their way in consolidating that thoroughfare; and, in any case, the crowning glories of a cold collation and a regatta were provided from private sources. If, however, these sober festivities were reprehensible, Sturt must come into the condemnation of Gawler. The Agricultural Society at their first meeting and dinner on December 11, 1840, enthusiastically greeted him as president.

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<sup>1</sup> First, by an Act of June 22, 1842, one half only of the Land Fund was allotted to emigration purposes. The remainder was to be employed for local objects. Secondly, in July 1842 the Province was definitely made into a Crown colony, with a legislative council to be nominated by the Governor and to share in his responsibilities. Grey then had these two great advantages over his predecessor—a local treasury-fund and a local council.

<sup>2</sup> See Hodder's *History of South Australia*, ii. 152.

Again on December 15 we find him presiding at the yearly dinner to the Governor; and on February 1, 1841, under the auspices of two chaplains, driving the first pile of a wooden church at the Port.<sup>1</sup>

Few assemblies indeed took place but of a strictly utilitarian character. In private life rigid economy was enforced by small means, high prices, lack of servants and of supplies. Ladies from considerable distances would meet by arrangement to help one another in domestic work, and though to the young and lively, even after a day of drudgery, a few hours of gaiety might not come amiss, such amusements were exceptional. Sumptuous entertainments were unknown.

If however the pomp of Gawler's rule was imaginary, not so was the ruin that followed his recall. On February 8, 1841, the colony was thunderstruck by the news that Gawler's bills had been dishonoured—a repudiation by which hundreds were involved in disaster. The Governor was left without instructions from headquarters, and not till April did a first rumour of his recall and of Grey's appointment reach Adelaide.

The leading colonists now besought Sturt on their behalf to expostulate with the Home Government; to express the universal respect felt for Colonel Gawler; and, in case that Governor should be finally recalled, to urge his own claims to succeed him. To this request of Sturt's fellow-colonists, endorsed by Gawler's full approval, is due a protest which, on April 30, 1841, he addressed to Lord John Russell.

After deprecating a removal which would call forth the extreme regrets of the whole colony, and which Russell, if at all aware of the real state of things here, would not have sanctioned, Sturt expresses the earnest hope that this measure, still lacking official confirmation, may not be carried into effect.

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<sup>1</sup> This church, raised on piles above the reach of high tides, is still remembered by old colonists.

Should Gawler's recall however be unhappily decreed, Sturt, in reference to the officer named as his successor, ventures to call attention to the position in which that appointment would place the older and-more experienced functionaries.

Towards Captain Grey personally he has no feelings but those of friendship and esteem. They had met as men of similar habits and pursuits ought to meet, and Sturt would always rejoice in Grey's promotion and welfare.

From public considerations however, Sturt, in common with many others, had hoped that, if a successor to Colonel Gawler were appointed, the choice would fall on an officer of equal standing and reputation, or on a civilian of tried abilities who would maintain influence over men of experience and tact in office. . . . There cannot be, generally speaking, a more respectable body of officers than those whom Colonel Gawler has gathered round him. Then Sturt touches briefly, but with interesting side-lights, on his own claims and services.

Referring to the extreme confusion of the Province in 1838, without a Governor and without a survey force, and to his report of that year on the Murray Mouth, he adds, 'though Mr. Pullen after a prolonged stay had been able in calm weather to cross a bar on which Sir John Jeffcott perished, and my own boat was four times amidst the breakers, I have still no hope of its practical utility as a harbour.'

He proceeds to tell how Colonel Gawler's offer of the Surveyor-Generalship found him established on a large and flourishing farm, which the knowledge of Gawler's high character, and of his embarrassments from the want of competent officers, induced Sturt, at a great personal sacrifice, to abandon. The passage from Sydney had cost 219*l.* against an allowance of 21*l.* The farm and its produce had been sold at a loss of 700*l.* Scarcely was the survey organised and its heaviest expenses reduced, when Sturt was superseded.

As Assistant-Commissioner he has 'ever since directed the Land Office, the Emigration and the Stores Departments, being at the same time chairman of the bench of magistrates. He further mentions his presidency of the Mechanics' Institute and of the Agricultural Association as proof that he 'possesses the good feelings of the colonists; and he feels the fullest confidence in his ability to discharge the duties of the responsible and difficult situation in question. On no account would he advance any claim in opposition to Colonel Gawler, than whom there cannot be a more anxious Governor or a better man.' He writes 'at the instance of several of the most influential colonists,' who hope that in the event of Gawler's recall Sturt's claims may be duly considered: 'I may without presumption assure your lordship that, in the event of the loss of their present Governor, the colonists would hail with confidence and satisfaction my appointment as his successor. I take the liberty of candidly stating my feeling that if an individual of ordinary rank is to fill this post, no one has greater claims than myself.'

The appointment of Captain Grey, an officer much my junior in years and of less experience, would place me as subordinate to him in a situation which I could not but feel embarrassing and humiliating.' After referring to men of influence in both Houses, as well as to officers under whom he had served, Sturt concludes: 'Although I have thus pressed my claims, I would assure your Lordship that Captain Grey, in the event of his arrival, shall receive my best assistance.'

Within a fortnight this protest was made into waste paper by the arrival (on May 10) of Grey, and by his curt proclamation of himself as Governor.<sup>1</sup>

The papers that deal with these events have been destroyed; the severe local comments have been suppressed. Sturt's firm remonstrance still speaks volumes on the feeling in the colony. The last paragraph in the despatch was however no idle formula. Sturt resolutely thrust aside graver cause for bitterness than he had foreseen when writing to Russell, and loyally tried to make possible a strained and awkward situation.

He fearlessly called to order the young Governor in many an error of tact and judgment; while he smoothed the ruffled feelings of indignant officials, and calmed the

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<sup>1</sup> Captain Grey arrived to displace Colonel Gawler without notice, and walked into Government House without ceremony, having on the front steps read his commission in the hearing of a very small audience ... by whom he was received with no marks of approval,' says Hodder, *History of South Australia, ii.* 155. Gawler however receives his former guest with touching dignity

'My dear Sir,' he writes to Grey, May 12, 1841, 'I send Mr. Hall [his secretary] this morning to call upon you.

Strange to say, up to this moment I have not received the *slightest intimation* either from the Colonial Office or the Commissioners of my own removal or of your appointment or approach ; even in the Commissioners' and the Colonial Office mail bags by the "Lord Glenelg" there is not a word on the subject.

The newspapers mentioned your appointment, and Colonel Torrens, in a private letter, simply informed my brother-in-law of it; but of course I could not act upon these reports, knowing nothing officially.

Under these circumstances I can only say, if your Excellency and Mrs. Grey will make use of the spare room in Government House, which you before occupied, and put up with the bustle of removal, that we will pack and leave the house as soon as possible, and be gratified with your company while we are in it.

I should be glad that you should take the oaths at an early day. It should, if possible be announced to the public in to-morrow's *Gazette*.' In the very extraordinary position in which I am placed by the official silence on the subject of recall, will you pardon me for requesting that you will show your appointment to Mr. Hall, or, if not now convenient, to me when you arrive? You will, I trust, see that I am compelled as a necessary form to ask it.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your Excellency's very sincerely,

(Signed) 'GEORGE GAWLER.'

fury of the mob.

When one after another of Gawler's good staff threatened to resign 'because of a difference with the Governor,' Sturt helped to hold together the knot of able men to whom South Australia owed salvation in the darkest days she has ever weathered. At the notable Birthday Levee of May 26, 1843, which the officials in a body refused to attend (a failure naively attributed by the Government paper to the 'drought!'), Sturt's name duly appears.

But Sturt shared fully in the general sympathy for Gawler, and in the resentment at his unmerited downfall. On the eve of Grey's arrival, May 4, 1841, he writes to MacLeay: 'The Province is in an absurd state of confusion. Sundry politicians are now holding forth on the prudence of the Governor's course. A bold one, no doubt, he has steered, and in my opinion a correct one; and there is a general feeling in his favour. This is as it should be, for, right or wrong, he has been a father to his people, and deserves to be gratefully remembered so long as the solid and useful fabrics he has reared shall stand. . . .

'I am really worked to death, George. At home or abroad, they never let me alone. More than ever I sigh for quiet. My only enjoyment is in wandering over my garden with my two beautiful boys. . . . I will early send you a box of plants. In a case lately received from Loddige's, some fine fuchsias, laurel, chestnut, and white roses came safely, but the lilacs, arbuti, and other specimens were dead. Will you send me pine seeds, seeds of *Cupressus callitris*, the white cedar, and the loquat?'

Sturt's name is prominent in a series of addresses from all classes expressing full sympathy and esteem for the departing Governor; he contributed to the purse of 500*l.* presented to Gawler by the impoverished colonists; and Sturt and Cooper were among those who escorted Gawler to the Port on his final embarkation on June 22, 1841.

These demonstrations contrasted markedly with the cold formality shown to Grey, the manner of whose first public appearance had not been in his favour, and who moreover in the gentler arts of government had at that time everything to learn.

Well for him that in the emergencies of those years he had at his side more experienced councillors. To the teachings and influence of the men who had first settled in South Australia<sup>1</sup> Grey after many years paid a touching tribute. Not that he readily sought advice; on the contrary, his extreme reserve often caused difficulties, from which he expected at the eleventh hour to be delivered by men to whom he denied his confidence. Even when the Legislative Council was ordered by Parliament to share in the Governor's responsibilities, Grey showed no zeal to call together that body and small respect for its deliberations.

Never were Sturt's powers of conciliation more severely tried than during the winter months (June to August) 1841, when want and despair drove hundreds of starving men to band together and to threaten Government House. On more than one such occasion Sturt and his friends rallied round Grey; and, supported by Major O'Halloran and his volunteers, generally succeeded in pacifying the rioters without actual fighting.

These riots first taught Grey the just grievance of the hastily dismissed Government labourers. To Sturt's shoulders he shifted the responsibility of dealing with this knotty question. In a curious letter of August 7, 1841, he asks Sturt, as Chairman of the Bench, to convene on the 9th a meeting of the magistrates for the purpose of deciding how to fix for men employed on Government works a rate of wages which, while putting the labourers 'beyond the reach of want, should avoid the dangers of excessive comfort.' For any information required, he refers the magistrates to their chairman. After a long discussion the Government allowance was by the bench reduced from seven and sixpence to seven shillings a week, and details of working hours, and of a minimum rate of private wages were carefully elaborated.

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<sup>1</sup> See Grey's speech at Adelaide in April 1891 as quoted in Rees's *Life*, ii. 540.

This made a good working compromise for the immediate pressure; yet while the rate of wages was lower than in other colonies it was evident that immigrants would not stay in South Australia. Already had begun the fatal exodus of men who in trade or farming had saved enough to pay their way; the very men who formed the most vital element among the settlers. Could there have been a more striking commentary on the false economy of Government? While Napier's warning about dearth of capital was so disastrously fulfilled, his prescient demand for troops was also too soon justified. The dangers foretold by him—mutiny within, savages and bushrangers from without—had in this one year developed so alarmingly that Grey was early driven to call in troops; and on October 16, 1841, a first detachment of the 96th Regiment arrived from Hobart Town.<sup>1</sup>

When however repeated attacks by the natives on overland parties demanded energetic action, the magistrates and their chairman were again expected to settle everything. At their behest Captain (later Major) O'Halloran and his mounted police took the field; and their summary execution of native ringleaders was entirely approved by Sturt as tending to check further loss of life. The magistrates established at the ferry (near the north-west Bend), under Moorhouse, a guard of native police, which later developed into Eyre's police station.

On August 26, 1841, Moorhouse and his police came

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<sup>1</sup> These troops however played but a small part in pacifying the Province, an object far better effected when Grey, on Sturt's suggestion, placed Eyre at Moorundi in charge of a handful of native police. A military expedition against murderous natives near Port Lincoln was rendered barren of results by the nature of the country and the migratory habits of the foe. From temporary quarters in Grenfell Street, these troops were moved to the Moorundi barracks, built by Grey at a cost of 1,200*l.*, but soon left to decay. (See Allen's *Journal of a Trip in the Lady Augusta in 1853*, p. 58.)

opportunely to the rescue of Robinson's overland party of twenty-six men attacked, for the sake of their sheep, by an overwhelming number of blacks. The relief force came up in time to defeat a second attack, but twenty natives were killed, and one white man was wounded. This affair led to an inquiry of three days before Sturt, Eyre, O'Halloran, and Moorhouse. The court closely questioned Moorhouse, 'the chairman giving every facility to inquiry.' Then Sturt asked Moorhouse what was the conviction in his mind when he attacked. Moorhouse declared his conviction that had the natives been allowed within spear's throw all the whites would have been killed. Firearms alone compensated his party for inferiority of numbers.

To Sturt's next question, 'Did you before firing make any motion to them to retreat?' Moorhouse replied, 'Yes ; but they came on, taking no notice at all.' Captain Sturt then explained the blacks' advantage of position over the Europeans. He himself had some years ago moved five miles up the river to avoid a throng of natives round him on the same spot. The bench unanimously commended Moorhouse and his party for great forbearance under most trying circumstances.

The progress of exploration meanwhile was severely checked. Sturt's offer in January 1841 to explore the centre of the continent was snubbed on the plea of his supposed ill-health and blindness; disabilities which no less forcibly than Gawler's 'extravagance' had been impressed on the authorities in England. Pullen's schemes for navigating the Murray were also quashed; and that adventurer, as a colonial diarist quaintly tells, finding Grey obdurate, 'left for *more hospitable* climes.' He proceeded in fact to the Arctic regions, where he remained *ice-bound* for two years

But the unabated zeal of the colonists broke forth on Eyre's return from his desperate adventure.

The story of his heroic endurance stirred Adelaide, 'in the mid-winter of her discontent,' with a fervour which counteracted usefully the prevailing despair. At the dinner given to Eyre on August 24, 1841, Sturt presided as chairman, for Grey's presence, left doubtful to the last, was something of a surprise.

So interesting a meeting of three explorers was not forgotten in the speeches. Sturt, as president, proposed the Governor's health, and from Sturt's lips fell the first good word publicly spoken for Grey in the colony. The praise perhaps rings somewhat faintly.<sup>1</sup>

His Excellency has honoured us by his presence, and we ought to feel doubly gratified because he thus honours our invited guest. His Excellency's presence is a proof that, having himself experienced all the difficulties and dangers of inland research, he appreciates Mr. Eyre's services, and can sympathise in the perils of the Journey to Swan River. Gentlemen, I am not conversant in the language of praise, but the few words said are sincere, and will, I hope, not be the less thought of though not expressed in the language generally used on these occasions. I am sure his Excellency's presence to-night-his first public appearance-is gratifying to us all. But the gratification is heightened by the fact that he has appeared on an occasion with which so much public interest and public benefit is concerned.' Whereupon for the first time at Adelaide-Grey's health was drunk.

But Sturt's tongue had not faltered in praise of Eyre, and the homage to the Governor contrasted coldly with

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<sup>1</sup> Grey had recently published a biased description of the South Australian overlanders, with side-hits at the complimentary dinner and the presentation plate, which would warrant the charge of personal allusion, even without his reference by name, to Hawdon, Eyre, and Sturt. (See Grey's *Journals*, ii. 183-204.)

the applause which greeted Judge Cooper's brief reference to Sturt himself, and to the courage, perseverance, and enterprise which exalt him to the highest rank among living travellers. In acknowledging these compliments, Sturt again turned to Eyre's great achievement and to his unparalleled and chivalrous efforts; and so, in a chorus of praise to the guest of the evening, the feast broke up.

A private letter of 1842, in which Sturt defends Grey's good intentions somewhat to the disparagement of his good manners, gives interesting proof how well the courteous Governor of later years must have subdued this defect of his youth. 'Captain Grey when he came here had undoubtedly a most difficult card to play. Yet men were not so selfish but that they would have submitted readily to salutary retrenchment; and Captain Grey could have done almost as much as he has done, and would still have commanded respect, if not sympathy, had he shown some feeling for the general distress. But, unhappily for himself, his manners are cold and abrupt, . . . and he holds completely aloof. Therefore men will not give him credit for any interest in the welfare of the colony. . . . The present system must ruin the Province as effectually as too lavish an expenditure. Surely nothing but absolute want of money can have forced Government to a policy perhaps dictated by the wish to check similar colonising experiments in future. But the policy of England has ever been to alienate the affections of her dependencies; and in her very methods of assisting an infant colony are sown the seeds of discontent as tares in wheat, eventually to smother both.'

Sturt when he thus wrote was suffering from a serious reduction in his own salary—a loss felt the more from certain aggravating circumstances.

In August 1841 Grey had declared in Council his intention to carry out Gawler's original promise of raising Sturt's salary to 600*l.*

But to Russell at the same time, August 13, 1841, he represents that even a money payment of 600*l.* would be a reduction on the 500*l.*, with maintenance of two horses and a servant, which Grey on his arrival at Adelaide found this gentleman receiving, and, until further orders, he 'will not allow him more than 400*l.* Grey says not a word of Gawler's warm commendation of Sturt for special labours, and for unpaid duties cheerfully performed in the absence of Treasurer, of Registrar, and sometimes of Colonial Secretary! The letter to Russell could have but one result ; and accordingly, in August 1842, Sturt was informed that from the *previous January* (January 1842) his salary was cut down to 400*l.*, while his present office was abolished, and he was appointed Registrar-General. As the salary, so the duties of Assistant-Commissioner had vanished under Grey's sarcastic pen ; and a man described as ' an idol of the people, whose courage, energy, and scientific attainments won the admiration of all,<sup>1</sup> was relegated to an obscure and badly paid post which under Grey's rule involved specially trying duties.

Of Grey's letters to Russell Sturt knew nothing. He had only heard Grey's proposal in Council to raise his salary to 600*l.*, and to place him in charge of the Registration office. This he understood as a public recognition of the extra duties he had long performed. So completely was he in the dark as to Grey's real intentions that, on April 9, 1842, he writes to his brother William: ' Since I last wrote I have taken the additional office of RegistrarGeneral with a salary of 600*l.*, so that I hope I shall get on.

The delusion was brief, and to the same correspondent within a few months he exclaims: ' They have reduced my salary 200*l.* a year and broken all faith with me, so that I regret that I ever came here. I have to read over every day a parcel of deeds, mortgages, bills of sale, powers of attorney, to learn the misfortunes of all around. Too often he who meets me with a smile must lie down with an aching heart and curse the return of light.

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<sup>1</sup> 'See Hodder, i. 193'.

My office as Registrar-General I hate for all this, and because it is a worthless, idle post. I would rather enter the Zezein Pass with all its horrors than my office.

Indeed, the reduction of salary hit Sturt so hard and so unexpectedly, that he forwarded through Grey, on January 3, 1843, a memorial on the subject to the Treasury. (This paper did not leave Adelaide till March 16, and then not till Sturt had joggled Grey's memory.)

To Grey the petition was distasteful; he urged its suppression, and thought to pacify Sturt by the assurance that his appointment as Registrar-General, already gazetted in England, would soon be announced in the colony. Sturt in reply thanks Grey for his consideration, but requests that his despatch be forwarded. Through life, ' he adds ', I have sacrificed my best interests to a reluctance to apply even for that which might have been readily accorded to me.

On this Grey forwards the memorial, under cover of a letter to Stanley, which, far from supporting Sturt, barely veils the writer's own ill-will.

Thus tardily, and under cover of an unfriendly letter, the memorial was at last despatched. The contents of that document partly explain Grey's attitude.

Sturt first tells briefly the circumstances of his appointment under Gawler, who had left no doubt whatever as to permanent post or adequate salary. Colonel Gawler notified that he should recommend a salary of 600*l.* a year, though he could not authorise the payment of more than 500*l.* until further instructions from England. On the strength of these promises, and at Gawler's urgent request, Sturt had sold at a heavy loss the little property earned dearly and at the sacrifice of his profession ; the transport of his family had cost him 197*l.*

And your Memorialist is prepared to prove that he sacrificed from 1,000*l.* to 1,100*l.* to finish the survey and to further the interests of the Province. In the prompt and vigorous prosecution of this work, neither sought nor desired by him, but pressed upon him, a work on which depended the welfare of thousands, he had laid aside all personal considerations.

He emphatically states that 'in the establishment of this Province, save as its discoverer, he had no share.' Had he listened to the promoters of that undertaking, he might, under the late Commission, have commanded any appointment; but he did not feel justified in forwarding a scheme he disapproved; and although then without a profession, he adopted habitually that course which he thought His then Majesty's Government would most approve. He shared neither in the risks nor in the advantages of the early settlers, but accepted office to assist the Local Government to the best of his ability, and without the most distant intention of speculation. Yet no sooner had he brought the survey into working order, and reduced the expenditure by several economical changes, than he was superseded by an officer independently appointed by the Commissioners, notwithstanding the fullest powers delegated by them to Colonel Gawler.

He proceeds to tell how Gawler, to make up to Sturt for the injury done him, appointed him Assistant-Commissioner, with a seat in Council as before and a salary of 500*l.* ; both appointments being confirmed by Her Most Gracious Majesty. The salary was likewise confirmed by the Commissioners in a despatch which Gawler had read to Sturt.

Governor Grey, among new arrangements, had transferred the duties of Sturt's department to the Surveyor-

General.<sup>1</sup> On the passing of the Registration Act, Grey, in virtue of Sturt's appointments as Assistant-Commissioner and Registrar, placed him in charge of the Registration office, and proposed in Council to allow him 600*l.* a year.

The Memorialist has however received an intimation that the appointment of Assistant-Commissioner is to be abolished, and that, as Registrar-General, he is not to expect more than 400*l.* a year, *no higher salary having ever been authorized to him*'. He points out that the late Board [of Commissioners], in assenting to the higher salary, had left no doubt in his own mind or in that of Gawler, that they acted on the authority of the Treasury.

And although on so incompetent a salary as 400*l.* he would cheerfully for a time have superintended the surveys, he would not himself have accepted that salary, nor would he have taken an office of doubtful permanence or liable to such changes as he had undergone.' At the best, his 'salary was barely sufficient for his support in a high public position, and was altogether disproportioned to the sacrifices he had made. . . .'

After a brief mention of his earlier services, including particular employment by Sir John Lambert during the unhappy disturbances of 1823 and 1824 in Ireland,' Sturt laments that 'those under whom he served for more than twenty years, who would have borne willing testimony to his character and conduct as a soldier, have passed before him to the grave.

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<sup>1</sup> Grey had demurred also to Frome's salary, which he tried to cut down by 200*l.* a year, while throwing additional work upon the Survey Department. Frome addressed to Downing Street a memorial on his particular grievance about the same time that Sturt wrote home. Doubtless these complaints from able and responsible men carried weight. Grey's economies on the civil list were so sweeping that the signal-master at west Terrace and the letter-carrier of North Adelaide were suppressed, to be restored by the next Governor. The Blue Books however show no diminution of the Governor's salary of 1,000*l.*, which indeed in the year 1845 was raised to 1,500*l.* Russell's remark that 'no prospect of increase to the rate of salary at present assigned for the Governor of South Australia could be held out to Captain Grey,' suggests indeed that an increase of that stipend had been asked for.

But he would refer my Lords with confidence to Lambert and Darling, to General Lord Hill, to Sir Thomas Brisbane, to Sir William O'Callaghan, and to Sir Richard Bourke; adding that he received the assurance of the Commander-in-Chief's regret when illness obliged him to abandon his profession.

His small resources, earned at the sacrifice of that profession, as a reward of laborious services, have been greatly reduced by his removal to South Australia and by residence there. He ends by requesting that if he be deprived of his seat in Council and of a third of the salary originally promised, 'my Lords will direct that the sacrifices he has made be wholly or in part refunded, so that he may return to New South Wales. . . .'

To this memorial a reply embodying the views of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners was sent from the Colonial Office on October 12, 1843. In self-defence against pecuniary claim, the Commissioners maintain that neither Colonel Gawler was entitled to confer, nor Captain Sturt to expect, any other than a provisional appointment.<sup>1</sup>

The 'want of Treasury sanction,' justly complained of by Sturt, the Commissioners admit to be a defect; but a defect, say they, common to many other official salaries in South Australia. They proposed to bring before the Treasury for revision and approval the whole Colonial Establishment; and the language of their consent to Captain Sturt's salary was framed accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> Yet from Gawler's letter of October 5, 1839, they quote the following strong plea for Sturt: 'The case of Captain Sturt is particularly hard. On receiving my letter he sold a flourishing settlement in New South Wales, left a large circle of friends, embarked with his family-in a stormy season at great risk; and has in nothing spared himself. Throughout a wet season he has been continually in-the field. I engaged him at a salary of 600*l.* a year, knowing that no man of character and talent could be secured for less. . . . The office of Assistant-Commissioner which he has accepted is a very poor equivalent for that of Surveyor-General. I could not add the office of Registrar-General--an office, says Gawler, quite beneath Sturt's talents and education.'

Almost immediately followed the distress of the colony, and the settlement of all general questions connected with it was suspended. This disaster, they contend, made no difference whatever to Captain Sturt—a declaration belied by their record of the vicissitudes which he had undergone. Captain Grey had stated that he, on reaching the colony (in May 1841), found Captain Sturt in the receipt of 500*l.* a year, with forage for two horses. . . . He was then reduced to 400*l.* a year without forage, being all that Captain Grey knew to be sanctioned for his offices.

Yet in haggling over these details the Commissioners are surprised by pity not unmixed with remorse.

They would do justice to the character and motives of Captain Sturt. By his expedition down the Murray he may be considered the discoverer of South Australia, and to that journey the settlement may be said to have owed its existence. Yet he had no share in any of the earlier speculations in it for purposes of profit; nor was it till long after a Government had been formed there, that he accepted an arduous office at a moment of public emergency. On personal grounds Captain Sturt is entitled to every consideration.

While for the above reasons the Commissioners think that no violation of public faith can be proved, they readily admit that Captain Sturt must have felt disappointed in the early loss of his first situation; that there has been something harassing, though unavoidable, in the various changes of his subsequent appointments; and that in the end he has fallen into a place below the pretensions of an officer of his rank and reputation.

The Board therefore, while refusing to acknowledge his claims to compensation, leave to Lord Stanley's indulgent consideration Captain Sturt's petition for some opportunity of promotion in another colony.

This document, signed by T. Frederick Elliot and by John G. Shaw-Lefevre, is addressed to James Stephen, Esq. (of the Treasury).

By such arguments it was easy to hush up for the time Sturt's manly protest. Protest and reply now speak to a public who between the lines may read in the wrongs of the individual those of the colony. For while these despatches were under consideration and travelling to and fro, the affairs of the Province were drifting from bad to worse. Stanley's plan to suppress South Australia by shipping off to New South Wales the unemployed emigrants was indeed so firmly opposed by the Council, the magistrates, and the people, that in that matter Grey refused to act upon his orders. But already settlers were leaving the colony in alarming numbers. The plentiful harvest of January 1842 was but partially garnered for lack of labourers, and Sturt was foremost in a movement to stimulate invention by offering prizes for agricultural improvements. As a result, numerous patents were taken out for labour-saving devices; and before another harvest came round, Ridley had by his reaping and threshing machine revolutionised the cost of wheat production.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> South Australians owe a deep debt of gratitude to Ridley for his useful invention. Ridley's Reaper has rendered cheap and simple a process which in that dry climate was formerly most difficult. The machine, drawn by two horses and driven by one man, presents to the standing corn a row four feet wide of broad bent teeth well separated. In the spaces, the wheat ears are caught and drawn under rollers which thresh out and deposit the grain and chaff, while they release and leave standing the straw. When the machine is full, the contents are raked out on to a prepared piece of ground. In that dry climate the heaps often lie uncovered till eighty or 100 acres are reaped. From five to eight acres would be an average day's work. In land free from trees, men (with a change of horses) have done from ten to twelve acres per day. Not only is this plan infinitely cheaper, but also far less wasteful than the most careful hand reaping. To this invention is mainly due the great success of agriculture in South Australia; and great is the obligation of the colony to Mr. Ridley, who has, alas! been treated almost as badly as yourself. (From an unpublished letter, September 29, 1864, of Mr. William Browne to Captain Sturt.)

In promoting the cause of agriculture Sturt ever took a leading part. His letters show him eagerly introducing new plants and fruits. His name appears in support of ploughing-match and cattle-show. The fell disease of scab among sheep was at this time practically stamped out by the results of his searching inquiries and of the prompt measures suggested in his exhaustive report on this vital subject (in November 1843).

For no personal grievance interfered with Sturt's public usefulness. In many a difficulty, Grey, ignoring as long as possible the powers of his Council, still applied unofficially to Sturt as Chairman of the Bench. The proposal to send out batches of reformatory boys was referred to the magistrates, and by them denounced as subversive of the first principles of the colony. Grey showed his aversion to recognise the opinions of others by delaying for six months to appoint the Legislative Council as ordered by the Act of February 20, 1843, and by further delaying to summon it for business till *October 10, 1843*.<sup>1</sup>

In that Council Sturt worked hard at Bills on Trial by Jury; on Government tenders; on agricultural improvements; on protection of small settlers against the large squatters; on matters affecting alike the interests of farmers, of paupers, and of natives. To Sturt was due the establishment at Moorundi of a police force under Eyre as Protector of the Aborigines. Sturt, too, directed his energies to the abolition of the obnoxious 'Port Dues,' levied since 1842 on all shipping, but at last, to the general relief, in January 1844 'reduced beyond expectation,' and finally removed in July 1845.

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<sup>1</sup> Nor did Grey enlighten his Council so much as they thought desirable. The Register of October 13, 1843, contains this entry : 'Moved by the Registrar-General (Sturt) and passed : That his Excellency the Governor be requested to cause arrangements to be made for the supply of such documents as refer to the colonies for the guidance and information of the Legislative Council.' A Privy Council Order of August 29, 1842, appoints Sturt to be one of the seven members of this Council-an appointment not confirmed by Grey till June 15, 1843.

Amid these manifold and absorbing interests Sturt did not brood over private wrongs. His letters of this period touch indeed on the troubles around him, but show him happy in the home joys of his leisure. They also show his heart set on new and large schemes for exploration.

We all feel the pressure of these bad times, he writes to his brother William (April 9, 1842); I know not where distress and difficulty will end. Our merchants are going, one after the other, the bad carrying along the good into the general ruin. This state of things is caused by over-speculation and by the exorbitant price of labour. The toleration of such demands has all along appeared marvellous to me. South Australia is however a beautiful Province-rich in soil and healthy in climate. Here grassy hills and valleys studded with trees and abounding in orchids, form a scenery quite different from that of other parts of Australia. Our hills and our plains have two distinct climates. The plains in summer are hot; yet the heat is less oppressive here than in moister regions. My home near the sea is in truth very pretty, but it has cost me too dear ; for I counted on the repayment of sums which might as well not be due, and on the sale of my former cottage which in consequence of the bad times remains untenanted. I shall probably never return to England; nor should I now like English frost and snow. I am about five miles from Adelaide, and ride in and out every day; and I take great pleasure in adorning my place as much as possible. Send me any seeds you like-a good burden of all kinds; fruit and flowers; especially some of the Hill seeds and bulbs. Dr. Wallick will supply you; but don't let him send fusty old seeds which won't grow!

If you can learn when a vessel is to sail for Adelaide, you might put up cuttings of various trees, stowed close in a barrel with wet moss at the bottom; or a case of orange-trees in pots. Send me also pineapples, but above all, indigo seed, which I am very anxious to try. . . . My youngsters are all well, thank God; N already of great use to me in gardening. He has our mother's sweet disposition. C is as handsome a boy as you could behold; and E a sturdy red-headed rogue. I have no fault to find with any of them, nor have they their equals here. . . .'

A letter to the same brother on September 14, 1842, tells of continued disaster, yet shows firm faith in the eventual revival of South Australia.

'The Province is in a sad state of depression. Grey is dreadfully unpopular; and the colonists are calling out against taxation &c., but there is no help for it. I sigh for quiet, and would gladly retire from public life, but I cannot. I have played my cards badly. I dare not praise the colony as I should wish, yet I feel that things will mend, and I am quite satisfied with the place. New Zealand, with which you are so infatuated, has indeed fine harbours, though they be bar harbours, and that is all you can say. It is at this moment the theatre of distress, and I do not see what the settlers will do. Here we have under cultivation 16,000 acres of wheat, besides other crops. If they average fifteen bushels to the acre, there are 240,000 bushels. We shall in truth be the cheapest colony; indeed food is cheap enough. Our very sandhills yield a profusion of vegetables beyond our wants. The place is better than England with all its wealth and politics. . . .

As you are in Calcutta, you can see Wallick and send me seeds and cuttings. Put the cuttings into damp moss in a box, and the seeds into dried sand. Send pineapples, bananas, arrowroot, sugar-cane, but at all risks indigo seed.'

This letter and a later one of October 31, 1842 (not received at Calcutta till June 18, 1843), express deep anxiety about another brother John, of the Royal Engineers, cut off untimely on the disastrous retreat from Cabul.<sup>1</sup>

We are still in ignorance of poor John's fate, and most anxious on his account. We cannot but feel gratified at his bravery and determination; but when a boy he gave many proofs of sterling worth. If he has fallen, he has fallen well. Poor fellow! had he been single, I had not felt for him half what I feel, but all the circumstances are melancholy and affecting. Wounded and weak as he was, he had no chance in that wintry retreat.

I trust, William, that you, as Military Secretary, remain at headquarters? I don't know how it is, I have taken a disrelish for war which once was eagerly sought by me. . . . You will be sorry to hear that my garden has been flooded and everything destroyed, after a great expense. Oranges, lemons, figs, 1,800 vines, and more than 3,000 trees of all kinds are killed. These are however trifling evils.'

Indeed the last three letters of this period strike each a lower note in the gamut of despondency. Early in 1843 an addition to the family supplies a text

'My youngsters now give me much anxiety. You know, William, I am waning in years, and must now look out for them; and yet this is the very time I am to be most tried. They have reduced my salary 200*l.* a year and broken all faith with me. . . . Captain Grey, who on the north-west coast ran himself into many difficulties – a young man of twenty-eight-is Governor. . . . I do not mean altogether to uphold the former expenditure, but I by no means approve the present system. A Government should be as Caesar's wife, without suspicion and without a stain. But it does not do to write on these matters. The colony is going to the dogs.

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<sup>1</sup> John Sturt, captain Royal Engineers, was killed January 9, 1842, in the disastrous retreat from Cabul. He was a good artist in water-colour, as may be seen by his illustrations to Sir Robert Sale's work on Cabul. His wife (a daughter of Sir Robert Sale) and her infant, born amid the horrors of that retreat, were among the captives eventually restored in safety.

A beautiful place and climate, a loyal and industrious people, Nature bountiful, but the mother country inexorable. Well! it is the principle to cut early the cords of affection which bind the young colony to its parent.

I have written to General Darling and to the Secretary of State, offering to explore the *whole* continent. I consider I could effect the survey in two years; but, after leaving Adelaide, I should not touch at any place for provisions. It would be a fearful but a splendid enterprise, and there are here men who would go with me through fire and water. 'If I fell, my name would stand in a list I have always envied.' Not a whit more cheerful is the news of August 17: 'All suffer severely in these dreadful times. Crash, crash, smash, smash ! all round one. Rich and poor, humble and proud, all going to ruin. Sheep won't pay-cattle won't pay-farming won't pay; what then, you will say, is to pay? Nothing!'

Now this is the state of things here and in Sydney and all these colonies. Men failing for thousands and hundreds of thousands, and banks accommodating themselves to the injury of the Public. It would indeed be well if the usury laws were in force here. I speak from seeing how the thing works. . . . The honorary post of Chairman of the Bench I have occupied for three years. As I have been twice elected '*nem. con.*' by our fifty magistrates, I suppose I am popular. But I am sick of public life; and if I had but 300*l.* a year I would retire from all the hateful scenes and thankless exertions of office. . . . But I may not forget that I have others to look to, so I may fret and fume and champ the bit in vain. . . .'

A softer chord is touched in snatches of home news 'Our fourth, a fine little girl, was christened with great ceremony, the Surveyor-General's and Collector's wives [Mrs. Frome and Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Torrens] with my friend Eyre standing sponsors. May she be like our sainted mother, than whom there never lived a better. God sometimes shows, by examples of more than ordinary goodness, how near mankind may approach perfection. Such was our mother. Mild, forbearing, and forgiving; faultless if ever mortal was faultless.'

And this letter too ends with the refrain of the true Planter.'

'Dr. Wallick's two cases of plants for our Horticultural Society came in excellent order. None of those you sent me did I ever get, much to my mortification. . . . Send me melon seeds of varieties, pumpkins, Bengal chillies, and any others. I want to try indigo, cotton, and other things. Forward them *via* Sydney, addressed for me to the care of Major H. Smyth there. Without precaution nothing comes safe. . . I will gladly pay all expenses.

'A vessel just in from England brings no good news. New Zealand has a grant of 60,000*l.* a year, and a Captain Fitzroy is made Governor. We on the other hand are left out of the Budget altogether. Never mind, we will beat New Zealand yet. . . .'

A letter to MacLeay of April 27, 1844, is marked *Private*. ' . . . I cannot write as I would wish, for we know not into whose hands these documents may fall; . . . and I shall profit by your hint of silence on certain observations in my former letters. However, you know that some time ago I was dissatisfied. I had Government bills to pay; my salary was reduced, and my property depreciated. I felt that I could do no good here, and I therefore wrote a long and explicit letter to Lord Stanley offering to explore the whole continent.

I gave a detail of everything, and of provisions for two and a half years, and I estimated the expense at 5,000*l.* At the same time I forwarded a Memorial complaining of the treatment I had received, and requesting that I might either be removed to another colony, or remunerated for expenses incurred and allowed to return to New South Wales.

Frome too wrote a like Memorial. To that Stanley sent a negative answer. Mine, he said, was under consideration. He could not decide on so important a matter till he had heard from Sir R. Darling, to whom I had referred him. My letter to Darling had been long delayed, but I have just received a copy of his reply, which I now transcribe for you. [For the gist of Darling's letter see p. 227.]

Now, George, I am looking with great anxiety for Lord Stanley's reply. You will observe that Sir R. Darling takes for granted that he will accept my services, and urges (as I urged) that I should be uncontrolled in the selection of my men, and in the providing of supplies. Indeed, otherwise I should be able to do nothing here. . . . My plan is to go up the Darling and to get as soon as I can into the tropics. I have a strange idea that there may be a central sea not far from the Darling in 29°, and I should go prepared for a *voyage*. You, I fear, will condemn this. . . .

Eyre about two months ago went up the Darling and connected the extremes of Sir T. Mitchell's journeys. He was accompanied by a single policeman. What would the doughty Major say to that?

'Disappointment has not checked the spirit of our farmers. Gentle rains have softened the ground, and all are busy again. But if our agricultural pursuits will yield us no return, our mines, I fancy, will. They are numerous and rich, though of singular formation, offering apparently surface deposits in enormous masses which yield 33 per cent. of copper. . . . Captain Grey is gone for some weeks to see the country at Rivoli Bay. . . . Believe me, George, if I go on this long journey, I shall often regret your absence from my side. . . .'

## CHAPTER XIV

*AUGUST 1844-JANUARY 1845*

CENTRAL EXPEDITION-LINE OF ROUTE-THE MEN AND HORSES -THE FAREWELL BREAKFAST-WILLIORARA AND CAWNDILLA -A FAITHLESS GUIDE-LAKE BOOLKA AND FLOOD'S CREEKFOUNDERED DRAYS-THE ROCKY GLEN

THESE letters show that private grievance did but lend wings to Sturt's exploring ardour. On January 25, 1843, he sent (to be forwarded by Grey with the Memorial) detailed proposals to explore within two years most of the Australian continent. Neither this despatch nor one of the same January to Sir Ralph Darling reached its destination till the following August or September-a delay that has never been explained.

Sturt took the fortunate precaution to send in March by private means a short outline of his plans, which caused inquiry for the earlier despatches. Darling, after expressing wonder that the first letter should have been delayed till September 6, loses not a day in urging upon Stanley the importance of the proposed scheme. His letter of September 7, though too long for complete insertion, is full of interest.

The undertaking is worthy of your patronage, and I know no one better qualified than Captain Sturt to carry it into effect. . . His mind appears naturally inclined to such researches; . . . his scientific knowledge and disposition give the best assurance of his probable success. . . . During two former expeditions of six and seven months, Captain Sturt evinced the utmost prudence, judgment, and management.

He conciliated hostile tribes, won the affections of his party of convicts, . . . and brought back without a single casualty, or even a sore back, the troop of horses and bullocks &c. . . . This was not from the ease with which the journeys were performed (as the privations and fatigues were severe), but from the skill with which they were conducted. . . .

I would take the liberty of observing that Captain Sturt should, as far as possible, be allowed *a carte blanche*. He will not abuse any confidence reposed in him. I would suggest that he should be allowed to select, without control, his men and animals. . . . Captain Sturt does not appear at present in his proper or natural element. Like Columbus, he appears urged on by fate; the result may be similar. It will be seen that he does not act blindly, but calculates from the natural effect of certain causes which he details. . . .

This letter, Sturt tells us, induced Lord Stanley to consent to a modified edition of the first scheme.

‘Aware as I was of the importance of the season, I so timed both my letters as to allow (after I should receive the replies) an interval sufficient for me to make all preparations, and to start at the best time of year.’ Strange to say, Stanley’s earlier despatch to Grey (though referred to in a private letter received by Grey May 1844) was not shown to Sturt till the end of June. ‘This further delay necessarily threw me late in the season to begin preparations. . . . By the end of July however the arrangements were completed and the party organised.’ Sturt, in the published account of his Central Expedition, gives interesting details of his general instructions-of the limitations imposed on his original plan, and of the reasons which led him to follow the line of the Murray and Darling rather than to strike northward from Mount Arden, as was urged by Sir John Barrow.

Sturt indeed 'would much rather have followed the Mount Arden line. The strongest grounds alone could have made me pursue a different course.' The earlier journeys in that direction both of Eyre and of Frome had been undertaken after constant and intimate discussion with Sturt; and great was his disappointment when both those travellers agreed as to the impracticable nature of the country due north of Spencer's Gulf. Moreover Eyre to the north-west and, Frome to the north-east of Adelaide had struck upon the soft quaggy bed of a salt lake forming an impassable barrier. Hence had arisen the theory that 'Lake Torrens' stretched in a horseshoe form round Flinders' Range from the head of Spencer's Gulf. Eyre's journeys, says Sturt, 'had proved the impracticability of a direct northerly course—a course which would have led me into the horseshoe of Lake Torrens and into a country which all local inquiry and experience pronounced hopelessly deficient in water'.<sup>1</sup>

Dismissing then all idea of pushing through so inhospitable a region, Sturt turned his attention not, as Sir John Barrow thought, to Fort Bourke which would have led him some 600 miles out of his intended course, but to Williorara, a point on the Darling 300 miles short of Fort Bourke. The Williorara (Laidley's Ponds) was described by the natives as 'a hill-stream that came far from the north-west, containing large fish and flowing between grassy banks.' To trace this stream up into the hills, with the chance of meeting the opposite fall of waters, seemed better than to be from the first entangled amidst the scrub and salt lagoons of the Lake Torrens district.

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<sup>1</sup> So uninviting was this region that the fallacy about Lake Torrens was not disproved till, after many years, squatters pushing steadily northward found the north end of that lake to be separated by some fifty miles from what is now called Lake Eyre.

The Lake Torrens basin contains many other salt lakes; but between these lakes are several openings. The difficulties of the Mount Arden route were however in Sturt's day insurmountable; and for more than fifteen years afterwards pioneer squatters were busily digging wells and fertilising deserts, before Stuart could avail himself of an advanced starting-point for his last successful journey across the continent.

The disappointment of finding the Williorara a mere channel of nine or ten miles connecting the Cawndilla and Menindi lakes with the Darling shattered then the keystone of Sturt's edifice. The disappearance of his hoped-for hill-stream was just such another shock as the saltness of the Darling or the sand-choked mouth of the Murray.

Sir John Barrow, while deprecating the magnitude of Sturt's original scheme, remarked: 'There is however a portion that may be accomplished in a reasonable time and at a moderate expense.' He quotes Sturt's letter:

"If a line be drawn from lat.  $29^{\circ} 30'$  and long.  $146^{\circ}$  north-west, and another from Mount Arden due north, they will meet a little to the northward of the tropic, and there I will be bound to say a fine country will be discovered." On what data he pledges himself to the discovery of this fine country is not stated. It may however be advisable to allow Mr. Sturt to realise the state of this fine country. Sturt, when later regretting his failure to reach the tropic and to set at rest his hypothesis of the better country to be found there, briefly tells his reasons for the supposition.

Birds observed east of the Darling in the summer of 1828 in about lat.  $29^{\circ} 30'$  S. and long.  $144^{\circ}$  had invariably migrated to the west-north-west. Cockatoos and parrots, known while in the colony to frequent the richest and best-watered valleys of the higher lands, would pass in countless flights to that point of the compass. In South Australia, in lat.  $35^{\circ}$  and long.  $138^{\circ}$ , I had also observed that several birds of the same kind annually visited that Province from the north. I had seen the *Pistachios Nova Hollandiæ* and the shell paroquet following the shore-line of St. Vincent's Gulf like flights of starlings in England. The different flights, at intervals of more than a quarter of an hour, all came from the north and followed in one and the same direction.

'Now, although the casual appearance of a few strange birds should not influence the judgment, yet from the regular migration of the feathered race a reasonable inference may be drawn. Seeing then that these two lines (viz. from Fort Bourke about lat. 30° and long. 144° to the west-north-west, and from Mount Arden in lat. 35° long. 138° to the north) if prolonged would meet a little to the northward of the tropic, I formed the following conclusions:

'First, that the birds migrating on those lines would rest for a time at the point where those lines met.'

'Secondly, that the country to which they went would resemble that which they had left—that birds which frequented rich valleys or high hills would not settle down in deserts and flat country.'

'Thirdly, that the intervening country, whether owing to deserts or to large sheets of water, was not such as these birds could inhabit. Indeed such large migrations from different parts to one particular point argued no less strongly the existence of deserts or of sea to a certain distance, than the probable richness of the country to which as to a common goal these migrations tended.'

On the late expedition, at the Depot in lat. 202° and long. 142° I found myself in the direct line of migration to the north-west; and to that point of the compass birds whom I knew to visit Van Diemen's Land would, after watering, pass on. Cockatoos, after a few hours' rest, would wing their way to the north-west, as also would various water-birds, as well as pigeons, parrots, and paroquets, pursued by birds of the Accipitrine class. From these indications I was led to look still more for

the realisation of my hopes, if I could but force my way to the necessary distance.'

Sturt, as we have seen, did not receive Stanley's assent to his modified plans till the end of June 1844; and though he then worked with such alacrity that within a month all was ready, he still awaited a reply from Mr. John Harris-Browne, whom he had asked to join the party as medical officer. 'I had never before seen Captain Sturt,' writes Mr. Browne. 'I was living on a sheep farm that I had discovered and occupied the previous year. I had already done some local exploring in the north; and Captain Sturt, hearing of this from Mr. Eyre, invited me to join the Central Expedition.'

'Though personally unacquainted with Mr. Browne,' says Sturt, 'I was aware that he enjoyed the respect and esteem of all who knew him, and that he was in every way qualified for the enterprise. I had every reason to congratulate myself on having secured the services of one whose value under privation, trial, and sickness can only be appreciated by myself.' The rare qualities of this inestimable friend and comrade live in the records of such perilous wanderings as few men can have shared together for eighteen months.

The full list of the party stands thus:

Captain Sturt, *leader*.

Mr. James Poole, *assistant*.

Mr. Harris-Browne, *surgeon*.

Mr. McDouall Stuart, *draughtsman*.

Mr. Louis Piesse, *storekeeper*.

Daniel Brock, *collector*.

Robert Flood, *stockman*.

George Davenport, Joseph Cowley, *servants*.

David Morgan, *with horses*.

Hugh ffoulkes, John Jones, J. Turpin, Wm. Lewis (sailor),

John Mack, *bullock drivers*.

Dick Sullivan, John Kirby, *with sheep*.

11 horses, 30 bullocks, 200 sheep, 4 kangaroo-dogs, 2 sheep-dogs,

1 boat and boat-carriage, 1 horse-dray, 1 spring-cart.

Sturt and Browne were tall and spare. Poole on the contrary was short and stout, and in person resembled

Sir Thomas Mitchell, like whom moreover he wore a blue foraging cap. This resemblance nearly cost him dear among some natives of the Darling tribe who had fallen foul of Mitchell, and who, according to the native interpreter, were so much impressed by the mistaken identity that they would certainly spear Poole. This catastrophe was perhaps averted—all irritation was certainly allayed-by changing the obnoxious cap for a straw hat!

Poole's tragical death while absent on this expedition lends a melancholy interest to his short career. Sturt however early felt uneasy about Poole's health, and doubted if he would prove equal to the task before them.

Stuart, like Poole, had already worked on the survey. To him the expedition formed a fine training for great future achievement. He was slight, and under 5½ feet, weighing less than nine stone, but wiry and active. Sturt records 'valuable and cheerful assistance from Mr. Stuart, whose zeal and spirits were equally conspicuous, and whose labour at the charts did him great credit.' To Piesse's important services the Journal also bears emphatic testimony. He too had been employed by Sturt in the early survey work.

In Davenport and Flood we meet old friends. The latter 'at the eleventh hour' joined the party when already on the way to Moorundi. Sturt describes him as one of the most experienced stockmen in the colonies, and well acquainted with the country. 'To him I was indebted for having my horses fit for service.' Flood later served on Gregory's expedition, and survived till 1878 or 1879, expressing to the last the most affectionate devotion for his former leader. Lewis became a prosperous farmer and did not die till 1893. David Morgan, after serving in the Navy, had landed at Adelaide in 1837 and had worked on the survey under Light and Sturt. He lived till July 1896, when at the age of eighty-seven he suddenly and quietly breathed his last.

Joseph Cowley earned special distinction from Sturt, as 'a fine young lad whose moral courage inspired confidence. But indeed, says Sturt, I would fain speak well of all the men. They have always shown their willingness to bear with me the great fatigues and exposure incidental to such a service.'

The *dramatis personæ* would be incomplete without mention of the horses, on whose endurance depended the lives of the party. Sturt does not forget them. My own horse was a grey-for which reason I called him Duncan. I rode him during the whole period of my wanderings; nor did I ever see an animal that could endure more or that suffered less from the want of water. He was aged; and he was a living proof that to brutes as well as to men years give a certain stamina that youth does not possess. This animal knew me well, as indeed did all the horses. Browne's horse, a little animal, was also one of great endurance. Poole's hunter we called The Roan.<sup>1</sup> Punch, a recent purchase, was one of the best horses-strong, powerful, and in good condition. Of the four pack-horses the most notable was Bawley, a strong compact little animal with a blaze on the forehead and a shining coat. Having been a pet, he was up to all kinds of tricks; but he was a general favourite. Poor Bawley was destined to give a name to the plains on which he died.

The formal departure of the expedition on August 10 was celebrated by a general holiday and by a public breakfast. The local papers rested from controversy to express in chorus their 'esteem, respect, and confidence,' and to applaud Captain Sturt's great enterprise. At the farewell breakfast Major O'Halloran took the chair; and among those present were the Governor, with all the officials, and 250 guests. The Union Jack, worked by friends, was presented; the chairman's toast of success to the party was enthusiastically received.

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<sup>1</sup> He was turned out to die in peace on Cooper's Creek, where he was found alive and well, fifteen years later, by Howitt. 'Roan's Plains' are to this day marked on the map of Australia.

Sturt, rising amid deafening cheers, said that if for a moment the recollection of similar scenes long past subdued him, the remembrance would not weaken him in the hour of difficulty and danger. He was grateful, very grateful, for the present unexpected display of public feeling. The thought of it would lighten his task; and if he were fated never to return, the kindness now shown him would be proudly remembered by others.

He had brought his young son (not yet eight) to witness and to bear in memory throughout life the scenes of that day. . . . He loved the Province—here he had made his home—here he would wish to die. . . . He would go forth inspired by what he had seen and heard and felt; nor would his men forget the impression now made upon them. . . . They would be stimulated to perform worthily a great duty for the benefit of mankind. Glory and honour attend the death of a hero; but there is no glory like that of falling in the endeavour to benefit our fellow-men. He had received the most cordial support from His Excellency; he would go away wanting nothing, and, so far as equipment went, with every confidence. He would proceed from the Darling to Mount Lyell. Then, striking to the west, he would endeavour to turn Lake Torrens, and before going north he hoped to examine the country to the north and north-west of that lake. . . . All that human perseverance and diligence could do should be done to accomplish this great undertaking; and if he should return, he prayed God he might find all in prosperity and happiness.

Many a tear was shed as Captain Sturt placed his hand in tender farewell on the head of his son.<sup>1</sup> One of the men expressed his own and his comrades' resolve to live and die with Captain Sturt.

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<sup>1</sup> See *History of Australia*, by James Allen, published Melbourne 1852.

In that day's procession, quaintly depicted by Angas, the leader's faultless garments and tall hat seem better adapted to the public breakfast than to the bush!<sup>1</sup> But only the drays and animals left Adelaide on the 10th, Sturt following on the 15th.

'The sun rose bright and clear on such a morning as is only known in a southern climate. But I had to bid adieu to my wife and family, and could but feebly enter into harmony with the joyous nature around me.' During the last solemn farewells, Mr. Browne tells us that he promised Mrs. Sturt, Sir Charles Cooper, and Colonel Torrens that, except for short excursions, nothing but death should part him from Captain Sturt.

From Moorundie<sup>2</sup> the scene of the final muster, Eyre accompanied the party up the river. This part of the journey, though rich in observations on the natives and their country, yet deals with a region already described, and therefore must be left to readers of Sturt's book. Lakes Bonney and Victoria<sup>3</sup>--those backwater lagoons of the Murray--were carefully surveyed.

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<sup>1</sup> The tall hat was certainly left behind. In the bush, Sturt wore a straw hat covered with cotton-cloth; Browne one made of the leaf of the cabbage-palm plaited like straw. This style was adopted by some of the men, while others had felt hats. Piesse wore one like that of an Italian brigand, with a high conical crown. A hill south of Stevens Creek was named by the men "Piesse's Nob" from its likeness to that hat. -From letter from J. Harris-Browne.

<sup>2</sup> Before quitting Moorundi, Sturt on August 21 assembled the men; and after telling off each to special duties, and urging on all the importance of concord and mutual helpfulness, he peremptorily forbade intercourse with the natives, more particularly with the women--as to this irritating source he attributed many of the acts of violence that had occurred on the river. Sturt adds: 'I felt it a duty I owed both to myself and to my men, before they finally left the habitations of civilised men, to address a prayer to Almighty God for His protection and guidance. The men stood uncovered around me; and having concluded, I directed them to proceed on their journey; and in less than half an hour they had crossed the flat and were pushing on slowly to the north.' -*Journal of Royal Geographical Society* (1847), xvii. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Not to be confused with Lake Alexandrina, which had now also been named 'Victoria.'

While at Lake Bonney on September 2 Sturt writes to his brother Evelyn:

‘From Mount Lyell I shall try to reach the eastern shore of Lake Torrens and see how it looks there before I go further north. I am well equipped and have provisions for one year complete; if I find any country, I shall curtail the allowance in order to do as much as we can. I still fear I shall have to run up to 28° of latitude before I shall be able to cross the desert ; and a precious task I shall have all the way up. Even Eyre shrinks from the path I have to tread. But never mind if we succeed at last. God knows I care little for myself, and would willingly sacrifice health to attain that object. If I fail, I shall only have done my duty, and must rest satisfied with that. I have still the same gloomy presentiment as to what will befall myself. Our parting was painful enough. I left my poor Charlotte and my beloved children with the conviction that I should never see them on this side the grave. A happier destiny may however permit me to pass the evening of my life in peace.’

This letter with others was sent back by Eyre, who left the party on their arrival at the Rufus. The surveys on the Murray and sundry small accidents delayed progress; yet the Ana branch of the Darling was gained on September 22, and the Williorara Creek by October 10. Hitherto the natives had described Williorara as a fine hill-stream which would ensure an ample supply of water and of grass far up into the hills of the north-west. As the travellers approached the vaunted stream, the native stories sobered down to a depressing picture of the grim reality.

The ranges were now described as inaccessible, covered with sharp-pointed stones and with great rocks that would fall and crush the wayfarer. Were it possible to cross this barrier to the low country beyond, ‘the heat would kill us all. Neither water nor grass should we find, nor wood to light a fire. The native wells were too deep for watering cattle, and finally, the water was salt; and the natives had to let down bundles of rushes to soak it up.’

This account, with, a liberal allowance for imagination, confirmed too truly Sturt's forebodings. 'Prepared however as I was for a bad country, I was not prepared to find it so bad as it proved.'

The first shock occurred on October 10, when the party, after crossing 'a bare flat of whitish clay, were stopped by a watercourse with low muddy banks, decidedly the poorest spot of the kind we had seen. At the intelligence that this was the Williorara or Laidley's Ponds, I was utterly confounded. Instead of a mountain-stream by which to gain the hills, I now found directly in my way a backwater channel fifty yards wide, with a course of nine or ten miles, connecting the two lagoons of Menindi and Cawndilla.

This total disappointment about the Williorara dealt a death-blow to Sturt's high hopes. If, in long 142° 5' E., lat. 32° 25' S., Cawndilla were to be his furthest base of assured water-supply, he, knowing that the Darling had no tributaries from the west, must now have felt how precarious was his chance of success. But, to lose no time, he sent Browne westward, and on his report moved the camp to the better pastures of Lake Cawndilla, while Poole reconnoitred towards the hills. Within five days, on October 15, that officer returned; he had failed to find good camping-ground, but from a high hill had seen to the north-west distant ranges rising like islands out of a vast sheet of water.

Sturt at once established his main camp at Cawndilla and started for the north-west; not omitting to send to his family and to the Governor,

the last tidings they were to receive for many a long day.<sup>1</sup> These despatches served to dispel a circumstantial native story of the massacre by blacks of Sturt's party, a report which Grey unhesitatingly repeated to Stanley ; who in May 1845 expresses pleasure at learning that these fears were groundless, and that the expedition was proceeding ' very satisfactorily.' The legend probably originated with Mitchell's old affray, which Sturt found still fresh in the memory of the Darling tribes; or in the recent murder of Darke when exploring near Port Lincoln.

To his friend Torrens Sturt purposely wrote in a cheery vein: 'We seem on the high road to success, with mountains and seas before us.... We have strange birds of beautiful plumage, and new plants, and shall soon be in the thick of our work.... It will be a joyous day for us to launch on an unknown sea and run away towards the tropics.' Mrs. Sturt, when copying this for his brother, adds the caution: This report is not from my Charley's observation of the distant country, but from that of his assistant Mr. Poole.

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<sup>1</sup> Sturt describes his camp at Cawndilla, 'about half a mile up the creek,' as shaded by gum-trees and banksias, and affording abundance of good feed. If nearer the settled districts, this place would be of great value as a station.' And Haverfield in 1861 writes (in the *Bendigo Advertiser*) of the rapid development within sixteen years of the adjacent Menindi, on the Darling, about 180 miles above the junction of that river with the Murray. 'Menindi is an important outpost and at no distant period will become a depot for a large tract of country. A road must soon be opened thence to Booligall on the Lachlan, whence there is a beaten track to Hay on the Murrumbidgee. From Hay, coaches ply three times a week to Deniliquin, and by this route the stock and produce of the Upper Darling and its back country will be brought down to the Victorian markets. Cadell, by his scheme for canalising the Darling, will provide water-communication between Menindi and Adelaide. Between those points, the invincible energy of South Australian squatters is opening up a very practicable overland route. As they advance, they water by means of deep wells the hitherto waste country. . . .

'This locality will ever be famous in the annals of exploration ; but Captain Sturt has thrown the most light on the region to the north and north-west of Menindi. The chivalrous Eyre had previously penetrated to Lake Torrens, and the indomitable Stuart has since *very* nearly crossed the continent. Both of them would however admit that to Sturt belongs the great honour of having opened the door to the vast central regions of Australia. Stuart has undoubtedly been guided by the knowledge he obtained under his former commander.'

No one here expects good news of a good country. Nothing but desert for my beloved to toil through; and no water to ease his labours. This you will judge from his letter to me written in a more sober strain

'We have been very watchful, having heard constant reports of the massacre of fifteen white people at a lagoon on the Darling. I now find that this refers to an old affair with Major Mitchell. We have passed on the most friendly terms with the natives, they show perfect confidence and bring their youngest children to our camp. If we remain stationary however they may collect and become formidable; I am therefore busy building a stockade that my men may be secure during my absence. The natives give a fearful account of the distant interior but not worse than I expected. They shake their heads at me when I tell them I must go. In truth I believe it to be a fearful desert, the bed of a former channel between better lands, and in my attempt to penetrate it I can only trust to Providence.

I hope to gain a distance of 350 miles from this place, by sending on supplies of water to distant points, and taking in the light spring-cart a full supply for sixteen days. To the perilous enterprise of crossing the desert all my energies will be bent; and if I succeed, I trust that I may never leave my home again. I take Mr. Browne and Flood with two horses only and the cart; so two of us will ride while one walks, and we expect to go thirty miles a day. I cannot but think that we may yet be stopped by an inland sea; for we are now no more than 215 feet above sea-level, and the country dips to the northwest.... Browne is a very nice young fellow and of great assistance to me. Poole is far from strong and is not by any means calculated for such a journey as this. Davenport and Flood are very attentive.'

Sturt's reconnaissance with Browne and Flood proved much shorter than he anticipated.

The hopes raised by Poole's description were quickly dispelled; for a view from the summit of the Coonbaralba (or Broken Hill) range: much higher than the hills visited by Poole-revealed nothing cheering. Everything below was dark and dreary, nor was there any sign of a creek to take us to the north-west.

Moreover Topar, the native guide, proved a broken reed. From the time the explorers entered upon the hills and passes, Topar showed alarm bordering on frenzy; he kept shouting "kerno, kerno" (rocks, rocks), and would insist that we should all be killed.' From no apparent motive except that of sheer terror, and from anxiety to deter his friends from certain death, this lad turned them out of their way, and guided them to water that even the horses refused! Other pools were bitter to the taste; and the water when boiled was often inky-black from the decoction of gum-tree leaves. Fortunately, near one waterless camp on the 22nd Sturt's despairing search up a dry creek resulted in the discovery of a beautiful serpentine pond eighty yards long. As abundant grass grew near this pool, Sturt attained his present object of finding a more advanced base to which he might move the Cawndilla camp. Not however without much difficulty, and severe toil in deepening some intermediate native wells, did Sturt succeed in getting his cattle and drays up to his oasis of 'Parnari'.

From this base, the first five days of November were employed 'in taking bearings from the highest points of the range, in following down the creek which proved waterless but for one other small pool, and in preparing for a second. excursion from the camp.'

To contend with the great obstacle-want of water a tank was made and sent forward a day or two in advance. The tank, however, burst on the first day's journey from jolting over rocky ground. Notwithstanding this disaster,

Sturt and Browne with two men accomplished a fatiguing but important examination of the ranges; ascertaining the point of water-parting, and discovering in a certain rocky gully a delicious supply of water sufficient to relieve immediate anxiety for the animals. They also beheld the westward termination of the ranges where 'the distant horizon from south-west to north-west presented an unbroken level. . . . The country now in sight however far exceeded in barrenness that through which we had passed. In this view I saw realised all that I had imagined of the interior, and felt assured that before me lay a task of extreme difficulty.'

On November 9 and 10 the horsemen struck across the plains to the north-north-west, still keeping up their bearings with the higher points of the range. Late on the 10th the presence of 'diamond birds' (*Amandina Castanotus*) and other hopeful signs encouraged them to dig in the bed of a dry creek, with the result of a good supply. During the operations 'some of these birds were bold enough to perch on the spade. In a low *Banksia* we had seen a number of their nests containing eggs or young birds. They are of gregarious habit and hatch in November and December. . . . This pretty bird, more numerous perhaps than any other in the interior, to us was ever the harbinger of good ; for never did its note fall on our ears but we were sure to find water nigh at hand....' The gravelly bed of this creek was also brilliant with the *Clianthus Dampierii* in magnificent bloom; and in the gum-trees nested the *Cacatua Leadbeaterii*, of white plumage with light red under the wings, and with large sulphur and scarlet crest. They frequent pine forests; and here too surely they indicated the explorers' approach to a region of sand-ridges clothed with pine, and separated by flats of red clay.

Sturt's object now was 'to attain as soon as possible the meridian of Mount Arden, and on a westerly course to strike, or, by good hap, altogether to clear the north-east angle of Lake Torrens. Eyre had seen no northern shore; the lake then might be connected with some more central body of water, and the early discovery of such a feature would facilitate my future operations. But meantime, though the sand-ridges in places yielded to better country with fine grassy flats, water was not to be found; nor did a view from the highest trees reveal any better promise.

As in any case the horses must now be three days without water, Sturt at sunset on November 12 began his retreat to the well dug in the Cockatoo Creek, where he arrived by 4 P.M. on the 13th. In fierce heat, with the midday thermometer at 117° in the shade, on the 15th they regained the ranges.

Heavy rain that night so changed the country that from the hills Sturt now beheld the plains 'flashing in the light of waters,' and regretted his forced retreat. He hastened back with all speed to headquarters, so that Poole with fresh horses might avail himself of the improved circumstances. Browne by special request rode forth again with Poole, and, guided by Sturt's explicit instructions, the two made an important reconnaissance of thirteen days' duration, from November 20 to December 2.

From their furthest point on a west-north-west course, these gentlemen saw before them two lakes in sandy beds connected by a dry channel. The lakes ran about three miles from north to south; their water was brackish and would probably dry up in summer. Beyond these lakes rose three remarkable peaks, similar to those noted by Eyre. Sturt comments that Poole 'had clearly struck either the lower part of Lake Torrens or some similar feature. But although a westerly course was as yet closed by the want of surface water, the immense number of bitterns, cranes, and other aquatic birds flushed near the lakes led me still to hope for larger waters in the north-west.

During the absence of his friends, Sturt had succeeded, in spite of many obstacles, in bringing up his camp and heavy teams over the ranges and along the plains as far as the Cockatoo Creek, in which he had made the men sink a tank. With all precautions however the water dried alarmingly under a series of hot winds.

Poole and Browne returned late on December 2. Flood, sent on the 4th to search for water, returned on the 7th with the welcome news that, forty miles to the north, 'he had found a beautiful little creek, with long deep water-holes shaded by gum-trees and surrounded by abundance of grass.' But for this opportune discovery, the rapid drying of the Cockatoo gully would have forced the party to retreat within a few days. During the three days of Flood's absence, notwithstanding a heat that never fell below 96° and that rose daily to 112° and 125° in the shade, work went on busily. A new base-line was run and measured to correct any error in the bearings. Stores were carefully examined and the rations of tea and sugar were further reduced in consequence of the loss of weight. In view of the frequent relays of horses required in the incessant search for water, the horse-team was done away; and the loads were redistributed among the bullocks.

On December 9 all moved forward; Sturt taking last bearings from hills in which he had noted remarkable masses of iron ore, and had found specimens of tourmaline. The forty-mile journey was fortunately broken by a small pool about halfway, which enabled the party to reach Flood's Creek by an easy stage next day (December 10). Here water and feed were for the time abundant; the usual grasses were varied by native cereals, 'a wheat, oat, and rye' of great nutritive value. But not a day was lost; on the 11th Poole and Browne were sent with a fortnight's provisions to the north-east.

On the 13th Sturt with Stuart and Flood crossed the ranges eastward to explore towards the Darling as far as Mount Lyell, which they laboriously ascended. This excursion only showed that however bad a country the travellers had passed, that towards the Darling was still worse. Hardly any water was found during three days of severe toil, and on the 16th the party returned to camp. The drays needed repair, the wheels having shrunk from heat. The thermometer now rose daily in the shade to 112°, 116°, and 118°; in the sun to 140° and 150°.

Poole and Browne returned on the 25th; they had found good water, but at a distance of forty miles, and 'as to its permanence, Poole was more sanguine than Browne.' Sturt hesitated to advance at the risk of finding retreat cut off by the failure of water in the rear. But he did not hesitate long. Under the fierce heat that supply would already be precarious—even Flood's creek was sensibly diminished. With the first breath of cooler wind, at 4 P.m. on the 28th he struck tents and pushed northward.

By a slight error in Poole's bearings, the teams unfortunately became involved in a pine forest on sandridges. In vain did the men urge their bullocks over the deep loose sand; the moment they had topped one, another rose before them. Seeing how they suffered, I called a halt. Poole and Stuart were sent forward with the spare horses and sheep to gain relief as soon as possible.' Sturt and Browne doubled the teams and abandoned two drays; but even so, progress was hopeless. The bullocks were completely worn out and refused to pull. To save them therefore it was necessary to unyoke and drive them to water. . . . Telling the men with the sheep (who had stopped within half a mile) to follow on our tracks, we left the drays at 6 P.M. (on 29th). . . . At dusk we cleared the ridges and crossed open plains. At half

past ten, by moonlight, we again moved on. . . . At midnight one bullock fell; another fell two hours later; but these were our only casualties.' At 3 A.M. on the 30th, a fire guided Sturt to Davenport and Cowley on the creek bank. They had lost Poole and had not found water!

Fortunately Poole was soon tracked; and though his lagoon was muddy and full of frogs, the animals were saved. Morgan, with a spare horse, was at once sent back to the drays to bring up and fill casks for the men in rear (with whom Sturt had left ten gallons of water). He was also to fetch from the drays supplies to the party at the creek. But night fell, 'bitterly cold' after the day's fierce heat-with no news of the messenger. Nor was the manner of his return consoling.

At ten next morning (the 31st) Sturt, while circumventing some building rats, saw Morgan ride up to the water, fling himself on the ground, and drink, as if for very life. Of pack-horse, casks, or food, no sign! Morgan, when returning from the drays, had stopped to let his horses feed; and, overcome by sleep, had woken to find them gone! He was forced to leave everything and to walk - till, near the creek, he overtook his saddle-horse. The men at the drays had consumed their last drop, and he found them already in great straits. Flood was at once sent for Morgan's derelict casks and provisions, but did not return till late. Sturt then, with two men and the strongest of the bullocks, set out for the pine forest to relieve the distressed party and to bring up two of the drays. By a forced march that night and by repeated journeys for water, he brought the harassed men and cattle safely through this critical adventure.

Not till 3 A.M. on January 2 did the first two drays reach the creek, 'men and cattle fairly worn out.' Only two days could be spared for rest. The teams then were sent to bring in the last drays. In all, the bullocks had completed a task of about 170 miles in eight days.

Their sufferings from heat in the close scrub were dreadful; they vainly pawed the heated ground to get to a cool bottom. The men's shoes were burnt as if by fire, and their backs blistered. The dogs lost the skin off the soles of their feet: poor Fingal, one of the best, perished on the way.

Amidst the sufferings of the other animals, the sheep thrived exceedingly. They were quite fat, and their fleeces were as white as snow.' The 6th and 7th were spent in wedging up and greasing the drays, which were again out of repair. But the lagoon was fast drying; officers and men were ill from the bad water; and, on the evening of the 7th, Sturt pushed eight miles further to Poole's vaunted water-hole. This bivouac was not reached till 10 P.M., when in the darkness the party would have missed the water but for the hoarse notes of a bullfrog.

An inspection of the stores now showed 10 per cent loss of weight in the flour; whereupon the ration was reduced to seven pounds a week.

On January 11 they arrived at the more important camping-ground selected by Poole for its promise of safe water-supply. But even since his first visit, the broad sheet of water had diminished ominously; and now a glance assured Sturt that this wide but shallow lagoon would only too soon dry up. At this anxious crisis Sturt and Browne rode forth on a long and close survey which further convinced them of the alarming decrease in all the available water-holes. But on the first day's ride, some four miles from the camp, the explorers crossed an important tributary creek coming from the westward, where Sturt noted that it broke through hills likely to prove a reservoir of waters. Poole was specially directed to follow up that tributary to its cradle in the hills, and in so doing discovered the plenteous springhead of the Rocky Glen, where for the next six months the travellers found refuge from the deadly drought.

Sturt and Browne meantime rode hard for twelve days, scouring the country far and near; making toilsome ascents of adamantine ranges-crossing desert plains-depending for water on muddy holes to which they were led by pigeons or cockatoos. They suffered intolerable annoyance from flies by day and ants by night. 'The latter truly swarmed in myriads. They worked under our covering, and, creeping all over us, banished sleep. The flies began their attacks at early dawn; and alike in dense brush, on open plain, or on bare mountain, were equally numerous and troublesome.'

From lat. 29° 43' S. and long. 141° 14' E. (with variation 5° 21' E.), they rode for two more days to the north-east without noting one cheering feature. Still however should I have persevered in exploring that hopeless region but for my anxiety as to the straits to which the camp must have been put.

Accordingly, the leaders on returning to camp, January 24, found that the lagoon had vanished. The men drew a precarious supply from a hole dug in the creek; and the cattle were driven to a neighbouring pond which they had all but exhausted. But for the success of Poole's mission, the only course left open would have been instant retreat upon the Darling at an irreparable sacrifice of animals.' Sturt now lost no time in moving his camp to the springs in the hills.

On January 27 he and Poole, following up the creek into the Rocky Glen, were delighted by the change of scenery. Close to a long sheet of water shaded by trees and cliffs we pitched our tents, little imagining that in that lonely spot we were destined to remain for six weary months.

'We were not yet aware that our advance and our retreat were alike cut off.'

## CHAPTER XV

*JANUARY-AUGUST 1845*

THE DEPOT GLEN--THE KITES-RECONNOITRING PARTIES EFFECTS OF HEAT-  
 A NATIVE VISITOR-DEPARTURE OF BIRDS-FIRST RAIN-THE RELEASE-  
 DEATH OF POOLE-DIVISION OF PARTY-FORT GREY-LAKE BLANCHE

THE tents pitched in the Depot Glen on January 27, 1845, ' were not again struck till the 17th of the following July. Not until we had run down every creek, and traversed the country in every direction, did the truth flash across my mind that we were locked up in this desolate and heated region as effectually as if we were ice-bound at the Pole. Long indeed was it ere I could bring myself to believe that so great a misfortune had befallen us. This ruinous detention paralysed the expedition, and enervated the strength of both men and animals. . . .'

Yet for the present Sturt's mind was relieved ; his oasis supplied grass and water, and his party was safe. They were encamped on a fine lagoon; round a smaller one to the south-east was good pasture, and the gully contained other pools in rocky basins. The course of the creek was shaded by gum-trees. In lat. 29° 40' 14" S. and long. 141° 30' 41" E., the camp was about twentyfive miles north of the latitude of Mount Hopeless, which bore west by south of it; and about 120 miles from the eastern shore of the supposed Lake Torrens (really Lake Blanche, see p. 259) and about

two prominent landmarks were the Red Hill (afterwards called Mount Poole), which, at three and a half miles to the north-north-west, rose from an undulating stony plain of salsolaceous herbage ; and, at ten miles to the south-south-east across level sandy plains and brush, the Black Hill. To the westward, the vast level was shut out by the low range through which the Depot Creek forces its way ; and eastward lay a hilly country.

Within a few days of their arrival at the Depot, several of the party complained of illness. Browne had a serious attack, which however he soon threw off. The men showed rheumatic symptoms, as did Sturt himself; but in his case violent pains, attributed to a long course of sleeping on hard ground, proved to be harbingers of 'a more fearful malady than the worst rheumatism.' These troubles did not deter him from constant exertion.

Sturt and Browne returning on February 5 from a forty-mile ride-in a heat of  $117^{\circ}$  in the shade, and under the 'parching blast of a hot wind-when out in the plain noticed high overhead a number of small black specks. In an incredibly short time we were surrounded by several hundreds of the common kite (*Milvus of nis*), swooping down to within a few feet of us, and turning away after having eyed us steadily. Several of them came so close that, to avoid contact, they threw themselves back, opening their beaks and spreading their talons. These birds had a most formidable aspect, and were too numerous for us to have overpowered them if they had really attacked us. That they came down in the hope of prey there can be no doubt; but, seeing that we were likely to prove formidable antagonists, they wheeled from us in wide sweeps, and were soon lost to view.'

When not in the saddle, Sturt was always busy on his charts and journals; but to obviate the difficulty caused by the rapid drying of ink and colours, an underground room was built for work. This proved of great

comfort, being seven to eight degrees cooler than the outer air.

To detail the many and distant excursions carried out by Sturt and his comrades during the first months of their imprisonment is beyond our scope. Yet nothing short of detail can do justice to the indomitable endurance displayed, or to the ingenious arrangements for throwing forward to remote points supplies of water wherewith to fight the increasing drought.

Poole, when riding with Sturt on February 7, fell ill. They brought him back to camp, whence he never was able to stir again. From this time his condition was so serious that Sturt and Browne could rarely both be absent together. Stuart meantime proved daily more valuable as an assistant, no less from his knowledge of survey work than from his true bushman's instinct.

From February 9 to 22 he was out with Sturt and two men on an extensive survey to the north and west. This trying journey, largely performed on foot, was carried so far northwards as to the 28th parallel and to within seventeen miles of the 141st meridian; the extreme westward limit being lat.  $28^{\circ} 56'$  and long.  $140^{\circ} 54'$ .

From the furthest known water (at the so-called Muddy Creek'), casks, and a sixty-nine-gallon tank of 'thick and putrid' liquid were deposited at wide intervals along the desert track as a precaution for the return. The creeks so lately found fit for bivouacs were now almost quite dry. Sturt and Cowley alone on foot, in a heat of  $119^{\circ}$ , encountered sand-ridges 'thickly matted with spinifex through which it was painful to tread. There was no grass in this terrible place-one of the most gloomy regions that ever man traversed. The stillness of death reigned around; no living creature but the ant inhabited that dreary desert.' Driven back from the north, they followed down to the west the Depot Creek, which at first promised well, with good pools near which,

round native huts, the harvested nardoo grass (Lindley's *Panicum levinode*) was spread to ripen in the sun.

The creek at last ran out in a large plain beyond which, for eight miles, spread a 'Grassy Park' in such verdure of tree-groups and waving grass as to rejoice the waste-worn travellers. The strictest search revealed no outlet from this rich hollow ; and within less than a mile the dreaded sand-ridges began again. That day, says Sturt, from morning to night, the heat was as great as ever man endured. The thermometer, in the shade at 132°, rose in the sun to 157°. Only once before had the heat approached to this; 'nor did I think that either man or beast could have lived under it.'

This discouraging survey far to the north and west impressed' Sturt with a true sense of his isolation. 'Having failed to discover any change of country, or the means of penetrating further, I sat down quietly at my post to abide the result, and to trust that Providence would release me when He thought best.'

About this time, thousands of birds which had hitherto enlivened the glen departed. Parrots, pigeons, bitterns, cockatoos, ' all passed away in a single day-the line of migration being directly to the north-west, from which quarter came small flights of ducks and pelicans.'

Early in March Poole had a sudden attack which kept Sturt and Browne in close attendance; but this was followed by so favourable a rally that the two leaders spent ten days, from March 12 to 21, in examining the country to the east and north-east. The fatigues they underwent developed in both Sturt and Browne painful symptoms of scurvy-a disease whose first insidious approach both had already borne in silence. Poole's continued sufferings were due to the same cause. 'For myself,' says Sturt,' I at once took double precautions and was thankful that I did not become worse. As Browne did not complain, I had every hope that he too succeeded in arresting the progress of

this fearful distemper. Of the three, Poole suffered most, and gradually declined in health. 'That the officers only should be thus attacked Sturt attributes to their constant absence from camp and consequent dependence on salted provisions, whereas the men were living on fresh mutton. Of the men taken out, the same two were seldom chosen for two consecutive journeys; but for the officers there was no respite.'

Beyond the Darling very few natives had appeared, though near Cawndilla one was seen hollowing out a canoe with a stone axe, and Topar, the guide in the ranges, delighted Sturt by his fleetness in running down a couple of wild dogs.

Huts of a substantial build, carefully turned from the prevalent south-east winds, skilfully thatched with grass and leaves and coated with clay, were found empty on the plains. The rare specimens of humanity now encountered were in miserable plight, living on cakes made from grass and gobero seed, eked out with an occasional talpero or lizard hunted out of the sandhills. These poor wretches were in great straits for water, and assured the explorers that neither to the south nor to the east did a drop remain-'the sun had taken it all.'

Indeed it was found impossible to ascertain the dew-point. In the underground room 'the thermometer stood at 78° Fahr., but we could not reduce the moist bulb below 49°. For nearly four months we had not had rain; nor had we, during our stay at the Depot, ever experienced a dew. During the months of December, January, and February, the mean of the thermometer in the shade had been 101°, 104°, and 101°. The ground was thoroughly heated to the depth of three or four feet; and the tremendous heat had parched all vegetation. Under its effects every screw in our boxes had been drawn, . . . horn handles and combs were split into fine laminae.

The lead dropped out of our pencils, . . . our hair as well as the sheep's wool ceased to grow, and our nails became as brittle as glass. The flour lost more than 8 per cent of its original weight, and the other provisions wasted in still greater proportion. The bran round the bacon was saturated and weighed almost as heavy as the meat; we were obliged to bury our wax candles. Browne's bottle of citric acid became liquid, and we found it difficult to write or draw, so rapidly did the fluid dry in our pens and brushes. Had not a cooler season set in, I do not think many of us could much longer have survived.'

Sturt was convinced of the value of steady employment, however monotonous, alike for himself and for his men. When distant rides were not possible, survey work on a more limited scale was still carried on. Gardening was not forgotten; though, alas! most of the seeds planted in the creek-bed were scorched on their appearance above ground. In mid-April, the sight of dense clouds and the sound of thunder in the west, with a shifting wind, raised futile hopes. On the chance that rain might have fallen to the west-north-west, Sturt, Browne, and Flood pushed to a distance of sixty-eight miles from water; and after drinking nothing for two days, were fain to quench thirst at muddy dregs which Sturt found 'too thick to swallow, though Browne managed to drink a pint of it made into tea. It fell like thick cream over the pannikin, and stuck like pipeclay to the horses' noses.'

On their 'return (April 23) from this disappointing journey, the explorers found Poole seriously worse. In spite of all that could be done for him under those trying conditions, he continued to lose ground, and by the beginning of May was wholly unable to stir from his bed. The dread of moving him in this helpless state lent a terror even to the idea of possible liberation. Nothing could exceed Browne's 'constancy and kindness in alleviating Poole's sufferings by every plan which skill or

sympathy could suggest.' All the medicines available had already been used for his benefit.

On May 11 a solitary lean old native suddenly came to the camp. 'Half dead with hunger and thirst, he drank copiously, and then ate as much as would have served me for four-and-twenty dinners.' Then, rolling himself up, in a blanket, he fell fast asleep. He gave information which revived Sturt's visions of a sea within measurable distance. He understood the use of the boat,' and pointed to the north-west as the quarter in which we should need her. In those waters, he said, were fish too large to get through the meshes of the sheep-net, which he mistook for a fishing-net.

'Pointing from west-north-west round to the eastward of north, he explained that large waves higher than his head broke upon the shore. Of the fish in Sir T. Mitchell's work, he knew only the cod. Of the fish in Cuvier's works, he recognised the hippocampus, the turtle, and several sea-fish. On the pictures of snakes he put his hands very cautiously, withdrawing them suddenly as if he expected to be bitten, and showing great wonder at feeling nothing but paper. In a week he departed, promising to return, but he was never seen again. I confess he raised my hopes, and made me again anxious for the moment of liberation ; but when that time was to come God only knew. . . .

'A gloomy silence now reigned in the camp. Gradually we had been forsaken by every beast of the field and every fowl of the air. We had witnessed a second migration (of later broods) to that point whither we were so anxious to push our way. Cockatoos, parrots, pigeons, bitterns; birds also whose notes had cheered us in the wilderness, all had taken the same high road to some more hospitable region. The vegetable kingdom was at a stand. Our animals had laid bare the ground for miles, and never came near the camp but to drink. The axe

had made an ugly gap among the gum-trees. Day by day we watched the fearful diminution of the water on which our lives depended. Originally nine feet deep, it now scarce measured two; and it only occupied a narrow central line in the channel formerly filled from bank to bank.

Almost heart-broken, Browne and I seldom left our tents save to visit our sick companion.' Brown himself was suffering severely, but in silence. He used to swing on the acacia branches to exercise his muscles and to relax their growing rigidity.

Poole at this time suggested the erection of stations for bearings on the Red and Black Hills. To humour his friend and to vary the men's occupations, Sturt assented; and thus was founded the cairn on Mount Poole. 'I little thought when engaged on that work that I was erecting Poole's monument, but so it was. That rude structure looks over his lonely grave, and will stand for ages as a record of all we suffered in the dreary region to which we were so long confined.'

The ominous dwindling of the stores convinced Sturt that, unless on the first fall of rain he were to retreat, and so to abandon any fruit of his long toil, he must send back to Adelaide all but nine of the party. He carefully calculated that this change of plan would enable him to carry on his researches till the end of December. Poor Poole was much affected at the thought of the parting; but he saw the urgency of the measure and was resigned.

Preparations were begun in mid-June, though there were no signs of a change. The dray-wheels were with great trouble again wedged up; the supplies for both parties weighed out and separately arranged, those for the explorers being made as compact as possible.

For Poole's benefit a dray was specially lined with sheep-skins and covered with a flannel tilt, the nights being again very cold. (The thermometer had fallen at night to 24°-a difference of 133° between the extremes of summer heat and winter cold.)

summer heat and winter cold.) A swing cot was also made, with pulleys to ease the sick man by change of position. Stuart and Piesse, with a chaining party, measured for thirty miles, on a bearing of 55° to the west of north, the line on which the party was to move.

July opened with more cloudy weather and stronger hope of change. Poole, after signs of improvement, now relapsed with an attack of severe inflammation, which left him restless. He insisted on being moved to the underground room, where, to counteract the night-cold, Sturt had a chimney built by July 12. On that day, as Poole was being carried along, the first drops of rain fell ! They amounted to little more than mist ; but this hung about all night, and on the following evening steady rain set in. 'How thankful was I for the change!' cries Sturt. 'All night it poured, and at dawn the ripple of waters in the gully was a sweeter sound than the softest melody I ever heard. The creek next morning had risen five inches; the moment of liberation had come !'

Sturt lost no time in making up for the Governor, as well as for Cooper, Eyre, and other friends, a budget of despatches and private letters, of which a few, full of interesting details, throw additional light on the published journals. His little son was not forgotten; in a long letter, after a few simple precepts, he commends to the boy 'three beautiful pigeons,' and sundry bulbs and seeds to be planted as soon as possible. 'I hope by-and-by to get into a better country, and to return to you happier than I am now.' <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Nicholls who, as Miss Conway, helped Miss Cooper to work the flag for Sturt's expedition, and spent with Mrs. Sturt at Grange the anxious months of the explorer's absence, tells how that mail from the heart of the desert came to his family like a message from the dead. 'Together, late into the night, his wife and I read the awful perils through which he had passed, till at last I retired to bed, thinking Mrs. Sturt would do the same. Next morning, however, I found her where I had left her over-night, but with swollen eyes and whitened hair, which told too *surely* of the intense suffering caused by the narrative of her husband's dangers.'

In this packet Sturt also sent his diaries; and, after a touching parting from Poole, on 14th 'the homeward-bound party mustered to leave us.' The sick man, when lifted on a stretcher into the dray, seemed gratified at the arrangements for his comfort. Browne accompanied him on the first day's journey, rejoining Sturt on the 16th with a report of their friend's 'tolerable spirits, and with every hope of his gradual improvement.' Alas, that same evening came the tidings that Poole was no more 'Scarcely had Browne left him, when, rising to take medicine, he suddenly felt himself dying, and, falling back, expired without a struggle. . . . On the 17th the party, so lately separated, were reassembled at the depot. Poole was laid to rest under a Grevillia, in the bark of which was cut "J. P., 1845," and he now sleeps in the desert.'

Piesse was then put in charge of the home-returning party, while Sturt proceeded to the north-west, and fixed his next depot at the Grassy Park already referred to, henceforth called Fort Grey. By the end of the month the party was safely established here, and protected by a stockade from any unforeseen attack.

Leaving orders to build a stockyard for herding the cattle at night, and to plant out pumpkins and melons in a 'garden,' Sturt now rode westward with Browne and Flood, determined if possible to turn Lake Torrens. Surface water, at first plentiful, failed as they advanced. In spite of hot winds from the north-east the nights were cold, to the point of thick hoar frost on August 3. The explorers soon came into a region of salt lakes.

Two creeks which they now crossed (the first in a distance of more than 100 miles)-one 'salt, with deep clear pools of brine,' the other fortunately fresh-were in fact the double outlet of 'Strzelecki Creek,' though not so recognised by Sturt when a few weeks later he 'discovered' and named the upper stream, itself then a mere chain of ponds, and at best but a branch of 'Cooper's

Creek.' Here the water-hens (*Tribonyx*) were running about in numbers. On the 4th further progress westward was checked by a vast shallow and sandy basin, containing sheets of deep blue water as salt as brine. 'Stretching southward beyond the range of vision, it turned to the westward in a northerly direction in the shape of Lake Torrens as laid down by Eyre.' Sturt, in fact, stood on the margin of Lake Blanche, one of the many salt lakes of what may be called the Torrens basin.

We note nowadays wistfully the small space covered by the twin Lakes Blanche and Gregory, as compared with the vast horseshoe of the early maps, and the short distance which separated Sturt from the lower waters of Cooper's Creek, and from a north-westerly track to the better country of Stuart's later explorations. Indeed, but for the encumbrance of the drays, the expedition might from this point have taken a different turn, and might have achieved results of more immediate value. But streams which figure well on modern maps are still liable to fail in years of drought. Cooper's Creek itself is subject to these caprices ; nor is the Warburton, the Alberga, or the Finke infallible.

In that exceptionally dry year the country to the north-west of Lake Blanche was 'perfectly impracticable,' the lake bed impassable, nor did a careful survey reveal any passage either to the south or to the north-east. Time pressed, the surface water was drying up rapidly, and a hasty and almost waterless ride back to Fort Grey proved to Sturt the hopelessness of attempting to bring the drays across the intervening desert.

## CHAPTER XVI

*AUGUST 1845-FEBRUARY 1846*

STRZELECKI CREEK-STONY DESERT-EYRE'S CREEK-` STURT'S FURTHEST  
 '-COOPER'S CREEK-THE STONY DESERT AGAIN-DESPERATE RETREAT-  
 NATIVE HOSPITALITY-THE DESERTED STOCKADE--STURT FALLS ILL-  
 HARRIS-BROWNE TO THE RESCUE-NIGHT MARCHES-PLAINS OF THE  
 DARLING.

STURT now turned all his attention to an important journey to the north-west, on the results of which hung his final success or failure. Browne must accompany him, also Flood, Lewis, and Cowley, with provisions for fifteen weeks, and all but one of the horses now reduced by three months of only salsolaceous diet to poor condition. Morgan received parting instructions 'to prepare and paint the boat in the event of her being required.'

At 9 A.M. on August 14, 1845, the explorers left the Fort Grey Depot,<sup>1</sup> to run on a north-north-west course, and to beat to the westward whenever an opportunity should offer. My object was to ascertain the supposed existence of a chain of mountains traversing the continent from north-east to south-west, and, to solve this question, no course could have been better. No rain had fallen since July 14; nearly all surface water was therefore evaporated by the heat, and what remained was like a decoction of jalap. Nevertheless, being uncertain how far I might be

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<sup>1</sup> Letter to MacLeay, February 8, 1846

from any more permanent supply, I dug wells at stated intervals to secure my retreat. It was well that I did so, for we travelled eighty-six miles before we struck on a good-sized creek coming from the north (Strzelecki Creek). In it were wild fowl out of shot on a pool from two to 300 yards long. I was destined on my retreat to drain out of that pool the last drop of *mud*.<sup>1</sup>

The various other branches of the Cooper Delta, now laid down as the Leichhardt, Maclaren, and O'Halloran Creeks, were crossed by Sturt and Browne between the larger channels of Strzelecki and Cooper. On the 20th, and again on the 22nd of August, they crossed successive bends of Cooper's Creek itself, though the bed was too dry for Sturt to recognise its full importance. Yet he was struck by the fine trees which overhung this watercourse, by the numerous native paths along its banks, and by the decidedly better aspect of the country. A pool in this dry channel yielded silver perch like those of the Murray, a phenomenon puzzling to Sturt, but now explained by the identity of the pool-bed with a river so full of fish as Cooper's Creek. In these dry channels diligent search generally revealed some pool or native well. After crossing on August 23 the last creek of this delta, the travellers rode for two and a half days through grassy and promising country. Here a few natives were seen; one in full war-paint threatened them furiously because they had camped at a muddy but coveted waterhole!

This smiling district ended suddenly at a wall of sand directly across their course, which proved to be the boundary of a dreadful region. For twenty miles we toiled over stupendous and almost insurmountable sandridges of a fiery red, and after struggling over them and

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<sup>1</sup> This fine creek, discovered by Sturt on August 17, 1845, and named by him after the traveller Strzelecki, had been already crossed by him on August 3, at its feeble outlet to Lake Blanche. See *supra*, p. 258.

over the soft bed of a dry salt lagoon from 11 A.M. to 7 P.M., we were obliged to stop in a waterless hollow.'

Fortunately, an anxious search disclosed good water and grass three miles to the north-west. While the animals rested, Sturt and Browne from a high sand-ridge beheld for the first time that Stony Desert which was in the end to baffle them. 'The sandy ridges, like headlands projecting into the sea, abutted upon an immense plain, where, but for a line of low trees far to the north-east, and one bright red sandhill shining in the sunlight, not a feature broke the dead level, the gloomy purple hue. . . Not a blade of vegetation grew on this forbidding plain. It was covered with stones from four to eight inches long of indurated quartz rounded by attrition and coated with oxide of iron, the rock of which D'Urban's group and all the northern ranges are composed.' . . . The party, after plodding for two days over this 'adamantine plain, on which the horses left no track,' emerged upon a second desert, 'like a vast ploughed field, on which inundations have gradually subsided.' Thankful for dregs of muddy water, they spent a wretched night, with the thermometer at freezing point ! The dreaded sand-ridges now rose again in formidable array. Their extraordinary uniformity of direction, 'at an angle of  $340^{\circ}$ , or of  $20^{\circ}$  to the west of north,' only deviating on the south-east margin of the Stony Desert to about  $18^{\circ}$  to the west of north, led Sturt to ingenious theories as to the set of the current which had perhaps once washed this 'lowest portion of the interior.'

Here in lat.  $25^{\circ}$  and long. 139' he at last gave up his long-cherished dream of the inland sea. 'I no longer encouraged hopes of the proximity of a sea which probably once existed on this very ground. I was angry with myself for putting faith in the statements of the old man at the depot.'

August 28 a thin column of smoke from a box

tree forest led the party to a native camp, where troughs and grinding-stones showed the harvesting and grinding of the box or gobero seed. In contrast to the lifeless desert just quitted, the scene was here enlivened by numerous birds. They proved harbingers of good, and ere nightfall an unusually large native well was found in' a dry creek. Yet this deep hole held little water, and even that was brackish. With horses already flagging, the explorers were forced next day to push over such a plain, says Sturt, 'as I believe man never crossed before. The surface was so rent and torn by heat, that the horses' hind feet were constantly slipping into chasms eight to ten feet deep, into which the earth fell rumbling as into a grave.'

While crossing these plains Sturt and Browne heard two loud detonations 'as of a great gun discharged half a mile to the westward.' These explosions are now known to be caused by the fall of large masses of rock from the MacDonnell and other precipitous ranges of the central highlands ; the rocks being split by the alternate expansion and contraction of extreme day-heat and night-cold. Sturt little thought that here was a salute from that 'better country' of his dreams which truly lies near the tropic to the north-westward.

Browne and the men were now ailing. At the first available water—a shallow muddy pond—a day's rest was found needful for all. From this camp Flood's horse broke away in the night and was not recovered.

On August 31 a distressing journey over rent plains, followed by a waterless camp, placed the party in a critical position. The country to the west became worse and worse. The surface water, at best disgusting, now became so scarce that I felt serious apprehensions for our retreat. What I call ponds were mere hollows containing dregs thick and black.'

On September 3, the cheering sight of grass to replace the dreadful spinifex,

revived better hopes, and through promising country the party now pushed forward, drawing up on the banks of a fine creek from the north-west (Eyre's Creek).<sup>1</sup>

For three days they made good progress, following up this channel more than sixty miles to lat. 24° 53' and long. 138° 22' 30", where it failed, or rather, as Sturt writes to his friend, 'we reached its head in an extensive plain surrounded on all sides by sand-ridges. Here, by way of variety, everything was *salt*.. Gigantic blood-red ridges of sand, clothed with spinifex, rose from narrow valleys dark with salsolaceous bushes. Amidst these lay snow-white beds of salt lagoons, while salty creeks wound like huge serpents through the gloomy landscape.'

Such was the cheerless view from a dismal and waterless bivouac on September 6 at a sandhill sixteen miles beyond Eyre's Creek.<sup>2</sup> 'From an attempt to advance to the north-north-west I was forced back to the creek for water. Using as the centre of my movements the last pond on that creek, I then tried first to the west, and next to the north-east, but without success. Turning once more to the north, I got as far as south lat. 24° 40' and long. 138', thus gaining a position on the verge of the tropics, and within 150 miles of the centre of Australia.<sup>3</sup> But there water and grass failed me, and I was baffled in every attempt to push on. Depend upon it, I would not have retreated from such a position for a trifle. But you can form no idea of that region. Mr. Browne, as he gazed upon it, exclaimed in horror : "Good heavens, did ever man see such country ?" . . .

'Poor Browne was in excruciating pain from scurvy. Every day I expected to find him unable to stir. My

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<sup>1</sup> Now known as the Diamantina or Everard

<sup>2</sup> Letter to MacLeay of February 8, 1846.

<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere he says that he was 470 miles (geographical) north of Mount Arden, about 350 from Mount Hopeless, and more than midway between Arden and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

men were ill from exposure, scanty food, and muddy water; my horses leg-weary and reduced to skeletons. I alone stood unscathed, but I could not bear to leave my companion in that heartless desert. Finding myself baffled to the north and to the west, seeing no hope of rain, realising that my retreat was too probably already cut off, I reluctantly turned back to the Depot, 443 miles distant, and only through the help of Providence did we at length reach it.' Sturt, as he mounted to begin his retreat, was nearly induced to turn again by 'a flock of paroquets that flew shrieking from the north towards Eyre's Creek. They proved that to the last we had followed with unerring precision the line of migration.'

Three weeks (from September 14 to October 2) were spent by the explorers in a retreat of extreme risk and hardship. Water was yet scarcer than on the outward journey; some 'holes' had run quite dry. Over the trackless Stony Desert a straight course was most difficult, yet the lives of the party depended on time. Perhaps the worst experience was, after a forced march over the sand-ridges, to find no water on reaching the wellgrassed plains of the Cooper! After weary search, Sturt and Browne were guided by a flight of pigeons to a small pond which relieved their pressing need.

The next anxiety was how the exhausted horses would accomplish the eighty-five miles of desert between Strzelecki Creek and the camp. But for the precaution of the wells dug on the outward journey, some of the animals must have been lost. True, only one of these holes still held water, but that supply, being fortunately about halfway through the belt of desert, saved the horses. Late on the night of October 2 all arrived at Fort Grey, having ridden more than 900 miles during their, seven weeks' absence.

Browne was suffering severely. All the men too were ill and completely knocked up. Sturt alone held out, and

was impatient once more to take the field. He wished again to reduce the party by sending home in charge of Browne all but Stuart and two men ; and in view of this plan, he had, during the recent hard retreat, sat up late writing journal and letters that no time might be lost in despatching the return party to Adelaide. Yet he hesitated to break the scheme to his valued friend, from whom he could not part without great reluctance. Browne however displayed a power of will on which Sturt had not reckoned. After vainly urging Sturt to desist from further efforts which could only end in disaster, Browne declared his immovable resolution to stand by him to the last. 'Ask me to do anything else ; but I cannot and will not desert you.' In vain Sturt first implored and finally *ordered* the young man to return home before his health should be shattered and his private affairs ruined.

Browne was ready to throw up all pecuniary reward for his services, 'but desert you, *never*.' A night of calm reflection<sup>1</sup> failed to solve the dead-lock.<sup>1</sup>

Meantime increasing heat heralded the approach of summer ; if aught were to be done it must be done quickly. Even the fine pool at Fort Grey had decreased so much, that Sturt, in finally yielding to Browne's request, and leaving him in charge of that depot, had to

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<sup>1</sup> I spent seventeen months with Captain Sturt in "the bush." On one occasion he and I lived for nine weeks and travelled about 1,000 miles on 90 lb. of flour only. This gave us three unleavened cakes each per day ; each cake being about the size of the palm of the hand. Game was so scarce that during the nine weeks I got only one pigeon and three teal. We were often *very* thirsty ; and on such a journey many things occur to try men's temper. Yet during those seventeen months no angry word was ever spoken between us. Nor was there the slightest misunderstanding, except on the occasion when he first asked me and finally ordered me to leave him and two men to certain death in the deserts, and to take home the remainder of the party. This I refused to do, because, in his presence, I had promised his wife, Sir Charles Cooper, and Robert Torrens that nothing but death should separate us until we should return to Adelaide.'-Letter of Mr. Harris-Browne, December 1, 1895.

arrange for the possible failure of water there. In such emergency, Browne was to fall back upon the creek of the Rocky Glen.

After only six days' rest then, the 9th of October found Sturt again in the saddle, his party now consisting of Stuart, Morgan, and Mack, with eight horses, and with ten weeks' rations of flour and tea. The thermometer had been rising to 98°, 100°, and 106° in the shade; hot blasts from the north-east replaced the abnormally cold winds of the recent journey. At half a day's ride northward from Strzelecki Creek, Sturt discovered on October 13 the main stream of Cooper's Creek, with a channel more than 200 yards wide, with banks from fifteen to eighteen feet high, and approached from all sides by broad native paths. He foresaw that to trace this fine stream down would but lead him to the point where its waters would be lost in grassy plains or in the desert. He was more inclined to follow it upwards towards the east, where a broken line of hills showed far off. But a sudden thunderstorm in half an hour chequered the plains with sheets of water. This decided Sturt to run north into the interior as far as he safely could on the strength of the surface water.

Nevertheless, on his northward course, he never failed to dig a hole at every bivouac, working with his men by moonlight. To MacLeay he sums up a series of disheartening obstacles, detailed more fully in the Journal. 'I ran 170 miles without crossing a single water-course. I travelled over salsolaceous plains, crossed sand-ridges, was turned from my westward course by salt-water lakes;<sup>1</sup> and at last, on October 19, at about eighty miles to the east of my former track, I found myself on the brink of the Stony Desert. Coming suddenly on it I almost lost my breath. If anything, it looked more forbidding than

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<sup>1</sup> Of these Lake Lipson, from the numerous native villages on its banks, was evidently sometimes fresh.

before. Herbless and treeless, it filled more than half of the horizon. Not an object was visible on which to steer, yet we held on our course by compass like a ship at sea.'

On October 21, at fifty miles beyond known water, among high sand-ridges full of pointed rocks, from whose summits no hopeful sign could be seen, Sturt was finally checked.<sup>1</sup> 'Here a false step would have cost us our lives. The weary horses had been a day and a half without water in terrific heat. I could not hope to regain the nearest water, fifty miles in our rear, in less than another day and a half. The distant view held out no hope. To push on and to fail of water that night would seal the fate of my party. Yet to turn back would be to abandon my great task. I told Stuart and the men our position. They assured me that they were ready and willing to follow me to the last.

I believe I sat on that burning summit more than half an hour, telescope in hand. . . . Our situation, however, admitted not of delay.'

To his brother he writes : 'So close did I run that I was obliged to retrace my steps over the sandhills by the light of a small lamp. At the first waterless halt, the horses would not eat, but collected round me, my favourite grey pulling the hat off my head to claim attention. At ten o'clock that night we were still toiling over the ridges. Here, Traveller fell dead, and I feared every moment we should lose the Colt.'

At one o'clock a halt was again necessary, but Sturt and Stuart rode ahead hoping to take back water to the failing men and animals in the rear. Not till 11 A.M. did they reach the longed-for water-holes. Every drop was gone! While the leaders were searching in despair for water, Morgan and Mack came up. The Colt, at a mile in the rear, had fallen, but was yet alive. The men

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<sup>1</sup> This spot he places in lat. 25° 58', long. 139° 26'.

had fortunately found a small pool, but this having been drained by them and their horses, there now seemed no chance of saving the two best horses ridden by Sturt and Stuart.'

Suddenly a pigeon topped the sandhill—a solitary bird—the first we had seen. Passing us like lightning, it pitched for a moment only on the plain about a quarter of a mile from us, and then flew away. It could only have wetted its bill; but Stuart had marked the spot, and there was water! . . . I was enabled to save the Colt.'

From this bivouac to Cooper's Creek, Sturt traversed 137 miles, depending entirely on the wells he had dug, of which only two were likely still to hold water.

It was a weird race for life. In one hole the mud, just drinkable at night, was by morning not fit for man or beast. On the 26th, a good channel on which they had counted for certain was all but empty; and, 'had we been here one day later, most assuredly we should all have perished.' The stage from this channel to Cooper's Creek was about ninety miles, and the only chance of water depended on the least hopeful of Sturt's precarious holes.

Starting on October 27, at 6 A.M., and 'pushing on day and night by means of a lamp carried by one of us on foot along our old track, by dawn we neared our last well thirty-six miles from the creek. The horses could now hardly drag one foot after the other. Objects were still indistinct, when Stuart in front called out that he saw something glitter where the well was; and immediately after he shouted "Water, water!"

'Only a few bucketfuls remained—just enough to save the horses, the loss of which would otherwise too surely have sealed the fate of the party. Singular it was that the well on which we had least dependence should thus have held out.' With characteristic reverence Sturt adds: 'It is impossible for me to record this without a

feeling of more than thankfulness to the Almighty Power that guided us.'

After a few hours' rest, by 9 A.M. On the 28th, they mounted again; but not till midnight had the weary horses accomplished the thirty-six miles to Cooper's Creek. The Roan and the Colt had fallen, but were saved by water carried back to them. One day of rest was spent in lightening and compressing the loads, and in carefully concealing reserve stores.

On the 30th, Sturt set out to follow up the great creek, his progress much delayed by the state of the horses. From the first he felt doubtful as to the permanence even of this fine stream, with a channel here broad, elsewhere splitting into numerous branches; with a bed in places dry, and again spreading in wide reaches. The native paths and large bough huts, increasing in number as the party pushed up the northern bank, bespoke a numerous population.

After a first ceremonious meeting with sixteen warriors, the white men were introduced by ambassadors to five tribes within eight miles. From the information of these people, as well as from observations taken from high ground, Sturt concluded that the creek rose in a number of small channels among wide grassy plains (MacLeay Plains), whither he followed it up. He had now gone 120 miles to the eastward.<sup>1</sup> Further in that direction the natives declared he would find no water. The horses were so knocked up that the Roan, hardly able to crawl, was 'in pity left to wander at large along this fine water-course' (see *infra*, p. 343). The men were far from well; Sturt himself was breaking down.

Since July 20, from sunrise to sunset, I had been in constant exercise. Except for a few days at Fort Grey, I had slept without shelter either from the scorching rays of the sun or the distressing glare of the moon. From

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<sup>1</sup> From lat. 27° W and long. 140° 22' to lat. 27° 50' and long. 142°.

insufficient food and from an insidious malady hanging upon me I was beginning to feel weak.' Retreat was imperative.

At their furthest point to the east, Sturt and Stuart, when on the top of a knoll, were hailed by a deafening shout from three or four hundred natives assembled below.' Never before had I come so suddenly on so large a party. Checking my horse awhile, I gazed on the agitated figures assembled below, and then rode quietly down, followed by Stuart and the men. Dismounting, I walked to the natives, who immediately surrounded Stuart and me. Had they been unfriendly we could not possibly have escaped, for our horses could not have broken into a canter to save our lives or their own. But these people treated us with real hospitality. They brought us troughs of water, and afterwards held them up for our horses to drink--a remarkable instance of nerve. They likewise offered us roasted ducks and cakes.' Sleeping quarters in a large new hut Sturt declined, but he camped in the open at fifty yards from the native village.

He describes these natives as the finest race he had seen on the continent. 'Several of them stood more than six feet high, and of sixty-nine men round me at one time not one was under my own height (5 ft. 11 in.). They left us to ourselves at sunset, after bringing us water and firewood. At their own camp they sat up to a late hour, the women beating between two stones, with a noise like a factory at work, the grass-seed for their cakes. The whole scene, with dusky figures standing or moving against the long line of fires, was most picturesque. By eleven o'clock all was still; and I never slept quieter than I did that night when near so many savages.'

By November 8 the party reached the spot where they had stowed all superfluous stores and instruments. Their *cache* was safe, though inquisitive natives had dug under the ashes of their fire. In view of the formidable

task still before them, Sturt left behind all but the merest necessaries. We were 130 miles from the depot, and felt doubtful how far the road thither remained open. The nearest and only water between us and the camp would be in the large pool of Strzelecki Creek-if, indeed, any still remained there. On this question depended our safety.'

Before sunrise on the 10th they had started on the forty-six weary miles to that creek. After sunset they struck the upper pool, now merely a thick puddle, and early on the 11th moved for breakfast to the lower and larger pool. Of this fine sheet, so lately covered with wildfowl, nothing now remained but a shining patch of mud in the centre. By digging a trench into which the water might filter during the night a scanty supply was obtained. On that 11th of November a terrific hot wind blew with dire effect. The horses stood with their backs to the wind and their noses to the ground, without the muscular strength to raise their heads ; the birds were mute; the leaves of the trees fell around like a snow shower; I wondered the very grass did not take fire. The only remaining thermometer, graduated to 127°, had risen by one o'clock to the top, and its further expansion had burst the bulb.'

Here the loads were again reduced. At 5 A.M. on the 12th every drop was drained out of the trench, one gallon being taken on as a reserve for the first horse that should fall. From daybreak the party made thirty-six miles, then halted through the fierce heat till moonrise. At 7 P.M. they pushed on. 'Poor Bawley, my favourite, fell at midnight; but we got him up, abandoning his saddle. At a mile he again fell. The water now revived him, and I hoped he would struggle on; but in an hour he was down for the last time. We lit a fire by him, but he seemed fairly worn out.' At 3 A.M. on the 13th Sturt and Stuart pushed on, hoping to send back a dray with water.

At 11 A.M., after fifteen hours in the saddle, they reached the stockade. No sign of life met their eager eyes; all was silent and deserted! 'I had foreseen the likelihood that Browne would be obliged to retire, yet a sickening feeling came over me when I saw that he was really gone--not on my own account, for, with my bitter feelings of disappointment, I could calmly have laid my head on that desert never to raise it again.'

'In the reduced channel, according to agreement, a large pit had been dug. I did not drink; nor did Stuart. The surface of the water was quite green, and the water itself red.' From a buried bottle they now learned that the putrid change in the water and consequent dysentery among the men had forced Browne most reluctantly to fall back upon the old depot. This message frustrated all hope of sending relief to the men and dying horses in the rear. No vessel was at hand in which to boil water or to cook.

Nothing could be done but await the forlorn party. As darkness fell, the leaders lit a fire to guide Mack and Morgan, who did not come in till 2 A.M. on the 14th, having left Bawley and the Colt on the way, and having abandoned all provisions.

As however no one had touched food since the afternoon of the 12th, it was necessary to send Mack on the best horse for some of the discarded supplies, including a kettle. Water to refresh the dying Bawley was not forgotten; but that errand of mercy detained the messenger till 7 P.M., and not till then could any of the party boil tea or break their long fast.

The Colt, much nearer than Bawley, struggled to the depot, but only to die. Though these were the only two casualties from that dreadful march, Sturt next day was ill with scurvy. Fearing a serious attack, he started with Stuart at 5 P.M. on the 16th for a ride of sixty-seven miles to the old depot. The men and the weaker horses required at least another day's rest, and their journey was then eased by a

dray-load of water sent from the camp to meet them. Sturt and Stuart rode throughout that night and the morning and noon of the 17th, only pausing thrice for Sturt to lie for a few moments in a hollow rut to ease his violent pain. At 3 P.M., after twenty hours on horseback, they reached the tents.

Browne's joy may be imagined. He had given them up for lost, assuming that retreat from the north must be cut off. He and his men had almost recovered from the effects of the bad water at Fort Grey. Alas! Sturt now broke down. On dismounting he nearly fell to the ground from a muscular shock like a sudden blow. 'Next day,' he writes to his brother, 'my muscles contracted, my limbs became rigid, my skin turned black, and I was laid prostrate.'

Reduced as I was by bad living and exposure, I fell a prey to the worst symptoms of scurvy. Poor Browne began to think he would have to return to Adelaide alone. . . . Our situation was most critical. The very elements seemed to unite their energies to render intolerable our stay in that dreadful region. No rain had fallen since July. The water in the depot creek was seriously reduced. The heat was greater than in the previous summer, ranging every day between 110° and 123°. The hot wind filled the air with impalpable dust, through which the sun looked blood-red; and all green vegetation seemed dead.

So heated was the ground that our matches falling on it ignited. Citric acid was reduced to liquid. Writing was wholly impossible. Our rockets were useless, as, on being lit, they exploded at once without rising from the ground. Here, where at the end of last January the cereal grasses were in seed and the shrubs bore ripe fruit, while birds in numbers haunted the trees, now in November, six weeks earlier, not a herb, not a bud was visible, scarcely a bird was -to be seen. Our cattle wandered far for food, and the silence of the grave reigned around!

The Darling was 270 miles distant. Flood's Creek, at 118 miles, *might* still contain water. One smaller creek, Burr Creek, at forty miles, Flood, on the 18th, found dry.

From the 20th to the 25th Browne and the men made fruitless search for some way of escape. Eastward the door was closed. They returned hopeless, with a fearful report of the state of the country. Thus were Sturt's worst fears confirmed, while, to add to his depression, Stuart now showed signs of scurvy and most of the men were ailing.

'In this emergency,' says Sturt, 'when myself helpless, I felt doubly the value of Browne's services and counsel.' That staunch comrade volunteered to ride the 118 miles and back to report on Flood's Creek! The two leaders in consultation hit upon a notable plan to make this feat possible. In a bullock's hide, on the 27th, 150 gallons of water were sent by dray to a distance of thirtytwo miles. Browne, starting a day later in the light cart, which carried thirty-six gallons in barrels, on arriving at the large water-skin, would let his horse drink freely, reserving the supply in the cart to the end of the second day's journey. There, half that supply might be used, the cart being left at that spot for the return. Browne then unharnessed the horse and rode over fifty miles on the chance of what Flood's Creek might hold.

'It was a journey of great risk. Had he not found water he would have been lost.' His return had been calculated for the sixth day, and accordingly at 3 P.M. on December 3 he was hailed from afar by the anxious watchers. He brought word that the creek might still suffice the party for a day, but the water there was 'as black as ink' and would be gone in a week! Three bullocks were at once converted into water-bags; the boat destined for the central sea was launched upon the depot creek; the drays were wedged up and greased; bacon and all heavy stores were abandoned; and at 7 P.M.

on December 6 the forlorn party set out on their marvellous retreat.

All night they travelled, first halting at 5 A.M., but going on at 7 without pause till past midnight-Sturt on a dray, helpless and in severe pain from the rough jolting. One of the hides was useless, but the two others served; and a light drizzle at dawn moistened the grass near a dry creek, and enabled the animals to feed, otherwise Sturt doubts if they would have pulled through. By the following midnight they were at Flood's Creek, after a most harassing journey, but without the loss of a single animal.

The indefatigable Browne, though himself stricken with scurvy, rode ahead with Flood, and by the fortunate discovery of a halfway water-hole enabled the party to break the long stage of forty-nine miles to the gully at the foot of the ranges. Owing to the heat they moved on by night, and by 3 A.M. on December 14 safely reached the gully,<sup>1</sup> where good water was found, and where the whole party felt benefit from the cooler hill air. Browne here gathered a large bowl of the acid berry of *Leptomeria aphylla* (a low hill shrub) for his sick friend; and to this simple remedy Sturt attributes his gradual recovery from that day forward.

Trouble was not yet over. 'Our retreat was most harassing; it admitted of no hesitation. We had one more effort to make. Cawndilla was still distant sixtynine miles (they were now near Curnapaga), and between us and that place there was not a drop of water.' The dawn of the 19th revealed a fine view over the plains of the Darling as the travellers followed a dry creek down from the ranges. Excepting a halt of two hours in the worst heat, and a short hour's rest at 7 P.M., they now pushed on all day, and by a lantern all night. Daybreak

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<sup>1</sup> See *supra*, p. 242.

found them still eighteen miles short of Cawndilla, the animals flagging sadly; when Browne, riding ahead, discovered a paper nailed to a tree by Piesse, who since December 6 had been at Williorara directing an active search for the party. Near this spot he had deposited a water-barrel, which relieved the suffering horses. Piesse's message gave Sturt the comfortable assurance that his wife and children were well. During his illness he had been haunted by a conviction that his eldest boy was dead or dying! -a mental torture to which he later referred as having been the worst misery of that trying time. By 9 A.M. on the 20th all arrived at Cawndilla utterly weary, the beasts almost frantic with thirst.'

Piesse, from a camp seven miles further, on hearing the good news, hastened to welcome the party. He was the bearer of numerous letters, and he also brought tidings of the change of Governor, and of the new prosperity that the Burra-Burra Copper Mine had brought to the colony.

On the 21st all moved to the Darling, where in a cool hut of boughs Sturt remained over Christmas Day, trusting to the restorative effects of generous diet for recovering the use of his limbs and some degree of normal health. On December 26, men and animals being much recruited, the camp broke up, and the party turned definitely homewards, Sturt hoping that he might yet be able to ride through Adelaide. But his friends dissuaded him from any such rash effort. For ten days' journey down the Darling, Browne continued in close attendance on his sick friend. The drought had wrought havoc on the face of the land. The Darling had ceased to flow, and formed a chain of ponds. The Williorara was quite dry, as were the neighbouring lagoons and creeks. The natives, having cleared the river of the fish brought down by the floods, now subsisted chiefly on herbs and roots, and on the caterpillar of the gum-tree moth, which they procured

out of the ground with switches hooked at the end.<sup>1</sup> Yet Sturt was struck by the verdure of the very plains which eighteen months before he had decried as barren. 'The flats of Williorara were now covered with grass, and wore the very reverse of their former appearance. So hazardous is it to give an opinion of such a country from a partial glimpse.'

From December 26 to January 13 the travellers moved down the Darling and the Murray to Moorundi, where Sturt again rested a few days, while his men and teams marched in weird procession through Adelaide. The deepest interest was felt in the return as from the dead of men long given up for lost. Prayers for their safety had for months been used in the churches, but with little hope that they would be answered.

Gaunt indeed were the wanderers; their faces hidden in unkempt hair, their skin burnt almost to the swarthy hue of the natives. The horses were like living skeletons, and many of the cattle in sorry plight, though some of them had thriven beyond expectation.<sup>2</sup> 'The dray-wheels were calked up with whatever material could be spared to fill gaps and keep them together; the woodwork showed that every particle of oil and turpentine had been extracted

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<sup>1</sup> The food of the natives changes with the seasons. While we were on the Murray, they subsisted chiefly on herbs and roots. The back-waters of the rivers however, as temporary reservoirs into which pass immense numbers of fish, form a valuable provision for these people. In October they pound and make into cakes on the Darling the barilla-root (a sort of rush) ; on the Cooper, the seed of the 'Nardoo' grass. In the case of Burke and Wills this food proved insufficient to support life. The fatal result of their experiment and the observations of later travellers confirm Sturt's remark that, whenever possible, the natives supplement their vegetable diet with some form of animal food, usually fish, fowl, or insect. ' Their greatest delicacy is the large caterpillar (*laabka*), which produces the gum-tree moth. This insect, with hooked osier-like twigs eight or ten feet long, they dig out of the ground at the foot of the gum-trees.' (*Central Expedition*, ii. 140, cf. Lumholtz, *Among Cannibals*.)

<sup>2</sup> This may be attributed to the nourishing qualities of the atriplex, or salt bush, not recognised till a later time.

by the fierce sun. The most singular object of attraction was the remainder of the sheep, following the drays from habit as quietly and regularly as a rear-guard of infantry. As the expedition moved slowly up Rundle Street and King William Street, the spectacle was too impressive and touching to excite shouts, but many and hearty were the welcomes given when the party halted in Victoria Square.<sup>1</sup>

But Sturt's only thoughts were for his home. On January 17, for the first time since November, he mounted his horse, but had scarce left Moorundi when he was met by his friends Hardy and Campbell with a carriage, in which they drove him to Grange. He thus tells of his arrival: 'I reached my home at midnight on January 19, and, on crossing the threshold, raised my wife from the floor, on which she had fallen, while I heard the carriage of my considerate friends roll rapidly away.'

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#### SCOPE AND RESULTS OF CENTRAL EXPEDITION AS SUMMED UP BY STURT<sup>2</sup>

'My instructions directed me to gain the meridian of Mount Arden, or that of 138°, with a view to determine, whether there were any chain of mountains connected with the high lands seen by Mr. Eyre to the westward of Lake Torrens, and running into the interior from south-west to north-east. I was ordered to push to the westward, and to make the south the constant base of my operations. I was prohibited from descending to the north coast, but it was left optional with me to fall back on Moreton Bay if I should be forced to the eastward. Whether I performed the task thus assigned to me, or wavered in the accomplishment of it; whether I fell short of my duty, or yielded only to insuperable difficulties, the world will be enabled to judge. . . . That I found no fine country is to be regretted; however, I was not sent to find a fine country,

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<sup>1</sup> Hodder, *Hist. of South Australia*, i. 227.

<sup>2</sup> From South, *Australian Gazette* of February 13, 1841.

but to solve a geographical problem.... I trust I am not presumptuous in saying that, from a geographical point of view, the results of this expedition have been complete. If I did not gain the heart of the continent, no one will refuse me the credit of having taken a direct course for it. My distance from that hitherto mysterious spot was less than 150 miles. In ten days I should have reached the goal; and that task would have been accomplished had rain fallen when I was at my farthest north. Had I found such a river as the Victoria, I would have clung to it to the last; but those alone will really know the nature of the country who shall follow me into it.... When I determined on turning homewards, with mind depressed and strength weakened, it appeared to me that I had done all that man could do. Now, under the influence of restored health, I feel that I did far too little. I can only say that I would not hesitate again to plunge into those dreary regions, that I might be the first to place my foot in the centre of this vast territory, and finally to raise the veil which still shrouds its features, even though, like those of the veiled prophet, they should wither the beholder... .

#### STATISTICS OF THE CENTRAL EXPEDITION

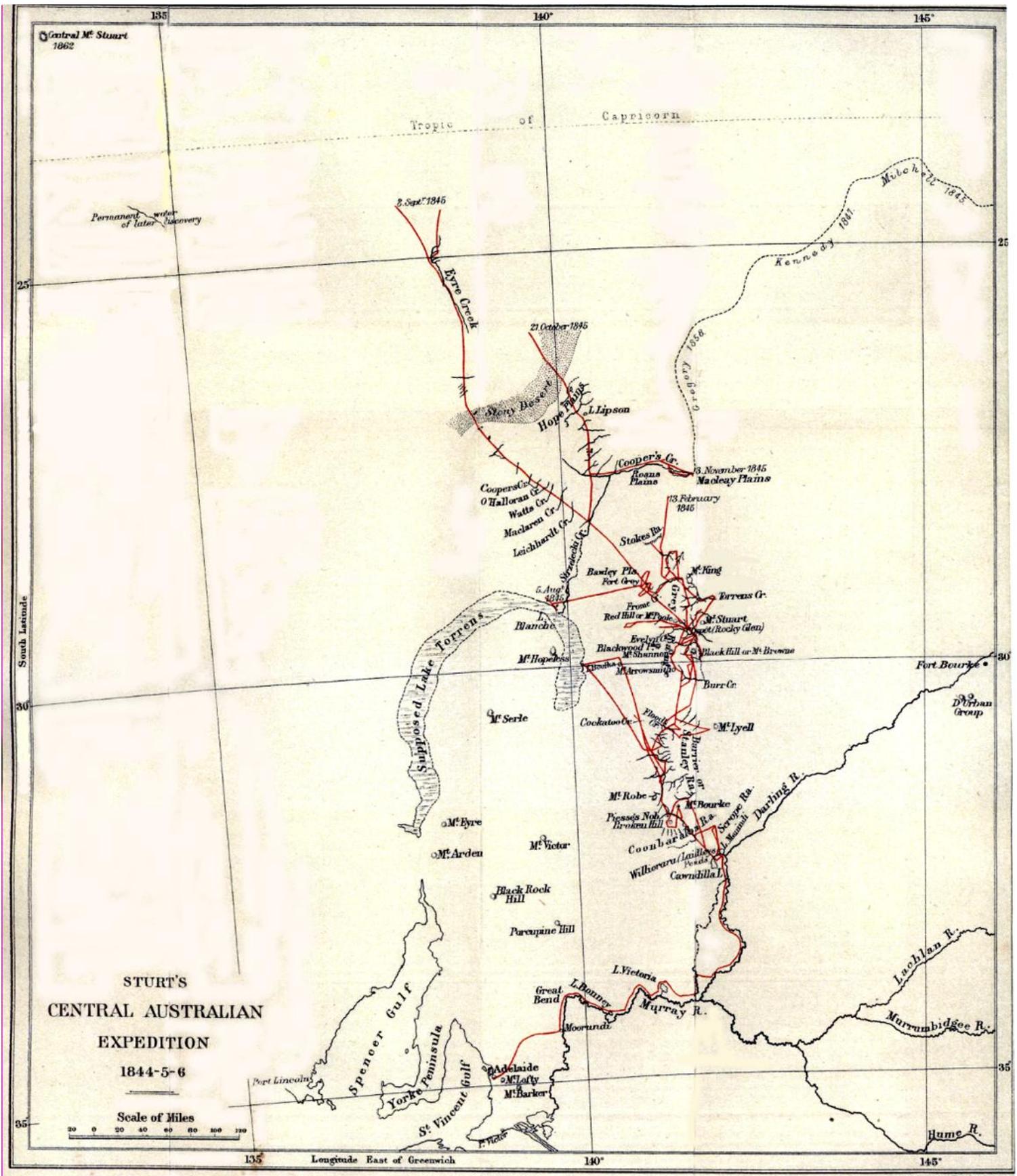
Sturt's first estimate of expenses as stated early in 1843 at 3,90*l.* 8*s.* 6*d.*, is curiously near the ultimate cost!

His fuller estimate for an absence of two years (during which he proposed to traverse the whole continent) was as follows:

	£	s.	d.
Weapons and instruments . . . . .	240	18	6
Animals, equipage, stores, presents to natives, &c. . . . .	1,901	3	6
Probable pay and wages . . . . .	<u>2,000</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Total . . . . .	4,142	2	0

Scope and expense of the expedition as cut down

by Barrow to <i>one</i> year's work only ; being, he remarks, 'pretty near half the proposal for two years' . . . . .	2,133	19	0
Ultimate total expense allowed . . . . .	2,500	0	0
To which Robe submitted an extra amount of . . . . .	<u>1,461</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Making for eighteen months a total of . . . . .	3,961	2	9



STURT'S  
CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN  
EXPEDITION  
1844-5-6

Scale of Miles

Longitude East of Greenwich

London: Smith Elder & Co.

Stanford's Geog. Estab. London

(Of this sum 500*l* was allotted to Sturt as leader: and during his absence from Adelaide, according to precedent, he drew half pay as Registrar-General – viz. 200*l*.)

Arrowsmith computed the distance to Sturt's furthest point 'at over 3,450 miles,' and considered that point to be within 150 nautical miles of the centre of Australia.

The appendix to Sturt's 'Narrative,' with notes by Gould and by Robert Brown, the botanist, gives interesting details of the collections, animal, vegetable, and mineral, sent home from the Rocky Glen.

One fine specimen of malachite brought from the Central Ranges by Sturt himself, and during his illness committed to the trusty Davenport, was duly polished and mounted for the high privilege of presentation to Her Majesty the Queen.

## CHAPTER XVII

1846-1852

A WARM WELCOME-COLONEL HOLT ROBE-STURT GOES TO ENGLAND-THE 'APPLETON'-GOLD MEDAL OF THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY-PUBLISHES 'CENTRAL EXPEDITION' - THE GREEN LINNETS - SIR HENRY FOX-YOUNG -CADELL AND MURRAY NAVIGATION-STURT AS COLONIAL SECRETARY-GOLD ESCORT-RETIRES FROM OFFICE

STURT, depressed by illness and by a sense of failure, felt more gratefully the fervour with which his return was hailed -a tribute to his triumph over difficulties rather than to any tangible success.'You welcome me,' he said at the crowded dinner of February 20, 1846, 'with as much kindness as if my long and arduous journey had been most successful. But since we last met I have travelled over a fearful desert. . . . In that barren country, where only surface water is found, the danger of advance is great, and beyond the Darling you may well believe I have not had an hour without anxiety.' It was not a little indeed that would have turned me back when I was within eight or ten days' ride of that point to reach which I would almost have given my life. But the arid country of the far interior is such as to set at rest, I think, the geographical question which I was sent to solve. The barren tract stretches undoubtedly for at least a hundred miles beyond the highest point I reached.' . . .

After alluding in the warmest terms to his companions, and to the men of the expedition, Sturt resumed his seat amid general and prolonged cheering.

To attend this dinner was an effort, for he had not yet recovered from the effects of his great journey, and for some months afterwards his health and eyesight caused grave anxiety. But a sound constitution enabled him in time to throw off all bad symptoms, and by September 1846 Sturt had for some time resumed his duties as Registrar-General, and was now also appointed Colonial Treasurer with an addition of 100*l.* to his salary.<sup>1</sup>

The Colonial Office expressed its feelings on Sturt's expedition, first in a note of July 3, 1846, bearing the potent signature of W. E. Gladstone-'From the reports . . . it appears to me that Captain Sturt is entitled to the acknowledgments and thanks of H.M.'s Government for the courageous and persevering efforts which he made to lead on his party under circumstances of much difficulty and suffering,' and secondly in a more sympathetic tribute from Earl Grey (November 10, 1846): 'I have to request that you will express to Captain Sturt my high sense of the courage and perseverance displayed by him and by his companions in the arduous service that they have so well performed. You will further express the great satisfaction with which I have heard of their safe return, . . . and my warm approbation of their humane spirit towards the natives. . . .'

This despatch ends by thanking Sturt 'for his offer to command another expedition,' and by expressing the hope that his services may at some future time be made available, though 'for various reasons such a plan had better for the present be deferred.'

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<sup>1</sup> The emoluments of both offices amounted only to 500*l.* Sturt at this time declined a proposal brought before Council by Morphett to increase his salary, because there was no prospect that his friends in office could receive a similar benefit.

During the eighteen months of Sturt's absence, the mineral resources of South Australia had rapidly developed; the copper mines in particular proving so rich as to raise the province to sudden prosperity, a prosperity for which admiring biographers have not failed to give Grey credit, and which certainly set in before Grey left Adelaide. But the mines, though foretold by Sturt and Menge, were discovered accidentally. In their development Grey meddled only so far as to raise a storm for his successor by enforcing the hated royalty on minerals, and his influence on the fortunes of South Australia finally ceased when, in October 1845, he was suddenly transferred to New Zealand, and was replaced at Adelaide by Colonel Holt Robe, C.B.

The new Governor, like many colonial magnates of that time, had qualified for his office by good service in the Peninsula. He was of a fine presence, and alike morally and physically inflexible. The appointment was however made in haste, and its provisional nature was shown by the qualifying title '*Lieutenant-Governor.*' Within barely three years Robe quitted without regret a sphere he had entered without enthusiasm, and in which he shone steadfast rather than brilliant. To him Grey bequeathed a legacy of lost causes. The royalty on minerals, the state aid to religion had raised a din from which even Grey had recoiled. Robe, a staunch Tory and High Churchman, did for a time, in the face of great opposition, carry both these projects. But in 1848 the royalties, in 1851 the subsidies to religious bodies were rejected; and thus disappeared within six years the landmarks of Robe's legislation.

In official and in private life Robe never swerved from the ideal of a true-hearted gentleman. His honesty of purpose inspired general respect. Sturt found in the new Governor a cordial friend. Debarred at first by illness and later by absence from taking prominent part in the

political controversies of the moment, Sturt nevertheless supported the movement for State aid to religion as strongly as he deprecated the tax on minerals.<sup>1</sup>

During the year 1846, Horrocks, a young man well known to Sturt, fired by his example and advice, started with a small party and two camels to explore the region north-west of Mount Arden. But the attempt ended tragically in Horrocks's death by the discharge of his gun, a disaster the more to be regretted as the young fellow was a keen observer ; and his companion, Mr. Gill, a good artist, brought back many excellent sketches of that desolate region.

Early in 1847 Sturt went on leave of absence to England. Before embarking, he and his family spent their last days with the Coopers, and to Miss Cooper Sturt writes a few farewell lines from: On board the "Appleton," May 7, 1847. The wind is fair, and tomorrow's dawn will see us far away. My last moments off these shores shall be devoted to you and to your brother. . . . To have lived with him in the warmest friendship, and now at parting to be assured of his high esteem, cannot but be most gratifying. . . . As regards the future, my wishes second his, for my life has been so chequered with trouble, and so restless, that I now sigh for quiet.

Our friends generally lay on our services a greater value than the indifferent will allow. Nor am I buoyed up by any undue hope, but should fall back into my berth without a murmur. . . . I certainly can look quietly on the course of events, and, but for those I love, could lay my head for the last time on the desert as calmly as on a bed of down. I never set a value on life for living's sake, and I can say with truth that I never feared death. I have been ambitious, but have never

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<sup>1</sup> The official members of the Legislative Council were in a sense bound not to vote against the Government ; but they could assert their independence by refraining from voting.

sought honours. Neither has my ambition been selfish, and I trust I have given to others the credit they have deserved. But on every play the curtain falls at last, and I believe that I shall never again enter the field on which I have reaped my humble laurels.' . . .

The 'Appleton,' a brig of 250 tons, fitted with a large central hold for the transport of copper, was so loaded with ore that she sailed dangerously low in the water. The stern cabin assigned to the Sturts was in consequence generally closed by dead-lights. On the rare occasions of their removal in halcyon calms, the children were able through the portholes to touch the passing waves. In a stiff breeze the lee bulwark was constantly under water. Off Cape Leeuwin a sad disaster occurred. The ship was scudding under reefed topsails in a heavy gale, when a lad missed his footing on the steep deck, and, vainly clutching at the dipping bulwark, fell headlong overboard. He swam well, but, hampered by heavy boots and waterproof, was lost astern before the ship could be brought round or a boat lowered. The poor boy's last cry to 'look sharp' long rang in his comrades' ears.

The 'Appleton,' under a stiff wind from starboard, was nearing St. Helena, when a large ship astern, to the general terror and surprise, crowded on sail, and came up on her port quarter. Her studding-sails set, her lights resplendent, the stranger loomed large in the dusk, as if to crush the smaller vessel. The steersman of the 'Appleton' paused in panic; the ship was swinging up towards destruction, when her captain rushed to the wheel, and putting it hard down barely averted disaster.

In a trice he was again at his post, speaking-trumpet in hand. As the stranger rose on a wave close by the stern, her captain shouted for the longitude, and, on the prompt reply, the big ship vanished in the darkness. The Sturts meeting her captain ashore next day, rallied him on the

panic he had caused. He admitted the grave peril but he had not been aware how heavily laden was the 'Appleton,' and, having lost his reckoning, he had feared to miss St. Helena. He now offered the Sturts free passage home in his fine East Indiaman and urged them to leave the unsafe Appleton. But Sturt would not break his first agreement.

The heavy ship was delayed by storms, and 150 days were spent on this slow voyage round the Cape, affording to the young Sturts at least a fine gymnastic training. They were soon nimble in the rigging, and beguiled the tedium of the voyage with sundry risky exploits. The 'Appleton' was bound for Swansea, where at that time all Australian ores were smelted. But on nearing England the captain was forced by violent gales to stand off from the Welsh coast, and to run first into the Cove of Cork. Here, under the influence of a swarm of bumboats, the men became so uproarious that during the captain's absence on shore, Sturt signalled for a man-o-war's boat to restore order, while his small sons gleefully watched the cook with tipsy gravity boil the big ship's kettle and carefully lower it overboard.

In October finally all landed safely at Swansea. Sturt was too late to receive in person the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society. That honour was on May 24, 1847, decreed to him by Lord Colchester after a speech ending thus.

For these services in the cause of geographical discovery, for the *energy* and *courage* displayed in confronting no ordinary difficulties, for the *prudence* with which further advance was abandoned when it could only have risked the loss of those entrusted to his charge, for the *conciliatory conduct* to the natives, which not only avoided conflict, but rendered them willing to assist the expedition ; and also to excite future explorers to a display of the like qualities, the Council have awarded the Medal

of the Founder.' . . . And the medal was handed to Mr. John Morphett with the request that he would 'recount personally to Captain Sturt the high value this Society sets upon his labours.'

The Sturts now spent some time in lodgings in Keppel Street, a residence varied by visits to relations, and enlivened by the near neighbourhood, in Gower Street, of the Gawlers. Sturt was occupied in preparing his journals for the press. The 'Narrative of an Expedition into Central Australia, 1844-46, with a notice of the province of South Australia in 1847,' did not however see the light till January 1849. The author was seriously hampered by renewed troubles of eyesight. From the great oculist Critchett, by methods gentler than those to which he had formerly submitted, Sturt derived great benefit. But Critchett found that the optic nerve was permanently injured. This injury he attributed to the constant use of glasses, and to observations taken in the glare of the Australian sun and moon.

While Sturt was in town, Sir Thomas Mitchell arrived, 'glorying in his supposed discovery of a waterway to the Indian Ocean.' Mitchell could not forget his old grievance. 'He saw me in the street,' says Sturt, 'but hurried on without recognition.'

In 1848 society was disturbed by the Chartist riots, and Sturt was enrolled among scores of volunteer constables. Angry demonstrations were successfully checked on April 10 and on May 29, and though on Whit Monday (June 10, 1848) the notice of an intended rising caused the amateur constables to spend the day encamped in Bunhill Fields and elsewhere, their timely precautions totally suppressed the expected riot, of which no more was heard.

The greater part of Sturt's leave was spent at Boulogne, in a house near that occupied by Mrs. Sturt's aged mother. Here the family felt the backwash of a Revolution, and witnessed the planting of a Tree of

Liberty; demonstrations which did not debar the boys from the benefits of a good day school, nor from exciting skirmishes with French gamins on the way thither.

Meantime Robe was recalled, and Sir Henry Fox Young, Lieutenant-Governor at the Cape, was transferred to South Australia. The new Governor with his bride (a niece of Captain Marryat the novelist) sailed for Adelaide in April 1848.

Sturt, after the publication of his book, embarked (March 1849) with his family in the 'Eliza' for Adelaide. Unfortunately that ship also carried a first consignment of the notorious Green Linnets,<sup>1</sup> workhouse girls sent out by misguided philanthropists, and soon to be a byword in the colonies.

Of the party on the 'Eliza' about a dozen were thoroughly bad, and all were rough and noisy. They were kept within wooden partitions fitted up for their benefit below decks. Here they would indulge in frantic yells, replying to all remonstrance, 'You may cage up the linnets, but they mean to sing.' The matron in charge of these wild girls, formerly governess to a leading promoter of the scheme, was utterly helpless and incapable.

Trouble arose at once, and at Plymouth the captain insisted on landing the worst ringleader of the party, while he turned a deaf ear to the matron's prayer that she too might leave the ship. Her resignation and the captain's protest brought down post-haste certain philanthropists who had much ado to oil the troubled waters, and to persuade the captain and the matron to fulfil their contract.

Matters soon went from bad to worse. Ere long the discovery was made of a mutinous correspondence between the Linnets and the crew. Their plan was simple and daring. The captain was to be hustled overboard, the

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<sup>1</sup> The nickname was derived from a shipowner Green, whose vessels were largely employed on this particular service.

ship seized and taken to California, where gold would be found in plenty, and where they would have a good time. From signs of disaffection among the men, the captain feared that but for prompt measures this crude plot might too surely be carried out. He at once called together the few gentlemen on board; they resolved to fly to arms and to stand by the captain to the last. Sturt offered to try the effect of a few bold plain words on the misguided men. Experience among convicts had taught him the power of good counsel over brute force. The men were accordingly mustered on the upper deck, where the gentlemen were drawn up fully armed. The Mutiny Act was read, and Sturt then stepping forward told the men quietly and firmly that their plot was known. Dwelling on the folly and madness of such a scheme, he urged them to consult their best interests by returning quietly to the path of duty. The men listened to reason, expressed regret, and, on the assurance of pardon, settled quietly to work, thenceforward turning a deaf ear to the caged sirens.

Gladly did the Sturts in August 1849 land at Port Adelaide, and part company with their noisy shipmates. On August 25, 1849, Sturt was appointed Colonial Secretary, and in that capacity he now took his seat in the Council. During his two years' absence, great changes had occurred in the colony. In spite of reaction from the first wild dreams of mineral wealth, a tide of steady progress had set in; the horizon was bright with hope. The new Governor had sufficient experience and breadth of view to respect general opinion, and to abjure illiberal measures. Though he followed in the footsteps of Gawler rather than of Grey, the Home Government had learned a lesson and supported him.<sup>1</sup> Already proposals were eagerly discussed for a new representative

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<sup>1</sup> Royalties were abolished ; land sales were resumed ; for the first time the exports exceeded the imports.

constitution, which in January 1851 became law.<sup>1</sup> On August 20, 1851, the first elective Legislative Council met.<sup>2</sup> To the original eight members nominated by the Crown sixteen elective members were now added.

Under these freer conditions Sturt, as Colonial Secretary, enjoyed a position of greater dignity, yet of no less active work, than heretofore. In promoting the construction and repair of roads, including the first railway in Australia,<sup>3</sup> in pressing the demands of education, in urging reforms to simplify land-leases (thus paving the way for Torrens's Real Property Act seven years later), Sturt found ceaseless occupation. To him is due Bagot's proposal of June 13, 1850, to 'place on the estimates 4,000*l.* in a bonus of 2,000*l.* each for the first and second iron steamers of over 40-horse power and not more than 2-feet draught, that should go from the Goolwa to the Darling Junction.'<sup>4</sup> In Sir H. Fox Young, Sturt found an ally eager to realise his long dormant hopes of water communication, and the rewards now offered stimulated enterprise on lake and rivers.

Randell, with a small steamer built by himself, was first in the field ; and though his 'Mary Ann' did not fulfil the conditions of power and draught, he received

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<sup>1</sup> This Bill, by which Victoria was first separated from New South Wales, contained also a federal scheme for uniting the Australian Colonies and Van Diemen's Land under one Governor and one General Assembly. For so large a scheme the time was not ripe. But (January 20, 1851) the great step was made of granting to these colonies popular representation.

<sup>2</sup> Of the part played by Sturt in this change, he tells us: 'As Colonial Secretary of South Australia I conducted the public business of the Government. It devolved on me to divide the province into Electoral Districts, and to make all the arrangements for the return of its first Elective Assembly, of which I was the leader for two years.' (See Start's letter to Lord Stanley when Principal Secretary of State, May 27, 1858, *re* Queens. land Petition, *infra*, p. 328.)

<sup>3</sup> The Adelaide City and Port Railway.

<sup>4</sup> Although in fact Bagot proposed and Sturt seconded this resolution, Sturt, who best knew the Murray, was the real instigator,' writes Sir Samuel Davenport, 6. 4. 1808.

from Government 300*l.* to which a sum of 400*l.* was added by private subscription. But the larger prize was awarded to Cadell, who, in August 1853, at a time of dead calm, ran a light steamer over the bar at the Murray Mouth; and then, taking on board the Fox Youngs and a party of friends, accomplished, between August 25 and October 14, a successful trip from Goolwa to Swanhill and back. Sturt was to have joined this party, but events which delayed Cadell's preparations hastened Sturt's departure for England. He had however helped Cadell with experienced advice, and had prepared for him a special map of the Murray.

Cadell became the hero of the hour. He was royally feasted, and in the chorus of triumph sundry perverse obstacles were overlooked.<sup>1</sup> Sturt had warned the sanguine navigators that 'steamers must be built or fitted together in the Goolwa, the sea-mouth being virtually impracticable; and that Port Victor, if connected by land with Goolwa, would offer the best available anchorage.' The dream of opening the Murray Mouth was indeed soon abandoned.

Nor did Port Elliot prove an adequate harbour, the position being too much exposed to heavy seas and to shifting sand-banks; and after a short career that harbour was abandoned in favour of one far more safe and useful at Port Victor, which has fully justified Sturt's good opinion. Yet the great works at Port Elliot served usefully to attract and to employ a valuable class

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<sup>1</sup> Cadell eventually suffered severely by the losses of a valuable steamer and of sundry boats and barges at the Murray Mouth, and by the collapse of the Murray Steam Navigation Company. Sir Samuel Davenport, who in 1869, with Sir Richard and Lady MacDonnell, accompanied Cadell on his first steam voyage up the Darling, describes him as a 'remarkable man, full of life and energy, a splendid swimmer and diver, in fact, wellnigh amphibious, and constantly in the water to see that his boat's bottom was not damaged by the snags.' Cadell met with a tragic death, being murdered in June 1879 by a native crew with whom he sailed from Amboyna.

of labourers, thus helping to re-establish a healthy labour supply.

Sturt, down to his retirement from office at the end of 1851, kept up correspondence with various exploring and survey parties. He received and condensed long reports from Driver in the Port Lincoln district, from Oakden in the region of Lake Torrens, and from others.

Mr. Bonwick, the well-known colonial archivist, going at that time to make researches at Adelaide, was referred to Captain Sturt as being 'at the head of everything' there, and as the man best able to help him. Bonwick's work lay chiefly in the Survey Department, where Sturt showed such complete mastery of detail that his guest formed the impression that he was Surveyor-General. Captain Freeling, who held that appointment, was probably absent at the time. Bonwick gives a vivid picture of Sturt, 'moving about with quiet dignity, watching the men at work and helping them with practical hints. . . . As he moved he had away of gently putting out his hands' -doubtless in consequence of uncertain sight.'

Yet he knew at once where was any book or paper required, and would lay his hand on it in a moment.' The visitor was chiefly impressed by the great deference shown to Sturt by every man in the office, a deference most unusual at that time in the colonies. He spoke of Sturt's rare charm of manner, and of the kind and ready attention which, under any pressure of work, he showed to all applicants.

For Sturt, no less than for the colony, a brighter day had dawned. True, his earlier and his later appointments differed little in importance; his salary to the last never exceeded 700*l*. But a black cloud had rolled away, and the air was clear. Just at this time however, when safe from detraction, and happy in the love of his fellows and in the larger hopes of the Province, Sturt found his powers of usefulness cruelly checked by renewed troubles of eyesight. In fear of actual blindness he felt it his duty to

retire from public life, and on December 30, 1851, he was officially informed that, 'under circumstances alike honourable to himself and the colony,' his resignation was accepted. This step was signalled by the generous vote of a pension of 600*l.* from the colony 'for the discovery and exploration of the River Murray, whereby and in other similar public services the said Charles Sturt bath sustained great toils and privations to the permanent weakening of his health.'

In August 1851, the discovery of Victorian gold caused an exodus from South Australia, which, by January 1852, threatened to drain the province of men and of money. In this emergency the happy idea of stamping in Adelaide gold ingots as legal tender restored the disturbed balance of exchange, and tided over a difficult crisis. To Tinline, a bank manager, and to Babbage, who became Government assayer, is due great credit for this enterprise. But Sturt, though no longer in office, gave much time and trouble to organise the necessary staff and machinery, and on his recommendation Tolmer, Commissioner of Police, was entrusted with the charge of the Overland Gold Escort between Adelaide and Mount Alexander – a choice amply justified by Tolmer's coolness, strength, and courage in a series of thrilling adventures. Sturt's letter to MacLeay of May 19, 1852, touches on these topics.

'You appear to have heard of my retirement from office on a pension of 600*l.* a year, and I am glad that you approve of this step after a public life of nearly forty years. But I should not have retired had I not laboured under unusual difficulties. My sight indeed has become very feeble, and entailed so much work on me that I had not a moment for myself. I felt therefore that I should do wrong to reject an offer made to me with the best feeling, and from a desire to make a comfortable provision for me. I am under no restraint, and might go home to-morrow if I pleased. But England would not agree

with me, and I am strongly attached to the spot on which I am established. My house, as far as it goes, is on the plan of yours at Brownlow Hill, and I shall endeavour to increase the resemblance if I can. But I have not your soil to work upon. However, I shall be thankful for any seeds of trees or flowers. While I was in England my garden and grounds were destroyed; for Mr. —, who occupied my house, though a good fellow, planted barley in my garden, tethered his horses to my young fruit-trees, and ultimately, setting fire to the stubble to clear it away before my return, burnt more than seven dozen of my choicest fruit-trees. Added to this, he let down all my fences, and the stray cattle destroyed everything ornamental. I really have not had the time or the means to repair damages. The couch-grass you sent me now covers my lawn, and has converted a barren sandhill into a green sward. I have also several plants you kindly sent me. Can I send you cuttings of our grapes? We have some of a splendid sort.' About the end of February we heard of the death of Mrs. Sturt's mother from the effects of an accident. By the poor old lady's death we receive a small addition to our income, so I have sent N. home to be two or three years at Rugby. My boys, C. and E., are at home, and I am brushing up my Latin and Greek for their benefit. Little M. is a sweet pretty child, and what is better has a sweet disposition. How soon will the hour come when we must separate, perhaps for ever on this side the grave! Are we to meet on the other? It appears to me that the strongest proof of a future and a better state is that in our present one we are never happy, but are always longing for something more substantial and durable. It can hardly be that the Deity has implanted in our hearts hopes and desires which are never to be realised. . . . What singular times are these! and what is to be the result of all these discoveries? Locally, I look on

them as a great evil, but no doubt they are designed to relieve a nation which has not yet fulfilled its part in the world's progress. As regards the quantity of gold found, I do not think that it will have any effect on the value of gold. The French want to exchange for gold the forty millions of silver in their Treasury; and, allowing the fullest produce from Victoria, New South Wales, and California, it would take nearly 100 years to pay off our National Debt. Most of those who acquire gold misuse it, and I think that the bulk will be distributed among so many that little change will take place.

'Our people have been more generally successful than others, and the Bullion Act has certainly saved the colony for a time ; as the establishment of an escort from Mount Alexander to Adelaide has removed the difficulty of transmitting the gold from the diggings.

'The people of South Australia have strong local attachments, so that I do not apprehend any great diminution of population. South Australia is peculiarly adapted for small farms, and is therefore greatly subdivided. The ambition of those who go from here to the diggings is to purchase a piece of land with what they get, and they are provident enough to buy in a ton of flour and other things in case of scarcity. You would be both impressed and pleased at the quantity of land under cultivation, although I fear this year but little will be done in that way. Trade with us just now is brisk, but I foresee that our crisis is not yet over, and I am watching the course of events with deep interest. . . .

'The Fox Youngs have ever been kind to me. Sir Henry has done everything I have asked him to. . . . They assure me every officer of the Government misses me. Our Bishop is an easy man and a pleasant companion. He is now on his way to Western Australia, which is stupidly and ignorantly attached to our See. Remember me kindly to Deas Thomson. Remember me too to

William McArthur and James, and say I do not forgot old times. Remember me also to Dumaresq and his wife. I might fill my sheet with the names of well-remembered friends, but will only say that I have ever felt a deep interest in the prospects of New South Wales and of my many friends in that colony. 'It is raining cats and dogs, so that I really think the river will be down upon my humble dwelling. Every year we are on an island; yet Grange is a most healthy spot. It has fine lofty umbrageous trees like oaks, the moisture having drawn their limbs horizontal. It is the most English-looking place in the Province. It lies within a quarter of a mile of the sea, my land stretching to the shore.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

1849-1853

GRANGE-HOME LIFE-GOLD FEVER-TO A RUGBY BOY-THE  
'HENRY TANNER'-MUTINY-ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND

AMID all vicissitudes of his career, Sturt found in home life his chief happiness. His love of home speaks from every page of letter and diary. Daily, as he rode from Adelaide, he shook off the cares of office to become a boy again among his boys, and with them to rejoice over his favourite animals and flowers.

Grange stood on a rise of ground  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Adelaide, and close to a creek which at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles lower down spread out to form the Port. About half a mile from the house, across sandhills, lay a quiet stretch of shore. The property of 500 acres included an 80-acre section of good pasture presented by the colony, but for the rest consisted largely of swampy ground near the creek, and barren sand towards the shore. Hard by the house, on grassy sward, stood groups of fine old gum-trees. To build, to plant, to beautify Grange, Sturt from his first year in Adelaide had fondly devoted a scanty leisure. Disappointment might check but could not quell his ardour. Year by year the floods<sup>1</sup>-at longer intervals

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<sup>1</sup> The floods, which almost every year surrounded the house, more than once swept away the bridges of Adelaide. During one inundation, Sturt on leaving his office found the water over the handrail of Hindmarsh Bridge, and a man there stationed to warn off passengers. Sturt however put his horse at the flooded bridge and safely crossed it amid cheers from the beholders. That evening much alarm was felt for the inmates of Grange, and-the Governor (Sir H. Fox Young) came with friends in a whaleboat from the Port to their rescue. But they stayed on their island, and the floods soon subsided.

the locusts-wrought havoc; the chaos produced in a few months by a careless occupant Sturt has already feelingly described.

His task of cultivation must have been tough, for in late years the salt floods driven up the creek by an encroaching sea have killed the noble trees and wrecked the beauty of the place. The ungrateful soil now defies labour, and Grange lies desolate. Yet old friends still remember the leafy shade, the choice fruits and flowers which under Sturt's devoted care once adorned this chosen spot. The little paradise was peopled by a variety of friendly beasts and birds. Here the kangaroo lay down with the dog, and the cockateel with the household cat. Cattle, poultry, and bees were carefully tended; to Mrs. Sturt the dairy was a source of pride if not of profit. Among the horses were veterans of the Central Expedition.

The very cats had stories. Mr. Bonwick, when dining at Grange, was struck by 'the beautiful cat who wandered among the dishes. Captain Sturt,' he adds, 'was a man so loveable as to secure\* the love even of a cat.' He certainly inspired animals with perfect confidence, and had rare power of taming them. A favourite cat long left with a friend, travelled back to Grange on horseback in Sturt's coat-pocket. Puss took advantage of a halt to bolt out of its prison and down a wild glade. Sturt, without dismounting, merely called the creature, who in response turned, and coining back allowed him to secure her more effectually for the rest of the ride.

Heroic was the devotion of a black tom-cat who was wont to bask daily in a particular sunny window. Sturt's brother Evelyn begged for this cat, and took him to Mount Gambier on the Victorian borders. Six months later the animal was missed by his new master, but in due time

reappeared in his accustomed corner at Grange. Unless this cat had made his way to Port Phillip and there stowed himself on an Adelaide-bound ship, he must have crossed 600 miles of wild country, swimming the Murray on the way. Needless to say, at Grange fine dogs always held a place of honour. Dogs and poultry however, more often than other pets, were killed untimely by snakes, for reptiles were not absent from this Eden, though from early habit the children feared these pests as little as the homely rat or beetle. Commonest was the large black water-snake, though the dreaded 'diamond' was thought more venomous. But most destructive were the deaf adders, who had an uncanny trick of lying hidden about the grounds or in the house. They abounded among the sandhills, lurking under low bushes, whence the boys for sport would dislodge them. Sturt, when clearing weeds from under a pink one day, pulled forth a deaf adder; but, remarking that the poor thing hadn't hurt him,<sup>1</sup> quietly let it go.

Of the Adelaide society of those days-which combined in a marked degree the best English traditions with the freer simplicity of colonial life-Sturt draws a true and charming picture.' Quiet and unpretending, but generous, were the hospitalities of Grange. Music was the speciality of the house. Mrs. Sturt played well on the harp, and delighted to collect friends who, with piano, violin, 'cello, and flute, made up a small but effective orchestra for open-air performances. The society, mainly recruited from good English families, was select without being narrow; and, as Sturt truly remarks, this quiet intercourse led to a warmer intimacy than could have sprung from more formal entertainments.'

Once at Grange (as will happen in the best regulated houses) a party of friends arrived on the wrong evening, their near approach first warning Mrs. Sturt of the

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<sup>1</sup> Central Expedition, ii. 226-274.

mistake. It was agreed not to undeceive the guests, Captain Sturt keeping them amused while his wife, having by active operations in poultry-yard, dairy, and kitchen ensured that the dinner, though late, should be ample, hastened, after a rapid toilette, to rejoin her friends. The evening was spent most cheerily, and ended with an impromptu dance, certain guests from a distance staying for the night.

Emergencies which would try the powers of a well-appointed English household were at Grange faced under special domestic difficulties. The supply of servants, at best casual, and dependent too frequently on emigrants of the 'Green Linnet' type, would often fail altogether. Those who were with difficulty obtained would sometimes depart in a body without a day's notice. Others would behave so badly as to leave open no course but summary dismissal.

Once, while Captain and Mrs. Sturt, with their baby girl, were absent for a few days, the boys, finding themselves neglected and breakfastless in an empty house, went to the shore, where the maids spent hours in idleness. Seeing them bathing far out in the shallow sea, the boys in hungry wrath confiscated their clothes, which they buried among the low bush of the sandhills. Then from afar they spied the wretched maids dodging homewards from tree to tree, with rapid breaks across the open. Terror of the natives or bushrangers, who were supposed to have taken the lost garments, had a good effect in restraining for a time the vagrant propensities of these foolish virgins.

The shore afforded fine facilities for bathing; and, though sharks were not unknown, the children indulged freely in aquatic pastimes, which developed to the utmost their swimming powers. Full of charm are the memories of Grange to the children there brought up, and accustomed from the cradle to ride, to swim, to ramble among

surroundings which made for them an ideal home. Sir Charles Napier's theory that life in a young colony affords the finest training was here exemplified, for the children learnt early to collect and to observe, and to be handy at all sorts of odd jobs. The elders must often have felt misgivings lest in such untrammelled freedom the boys should run too wild. They certainly figured in many pranks, but never in very serious mischief. A young fellow who came out with an introduction to the Sturts incurred the wrath of the boys by constantly appearing in a tall hat. Him they beguiled on to a prepared raft which they scuttled in mid-stream, leaving the guest to flounder out as best he could, while the obnoxious hat was filled with sea-sponges and sunk in the creek.

The second boy, C., high-spirited and a born naturalist, was indignant with Mr. Torrens (afterwards Sir Robert), who had reported him for playing with parachutes on the roof. One day, beholding from afar the enemy's approach, the boy laid ready a large rotten pumpkin on the ledge of a half-cut rick. Then, showing himself on the roof, he refused to stir on Torrens's remonstrance. Torrens, nettled at this obstinacy, gave chase; the boy keeping near enough to lead him on, and making for the rick. Up to the ledge flew C.; and when his pursuer was well engaged upon the ladder the boy with careful aim dropped the rotten pumpkin full upon his head. The same boy, bringing home in triumph one evening a ghurpur, or large monitor lizard, found the house upset for a dance; and, being at a loss where to stow his treasure, put it for the night in the bath-room. Presently the guests were startled by a figure in night dress flying into the ball-room screaming for 'Master C. to come and take the horrid great beast out of her bed.'

Amid conditions such as we have sketched book-learning was somewhat at a discount. Captain and Mrs. Sturt did their utmost in rare leisure hours to supplement

the teaching of a fair school in Adelaide. Moreover the Grange library held a good assortment of standard books, among which the boys browsed freely. But educational considerations no doubt weighed heavily in Captain Sturt's final decision to return to England—a move which, however, was not thought of till the outbreak of the 'gold fever' had rendered life in South Australia exceptionally difficult. The sudden exodus of able-bodied men at that time caused a perplexing dearth of labour, and forced women and children, however delicately reared, to perform every sort of drudgery. Nor at that time were life and property safe. The ranks of the police were thinned by the lust for gold, while country districts were raided by outlaws bent on stealing horses for the journey to the mines.

Sturt one evening on his homeward ride was suddenly attacked from behind a sandhill by three masked men. The foremost seized his bridle, while the others were hurrying up on either side. 'Quietly, my men,' said he. 'Hands off, and tell me what you want.' Disarmed by his cool manner, the leader slightly relaxed his grip; when, quick as lightning, Sturt spurred his horse over the fellow upset by the sudden jerk, and, dealing blows right and left with loaded horsewhip, galloped clear off before his assailants had recovered breath.

During Sturt's absence in Adelaide one day, the cowman peremptorily asked for his wages and departed, and soon arose the problem of fourteen cows lowing to be milked. Judge Cooper, happening to call, lent his milker for the night. But, with the Sturts' large dairy, such emergencies were not easily met; and many a time the boys now had to lend a hand in the various labours of the farm. C., then about fourteen, was often out very late, riding round the boundaries and driving in stray cattle. He has a lively recollection of a grand job of pig-killing and bacon-curing, when the meat, hung up in the moon-

light, was found quite rotten next morning. He remembers, too, how the whole family would spend the evenings in a general wash-up of utensils and crockery, and in various labours which lasted very late, to be resumed very early. Can we wonder that Sturt, looking to the future, dreaded for his boys as much as he deplored for his wife this irksome round of heavy toil?

Already, in the spring of 1852, the eldest son was sent to Rugby. The parting was terrible. After a heartrending scene at home, the boy, driving with his father to embark, at a bend of the track saw his mother, unprotected from the sun, flying over rough ground to snatch a last farewell. Sturt in later years referred to the 'sinking of heart' with which he left the lad alone on the 'Hydaspes.' Thenceforward the parents were drawn towards England by a magnetic force which lent unsuspected strength to other promptings in that direction. A letter of December 7, 1852, to the Rugby boy shows the drift of gradually maturing plans.

Grange: December 7, 1852.

My dear Boy,-With no small pleasure do I take up my pen to reply to your several letters, more particularly the last. Let me assure, you that both your mother and myself are highly pleased, not only at the general tenor of your correspondence, but at the prudent and decisive manner in which you have acted in reference to . . . Your conduct on that occasion, if followed up, will lead you to form for yourself a manly and honourable character, and give you self-possession under the most difficult circumstances. It is to form such a character that I have sent you to Rugby, as much as to give you a better education than I could have given you here. By mixing with your equals and observing the qualities that most endear any of your schoolfellows to their companions you will come to know what qualities will best carry you

through the world. If a boy can command the respect and attachment of his schoolfellows, he will command those of men when he enters the world. But, my dear N., in such characters there is required a moral courage which few possess—a courage that makes a boy or man above doing a mean or dishonourable action; which leads him at once and without hesitation to do that which is right and to obey the first impulse of the heart, which is always right. From what I have observed of your character I would fain hope that you possess this moral courage. Having watched over you from your earliest infancy, I am fond enough to anticipate that you will be a credit to your name and to your country. Never shrink from doing a good or a generous action; take part with the weak when they have justice on their side. Be kind and considerate to all, especially to your inferiors, and rest assured you will meet your reward in the approval and confidence of mankind. Recollect, my dear boy, that it is from your schoolboy experience—from the knowledge gathered during your schoolboy days—that you will ultimately derive advantage. The more you store in your mind, the more you study examples of the good or bad, of the great or the weak in history, the more readily will you find thought and expression when required.

God has given you good abilities; and as He has been thus bountiful to you, so ought you to be more thankful to Him and to ask a continuance of His blessing both night and morning. Let no ridicule induce you to neglect your sacred duties. Youth is prone to doubt; and it would be needless in me to explain to you points which can only be justly appreciated in maturer years. I do not expect you to be free from the errors of youth; but I would encourage you to cultivate those feelings and to practise those exercises which will always lead you back into the path of certitude. Rest assured the hand of Providence is over those who forget not their Maker.

The colony is in a most disagreeable state, not only from the high price of everything, but also from the want of servants. There are literally none to be had, so that household labours fall heavily on your poor mother; and I verily think that consideration for her will drive me away from South Australia. . . . Torrens was over here quail-shooting on Saturday, and in a short time bagged fourteen brace, with a brace of snipe and a landrail. . . .

The garden looks tolerably well, and there is a great show of pears, grapes and plums. Apples this year have failed in consequence of a small fly getting into the blossom. Some of the gardeners calculate their loss at 500*l.* . . . Everything is at digger's prices. I could not get C. or E. a pair of boots under 36*s.*, or for myself under 3*l.* 15*s.* The 2 lb. loaf is 9*d.*, and flour 35*l.* a ton. Servants are not to be had except at exorbitant wages; labour being 6*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* a day. . . . The accounts from the diggings are fearful. There is great distress, thousands wandering about in abject misery without clothes or food. Murders, robberies and fights are of constant occurrence, and bands of bushrangers infest the roads between Mount Alexander and Melbourne. There is a talk of diggings at Mount Barker; but God grant we may be spared such a misfortune. The uneducated cannot stand the attainment of sudden wealth.

. . .

Your little horse is very well. Old Journey makes nothing of the carriage now. The iron grey has grown a beautiful creature. Our dairy now consists of fourteen quiet cows, which yield a good deal of butter; but really the annoyance of the servants may drive us to give up the pleasure of looking after these animals. We have sixty goslings and twenty-three young turkeys, and a lot of young guinea fowls, as wild as partridges, but I have been unsuccessful with the ducks. Our bees get on famously, and next month I shall take four of the seven hives. I am very fond of them. The boys have taken

lots of fish in the creek this season. Boxer desires his kind remembrance to you; he is most faithful and steady. I am so sorry about poor Motley; he must have been stolen. . . .

On January 15 Captain Cadell enters the sea-mouth of the Murray in a steamer. I am preparing a fine map of the river for him, and shall enter the sea-mouth with him. I wish you were here to accompany me. It will be a service of some danger, but never mind that. I shall go beforehand and take soundings, and examine the place. And now, my dear boy, God bless you and direct your steps in life. All unite in most affectionate love to you with your attached father,

(Signed) CHARLES STURT.

Cadell however was delayed for seven months in his operations, and before he steamed into the Goolwa from the sea, Sturt had left South Australia. Judge Cooper, writing to the Rugby schoolboy on March 16, 1853, throws further light on the difficulties which finally determined that step.

'Since you left us a great deal of gold has been brought into the colony, and many labourers and shop-keepers have become rich. People like your father and myself with fixed incomes, so far from getting any advantage from this increase of wealth, suffer, for everything is enormously dear. Captain Sturt hopes by going to England to save and to be able to educate C. and E. better than he can here. It gives me great grief to lose my old friends. . . . I am very glad to have the whole party with me for these last three or four days. They sail tomorrow, and I am truly melancholy.'

On Wednesday, March 17, 1853, Charles Sturt with his family embarked at the Port, quitting for ever on the 19th the land of his adoption. How final was that parting he happily knew not yet. The 'Register' of March 18

bids him God-speed: 'Captain Sturt will carry with him, during his temporary absence, the affectionate regards and best wishes of every colonist of South Australia'.

The Sturts were to have sailed a few days earlier with sundry friends in the 'Barbara Gordon,' but the agents persuaded them, on the score of greater accommodation, to secure berths and a stern cabin in the 'Henry Tanner,' a ship of 388 tons, laden with wool and copper ore. On the eve of departure however, when she already lay outside the port, this vessel was uncomfortably crowded by a swarm of successful 'diggers.' So offensive were the ways of these newcomers that for Mrs. Sturt the saloon meals were impossible, and throughout the long voyage she and her small daughter took their food apart. But Captain Sturt and his boys, to avoid the offence of exclusiveness, ate at the general table. Their messmates indeed watched jealously for cause of quarrel. The surly malignity of one bullying miner was explained by his well-grounded dread of Sturt's brother, then chief magistrate of Melbourne. A widow of doubtful antecedents resented the evident partiality shown by the sailors for the young Sturts to the prejudice of her own spoilt children.

The high-spirited boys were often sorely provoked by these rude folk, and friction was only averted by Sturt's watchfulness and forbearance, and by his wife's kindly tact in helping to keep the peace. Hearing that the widow's baby was at death's door, Mrs. Sturt, by timely gifts of food and drugs from a private supply, saved the child and conciliated the mother.

When off Africa, to the south of Madagascar, the Henry Tanner hailed the 'Barbara Gordon,' and on board that vessel the Sturts gladly spent a day among congenial friends. In the early afternoon they were hastily summoned back by the captain, who, spying from afar the approach of a hurricane, lost no time in making for the open, while the 'Babara's' captain hugged the shore.

Scarcely was the party on board and all made snug, when the 'Tanner' was in the grip of the storm, before which for two days and three nights, under bare poles, she scudded helpless. The 'Barbara Gordon' was never seen again.<sup>1</sup> At the height of the storm a brilliant display of St. Elmo's lights over masts and bulwarks led the superstitious sailors to give up all for lost. The ship being a slow sailer and heavily freighted undoubtedly had a narrow escape.

Discipline on board had long been weak, and broke down utterly when at St. Helena the mate forfeited all influence with the men by marrying the digger's widow. Presently the cabin locker was tampered with, and a man put in arrest for that misdemeanour was promptly set free by his comrades. Sturt, unaware of this incident, was gazing out to sea aft, when the released sailor, half drunk, stole up and seized him from behind with intent to pitch him overboard. In the nick of time a big Irish butcher rushed to the rescue, and dragging off the assailant shook him like a rat and flung him down on to the main deck, declaring that he would willingly risk his own life to save such a man as Sturt. The butcher was wont to keep aloof from every one, and slept nightly atop of a large and heavy chest. From the first he had formed for Captain Sturt a deep though silent admiration. His size and strength made him now a valuable ally for the party of order. For mutiny was beginning.

On a threat to stop the grog the men left their posts, deserting even the wheel! at a time when fortunately a series of dead calms prevailed. The mutineers drew together in the forecabin; the passengers stood to arms;

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<sup>1</sup> But her captain's son, meeting young Sturt at Plymouth, told him that the ship had foundered with all on board. The captain had lashed his son to a spar, to which, seeing all was lost, he also clung, and after some hours they had been rescued by a passing ship, but the father, from exposure and despair, had lost his senses. By this shipwreck the Sturts lost many possessions which they had consigned to the ill-fated vessel.

the captain read the Riot Act, and declared he would fire on the first assailant. On a final appeal, many of the malcontents returned to their duty, the remainder were too half-hearted to come to blows, and a timely concession of grog quenched the last sparks of the threatened outburst.

Towards the end of the voyage victuals ran low; at last all on board were reduced to rations of maggoty biscuit from a reserve cask of uncertain antiquity. To render this food less unsavoury, the cook disguised it as curry; but, happening one day to burn the mess black, he was summoned by the captain, who flung over him the smoking tureenful.

No sooner was England in sight than the butcher fidgeted to be ashore; and though the sea ran high, he and his heavy chest were safely landed at a fishing hamlet on a wild coast. Then for the first time he told the men who rowed him that the chest was full of gold.

Off Plymouth (where dwelt relations of Mrs. Sturt) the delusive assurance of a pilot that land was within easy reach induced our travellers to cut short their weary voyage. At eight one morning accordingly they parted from the 'Henry Tanner' and her queer company, but wished themselves back when night found them still tossing in mid-channel. Not till two or three in the morning did they land. At so late an hour it was impossible' to disturb friends, and the friends when sought next day had just left for London, there to await the 'Henry Tanner.' Thither the Sturts now hastened, but in town they were detained for weeks by the serious illness of their eldest boy, who had come from Rugby to meet them. Only after anxious nursing did he recover sufficiently for all at last to join in a general happy meeting.

## CHAPTER XIX

1854-1858

CHELTHENHAM - EDUCATION - ADVICE TO SONS - GREGORY'S  
 NORTHERN EXPEDITION - GOVERNORSHIP OF VICTORIABRANKSEA  
 REVISITED-GREGORY IDENTIFIES THE BARCOO AND COOPER  
 --SIR RICHARD MACDONNELL-LAKE GAIRDNER

CAPTAIN STURT now settled at Cheltenham, the education of his children being henceforth his first object in life. The slight record of these quiet years is threaded together from a few stray letters to his friend Mr. Peake. The first of these fragments, written in July 1855, touches on the topic of the hour: 'We are all absorbed in anxiety about the war. Where will its calamities end? I do not like the aspect of affairs even should we take Sevastopol. Nearly a year has our army spent before that fortress, with a loss of half a million men.' And again in September

'What say they in town to the fall of Sevastopol ? In that affair we have little to boast of, playing second fiddle as we have done all along; I am very anxious for General Simpson's despatches to account for our failure at the Redan. What a blow the campaign has dealt to Russia ! But will she knuckle under? I say No ! . .

'For some time I have been, and shall be, very anxious about my boys. All this education is an awful expense. My eldest has entered the lists for an engineer commission; should he succeed, he would be provided for. I have been working hard with my two others; if my second gets into Addiscombe, he will a year later go to India

with even better prospects than 'N.' These hopes were duly fulfilled, the eldest son, after reading for only six weeks with a tutor, passing into Woolwich in the summer of 1856; the second son, from Addiscombe, obtaining in June 1858 a commission in the Indian army, a career on which in due time the third son was also launched.

On September 10, 1857, the father writes: 'My eldest boy has passed fifth out of sixty-six into the Engineers, and will be commissioned about Christmas. . . . C. will have to pass his ordeal next June. I am now anxious to give E. every advantage; he has but a limited time before his examination. However, I shall not let the grass grow under my feet, but shall do my best to prepare him for Mr. Fleming's, so you see I have some work before me. . . . I shall be glad when they are provided for.' And finally on December 10, 1858: 'The other day I took my boy E. to Mr. Fleming at Tonbridge. He will go to Bombay in May. My task will then be finished. All my brood except little M. will have taken wing, and I shall close my sojourn in Cheltenham.'

To his eldest son, starting on his new career in August or September, 1856, he fondly writes

'My dear Boy,-After seeing you to your new abode I am really unable to rest. I feel as I felt when we parted on board the "Hydaspes"- a sad conviction that I shall have to go home without you, leaving you among strangers to begin your race in life as I had to begin mine, with little hope save in my own exertions. Nevertheless, my dear N., no father will ever leave a son with more confidence than I shall leave you to work your own way. Rest assured that before I lay my head on the pillow, I shall pray for God's continued blessing and favour upon you, and that He will guide and defend you in all difficulties and dangers.' After touching on the importance of a firm Christian faith, the father adds: 'The full value of

such a faith seems to me only to open out to man as he advances in years and approaches the close of his earthly career. Youth is the season of buoyant spirits, of unrestrained thought; and I have no wish to encourage feelings that too often throw a gloom over the mind and unfit it for ordinary duties. But a mental conviction of a superintending Providence will always keep alive in us a sense of our moral obligations. In your branch of the service both officers and men are more seriously disposed than in any other; you, I believe, have considered as much as most young men the mysteries of religion. I am happy in the retrospect that you have been reared on a solid foundation. Most earnestly shall I ever pray that, in full assurance of a support stronger than any earthly wisdom or strength, you may be calm and confident in danger, and foremost to fulfil the duties of your noble profession. . . .'

In the same vein, two years later, September 3, 1858, Sturt writes a parting blessing to his second son 'I sit down to write a last farewell ere you leave your native country, and to assure you that you are never forgotten in my prayers. . . . You leave behind you many attached friends. Amidst the regrets of separation, remember that you have much cause of thankfulness, and that you have bright prospects. . . . Try to master Hindostani, knowing as you do that a knowledge of the native languages is the key to promotion and independence. Your aim should be, by a prudent though not niggardly economy, to lay the foundation for returning early to England.

Many will set you a bad example, but to steer a steady course you require only the same moral courage which you have displayed at Addiscombe. Maintain the character you have there acquired for steadiness and good conduct. Of your high sense of honour and propriety I have no fear, and I part with you, my dear boy, in the

full confidence that you will never commit an unworthy act.

And now, my dear C., let me impress upon you the necessity of a more important duty. You are in a profession in which your career may be short. I would have you stand prepared for any event. Let nothing prevent you from seeking the guidance and blessing of the Almighty in prayer at stated hours. Begin the day well and end it well, and great will be your consolation when the habit shall be so confirmed that you feel a want when that has been neglected. May your Almighty Father give you an understanding heart, so to think and so to act as to deserve His blessing-whether it please Him to shorten or to prolong your life. And now, my dear boy, I must close. The night is passing away-it is two o'clock-but I am unable to sleep. Remember your parents, more particularly your mother. God bless you always, my dear boy.

Believe me ever

Your truly attached father, (Signed)  
CHARLES STURT.'

With Sturt religion lay too deep for common discourse. So seldom did he lift the veil from the shrine of his inner life, that we are tempted to quote one other passage that touches on his views. He writes to a cousin about to adopt her mother's Roman Catholic tenets: 'From what you say of your intention to join the Catholic services, I do not understand whether you are about to embrace that faith for the first time or whether you have been bred a Catholic. I need not say that, as matters now stand, I hope you have always been a Catholic. In such case I could have no remark to make. I am no bigot, and though I might regret our separate faiths, I should not feel myself justified in any endeavour to combat early instructions. If however this be not so, I would entreat

wonder that, under trials and injustice, you should have flown to those who promise the peace which elsewhere you have failed to find. But alas! that promise is a fatal delusion. Believe me, neither in rigorous observances nor within convent walls is happiness to be found. By one way only- by prayer- may peace of mind be attained... . For no treasure would I give up the inestimable comfort of pouring forth my feelings before God in the silence of my chamber. I have felt the comfort of prayer; and in many a scene of danger, of difficulty, of sorrow, have risen from my knees calm and confident.

'Man needs no human mediator between him and the Almighty. . . . How shall any man, himself sinful, presume to forgive others their sins ? . . . 'I have put but one truth before you, for I could not do more. May Almighty God in His mercy direct you in that path which shall lead to your solace and peace. Whatever you determine, may you receive from above that strength and counsel which man cannot give. May you find that peace which passeth understanding. . . .

Believe me, my dear R.,

Ever your affectionately attached cousin,

(Signed) CHARLES STURT.'

Sturt meantime was not remiss in work for Australia. The year 1855 was memorable for the full self-government then granted to the Australian colonies; and, while that scheme was ripening, Sturt was frequently consulted by officials, who gladly availed themselves of his unacknowledged labours. Already in the autumn of 1854 he was busy with arrangements for Mr. A. C. Gregory's explorations in the north and north-east of Australia. Careful lists of saddlery and stores are made out by Sturt himself, with special notes and estimates. He was in close correspondence with Elsey, Lyall, and others whom he selected

for the expedition. Gregory was fortunate in his companions, among whom, in addition to those named, were a brother--H. Gregory, the botanist Dr. Mueller, Baines the artist, and our old friend Flood. He praised the stores ordered by Sturt no less for quality than for welljudged quantity.

The chief incidents of this 'Northern Expedition,' first to the Roper and Burdekin, later to the Albert and Purnett, and finally across to Moreton Bay (1856-57), were written to Sturt in detail by Eley, surgeon to the expedition. The first of these letters (June 12, 1856) conveys an interesting greeting: 'Dr. Mueller, our botanist, who was in South Australia when you were there, desires his best respects to you. He has raised several plants from the seeds you brought from the interior, and many of them have turned out exceedingly well. He has had much pleasure in naming a new *Solanum* in your honour. 'On these letters, amplified by Gregory's journals, and enriched by his own conclusions, Sturt built an interesting and exhaustive report of twenty printed pages.

Every confidence having been placed in me by the Colonial Department,' he remarks, 'I was naturally anxious as to the results.' Gregory, in his first attempt to penetrate if possible to the northern margin of the Stony Desert, following a line to the westward of the 138th meridian, was checked by long parallel ridges of red drifting sand just such as, at four degrees further south and eleven degrees further east, Sturt had encountered. Here, in lat. 20° 16' S. and long. 127° 35' E., a creek named after Sturt, and followed for 300 miles to that point, ran out into a series of dry salt lakes in a depressed hollow of the desert.' Nor was the difficult crossing of Arnheim's Land easterly from the Victoria to the Albert more fruitful.

'From the results of these two journeys it would appear that the desert runs up to the very summit of the table land which intervenes between it and the north

coast. . . . A great portion of it still remains unexplored, and whether it encircles any better country remains to be proved.' Gregory however, as Sturt points out, discovered both on 'Sturt's Creek' and in the eastern valleys of the Victoria extensive and rich tracts of land, where the drawbacks of tropical climate may perhaps, he suggests, be modified by 'the extreme dryness of the Australian atmosphere, and its consequent freedom from noxious exhalations. . . . Here Hindu labour in the growth of cotton and, other tropical products might be tried with advantage. . . . He expresses a conviction that the north coast of Australia holds forth good commercial promise.

Sturt's fine clear handwriting at this period shows that his eyesight had benefited by comparative rest. With the improvement of sight and strength his wish for work revived, and on the death of Sir Charles Hotham, Governor of Victoria (December 31, 1855), Sturt applied for the vacant post. In May 1856 he writes to Peake: 'I have been bold enough to apply for the government - of Victoria. . . . If I had not some confidence in my temper and experience, I would shrink from rather than seek the appointment; but I believe I could bring matters round. . . . If you hear any talk off it, 'put in a good word for me, and say that during thirteen years, as a member of the Legislative and Executive Councils of South Australia, I have filled almost every appointment in a Colonial Government. Moreover, that I am well known in the Colonies, and popular.'

Sturt, from his brother Evelyn, Chief Magistrate in Melbourne, knew well that he was asking for no sinecure. Successive Governors had barely made head against the misrule brought on Victoria by the gold-diggers. Latrobe in 1854 had retired in disgust; on his successor, Hotham, had burst the riots of Ballarat and the Eureka stockade; troubles which, added to financial and constitutional difficulties, undoubtedly hastened Sir Charles's death

Sturt would never have applied for such a post had he not felt able to conciliate the warring elements. Yet we can hardly wonder that officials who knew nothing of his rare influence with men of all degrees should have passed him over. His age of threescore years and one was against him, and though he was lithe and active, yet his health had suffered many shocks, and his eyesight was precarious. As a final disability, he was poor. No man could live more generously on a narrow income; but he had no feathers to pluck from his breast with the pelican-like devotion expected of our Governors. Small wonder then that Mr. Secretary Labouchere, 'though aware of credit due for past services, does not feel justified' in recommending such a candidate for the vacant appointment.

In spite of this disappointment, Sturt continued his disinterested labours. In May 1857, 'going to the Colonial Office, I was there detained by sundry questions from Merivale and Gairdner. It is clear they want to settle the northern coast of Australia.' And again in October 1857, 'The Colonial Office has been working me hard, sending me manuscript after manuscript to read and report on, which has tired my sight.'

Persistent work soon brought on the old trouble. Within a few months 'I am sorry to say that my sight is gradually diminishing, and causes me much uneasiness.... A celebrated eye-doctor tells me I have amaurosis or a weakness of the optic nerve and retina. No doubt both have been impaired. He however gives me hope of partial recovery, and for this I shall be thankful.'

Finding himself for the time condemned to inaction, Sturt fondly turns his thoughts to a possible country home, and in April 1857 unfolds to Mr. Peake the dream which for a while dazzled his imagination. 'The failure of the Eastern London Bank will have thrown into the market Branksea, an island in Poole Harbour, where I was

reared with Henry Sturt. Many a happy day have I spent there, and early associations endear the spot to me. To my cousin, who had other houses, it was an expense ; and he, on coming of age, sold it to Sir Charles Chad, on whose death it was again sold, and then fell into Colonel Waugh's hands.

He has turned the island upside down with quarries and I know not what. I am told he went on in the most extravagant way both there and in town, feeding sumptuously every day, and giving his servants champagne and claret. The place is said to be worth at the most about 11,000*l.*, my cousin parted with it for less (8,000*l.*), and I never regretted anything so much as my inability to purchase it. There I could live and die, and feel, rewarded for many other disappointments. I am assured that the purchase money might easily be cleared in a few years. I will then so far impose on your friendship as to beg you will make inquiries and let me know the result at your leisure. This is a natural weakness of mine that you must excuse.'

Alas! owing to false reports of mineral wealth, Branksea was just then run up to a prohibitive price. 'What a value is set on Branksea!' writes Sturt a month later. 'One of the directors told my friend that he had been offered 80,000*l.*, and earlier even 100,000*l.* for it! What will my good cousin say who sold it for 8,000*l.* ? It would appear that I was early treading on mineral wealth as unconsciously as when in after life I trod over the goldfields of Victoria and New South Wales. I am afraid however that the treasures of Branksea will only benefit the economical worker. It is an adventure I would not hazard, despite the force of old associations.'

In the summer of 1858 Sturt revisited this haunt of his boyhood, which he thus describes to his eldest son. 'As you will guess, I have been over to Branksea, and all the time wished you with me. The place is indeed much changed. The castle is truly a noble object from the

sea, but is already in ruins. The floors have been taken up, the oak panneling pulled down, and all has an appearance of extreme neglect. The garden, full of choice flowers, is surrounded on three sides by a glass corridor with tessellated pavement adorned by valuable plants. The drive from the lodge is bordered by fine beech, oak, and chestnut, while fir trees moan round the pretty little church, whence the view on the one hand is along the coast to Bournemouth, on the other towards Swanage and Purbeck. On the hill near the castle is the old battery of six guns, so honeycombed and rusty that they seem never to have been fired since my day. . . . The numerous farm buildings, the two kitchen gardens with fruit-houses 250 feet long are all dismantled. Paths wind along valleys of Scotch fir amid romantic scenery to the lakes and parsonage, and to the potteries at which nothing is doing. It really was with sorrow I looked on all this a sad instance of folly and recklessness.

'I am and ever have been as fond of Branksea as of Grange, and if fortune had smiled on me would gladly spend my days there, but that cannot be. . . .'

With regard to Branksea, fate cruelly mocked Sturt's plans. When Henry Sturt sold it for 8,000*l.* Charles had not 800*l.* at his command, and now, when Charles, after a life of toil, was ready to offer a fair price, the place was run up to a fancy value.

The company that bought it from Waugh's creditors came to grief; they however sold the property dear to Mr. Cavendish Bentinck, who, after lavishly adorning it in the Italian manner, parted with it at a dead loss. Of late years the castle was beautifully restored and enlarged by an appreciative owner, to be alas ! destroyed by fire in 1897, but to rise from its ashes on a larger scale than before.

The explorations of the year 1858 shed important light on Sturt's Central journey.

Gregory was again in the field, commissioned by the Sydney Government to search for the missing Leichhardt. That quest led him down the Barcoo, at a bend of which river, eighty miles beyond the track of any former explorer (lat. 24° 35' and long. 146° 6'), he found a large L cut on a tree. He could find no further sign of the lost traveller; but, following the Barcoo, at that time waterless for long stretches, Gregory pushed on till the river seemed to lose itself on a vast plain—the very plain from whose western edge Sturt had turned back down Cooper's Creek. Here Gregory knew the landmarks.

Low spurs from the Grey Range running northward, and meeting the Barcoo at nearly right angles, force the waters into a narrow channel, the well-known Cooper's Creek of Sturt.<sup>1</sup> This creek Gregory followed till at 100 miles lower it radiated into streamlets, most of which were absorbed by high sand-hummocks. The outer branch, the Strzelecki of Sturt, escaped through these mounds, and was traced by Gregory to the point where, as the 'Salt Creek' of Sturt (p. 258), it entered Lake Blanche (which, by the way, Gregory still called Lake Torrens). Finding, as he thought, a dry passage across Lake Torrens (in reality rounding the south-west end of Lake Blanche), Gregory bore for Mount Hopeless, and eventually arrived at Adelaide.

There full honour was paid to the party, and at a public breakfast on August 7, 1858, the Governor, Sir Richard MacDonnell, thus sums up Gregory's achievement

He has connected us with Moreton Bay. . He has traced the Victoria of Mitchell and Kennedy through Cooper's Creek into that mysterious basin, Lake Torrens. . . .'

Gregory in reply, after a brief account of his journey, referred to the expeditions of Sturt, Mitchell, and

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<sup>1</sup> *South Australian Register*, August 9, 1858

Kennedy, and described 'Lake Torrens' (alias Blanche) as the continuation of Cooper's Creek. It is simply a lake caused by the expansion of the lower part of the valley.'

In those days of colonial rivalry the explorer's panegyric on South Australia fell with special interest from the lips of a Sydney explorer who hailed originally from Western Australia. 'Elsewhere might be found richer minerals, or better harbours; but no place combined so many solid advantages as South Australia. Nowhere is the evidence of prosperity so general.' Gregory did not forget to refer with sympathy to Babbage, at that time entangled in the tough country to the north-west of Lake Torrens—the very region so wisely avoided by Sturt.<sup>1</sup> It is only possible to traverse that country under certain conditions. The rain which enabled us to proceed did not reach Mr. Babbage, who had to contend with a dry season, such as would have completely prevented this happy termination to our travels.'

After Gregory's speech, Sir Charles Cooper found in Captain Sturt and the early explorers' an inspiring theme. He referred feelingly to Oxley, Mitchell, Leichhardt, as pioneers no longer living, and from a host of surviving explorers selected those who had faced exceptional peril, 'cases where each day's journey involved a question of life and death.' Grey was not forgotten, Eyre's great venture was duly applauded; but to Sturt's rescue of his starving party from the dilemma of the Murray voyage was decreed the palm of combined foresight and heroism.

The good judge then, after quoting from Horace,

A heart of oak in triple brass had he,  
Who with his fragile bark first dared the sea,

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<sup>1</sup> The easy passage between Lakes Torrens and Eyre which finally allowed Stuart an advanced starting-point for his last great journey, was casually discovered a few months after Gregory's expedition by squatters pushing further afield.

dropped into warm praise of his absent friend. 'That friend's heart they knew-how kind, how generous, how careless of self. At the same time he had prudence and discretion, and those qualities enabled him to bring back his boat's crew without a single loss. . . . That friend he had while in England seen well in health. He might add that Captain Sturt still kept up an absorbing interest in this colony, and looked back most fondly upon friends and associations here.' The band then played 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot,' and the next speaker was Mr. Brock, an actual member of the Central Expedition, who, in the regretted absence of Sturt and of Browne, responded with spirit.

After due encomium on explorers in general, with particular mention of Pullen, under whom he had served, Brock launched into simple but forcible praise of his later leader : ' With regard to Captain Sturt, none but those who were with him could estimate the perils, the dangers, the difficulties to which on his last expedition he was exposed. Many may have exchanged with Sturt the friendships of domestic life; but only those who had been with him in his journeys could know his courage and his coolness. 'Often when the safety of the whole party hung upon his next movement, they knew that he would do all that it was possible for man to do, and they trusted in him. . . .

One incident might be given to show Sturt's determined character. When he sent back to Adelaide for supplies, on he would go, though the heat was dreadful, and though there was scarcely a drop of water to be seen, and no food for his horse or that of Dr. Browne. So they were obliged to come back to the depot. But one morning Sturt says, "Browne, I'm going again," and go again he would, though he knew the state of the country. All Dr. Browne's arguments were of no avail; in vain he reminded him of wife and family. Sturt had not accomplished his mission;

he had a duty to perform, and so he, went again. . . . He started with a smile on his face; we all thought it was the last time we should ever see him. . . . While waiting for him we had to fall back for want of water. . . . And when at last he did come, oh, how worn and changed he was! Every bone of his body was aching with violent pain, and he was unable to sit upon his horse.' Brock also mentioned that one evening when, with scarcely any water, they were preparing supper, 'the captain's kettle was accidentally upset, and he insisted on going that night without anything to drink rather than diminish the small share of any one else.'

The record of Gregory's journey and of the reception he met with in Adelaide was courteously forwarded to Sturt by Sir Richard MacDonnell, with an interesting letter of August 10, 1858: 'The Governor of South Australia must be the last to forget the name of Sturtso intimately connected with the history of the Province, so endeared to us all here by feats of manly enterprise, as well as by a thousand estimable qualities. . . . You will read with intense interest how Gregory has traced the Victoria through Cooper's Creek and Strzelecki's Creek into Lake Torrens, over which he had the good fortune to find a firm passage. . . . You will observe that in my speech I ventured to hint that your Stony Desert would be found to terminate, not in Lake Torrens, but in the newly discovered Lake Gairdner. This is almost certainly not connected with Lake Torrens, but trends westward for some 100 miles behind the Gawler Range.

Strange to say, this theory was strongly confirmed by the return on Monday of Major Warburton, our police commissioner, from an attempt to push north of Gawler Range. In this trip he was twice brought up by Lake Gairdner. A police trooper, Geherty, previously despatched by me to the north-west of Hack's Country-or

rather from the extreme west point of Gawler Range also found himself stopped by what I infer to be Lake Gairdner, stretching 100 miles west of the point where Major Warburton was impeded by it. Geherty describes the country as most desolate and composed of a succession of sand ridges running from south-east to northwest.

I think it very likely that we have at last found the real depressed basin where your interior sea ought to be, but most perversely is not. Geherty reports some good country north-west from Fowler's Bay; and if the western border of Lake Gairdner be rounded I think some important change of country may occur. . . . We certainly are rapidly filling up the map of this Province.

I have little hope of Babbage doing anything in the desolate region north-west of Lake Torrens so long as he is encumbered with wheels and drays. In fact, I despair of much being achieved even with horses ; and I certainly think we have never given explorers fair play in not equipping them with camels or dromedaries and *water-skins*, which in Africa I found the best mode of carrying liquid. The idea of the camel I broached at the *dejeuner* on Saturday, and yesterday (Monday) I got the enclosed "Argus," with leading article, and Mr. Embling's letter urging the same views. These cuttings will interest you. 'Pray turn the contents over in your mind, and let me know what you think of the feasibility of despatching some eight or nine men with double the number of dromedaries *right across the desert* to the mouth of the Victoria. I do not believe they would be more than three weeks in getting from Swinden's Country to the termination of Sturt's Creek in lat. 20°, and I cannot but think they would stumble on some water at least every third day. I wish you would consult Sir R. Murchison on the point, and see whether, if you thought the feat

not impracticable, the Imperial Government would undertake such an expedition. . . .

'A man entering the desert with a dray is like a man who, when about to climb a high hill, encumbers himself with a useless hundredweight of iron on each shoulder. Why increase the difficulties of a task quite sufficiently difficult under the most advantageous circumstances ? Look at Mr. Babbage, with his drays, his water-cart, and his stores. He had actually not moved his party more than eighty miles north of Port Augusta in three months ! Pray excuse this very hurried letter. . . . I shall endeavour to send with it a tracing which may be of use in giving you an idea of the general scope of these new discoveries. Remember that I shall anxiously expect to hear from you, while I also engage to send you the freshest intelligence by each mail.

'Believe me, my dear Sir, to be most sincerely yours,  
(Signed) 'RICHARD GRAVES MACDONNELL.'

These fragments show the progress of exploration to the close of 1858 and the vivid interest still felt by Sturt in the results of his life's work.

## CHAPTER XX

1859-1863

QUEENSLAND ASKS FOR STURT AS GOVERNOR - COOPER'S CREEK IN QUESTION - DINAN - DIPHTHERIA - LOSS OF FRIENDS - SEVERE ILLNESS-PORT ADELAIDE - AUSTRALIAN EXPLORATION - MACDOUALL STUART - LETTERS FROM HARRIS-BROWNE AND FROM STUART

EARLY in 1859 the settlement of Moreton Bay was separated from New South Wales to form the colony of Queensland. A letter in the 'Sydney Herald' of May 30, 1859, announcing that 'the Separation Bill was to be brought in immediately,' adds that Captain Sturt was to be governor of the new colony. And the 'South Australian Register' of June 6 echoes this report: 'The next outland mail will convey to Australia the style and title of the first Governor of Moreton Bay-Captain Sturt, of Australian exploration celebrity.' The Moreton Bay settlers, in their petition for independence, had in fact requested that Sturt might be appointed governor.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'In the memorial of the Moreton Bay settlers to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton (enclosed in Sturt's letter of March 9, 1859), after a protest against 'the vexatious delay interposed to the severance of the district from New South Wales,' &c., &c., this passage occurs :

'Your memorialists are deeply sensible of the arduous duties which must devolve on the officer charged with the duties of initiating a new government and constituting a new colony, and feel assured that long and practical experience obtained in the discharge of great public duties in the Australian colonies would form an essential element of success.

Your memorialists confidently feel that the great energy, firmness of purpose, and administrative talent evidenced in the exploration of vast por-

But the Colonial Office had already in view a younger man of tried ability, and on July 11 the 'Sydney Herald' reports the appointment of Sir George Bowen, Chief Secretary of the Ionian Islands.

There exists no private letter of this time to tell how Sturt bore this last denial of preferment. He still felt no fear of his own powers. He would not venture to prefer such a request did he not feel every confidence in his ability to fulfil the duties required. On the contrary, he would hope that long official experience in the colonies would enable him to conduct them with facility.<sup>1</sup> Let us hope that Sturt's rare sweetness of nature was gratified by the spontaneous homage of Queensland rather than embittered by the neglect of Downing Street.

In the course of the same year, 1859, the Sydney Survey Office, by a proposal to rename Cooper's Creek, raised a discussion which in the end confirmed Sturt's rights of first discovery.

That river, some 1,000 miles in extent from its source to Lake Torrens, had been, said Colonel Barney, in four several parts of its course laid down by four explorers. Of these, he admitted, 'Sturt had first, in August 1845, crossed Strzelecki Creek, had again come upon the river on October 27 of the same year, and had followed it up for more than a hundred miles-not recognising it, but now naming it "Cooper's Creek."'

Meantime, between these two dates, 'Mitchell on

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tions of this continent, and in the discharge of the various duties of Surveyor General, Colonial Treasurer, and Colonial Secretary in South Australia, pre-eminently distinguish Captain Sturt as possessing all these qualifications demanded of Governor to whom the duties of the colony shall be entrusted.

Your memorialists therefore request that you will be pleased to take such steps as may appear to you requisite for the immediate erection of this district into a colony, and that you will be pleased to submit the name of Captain Charles Sturt to Her Majesty for the appointment of the Governor thereof.'

<sup>1</sup> See Sturt's despatch to Lord Stanley, May 27, 1858.

September 14, 1845, came upon the head of the river, and, having followed it down for nearly two hundred miles, named it the Victoria. In 1847 Kennedy followed the river for more than two hundred miles beyond Mitchell's furthest point ; . . . and in 1858 Gregory finally connected the journeys of Sturt and of Kennedy, tracing the stream to Lake Torrens.'

Barney, while admitting Start's 'actual priority of discovery,'pleads that Mitchell's long journey down the river' before Sturt came upon Cooper's Creek' outweighs that claim. He suggests that, 'as there is already a Mitchell River in Yorke Peninsula and a River Sturt in South Australia, the name either of Kennedy or Gregory might appropriately be applied.

'This suggestion, with a further request that Kennedy be the name adopted, was on July 27 forwarded for approval to the South Australian Government, because that Government must be consulted about a river partly within its boundaries. An early reply was requested, 'in order to prevent the insertion in the new maps of the name of Cooper.'

Mr. Younghusband, Chief Secretary of South Australia, replied with spirit (August 7, 1859), expressing doubt as to the right of either Government to alter the name bestowed by Captain Sturt 'who, it is conceded, was the original discoverer, and who, in giving this name to a river whose course he explored with admirable resolution and perseverance for more than a hundred miles under circumstances of great difficulty, had not exercised any greater privilege than had been usually accorded to all discoverers of new country.'

Younghusband argues that the name Cooper's Creek, being by far the most widely known, ought not to be altered, unless to extend the name Strzelecki to the whole river. In no case should any name other than one of these two be given to the river without the consent of the

first discoverer. 'Captain Sturt should be the person now to decide what name the whole river should bear.'

This correspondence was on August 17, 1859, forwarded by Sir Richard MacDonnell to Sir E. Bulwer Lytton with the suggestion that the matter be referred to 'that distinguished traveller, Captain Sturt himself.'

In reply Sturt, while concurring fully in the wish to simplify maps by giving to the river one general name, yet points out the importance of distinguishing between the several branches (or creeks) into which the main channel spreads before losing itself in the salt-lake basin. He affirms Cooper's Creek to be undoubtedly the river's direct course ; and explains his preference for that name, not only as testifying to his personal feelings of regard and friendship for Sir Charles Cooper, but also as gratifying the colonists of South Australia by a mark of respect for his public character and worth. . . . I should therefore much regret the erasure of Sir Charles Cooper's name from the map. I am not wont to boast of what I have done, but on an occasion such as this I may be pardoned if I observe that, after all I have risked and all I have suffered for New South Wales as much as for any other colony, I deserved from that colony more consideration than I have received.

It appears that Sir Thomas Mitchell came on the river before I reached Cooper's Creek; and, if that is to be considered the main channel, Sir Thomas Mitchell as first discovering would have the right of naming the river. In such case the Government of New South Wales may claim the privilege, but I can hardly think it would use my own candour against me. There being already a Victoria River, I should wish the disputed river to be the Cooper along its proper course, and Strzelecki Creek to remain undisturbed.'

Neither Barney nor Younghusband nor Sturt himself seems to have observed that the river was first discovered as early as August 4, 1845, when Sturt noted the insignifi-

cant 'Fresh' and 'Salt Creeks' filtering into Lake Blanche. Moreover Sturt and Browne, when on their northward ride, crossed the lower course of the actual Cooper's Creek on August 20, 1845,<sup>1</sup> three weeks earlier than the date of Mitchell's discovery.

May 27, 1860, found Sturt at Southampton seeing off for Bombay his youngest boy. All his sons were now in the army, but his letters show no relaxation of parental solicitude.

From the spring of 1861 to the autumn of 1863 the thread of home life may be followed in a series of graphic letters to his eldest son. They are dated from Dinan, whither in the winter of 1860 the family had moved with a view to repair the financial damage of education and outfit. These letters deal largely with the young men's prospects and advancement, and reveal a confidential sympathy as between brothers more than between father and son. Good counsels abound, but are suggested with a frank simplicity free from all didactic sting.

The first of these letters (April 12, 1861) shows that the favourite garden work was not forgotten. 'As a result of excessive rain followed by cold north-east wind, all the seeds we so industriously put in have perished, and I shall have to replant them. . . . I am sorry that Malta is so unhealthy. Like you, I do not much fear infection; nevertheless I have suffered for my doubts, and I therefore believe a certain degree of caution is necessary. . . . It is sad that poor B. is such a sufferer; tell him there is nothing like patience and grinding his teeth or clutching hold of anything and squeezing it hard until the pain subsides. . . . The distance between the men and officers of your corps is an evil, that if I were you I should try to remedy personally. The character of an officer is soon known through the whole corps; this in difficult times tells greatly to your advantage. . . . There are many ways

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<sup>1</sup> See *Sturt's Central Expedition*, i. 361.

in which an officer can relax from the stiffness of duty to show an interest in the welfare of his men ; and, from my own experience, I am sure that this is one of the first qualities of an officer.'

Notwithstanding frequent admiration of the picturesque old town and of the surrounding country, Sturt never refers to the sojourn in France otherwise than as a self-imposed exile for a definite object.

When the third son was coming home on sick-leave, I fear he will find it dull here,' writes the father; 'we must try to find him some amusement. . . . Bedingfield has a beautiful little boat, copper fastened, two-year-old, with two sails, four oars, and an anchor. It is seventeen feet long, and was bought a great bargain.' In view of the son's arrival this desirable boat soon changed hands.' I cannot lose much by it; I dare say your dear mother will like an occasional sail, and when any of you come home it will be an amusement for you.'

The boat was duly appreciated by all the family, but no one took more keenly to the new toy than Sturt himself. 'I have been several times with your mother in the beat. . . . Yesterday I was out and fell into the water, but it was an accident that might have happened to any one. I was shoving her away from a sunken barge when the boat-hook slipped and in I went, head foremost, to poor young B.'s great horror.'

The general society, neither better nor worse than the average English colony in a quiet French town, was not altogether congenial, though in time many pleasant friendships were formed. 'There has been a great row in the club and a sharp lecture from the pulpit. . . . The gambling in the club is fearful; even the French are astonished at the conduct of some of the English. . . . We know but few people, nor do we care to know more, but it is a disadvantage to your sister not to have some companion.' This want was soon satisfactorily supplied.

September 3, 1861. - We have made the acquaintance of a pleasant French family. . . . One evening we were on the Fosse, and in the house just below us we heard the piano most exquisitely played. The performer went over some very difficult music; gradually others came to listen. That, said I, is a professor; it would be a good thing to get him for M. On inquiry in the morning, the professor who had charmed us proved to be a young lady not seventeen on a visit to her aunts, who, having frequently seen M. pass with me, and, having no companion of her own age, had often expressed a wish to know her. So we called, and now they are bosom friends.

Mdlle. Leonie is one of those beings to whom you cannot help feeling attached; she is of a sweet temper, a naive manner, very gentle; backward yet complying, and altogether immeasurably above the dull coldness of too many of our own countrywomen. She is not pretty, although she looks so sometimes; but she wins all hearts by her pretty ways. She dresses so simply and neatly that I like to see her. She plays very well indeed, but her feeling exceeds her touch, so that she makes the piano speak, and you see the tear glisten in her eye as she plays particular pieces-the Prisoner, for instance.'

Unfortunately at that time Dinan was a most insanitary town. The letters constantly refer to ailments in one or other of the party. Before returning to England every member of the family underwent serious illness. Early in 1862 'the losses by death among the English are very great; but M. Piedvache tells me that he has not known a more healthy season for the last thirty years.' As a significant corollary to the French doctor's brave assertion

I am sorry to tell you however that your dear sister has a throat attack that without being diphtheria, approaches it very nearly, and seems to be a common though not a fatal complaint here.' This was the beginning of a

terribly anxious time. The young daughter was scarcely out of danger when the mother fell ill with what Sturt now describes as 'that fearful throat complaint.' From this critical attack recovery was very slow. 'God knows how thankful I am that matters have taken a favourable turn,' he writes in another fortnight; but many weeks dragged on before alarm was over. Convalescence was then hastened by a trip to Dinard, where the fine military music suggests comments on the *regime* of the Second Empire.

'I never saw men better set up than these French soldiers. Depend upon it, Louis Napoleon will find work for his fine army. He is inclined to be bumptious to Switzerland-not that he would profit much from a quarrel with her. Sardinia will be the price for the evacuation of Rome; we can't prevent him getting it, but we shall have to take it from him.

'Keep your eye on the future. Sooner or later you will have something to do. Louis Napoleon will not always be quiet. His great uncle might never have been great had he not pointed the gun at the siege of Toulon. On such trifling events hang the destinies of man! . . . What say military men as to the change of tactics that must be brought about by modern firearms? Cavalry, I see, stands at a discount, but will, I think, still be of great use, though perhaps not in general action. . . .'

By the summer of 1863 the French political horizon was clouding. 'Europe is in a very unsatisfactory state of discontent everywhere. The Emperor has felt the rejection of the Government candidates for Paris . . . But he will resort to his favourite plan of bribing. Few men oppose a government from patriotic feelings-the most surly bulldog can be tamed. Napoleon however is not so popular as he once was and it is to be feared that when his firm grasp is no longer felt, France will be again revolutionised.'

The Toulon incident points the moral of another letter-a letter precious for its gleam of self-revelation.

June 24, 1862.-'You form too humble an estimate of your own powers ; you consequently yield to a diffidence injurious alike to your prospects and to your peace of mind. I may speak thus because I am aware this very distressing feeling has been my greatest enemy through life. Chances have been lost from a reluctance to push myself forward or to court favour from my superiors, and from a disinclination to the society in which one must appear gay when one would give anything to be elsewhere. In such a state of feeling we are sure to misinterpret the motives of others and to distrust their sincerity. . . . Few men have sought distinction-or rather pushed for it-less than myself; yet some chances have been thrown in my way. I was known to study branches of the Service outside the actual sphere to which I belonged, and I always volunteered when anything was to be done. But I disliked pomp and parade, and would sooner have headed a storming-party than have led off a dance.

I am sure that a man who shows himself professionally anxious and capable will not be overlooked. What brought forward the great Napoleon ? The pointing of a gun. But for that trifling event he might never have mounted the throne. To us all opportunities occur, if only we have the readiness to profit by them. A casual observation, a timely suggestion, may seem to pass unheeded, yet has marked the man. The ready display of ability and aptitude at the right moment will open the road to success.'

.....  
Limits of space forbid us to dwell on the sons' opening careers, which fill so large a part of their father's letters, or to quote his frequent references to natural history, botany, carpentry, drawing, which with all were

favourite pursuits. We soon hear of the second son at Asseergur doing great execution with the rifle among big game. By-and-by the father 'hopes C. won't be so eager now he has succeeded in killing a tiger.' But before long a box is on its way from Bombay filled with bearskins and other spoils of the jungle.' For the youngest lad when on sick-leave he took trouble to arrange a round of visits in England. 'This little pleasure to M. and E. will keep me in France longer than I intended ; for I won't return to England with my object half accomplished.'

For Sturt the sting of poverty lay in the limits imposed on his liberality to his sons. 'I wish I could send you 100*l.* to enjoy yourself,' he exclaims, 'but I am ever checked in my more generous impulses, and could sometimes cry over disappointed feelings and wishes.' To the extreme verge of his narrow means he was always open-handed and hospitable.

A favourite niece arrived in mid-October 1862 after a trying journey. 'Q. and E. embarked at Southampton in heavy rain, and after a dreadfully rough passage landed, still in torrents, at St. Malo. At the Custom House there was a terrible business. It happened that three days before your cousin left town a friend gave her flannel for a dressing-gown; this she cut out and partly made up, hoping that so it would pass very well. The brilliant scarlet hue of this garment on the top of the box at once caught the *douanier's* eye; it was seized in triumph and held up to the admiring gaze of all beholders, the officers telling Q. that she wanted to smuggle it to sell for waistcoats. She was however rescued by a friend, and finally reached us, dripping like a drowned rat, and vehemently prejudiced against everything French.' This unfavourable impression was soon modified, though the niece's tribulations were not quite at an end. Toothache drove her to seek professional advice. 'The only dentist

here is the man who sits in a cart on market-days to operate on the country folk, and who has a drummer at his side to drown the cries of his victims. Q. and I, then, were agreeably surprised to find him both gentle and skilful.'

In deference to English prejudice this hero consented for once to forego the joys of publicity, and to operate in a room engaged in the nearest hotel. But in the moment of triumph his feelings overcame him, and, flinging open the ground-floor window full on the crowded marketplace, he held aloft in one hand the extracted tooth, while with the other he dramatically pointed to Q. in a state of collapse.

The early autumn of 1862 was darkened by the illness and death of Mr. Samuel Batten, an old and tried friend. 'My poor friend Batten is on his death-bed. So will close a friendship of forty-six years of unvaried kindness and good feeling. I had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing him when in town. When his sister told him I had come, I heard him say: "Dear old Sturt, where is he?" While I was with him he said much, and the doctor told me that for two nights afterwards he did nothing but talk of me. It was with very painful feelings that I parted from him for the last time. He had a large heart, and will be missed by many a poor man. . . .

I have little to tell but what is melancholy. Death is making sad inroads among your relatives of my generation. Your dear mother and I go jogging on like Darby and Joan-every day nearer the end of life's toilsome journey.'

Between November 1862 and February 1863 occurs a long gap in the correspondence. This was occasioned by an illness which brought Sturt to death's door, and which caused his son to hasten from Malta to Dinan. The supposed origin of this dangerous fever is told in a characteristic letter of January 29, 1863, to Mr. Peake.

I have been long on a bed of sickness; for some days the result was very doubtful. The gout, from which I had been suffering, seemed to have left me, when on December 1, in response to an invitation from M. Blaise (nephew of the philosopher Lamennais), we went to spend the day at his pretty chateau of La Chenaie on the borders of the Fork Blanche. M. Raise is a Protestant; his wife is English ; both are hospitable in the extreme.

'All went well, till on going to dinner I felt, in common phrase, that I was "in for it"! The dishes were cooked in the most *recherché* manner, but were swimming in fat. I had to partake of *eight*, and then thought the feast was finished. To my surprise, however, roast beef and woodcocks were now brought in, followed by a huge plum pudding! I "must not refuse the beef our national dish," said Mrs. Blaise; and even Mrs. Sturt pressed on me the woodcocks, so exquisitely were they cooked! While, to crown all, Mrs. Blaise insisted that I must taste her pudding, with which she filled my plate. If good wines could have neutralised what I had eaten, there were plenty from his uncle's cellars, with first-rate brandy as smooth as oil.

'But I, who am ever a moderate eater, could not stand all this. I reached Dinan with a violent headache, and to slake my thirst drank two tumblers of cold water. I then went to bed, and woke next morning in a raging -fever. The three or four next days were to me days of unconsciousness. I dimly remember two doctors standing over me, who treated me to a blister that covered my back, with mustard to the feet. It seems, that the gout flew to my chest, causing violent inflammation and pain. Thank God, I rallied after a few days, and, in spite of slow recovery and continued weakness, I am wonderfully well, considering the severe illness I have gone through. .

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'P.S. Who is "Historicus" who writes in the

"Times" on International Law? He is a clever fellow, whoever he may be. . .'

With reference to this serious illness, it was remarked that during the visit to La Chenaie, as well as on the drive home, Captain Sturt was in the best of spirits. During the whole day he had laughed and talked more than usual ; and he had sat down to the fatal banquet with a larger appetite than he had felt for many a long day. Mrs. Sturt for her part attributed all the mischief to the draught of cold water at night.

In February 1863 the letters begin again with congratulations to his son on being ordered from Malta to Corfu. 'Your case is like that of a fellow who has been cramped up at a meeting, and gets out to stretch his legs. I hope you may leave Malta before March--the season, I think, for cock and wild boars on the Albanian coast. Take care of the natives! Those Albanians are a rum set, savage and unscrupulous, so beware! Always go with a party, never alone. . . . Don't forget my predilection for specimens of natural history, should you find anything particular either in the island or on the coast. By the way, where does your friend X. begin the operation of skinning his birds? . . .

The Greeks are still unsettled, and, like the frogs, can get no king. Report says that our Government has recommended the young Prince of Denmark for that throne. In that case we shall not long hold the Ionian Islands, especially as our Government shows every desire to be rid of them.'

In response to cheerful letters soon received from Corfu, Sturt writes : 'You do but confirm all that I have heard of - that beautiful island. Take advantage of any opportunity to visit classic ground, and to realise the glorious past of Greece. Though fallen so low, that land is hallowed by great memories which must rouse strong feelings in every generous mind.'

But the doom of our Ionian rule was already sealed. In June 1864 Corfu was abandoned by our troops, and young Sturt was ordered to Gibraltar, where Frome held command. 'Of Frome,' writes the father, 'I have the very highest opinion; you would be happy under him and indeed that Gibraltar is to be ceded to the Spaniards. Certain it is that one party is urging that most preposterous step; and really a Ministry so susceptible to pressure from outside may be led into any act of folly. . . . Europe though is not really tranquil. I believe Louis Napoleon is quietly scheming against Italy. . . . Unless his army were buoyed up with hope of active service, it would never be so quiet. Not even the powerful genius of the first Napoleon could have kept these fine troops so long idle.'

To his sons, Sturt, with keen sympathy for the young, writes chiefly on personal or professional matters, enlivened by such light home-gossip as a lad would look for. Now and again however he closes abruptly on the plea that he has tired his eyes over 'a long Australian letter.' For not the less eagerly was he watching the progress of his beloved colonies. The few scraps that remain of his correspondence with colonial friends show him as ever wise in counsel, quick in interest, eager for Australia's welfare. Thus, when consulted on a scheme for enlarging Port Adelaide, he writes with careful detail to Messrs. Hector and Wright (Dinan, June 10, 1861)

'My official experience enables me to confirm the reports of the Chart sections B and A, especially of the former, as being the points most available for permanent wharves and quays. Supposing the difficulty of access to be removed, . . . Milunga (or section B), from its deeper water-frontage, its height above tidal influence, its proximity to fresh water, must be the best site for the proposed improvements. . . .

I never had a doubt but that the extension of the old Port downwards would become imperative, that portion of the creek having been for years too small for the increasing trade; and certainly nothing would more materially increase the mercantile importance of South Australia than the completion of so desirable, so necessary an enterprise. By removing causes which vexatiously delay vessels sometimes for months at the present Port, this scheme would reassure shipowners not only as to the safety in harbour, but also as to the speedier return of their ships, with the consequent diminution of expenses.

I cannot but wish you every success in an undertaking calculated so greatly to benefit a Province whose exports would draw to her shores shipping in numbers, had she but an adequate port. . . .

The years from 1858 to 1862 form a golden age in Australian discovery. Deserts which had baffled Frome and Eyre, and had turned Sturt out of his way, were yielding step by step to the farmer and the herdsman. The waters of flood seasons were eagerly stored; native wells were enlarged; in time artesian boring worked wonders. From outlying stations adventurous squatters went forth as pioneers. Herds of cattle played their part in improving the land; and in the sixteen years since Sturt's Central Expedition the boundaries of civilisation had been pushed very far to the northward of Spencer's Gulf.

The vast Lake Torrens of the early maps had shrunk within manageable dimensions. Almost accidentally squatters had found that lake to be divided from Lake Eyre by good pastures that lay high and dry. In the very heart of that once hopeless district, fresh-water springs were discovered, sometimes close to salt deposits. Moreover the steady advance of settlers' stations now enabled explorers to start from a far more northerly outpost than had formerly been possible.

Making full use of these advantages, McDouall Stuart

was constantly in the field, turning to good account his knowledge of survey work, and the principles imbibed from Sturt. Already in 1858 and 1859, under the auspices of Finke and Chambers, Stuart had carried out with vigour and success no fewer than three expeditions around Lakes Torrens and Eyre, thus learning the position of permanent springs, while opening up fine grazing land. These first attempts were followed by three very arduous journeys before he finally crossed the continent.

Starting from Chambers's Creek, on the first of these expeditions, between March and October 1860, he reached the centre of Australia, and on 'Central Mount Stuart',<sup>1</sup> two and a half miles to the north-north-east of that point, planted his flag. At this time he also discovered Chambers's Pillar, the MacDonnell Ranges and the Finke River—surely the 'good country' of those migrant birds on whose movements Sturt had formerly built his hopes ?

Starting again from Chambers's Creek January 1, 1861, with the aid of a Government grant of 2,500*l.*, Stuart pushed some 100 miles nearer his goal ; but, once more baffled by impenetrable scrub and by hostile natives, was forced back by September 7. Already the ill-fated Burke and Wills had from Cooper's Creek reached the Gulf of Carpentaria, but had perished on the return journey. Their sad fate Stuart learnt just when, in November 1861, starting on his final achievement, he left Adelaide to join his party at Chambers's Creek. Meanwhile, three months before that 25th of July, 1862, when Stuart stood by the Indian Ocean, Mackinlay, seeking news of Burke and driven north-eastwards by floods in Lake Eyre, reached in April the Gulf of Carpentaria—an honour claimed during the same summer also by Landsborough and Walker. Mackinlay and Landsborough shared with

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<sup>1</sup> It is said that 'Stuart expressed a wish to name this hill "Mount Sturt" after his former leader ; but his own name was chosen as the more appropriate.' (From letter of Sir Samuel Davenport.)

Stuart in the distinction of gold watches awarded by the Royal Geographical Society ; and South Australia presented 100*l*, to Mackinlay.

But Stuart alone had fully carried out the conditions on which 2,000*l* had been offered to him who should first cross the continent, and none disputed with him the award of that prize on his return to Adelaide in December 1862. He moreover had marked a way on which others might follow-the path in fact eventually chosen for the Overland Telegraph line.

These events are referred to in a letter of September 20, 1862, from Mr. John Harris-Browne to Captain Sturt.

'Stuart has not yet returned, though expected back about this time. I fear he has not had a good season.... Very little rain has fallen to the north of Black Rock Hill. . . . For the last four years the country about the Flinders and Barrier Ranges has been very dry, and the squatters to the east of the Passmore and the Frome have suffered very heavy losses, but such continued drought is very unusual.

'By the papers you will have seen the return of Walker and Landsborough. Keeping to the east of poor Burke's track, they appear to have passed through good country along the coast ranges. In that direction there seems to be almost boundless grazing land. Without doubt this country will marvellously increase its export of wool and animal products.

'Mr. Howitt is soon expected here from Cooper's Creek with the remains of Burke and Wills. He followed Gregory's track down Strzelecki Creek, and returned by Lake Hope and the creek which fills it (our " Fishpond Creek," I think). He also made excursions out on our tracks as far as the Salt Lake on this side the Stony Desert (Lake Blanche?). . . . He caught the roan horse you left on Cooper's Creek. Though nearly twenty-five years old, he was in good condition.

'Howitt's description of the country, though seen by him in a favourable time, after heavy rains, corresponds exactly with yours. When we saw that country, the value of salt-bush and other *salsolae* for sheep was not generally known. Experience has taught us that a richly grassed country without *salsolae* (like Mount Gambier) is not nearly so good for stock as one in which salt-bush, grass, and bushes are mixed (like the plain to the west of the Barrier Range, which, if water can be obtained there, would now be called a first-class sheep-run). To show you in what estimation that kind of country is now held, a friend whom I advised four years ago to take up a block in the Barrier Range, lately sold in Melbourne 250 of his 1,000 square miles for 4,000*l*.

I have often to defend your description of that country, which, as we saw it in drought, was perfectly true. Nor is there any change in the country. The change is in our estimation of its value and in facility of access to it. The possibility of navigating the Darling has given new importance to that region, which will yet be all occupied as sheep-runs. I look upon Adelaide as the future outlet for all the country drained by the Darling and by part of the Murray. . . . The Darling has been navigated to Walgett, about 2,000 miles above its junction with the Murray. Already many settlers on its tributaries send for stores to Fort Bourke instead of to the coast towns. These stores go up from Adelaide by the river, and the wool comes down to the Port. At present the charges and obstacles at the Murray Mouth and Goolwa are great difficulties. I look for more prosperity when the Murray (Bend) shall be connected by rail with Port Adelaide. . . .

'Yesterday we heard by telegram that McKinlay had returned to Queensland after crossing from here to the Gulf of Carpentaria. . . . He is by no means a scientific man, but a thorough bushman, of great size and strength, and possessed of judgment and common sense.'

Early in December 1862 Stuart returned triumphant to Adelaide. No sooner was his success known in England than his old leader wrote in warm congratulation; receiving in due course a reply, which we give. Unabbreviated

Brighton, South Australia, June 24, 1863,

My dear Captain Sturt,-It is with great pleasure that I received your letter of April 17, 1863; and allow me to return you my sincere thanks for the high commendations you have bestowed upon me. I do assure you that I feel proud of such coming from my late commander, to whose example of energy and perseverance I attribute the success which I have attained.

On reaching the Centre I found the hill and ranges of considerable height; but, having no instruments with me to prove the height (in consequence of an oversight of those who were in charge of my outfit), I am unable to state what is the exact height of the country. I could only judge generally from the flow of water from the hills, which, at short distance from the ranges, emptied into large plains of scrub and grass.

I did not encounter the floods as did McKinlay; we had scarcely a storm of rain from the latter end of January until I had crossed the continent and returned to Adelaide in December 1862. Not one of the party except myself suffered anything in health - and I suffered much the same as did you on our return in your expedition. For three months I had to be carried between two horses on a stretcher. I completely lost the use of my limbs and had to be carried about like an infant. I regret exceedingly to inform you that from an accident which happened to me with the horses at some distance from Adelaide when I started on the last expedition, I have nearly lost the use of my right hand. Since that time it has contracted so much in the last twelve

months that it has now rendered me incapable of following my professional, duties as surveyor and draughtsman. The funds of the South Australian Government being at such a low ebb that they are unable to give me more than was promised two years ago, I have through my friends in both Houses of Parliament requested their support for a reward. [Then follow the names of the patrons invoked.]

Might I solicit your powerful interest and influence, and also your powerful relatives, with those noblemen and gentlemen? My friends in England are endeavouring to promote my interest with the Home Government in procuring me something to live upon, after the accident that I have received in my right hand, and have broken up my constitution with which I have returned after five years' exploration in crossing the entire continent of Australia from the South Sea to the Indian Ocean, and bringing to a close the many disputed theories which have for many years existed that the interior was a complete desert, instead of which I have found it to be a good grazing country-with the exception of occasionally a mile or two of scrub and spinifex.

I am sorry to say that my health is still in a very delicate state. Present my kindest regards to Mrs. Sturt and family, and believe me to be, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,  
(Signed) JOHN MCDOUALL STUART.<sup>1</sup>

The exploit so modestly referred to, no less than the good feeling expressed, in these unstudied words, gave Sturt real pleasure, and in his last letter from Dinan, August 26, 1863, he writes to his son

'The other day I had from Stuart, my *ci-devant* surveyor, a letter in which he gratefully attributes his suc-

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<sup>1</sup> Stuart never fully recovered from the effects of his fatigues. He died June 5, 1866, in his fifty-first year.

cess to the lessons I taught him, as well as to the example of my perseverance. . . . I also heard from John Browne, whose brother at Mount Gambier is farming on soil that produces from thirty to fifty bushels per acre. He tells me also that Baker had sold his *station-leasehold-at* Menindi (the spot from which I left the Darling for the interior) for 43,000*l.*, with 11,000 sheep and 2,000 head of cattle on it !-- so lucky are some people !

'Sir George Grey has, I understand, made a mess of it in New Zealand, and has applied to be recalled. I fancy he gave in too much to the natives, and has lost all influence with them. They say that at a meeting of the Chiefs at which he was present, they (the Chiefs) would not listen to him, but threw their cloaks on the ground, and trampling on them said that was the way they would treat the English. No doubt he will bring them to their senses, but he will first have had a severe lesson as to the danger of yielding too much to a savage race. . . .'

The September of 1863 finds the family ('birds, Rover, and all') in lodgings at Southampton, whence Sturt describes with pathetic humour his persevering but vain search for a small country home. By mid-November that dream was reluctantly given up, and he resigned himself to the prosaic Cheltenham house (19 Clarence Square) where he spent the last few years of his life.

He never abandoned some hope of return to his adopted land. 'Should nothing come of the South Australian plan,' he writes when settling down. What was that plan we know not, but it probably depended on some appointment which never fell to him, or involved larger outlay than he could afford.

In any case the wish that he 'might lay his bones in Australia' was not to be gratified.

## CHAPTER XXI

1864-1867

DEATH OF A SON (LIEUTENANT E. G. STURT-LETTERS TO  
MACLEAY- DEATH OF ARCHDEACON WOOD- LETTER FROM  
VON MUELLER - EYRE'S JAMAICA TROUBLES - SIR CHARLES  
DARLING

The years of exile were over; but Sturt's exchequer was still so low that the renewal of a forgotten claim disturbed him vexatiously. The story as told by Sturt to his friend Mr. Peake is very characteristic of old colonial days.

February 5, 1863. - 'I forward for your advice a letter about a bill due by me to the estate of the late Mr. S., a merchant of Sydney. The amount is 41*l.*, but with twenty-six years' interest it amounts to 125*l.* This claim took me wholly by surprise ; and as I have long since destroyed all papers of twenty-five years ago, I have been puzzled to recollect the circumstances.

'I remember however that when I took office as Surveyor-General in South Australia, I sold a small property I had in New South Wales, authorising my friend Mr. M. to receive the purchase money, 500*l.*, for the settlement of all claims that might be due. For his guidance I gave him a list of my liabilities, at the same time notifying in the public journals my intended departure for Adelaide.

'Mr. S., who was my personal friend, died before I left Sydney ; and I certainly believed this debt had been paid in the general settlement of my accounts by Mr.

M., otherwise I should at once have paid it. There must have been neglect on the part of the executors. Mr. M. subsequently failed ; but he was an excellent fellow. As a sheep farmer, I had large transactions both with him and Mr. S., and if I had kept to that I should now have had thousands instead of hundreds. I am very ready with your consent to offer the 41*l.* first claimed. Were I a richer man, I should not hesitate to pay the whole. But my circumstances have not so improved that I can afford to pay more now than I could twenty-five years ago.'

Alas! the month of May 1864 brought a terrible bereavement. E. - the bright, the fearless, the warm-hearted-wrote home on the 13th of the month in excellent spirits on his way up country to Mhow ; but on his arrival at that station, before his happy letter was even despatched, he was suddenly cut off by cholera ! Taken ill at breakfast on the 28th, and given up from the first by the doctors, he died at dawn on the 29th.

The cruelly brief telegram was in time softened down by a feeling letter from Major Bean, the kind friend who with fearless devotion tended the poor lad in his last hours of unconsciousness. But the parents were stunned by this blow. The depression of that sad time may well have disheartened Captain Sturt from a half-formed plan of return to Australia.<sup>1</sup>

This was the one great sorrow that clouded the calm sunset of Sturt's life. Age, on the whole, dealt kindly with him. Troubles of blindness, of poverty, of unrequited worth might assail but could not subdue the buoyant sweetness of his nature. His mind, stored with varied interests, was indeed to him 'a kingdom.' The friends and scenes of other days were mirrored for him in a memory undimmed by bitterness. For him the past knew no remorse; the future future held no fear. In a stronghold of

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<sup>1</sup> I have been expecting from South Australia information that would materially affect my plans, he writes to Peake, April 13, 1864.

happiness founded on his heart's affections he dwelt at peace, though forgotten in the struggle for place and power.

Sir George MacLeay fortunately preserved several of Sturt's latest letters ; they contain neither startling incident nor striking comment, but tell in his own words the simple record of the explorer's closing years.

19 Clarence Square, Cheltenham: January 5, 1865.

My dear George,--A happy new year to you and your dear wife. May that greatest of all blessings, health, carry you both through it as well and as happy as I trust you now are ! . . . Within the week I have had an attack of gout, which still confines me to the house and sadly dims my sight.

Have you seen the last number of ' Macmillan' ? There is an article by (Henry) Kingsley on our trip down the Murray. If you have not read it, do so. . . .

I dined the other day with a Colonel Bridges who served in New Zealand with Grey during the first Maori war. He says that Grey's partiality for the Maoris blinds his better judgment, and that he could not have done a more foolish thing than to place 200 of them on an island on parole. Of course they got off and joined their friends, and have now made matters worse.

I hear sad accounts of the North-West Settlement that disputes have broken out and that Finniss is in very hot water. It is perhaps one of the most difficult things in the world to plant a new colony. The man who undertakes such an adventure should be a man of the most conciliatory habits and the calmest temper. He should have had experience not only of the present but also of what must be the future wants of the people. He should know where to pitch his capital with reference to future waterage, sewerage, drainage, and a thousand other requisites. A due attention to such details would as greatly

encourage as the neglect of them would retard improvements. Such a task requires a calm steady man who can meet discontent and temporise with it, not resist it. I fear that the infant colony will meet many difficulties before it becomes permanently established. I wish I could get some feathers of birds from thence.

I want you to get me two of the new Japan lilies, as now they ought to be put into pots. I am told one may be taken in in the purchase, but at Veitch's you will get them true for 10s. each and to flower this year. Can you recommend me any other new sort of lily? I hear there is a beautiful new *Convolvulus grandissimus* from Japan. I have some very good things in my greenhouse. . . .'

These letters invariably end with most affectionate messages: leading to ' God bless you, my dear George, and believe me ever

'Your most attached Friend

(sometimes, 'your truly attached Friend and Brother'),

CHARLES STURT.'

On May 17, 1865. - I have had a melancholy visit into Denbighshire, where my poor cousin and playfellow lies dangerously ill ; and I am daily expecting to hear that his spirit has passed away. I shall exceedingly mourn his loss.

. . .

The illness of Archdeacon Wood deeply affected Sturt, who a few days later, May 24, writes in a melancholy vein to Sir Charles Cooper: 'I ought sooner to have replied to your last kind letter about Grange, which in the meantime I have let for ten years. My thought of selling the place arose only from the wish to bring my means within as narrow a compass as I could in the event of my death. Death has been busy among my friends and kindred; and his next summons may be to myself.

'During my absence I was called to Denbighshire to see my dying cousin, Archdeacon Wood, the companion of my childhood and youth, who has ever been to me as a brother

It was sad to see him suffer, and to know that he still lies in a hopeless state. But he is well prepared for the great change. He has been a faithful steward; and his death, though my loss, will be his gain. I can only pray that my last moments may be as calm and hopeful as his. I have not written you a cheerful letter! I hope my next may be more so.

'Farewell, my good and valued friend ! You were the beacon-light of my colonial life, and my kind supporter in many a scene of trial.'

In a fortnight all was over, and on June 9 Sturt writes to his son: 'Yesterday my dear cousin, the Archdeacon, breathed his last in his usual tranquil frame of mind. A good man and an excellent Christian, he died as a Christian ought to die, full of hope in the future. I shall in the natural course of events before long follow him; and I only pray that my last hour may be as calm and as hopeful as his. He is to be buried at Middlewich, but I fear I shall hardly be able to attend the funeral. . . .'

And again on June 14, 1865.-'Many, many thanks, my dear N. I cannot tell you how you have relieved my mind, for I believe that I did myself more harm by remaining at home than if I had gone, as I proposed, to Winsford. I was not however well, and I feared that I might bring on a dangerous attack of gout, and thus only add to the regrets of the moment.

'You rightly judged that I should have wished one of us to be present at the funeral, and you have, so to speak, taken away the sting from my regret at my own unavoidable absence. . . . I was quite sure that the inhabitants of Middlewich and its neighbourhood would show every mark of respect to one who had so long and so faithfully watched over their moral welfare, and who had been so good a man. I cannot wish you a greater blessing than that your deathbed may be as peaceful and as hopeful as was his. . .

Such a scene cannot fail to convince us of the value of a Faith that can so cheer the parting spirit and throw across the dark abyss a ray of light and hope. Light-to guide us to that region where neither sorrow nor disappointment are known; Hope-that we may see again those we so dearly loved on earth. . . .

About this time he writes to MacLeay: 'I conclude you will be at the Crystal Palace to-day. No doubt the show will be very fine. I wish I could be at your side, but I cannot. However my absence will save me from grumbling at my feeble sight amid the beauties of nature. But I have other good to balance such loss ; even your friendship and that of others whom I greatly value. . . .'

'July 13, 1865.'

. . . I am sorry to say the election has not passed off without bloodshed ; for a chemist shot a shoemaker, and sundry houses had all their windows smashed. I see that Robert Torrens, Registrar of South Australia, has got in for the borough of Cambridge. Without doubt his Real Property Act for the Registration of Lands is a most useful one, for which he deserves much credit and thanks from the colonies. For my part, as an old friend, I wish him every success. . . . He certainly speaks well of both of us in an exceedingly appropriate speech that did him infinite credit. . . .'

'October 26, 1865.'

. . . While we were at Torquay my dear wife was very ill with sore throat. . . . I do not much like the place; it is too hilly, and the climate is oppressive, Flowers of all kinds were in beautiful bloom; and the vigorous growth of myrtles, magnolias, and other shrubs in the open showed the remarkable mildness of the temperature.

I am sorry to see that in Victoria the loss of cattle from the want of water is as great as here under the

Murray - and that the north-west colony has altogether failed. To found a new settlement is not so easy as some people imagine. There are few enterprises that require so many rare or so varied a knowledge, not only of good things in general, but of human nature . . .'

To this period belongs a letter from Dr. Meuller, F.R.S. (later, Baron Sir Ferdinand von Meuller, K.C.M.G., F.R.S., &c.), Director of the botanical Gardens in Melbourne, which bears the stamp of



and is dated from 'Melbourne, Christmas Day, 1865.'

It affords me sincere pleasure, venerable and dear Sir, to reply to some very kind lines which not long ago you were pleased to address to me. Let me in the first instance express my cordial acknowledgment of the sympathy you evince towards poor Leichhardt, a sympathy of which the friends of the deplored traveller will be proud. To me Leichhardt's fate appears much more hopeful than that of poor Crozier, and yet Britain is not likely to leave the rumour concerning the possible existence of a few of Franklin's gallant I always regretted much that, during my stay in Adelaide, I deprived myself of the honour of becoming personally acquainted with the greatest Australian Explorer. You were at that time suffering, after your great exertions in the interior, from impaired sight; and being myself then a very young and comparatively unknown man, who had done nothing but carry out the botanical survey of a part of the Dukedom of Schleswig, I did not wish to intrude. Should I ever have an appointment to visit Europe (but

this is most improbable), I shall not fail to wait on you and express the admiration I entertain for your great labours in Australian geography, which will for ever identify you, dear Captain Sturt, with the history of this country.

Different seasons must impress on the interior very different features. In a year like this the graphic description given by you of the Stony Desert will be most applicable. In my 25,000 miles of varied land-journeys in Australia I have seen enough: of the effects of an arid and of a wet season to reconcile the discrepancies in the accounts of our geographic pioneers. The aridity of the last year and a half impedes much the movement of M'Intyre's caravan; but from the 20° Lat. northward, on a westerly course, the search party will enjoy the tropical summer rains by which Leichhardt himself wished to benefit. . . .

Here unfortunately this interesting fragment breaks off—the last sheet is wanting. But these few lines from a kindred and sympathetic spirit carry on the undercurrent of Australian interest that flowed clear and strong beneath the surface till the last hour of Sturt's life.

In the next letter to Sir Charles Cooper, Sturt discusses Eyre's strong action in Jamaica.

'Crichel House', Wimborne, January 11, 1866.

My dear Sir Charles, - . . . I have not, like many of Eyre's friends, written of him in the public journals ; that after all does not count for much. But I have signed an address to Mr. Cardwell that fully conveyed my opinion of Eyre and of the manner in which he had been treated.

It is difficult to say how he will get out of the affair. He individually would do everything that was proper. Nor do I set any importance on Gordon's execution. It is for the conduct of his subordinates that I fear he will be blamed.

The insurgents, though doubtless in such armed force as to justify the fire of the troops, evidently made no resistance, and yet were hotly pursued and put to death. Eyre may have some difficulty to explain all this. But I sincerely hope he may be wholly exculpated and that he may be rewarded for having acted with such decision; for, after all, if he had not so acted Jamaica would have been lost to us. Besides, in *principle*, I support him through thick and thin; and if I had my wish I would hang on the same gibbet with Gordon, the Secretary to the--- Association, and Messrs. U. and J. B.' (naming well-known men who had taken a prominent part against Eyre).

'In ordering the Commission of Inquiry, the Government only acted on precedent; and if no blame is attributable to Eyre, he will be left in command as before. So we must remain quiet for the result of the investigation, and hope for the best for our old friend. Your letter to the "Times" was a very good one, not overdoing what you wanted to do, but giving your opinion in a few words.

I should regret to hear of ---'s marriage, for I do not think a young soldier worth a farthing when he is married. In India, where an officer has to remain until he retires for good, it is all well; but when an officer has to lead an active life it is different.

I am now unable to read my own writing. My sight is much weakened, and although I endeavour to hide it, it causes me great uneasiness. . . . Many divines agree that this is to be a great prophetic year, and they all seem to turn their eyes to the fall of the Papacy. But I am sceptical on such matters, and feel assured that the key to the future has not yet been found. I think the year will be chiefly signalled by the bankruptcy of the Federal States, and the ruin of half the merchants of Lancashire.

. . . I have bad news of the weather in the colonies,

which are suffering from protracted drought. Scarcely a drop of rain had fallen for eighteen months; the crops were below the average, flocks and herds were dying in thousands, the very kangaroos were succumbing to so terrible a trial. Heavy gales had brought the sand of, the interior in dense clouds to the southern coasts, and at Mount Gambier it fell like a shower of mud. For some unknown cause the seasons in Australia seem to be changing.'

This letter was written from Crichel, where Sturt's cousin Henry had collected a large family party. The host had long been in failing health; but his death occurred somewhat unexpectedly on April 14 in the same year, breaking the last of Sturt's early friendships. A lament over this loss ends with the anticipation, too soon to be realised ' I may be summoned to my long home as suddenly, and it is well to put my house straight.'

The only other letters for the years 1866 and 1867 are the following three to George MacLeay:

June 4, 1866.

I sincerely trust that you are no sufferer by the recent failures. For it is hard when one has toiled for comfort to be deprived of it by others. . . .

We really live in strange times; and let men say what they will, England is fast going downhill in greatness, power and respectability. . . . You will say I am writing in a strange mood; but every reflecting man must see reason for great anxiety in the present state of affairs.

So there is now no longer any doubt of war. I had none from the first, because the belligerent powers were too much in earnest. They did not shilly-shally as our Ministers about the Reform Bill, which, considering the state of Europe, ought to be abandoned. These are no times to try such experiments. . . .

I have a splendid specimen of *Lilium auratum* that has shot up seven feet high, and will have four large

blossoms. I have also a pot of yellow convolvulus with a black eye coming up vigorously from seed sent by C. in a letter, and I am busy planting out. . . .'

'August 3, 1866.

. . . . I suppose you are brushing up your breech-loader and preparing for the moors? I wish all of you good sport. . . . After only twelve days in town, we paid a visit to a South Australian millionaire, whom I had helped to a good wife ; and at the end of ten days I came to the conviction that I was the happier man of the two. . . .

Your *Lilium auratum* has grown seven feet six inches ; it has nine blossoms, and is the admiration of every one who sees it-I wish you could, my dear old friend, but in this world we are destined not often to meet ; in the next I pray we may be together. . . .

'September 20, 1867.

You will be glad to hear that the last mail brought us better news of the brothers. Both go on the Abyssinian Expedition-N. as field engineer. C. may now be either at the Persian Gulf or in Egypt purchasing mules, so I shall look for the next letters with great interest.

. . . . .

Yesterday I attended the first meeting of a Natural History Society we are getting up. When we were arranging about a museum, a little fellow got up and spoke well and fluently. He said he had several curiosities that he would gladly put into the museum. Among them a box of some things Captain Sturt had given him on his return from his celebrated expedition down the Murray with Mr. George MacLeay. He thought that this would be a memento of great services performed. I inquired who this worthy was, and found that he was a Dr. G. of Sydney, and later he claimed acquaintance. Do you remember him?

This affair of poor Darling is very sad, and I am exceedingly sorry for him and for his truly charming wife.<sup>1</sup> But Darling has been wrongly advised throughout. He seems to have thrown himself into the arms of the Democrats against the upper orders. His maxim is *Vox populi vox Dei*. Glad as I should have been for the sake of one for whom I entertain no small regard, yet this proposed grant of 20,000*l.* to Darling would have formed a most dangerous precedent to future Governors to become partisans. . . . Notwithstanding, I hope most sincerely, for Darling's sake, tha% some compromise may be made. . . .

I hear that another gold-field of great promise has been discovered, in which a man picked up a nugget of forty ounces, and another man filled a vessel with nuggets of pure gold from among the boulders in the Creek. Coal and copper have likewise been, found as if to fill up the measure of God's bounty to so favoured a land. . . .'

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<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Darling (nephew of Sir Ralph, see p. 23, etc.) had in 1863 succeeded Sir Henry Barkly as Governor of Victoria. He fell on stormy times ; and, espousing hotly the Protectionist clamour of the mob and of the Lower House of Assembly against the free-trade principles of the Upper House, or Legislative Council, he created a state of deadlock which led to his recall. The Assembly in grateful admiration voted a sum of 20,000*l.* for Lady Darling, as compensation for the pension which Sir Charles forfeited by his recall.

The ensuing disputes on the privileges and powers of the House of Assembly were only terminated by Sir Charles tardily making his peace with the Colonial Office and relinquishing all claim upon the sum voted. Scarcely was this settled, when on January 25th, 1870, Sir Charles died at Cheltenham. A pension of 1,000*l.* a year, with a sum of 5,000*l.* for her children, was unanimously voted by the colony of Victoria to Lady Darling.

## CHAPTER XXII

1868-1869

ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN--INAUGURAL DINNER--ORDER OF ST. MICHAEL AND ST. GEORGE--DEATH OF COLONEL GAWLER - LAST LETTER--DEATH

'I DO not begin the year very blithely,' Sturt writes on January 6, 1868, to MacLeay. 'On New Year's Day I was in bed suffering no end of pain from rheumatism in the head. But for illness, my dear old friend, I should have written ere this to wish that you and your dear good wife may during the coming year be undisturbed by any sorrow, and at its close may only have to look back with gratitude to the kind guidance of Providence throughout its course.

I received your notice of the Australian Anniversary Dinner; I would gladly come to it if I could, for it is long since I met my old friends and fellow colonists at the convivial board.

'Our letters from the boys are cheering. C. has an immense amount of work to do. N. is ordered to clear the Senafe Pass, and will then go to the front as field engineer. He says the *Tigre* chief is giving trouble, and may try to cut off the advance.'

Later in the same month the MacLeays prevailed on Captain Sturt to visit them in town and to give a few sittings to Mr. Koberwein, who made an excellent crayon portrait of him for MacLeay.

This is referred to in a letter of February 3, 1868:



Charles Sumner

*Etat suae 75.*

*From a drawing by Koberwein.*

I am glad the artist succeeded with my likeness, as you were so kindly anxious to have this portrait. I did not half take leave of you, and meant to run over in the morning, but a letter from General Frome obliged me to go to the War Office. . . .

Meantime Sturt's sons were engaged in that Abyssinian Expedition which, though often alluded to as a mere picnic party, bristled at every point with formidable possibilities. Letters from the front roused all the soldier in the proud father.

Cheltenham: June 1, 1868.

'You will have been anxious to hear of the boys. In a letter dated March 28, N. informed me that he was ten miles on the other side of Lake Ashangi, and sixtyseven miles from Magdala. He was then hurrying to the front, and as the first brush with the Abyssinians did not take place till April 10, I felt pretty sure that he got up in time to join the fray. Accordingly his next letter tells of terrific marches up and down mountains 3,600 feet high, along the narrow but well-made road by which Theodore had dragged some heavy guns from Debra Tabor to Magdala.

On the morning of April 10 N. had caught up the leading column, and was ordered by Sir Robert Napier to open a road forward to the enemy's position. Colonel Phayre however took him and his men two miles away up a pass between cliffs. They then turned to the right, reaching by 1 P.M. the summit of the hill in front of Theodore's fine position, now visible at a distance of four miles. From this point Phayre sent back to Sir R. Napier to say that the baggage might advance, as he was master of the height. Theodore's army occupied the summits of two flat-topped hills separated by a small plain of three-quarters of a mile in length; hills and plain having a precipitous fall of 1,500 feet to the valley

below. The only possible ascent to this formidable position was a sloping hill to the right, forming a reentering angle commanded by Theodore's guns, and above it rose Magdala, distant a mile. Descending from the hill, N.'s party at 3 P.M. reached the foot of Theodore's position and found themselves on undulating ground in the valley below. Theodore now fired his first gun; and, after firing three or four times, the Abyssinians came pouring down into the valley in gallant style, spreading over it as skirmishers. They then divided into two bodies, the one to attack the party with N., the other to seize the baggage. And here N. and his men would have been in a mess if the 4th Queen's and some Punjabees had not been at hand. N. and his men made way for the 4th to open out, the Punjabees followed, and then the Sappers in support.

The Abyssinians fought bravely and crossed bayonets with the Punjabees, but they were forced to retreat before the fire of the Snider rifle, and N. counted sixteen dead in a space of about fifty yards square. In the meantime the other body pressed on to the attack of the baggage ; but two of the small steel guns opened upon them at 300 yards, pitching shell into them in rapid succession.

This checked them and obliged them to retreat. The troops were then ordered to draw off, as night was coming on; but the Abyssinians came on again with great bravery, until at length they were finally repulsed. N. and his men occupied a hill within range of Theodore's guns, but though he opened fire on them, he did not get the range. Five or six balls pitched very near, but none took effect, and only one Sapper was wounded during the day. The next day they buried 487 of the enemy, but many more were killed and wounded. Y's company was not told off for the storming of Magdala, but he went to see it afterwards, and says he never saw so formidable a place.

I am afraid they are making a worse march down to the coast than they did up to Magdala.

N. and C. both return to Bombay; their coming home is uncertain. C. has made a magnificent collection of some 200 birds. He sent me twenty-two. Amongst them an eagle, forty inches from the bill to the point of the tail, and eight feet from the tip of one wing to that of the other ; a speckled brown woodpecker, a beautiful merops, some pigeons, and other birds; two new species of ichneumon and some anteaters ; some bulbs and a yellow gladiolus. He got an employment peculiarly suited to his taste, and has, I hear, made good use of his time.

You will be glad to hear that Sir Charles Darling has settled his affair by returning to the cold embrace of the Colonial Office, and giving up the 20,000*l.* I am truly glad for his credit and good that the matter has so terminated. He came early on Saturday morning to tell me this, so the deadlock in Melbourne will be brought to a proper end, as the Council will, I am happy to think, hold its own.

I am really sorry for poor Eyre, whose unlucky star has not yet set. There is no knowing what these wretched philanthropists may bring forward to injure his reputation, and to put him to expense.'

The next two letters show that Sturt still loved occasionally to gather his friends around him.

*To George MacLeay.*

Cheltenham: October 26, 1868.

On Saturday evening a great van stopped at my door, and therefrom came a large haunch of red deer, for which I am indebted to my kind friend Peters, and to you. I can only say I wish with all my heart that you both were here to partake of it. I had calculated on the probability

of your sending me a haunch just at the end of the season, when you would all be returning to town, and then I looked to have had a regular Australian dinner, and to have asked some score of my valued friends to meet under my humble roof, where they should have had as true a welcome as a warm heart could give.

But your friend, the haunch, on its arrival was found to be somewhat high, which rendered necessary a consultation with Gunton, who declared that it must be forthwith cooked if we wished to save its life. So I have asked Darling and a few other friends to give me their opinion of Highland venison on Friday. This is in spite of the remonstrances of my friend Gunton, who averred that it would not keep so long.

But what was to be done? I am to dine with Hadley on Thursday, and he is to dine with me on Friday; and this very Monday I was nonsuited, and was obliged to manage all for the best. My only regret will be that I shall not have my dear old friend George at my side. Pray thank Peters for thinking of me, and thereby enabling me to give my particular friends this treat.

I have been scaling the Tors from the valley of the Dart. This took the wind out of my sails for a time, for it is no joke for a man of seventy-three to scale rocks perpendicular to the height of 700 and 800 feet. It would have taken the shine out of you, George! But that valley of the Dart is a beautiful spot. We expect that N. will reach Portsmouth in the "Serapis" on November 2.

Lord Napier called, wanting to see me on Friday, but I was out; and when I went to see him next morning he had left for town.'

December 15, 1868.

My dear George,-It is long since I heard anything of you. I hope both of you are as well as your old friend could wish you to be. I am like a lame duck on

one leg; but I am better again, I am glad to say, for the twitches I sometimes felt were by no means agreeable.

Your haunch turned out magnificent, and was greatly relished by my goodly company.

What a hodge-podge of a Ministry Gladstone has packed—a regular Irish stew! a little of everything—Democrat, Revolutionist, Radical, and Aristocrat—a precious antagonistic medley, like a bowl of punch, only not half so good.

The great leader of the Opposition is right to be as strong in the Commons as he can ; but Dizzy is a match for them all, and a sharp thorn in their sides he'll be, for both Lowe and Bright will find that to be in office and to be out of office are very different. The Irish question has done its work; it has served Gladstone's game, and now you will see it will be, like Jefferson's treat, postponed from day to day and from month to month till it is all forgotten. But I am sick of politics and of all their debasing influences.

C. has sent me a number of Abyssinian birds, which I shall preserve as a memento of his services. Do you know if there is any descriptive catalogue of African birds to enable me to name them? Some of them are very pretty, but none gaudy. However they are very valuable, and I shall take great pride in them as C.'s handiwork. I hear a collector for the British Museum was in Abyssinia, and that C. gave him a lot of birds. Perhaps he would inform you in what work I could get their names.'

To Sir Charles Cooper, November 17, 1868, Sturt tells of his eldest son's return:

'Two days before your welcome letter reached me, N. came home, and we have hardly yet sobered down from our delight at seeing him again, looking very well, I am glad to say. He brings a good report of C., who is now at Belgaum, one of the healthiest stations in Bombay. . . .'

One more public dinner Sturt, by his friends' much

importunity, was persuaded to attend. On this topic he writes to MacLeay, March 1, 1869

'I had some doubts whether or not I should be able to join you at the grand dinner. But I do now hope to be with you, and to sit at your side as will be fitting for those who sat side by side for so many anxious days on the Murray. But pray don't suggest anything about drinking my health. I am quite aware of the kind feelings of the Australians without such a demonstration, I assure you.'

This 'Inaugural Dinner of the Colonial Society' took place at Willis's Rooms on March 10, 1869,<sup>1</sup> Lord Bury in the chair; while among others present were the Duke of Manchester, Earls Granville and Albemarle, Mr. W. E. Gladstone, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Childers, Sir C. Nicholson, Sir G. Cartier (Canada), Sir Bartle Frere, Captain Sturt, Messrs. Macfie, C. H. Gregory, W. C. Wentworth, Henty, E. Wilson, Youl, George MacLeay, A. McArthur, Westgarth, Darvall, Dalgetty, &c. As the veteran explorer entered the room, the assembled company rose to their feet to do him honour.

To Sir Charles Cooper, April 5, 1869, Sturt chronicles this affair: 'N. was with me, and on his account I was glad that we sat close to several of the Colonial Ministers whom he had never heard speak. But, with the exception of Mr. Gladstone, I was disappointed in all the speakers. The Canadians had it all their own way, and I was not sorry to hear one of them attack Reverdy Johnson (U.S.A.) for saying that one day some of our colonies might be under the Stars and Stripes, although he hoped that day was far distant. He is a coarse kind of man with one eye, having lost the other, I hear, in a scuffle on the floor of the House of Representatives in Washington.

'The story goes that Johnson and another member had a struggle in the Chamber, and that Johnson threw his adversary and kicked and pommelled him. But the other,

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<sup>1</sup> See *Times*, March 11, 1869.

being taunted next day with his defeat, affirmed that he had come off best, as he had gouged out one of Johnson's eyes, which by way of proof he pulled out of his waistcoat pocket. I tell you the story as it was told to me. He certainly has but one eye.

'Lord Granville in the course of his speech said that it was the intention of the Government to extend to the colonies the order of St. Michael and St. George. I had before heard of this privately, and had been urged to send in my claim, but I declined. Several of my friends however suggested that it would appear strange if I were passed over; and, much to my present vexation, I allowed myself to be talked over, and wrote to Lord Northbrook on the subject. At the same time I wrote to Robe, who took my letter to Sir George Grey, and they addressed a joint letter to the Secretary for the Colonies'. . . .

'Hearing from Robe that Grey had done this, I wrote to thank him, and enclose his reply. It is a singular letter, on which I make no comment. . . . Yet I agree in what he says, and care not one straw for knighthood and such things ; but if I could ensure comfort for my wife and daughter when I am summoned hence, then I should look forward calmly and gratefully to the day when I shall close my eyes in death.

'I live in hope, and I shall die in hope, a hope of which neither sceptic nor philosopher has power to deprive me. . . . Gout keeps flying about me and depresses me. I know not what to say of public news; it appears to me we are going deeper into the mire, and must soon stick fast. Gladstone will find that he will have more to do than to pass a Bill, and I would not for a crown have the responsibility that rests on him. . . .'

This letter enclosed a characteristic one from Grey:

'I moderated my expressions much within what I believe to be your claims, as I feared giving too strong play to my feelings. When first told of your wanting

this new order, I was averse to your getting it, and still am so. . . . The highest class of the order is held by men of no service or repute, and will add nothing to your dignity or reputation.

I thought you greater as an overlooked man, tranquil and patient under neglect, and calmly satisfied that his services, sufferings, and success in arduous undertakings would be fully recognised by a grateful posterity, than I shall think you as member of an order unknown to England, and in that order inferior in rank to men to whom in services and claims you are incomparably superior.

'What I think your friends ought to ask for you is a pension such as they gave to Sir F. B. Head, and to the widow of Captain Montagu, Colonial Secretary at the Cape. That pension was 300*l.* a year, and there would be more prospect of its being continued to your widow after your death. In a movement for this purpose I will gladly join.' Grey knew his man, but so did Cooper, who writes post-haste to keep Sturt up to the mark.

I do not at all agree in Sir George Grey's view, which I cannot reconcile with his remarks when I last saw him. . . . I hope you will not withdraw your claim, nor in any way countenance the opinion expressed by Sir George. The same title differs greatly in value according to the occasions on which it is conferred : and any honorary distinction earned, as in your case, by achievements such as few living men can boast of, should be to you and to your children after you a source of becoming pride.'

Already on April 3, 1869, Sturt had written to George MacLeay:

I am sorry now that I stirred in the business of the new Order. I had, as you know, a reluctance to do so, and only yielded to your friendly suggestions because I

feared my omission from the list might appear strange to the Australians.

I covet no honour, my dear George, and should drop with regret the simple title by which I am known to those who are good enough to appreciate me. There are innumerable applications for this new dignity, and to many it will be secured by political considerations. There is a great bother about the whole affair. Applicants are obliged to send in their claims and references. I have not yet done so, and can hardly make up my mind to this,<sup>1</sup> although I am afraid I have gone too far to recede. How willingly would I transfer my chances to you!

I am not very well, but I hope change of weather will change the system. Both man and beast feel the spring.'

To Sir George Grey's letter Sturt replies pathetically on April 20, 1869

'My dear Sir George,-I have been very ill since the receipt of your kind letter . . . and have been vexed at my inability to write to you sooner. However, I am now better, though weak. . . .

I have not taken any further steps with regard to the Order, in which, as I think I told you in my first letter, I reluctantly moved ; but my friends urged that it might be prejudicial to me if I were left out of the list, and that I owed it to my family to put in a claim. I am however so used to disappointment, if I may apply the word to this case, that I hardly expect success in any way.

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<sup>1</sup> There exist sundry rough drafts of Captain Sturt's modest account of his services, shortened severely upon each revision, till in the end he could only bring himself to forward a brief computation by Arrowsmith of the mileage of his several expeditions.

To Lady Charlotte Sturt on May 1, 1869, he writes

'I send you a copy of Arrowsmith's calculations of my several explorations. This is the only document I forwarded to the Colonial office when I made my application to be included in the list of the new order. I felt that Arrowsmith's computations would be indisputable, whereas my own might be challenged, and that a simple record like this would be stronger than anything I could write.'

If it has not pleased Providence to prosper me in a worldly point of view, I have much for which to be thankful. But I have lost heart in my old age, and do not like to try again lest I should draw a blank. Nevertheless, I am fully sensible of the value of your kind suggestion and still kinder offer.

I now know enough of Governments to know the motives that influence them in rewarding those who have served them well and those who have not. And it may be that when I am dead and gone, the greater sympathy may be shown for those I may leave behind me. In this I have much hope. . .

Mrs. Sturt begs to be most kindly remembered to you, and begs me to apprise you that she feels as much as I do the very kind interest you take in our welfare.

Believe me always to remain,

My dear Sir George,

Very earnestly and faithfully yours,

(Signed)

CHARLES STURT.'

On May 1, 1869, a long letter to Lady Charlotte Sturt<sup>1</sup> is written in a clearer, firmer hand than usual, and touches with keen interest on topics of the day and on family affairs.

'My brother Evelyn is on his way home; we expect him in June. N. at Chatham is undergoing a course of instruction in electricity, telegraphy, exploding torpedos, &c. . . . I hear that the application of electricity to purposes of locomotion has at length been discovered by a carpenter. His machine of six-horse power was exhibited on Saturday last at the Royal Academy (Woolwich?) with complete success. If the principle can be made applicable to large bodies it would produce the greatest changes. Coal, for instance, would no longer be required for railways or shipping. All these discoveries are yet in their infancy. . .

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<sup>1</sup> *Widow of his cousin Henry Sturt, of Crichel.*

I conclude that you are deeply interested in the Irish Church Bill. In my humble opinion the opposition has infinitely the best of the argument; but it is useless to expect that they will make any impression on a House predetermined to its course of action.

'The Parliamentary history of England shows that every great question is decided by party, not by principle. Not all the eloquence of Chatham and Burke could move the House of Commons to a wiser policy with regard to our American possessions, with the result that we lost them, and they now hold England's fate in the balance. So it will be with the Irish question. All is tending toward revolution, as a necessary consequence of the change in the moral and social condition of the people.'

On May 8, after a few days' illness, Colonel Gawler died at Southsea, an event touched on by Sturt in a letter of the 18th to his eldest son.

I was very, very sorry to see that poor Colonel Gawler had passed away—a good man gone to his long rest, where he will not meet with any more disappointment or injustice. If our spirits may revisit this our earth, Gawler surely will yet disquiet some of those who have so neglected him. . . .'

The few last letters show signs of failing sight and faltering hand. One of June 7 to Mr. Bedingfield is long and fairly cheerful, notwithstanding that 'east wind, blight, worms, and caterpillars in close succession had so ravaged the garden as to lead to the conclusion that it is hopeless to cultivate a garden in this wretched climate.'

But writing on June 3 to Sir Charles Cooper, Sturt dwells with unwonted detail on symptoms which doubtless indicated serious mischief.

'Independently of the attack of gout which kept me in dread of something worse, I have lately had a singular affection, causing me to pant as if I had run violently uphill and had completely lost my breath. This was

attended by perspiration, and left me exhausted; but in half an hour I was all right again. I believe I puzzled the medicos, who could not well make out what caused these attacks. Some attributed them to indigestion, others to want of circulation, others to irregular action of the heart; others said they were due to a peculiar temperament! All I know is that the sensation was very uncomfortable, uncertain as I was at what moment I might begin puffing away like a steam engine. However, I am now better, though not yet through the wood.'

After chronicling various items of home news, and touching on colonial friends, he dwells with peculiar satisfaction on the clearing up of a serious misunderstanding between two of his intimates. 'This is a great cause of thankfulness to me, for I can now contemplate my removal from this earthly scene knowing that I shall leave at peace with one another all who are dear to me.'

Mrs. MacLeay had long suffered from bronchitic trouble, which now developed alarming symptoms. Her illness inspired Sturt's last touching letter to George MacLeay, written more feebly but still clearly.

Tuesday, June 8, 1869.

My dear George,-I am so uneasy about your dear wife, that I cannot refrain from writing. . . .

Believe me, my dear old friend, I truly sympathise with you in this your hour of trial, but we will hope that the dear sufferer may rally and be restored to you by an all-merciful God-to whom my prayers are daily addressed for her. I shall look to you to gladden my heart with a better account of my dear friend. Do not trouble to write a long letter, but give me the hope that she is doing well.

I expect my brother Evelyn in about an hour-but am not in good spirits to receive him, for I am myself far from well, nor do I think the doctors know what is the matter with me. I will write again soon. In the mean-

time Mrs. Sturt joins me in best love to your dear one and in every good wish for you and her.

I am ever, my dear George,  
Your very affectionate friend,

CHARLES STURT.'

To Lord Northbrook, inquiring for news of the long-delayed knighthood, Sturt replies in a letter undated, unfinished, and never posted

'I have not heard either officially or privately about it yet, but I suppose my name will appear in the " Gazette " one of these days.'

Too soon, alas! in a very different list the name was to appear.

The last recorded letter from the active pen was written on June 10, 1869, to the son in India. The letter is long and is full as ever of loving solicitude for those nearest and dearest to his heart. After dwelling at great length on the prospects of both his sons, and mentioning with solicitous affection the wife, the daughter, and several near relations, the writer concludes

'N. is now with us. He goes back to Chatham tomorrow. I am not without hopes of a brevet for him. At all events I won't lose sight of it. I wish I could see that you had your promotion too.

Your uncle Evelyn was with us yesterday, having just landed at Southampton. He promises soon to pay us a longer visit.

There is little public news of interest. The Lords will pass the Irish Church Bill, and there will be a row in Ireland, as there would be if they threw it out. The French are rather restless, but they will get the gendarmes about their ears, who will make short work of them. My sight is not very good this morning, so I am not writing very regularly, but I am sure you will make out my letter.

Now I am tired as I ever get, but I am better than when I last wrote. I will write you a long letter by the next mail.

God bless you, my dear C.,  
And believe me ever  
Your very affect. father,  
(Signed) CHARLES STURT.'

From slight hints in some of the latest letters it seems probable that occasional symptoms which puzzled the doctors distinctly warned Sturt that his life now hung on a thread. But though these attacks would at the time exhaust and depress him, he rallied from them so brightly, and so manfully kept up his usual active habits, that no one could anticipate the nearness of the impending calamity.

The eldest son however, taking alarm at a recurrence of distressing faintness, persuaded his father to seek special advice. A physician new to the case sounded the first serious warning and ordered the patient to keep his bed. This prescription, though distasteful, seemed even in one day so beneficial, that on June 12 the son returned to Chatham comparatively happy. So marked was the daily improvement, that on the evenings of the 14th and 15th Sturt was again in the drawing-room, outwardly much as usual in health and spirits.

On the afternoon of June 16 one of the consulting doctors found him sitting up, apparently much better, and full of keen interest in the plans and prospects of the latest search for Leichhardt recently undertaken by Forrest. Delighted by Sturt's enthusiasm, Dr. R. stayed chatting with him for some time, and on leaving seconded his entreaties that Mrs. Sturt would go out. While preparing accordingly for a walk, Mrs. Sturt in the next room heard no sound, yet before she reached the garden she was called back. Suddenly, while no one was present, Charles Sturt had passed away.

There was no sign of pain or struggle; he smiled placid as a child asleep. On the brow unadorned by man death had gently laid the crown of a great life's fulfilment.

Charles Sturt was laid to rest on Tuesday, June 22, 1869, at Prestbury, near Cheltenham, where his wife, dying June 5, 1887, now lies beside him.<sup>1</sup>

The spot is marked by a stone cross which bears the words

'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.'

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<sup>1</sup> The roll of honours is brief. Charles Sturt was Fellow and Gold Medallist of the Royal Geographical Society and Fellow of the Linnean Society; and to his widow, in consideration of his writings, was granted a Civil List pension of 801., with the same title as though her husband's nomination to the order of St. Michael and St. George had been duly gazetted.

IF Charles Sturt scarcely grew up so 'monstrous handsome' as his fond aunt once feared, yet portrait and bust show him decidedly good-looking. Those who knew him dwell on his rare charm and sweetness of expression and on his distinguished bearing. His height (5 feet 11 inches) was enhanced by an erect and well-proportioned figure, though in his last years he slightly stooped. He was of fair complexion with light brown hair latterly touched with grey, and, notwithstanding ocular trouble, of a keen and steady eye. To the last he retained a certain youthful elasticity of gait, and his talk sparkled with quiet fun.

Transparently simple and straightforward, guileless of motive, unsuspecting of others, Charles Sturt leaves a singularly blameless record. Seldom has a life so long and so eventful given rise to less controversy or bitterness.

Apart from the trifling boyish debts which unduly vexed an impecunious father, and apart from rare flashes of wrath at the jealousy or injustice of others, this fine nature reveals no weakness unless it be the diffidence frankly admitted by himself. Diffident he was to a degree prejudicial to his own interests, and those interests he was too much disposed to neglect. About his own affairs, according to a brother, he was 'a bad man of business.'

This is the more singular because, in official work no less than as trustee or as helpful counsellor to friends, he was alike wise and indefatigable.

Throughout life his conscientious care for others contrasts markedly with his disregard for self. Hence

the anomaly of his own low fortunes while those whom he advised grew rich.

To gauge to a nicety an explorer's life-work or to compare him with his fellows would be alike useless and invidious. Enough has already been said to show that even from the most barren of Sturt's ventures time has developed undreamt possibilities. But the true greatness of the man appears in the spirit which animated all his work, and which through his example has influenced the whole history of Australian discovery.

In his most fearless ventures foresight is never forgotten ; his men, controlled by strict discipline, are yet encouraged by a kindly sympathy ; the natives, though conciliated by the gentlest humanity, are held in check by a vigilant firmness.

To the end of life Sturt would mention as his chief source of satisfaction that, of the many hundred natives he had met, not one had through him suffered an hour's uneasiness.

'Few men, 'says Sir Charles Cooper, ' have been regretted by so many admiring friends;' and indeed from many voices in touching unison rise the last sad notes of praise and of regret.

The rare combination of sweetness and of strength, the zeal for science, the retiring modesty are extolled by all. ' He was still so full of life and buoyant energy, that to me he never grew old,' writes MacLeay, finding small comfort to his own loss in his friend's length of days.

A son of Isaac Wood revives memories of the far-off childhood: 'The name of Charles Sturt-for more than ten years my father's companion and playmate-was to us a household word. My grandmother looked on him as a son, and often told us children of the two cousins' wonderful feats. He was a very perfect character and the most guileless of men. . . . To ignore self and to push forward others was the habit of his life. Many

men are now reaping the greatest benefit from advice given by him-many of his noblest deeds and sacrifices will never be known.'

To a panegyric in the same strain Sir Charles Cooper adds: '*I knew him to be the truest of friends.*' While another able colonist exclaims: 'During an undeviating friendship of thirty-one years I truly *honoured him* and he *endured* me, excusing my shortcomings with that goodness and charity so peculiar to him.'

This quality of forbearance explains his patience and sympathy with the young; a trait vividly recalled by Mr. James Smith of Adelaide, who to Sir Samuel Davenport, in November 1898, 'grows eloquent in warm admiration for Captain Sturt and in gratitude for kindnesses received from him in the early days.'

In 1839, writes Smith, 'I was a lad of eighteen coming all alone to a new and very unsettled colony, and Captain Sturt's kind advice and offer of help in this new world were never forgotten. My memories of him are very pleasant; but indeed he was a favourite with all, and poor old Flood, who had pushed with him to his furthest point north, quite worshipped him.'

This general esteem is dwelt on by MacLeay, who alludes to 'the universal admiration and respect in which he was held by all classes of men in Australia, by all who had the advantage of his friendship in England, and by men of science throughout the world.'

His varied accomplishments are referred to by Sir Charles Cooper; his horticultural pursuits more particularly by Sir Samuel Davenport; his literary skill by Murchison; his love of ornithology and his artistic talent by Harris-Browne.

Eyre's tribute to his power of inspiring and instructing others has perhaps a special interest. This veteran explorer writes (July 13, 1896): 'It was my good fortune to make a friend of Captain Sturt fully sixty years ago.'

I was then a very young man, and it was through intercourse with Captain Sturt that my love of adventure and exploration was stimulated. To his kind instructions and assistance I am indebted for learning the use of instruments and how to take scientific observations.

'From that early date our friendship steadily ripened and continued to the close of his life. During so long a period we saw a good deal of each other under very varying circumstances. Such intercourse enabled me more and more fully to appreciate and admire his fine character.

'He was one of Nature's noblemen, generous and unselfish to a degree; always kind and considerate always sympathising and ready to oblige or help others in every way he possibly could.

'As a companion he was invariably pleasant and genial; full of life and fun, and at the same time clever and scientific.

'No wonder he was universally popular among all who knew him; it may be truthfully said that he never made a single enemy.'

His other fellow-explorers, MacLeay and Harris Browne, have in these pages already spoken their esteem; they echo with enthusiasm the general chorus of praise. Harris-Browne, like Eyre, pronounces him 'the most genial companion and friend, the most considerate leader. He knew so much, and had such a happy knack of imparting knowledge, that to have lived with him so long and so intimately was a liberal education.'

'Few,' says MacLeay, 'have had better opportunities than I of forming an opinion of his character.' And indeed had they not shared together in those toils and privations under which Sturt tells that his temper lost its balance? Harris-Browne, too, had spent with him in the wilds seventeen months under such conditions as sorely try men's temper. And yet; by a touching coincidence,

these two men, hailing separately from Sydney and from Adelaide-the one writing from Paris, June 20, 1869, the other from Australia, December 1, 1895-express their strongest feeling in the selfsame words: 'Captain Sturt was simply the most lovable of men.'

A tribute of a more public character was paid to Sturt as 'one of the most distinguished explorers and geographers of our age' by Sir Roderick Murchison, President of the Royal Geographical Society, at a meeting of that Society on May 23, 1870. With part of his long and appreciative address we may fittingly conclude

Of the many hardy and energetic men to whom we owe our knowledge of the interior of Australia, Charles Sturt is perhaps the most eminent. To him we are indebted for the great eastern water system of that vast island. To him we are also indebted for the solution of the great geographical problem, the true character of the eastern interior of Australia, which, until his expedition in 1844, was by many geographers believed to consist of one huge inland sea. And further, to Sturt's instructive example we owe the series of distinguished explorers, such as Eyre, MacDouall Stuart, and others, who have since so worthily and successfully trodden in his footsteps. . . .

'The great achievement of passing through the very centre of the land to the Indian Ocean was, by a strange fatality, lost to him who would by all have been deemed most worthy of that honour. . . . But his discovery of Cooper's Creek led in no small degree to the success of those who in more genial seasons followed in his path.

'And no man more warmly than Sturt expressed his appreciation of the labours and deserts of those who finally succeeded in the wonderful feat which had been the grand object of his own ambition. . . . Sturt has published narratives of his expeditions remarkable for succinctness, modesty, and general intelligence.

Calm and collected, this brave man never failed to inspire perfect confidence in his followers, while he secured their love and respect by his unvarying courtesy and consideration. . . . Like all brave men, Sturt was most kind-hearted, and compassionate almost as a woman. . . .

Modest and unassuming, he lived among us in complete retirement, never courting notice, though surely such a man ought to have been early sought out for public recognition. . . .

'On June 16 this gentle, modest, and brave man started on his last journey. No traveller, so bound, could have entered on it under happier or more promising auspices.'

THE NAME OF STURT ON THE MAP OF  
AUSTRALIA

- Sturt Bay (in the south of Yorke Peninsula, South Australia).  
County in New South Wales (on the Murrumbidgee).  
County in South Australia (stretching from the Ranges  
to the Murray).  
a small town between Mounts Lofty and  
Barker.  
Point in Lake Alexandrina.  
Mount. A spur of the Gawler  
Range.  
River, The, near Adelaide-named by Barker.
- The Sturt Light on Cape Willoughby, Kangaroo Island,  
so named by Sir Henry Fox Young in 1852; the first  
lighthouse erected in South Australia, and the third  
highest in the Colony.
- Sturt's Ponds are lagoons near Lake Lipson.  
Plains in the North-so named by Stuart.  
Creek in the North-named by Gregory.

(A small town of 'Sturt' in County Auckland,  
Victoria, was probably named after the explorer's brother  
Evelyn, long resident in that colony.)

## PICTURES AND BUSTS

A three-quarter length portrait of Sturt, by Crossland, hangs in the Council Chamber at Adelaide.

A duplicate of this portrait, by the same artist, is in the possession of Miss Sturt.

The smaller portrait by the same artist, from which the frontispiece to this volume is taken, hangs in the Art Gallery, Adelaide; and of this smaller portrait a copy was recently presented to Miss Sturt by friends in Adelaide.

The crayon drawing by Koberwein, from which is engraved the portrait at p. 360, is now in the possession of Colonel Napier George Sturt.

Summers, the sculptor, executed two busts, one of which is in the Art Gallery, Adelaide; the other in the possession of Mr. Halley Knight.

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