

JOURNEY OVER-LAND FROM KING GEORGE'S SOUND.

(From Mr. Harris's Journal)

Having contracted with the Government to convey the baggage of a detachment of the 21st Fusiliers from King George's Sound to Warriup, intended to establish a new post in a district on the line of road from Perth to King George's Sound, I embarked at Fremantle, with three horses and a light cart, in H. M.'s Colonial schooner *Champion* on the 6th of February, and arrived at the Sound on the 12th. On the voyage, we spoke with two and saw a third vessel, on their way to Swan River with horses, cattle and sheep, from Van Diemen's Land and Sydney. As I had determined to return to the Swan over-land, and to visit my farm on the Williams' River by the way, I provided everything necessary to ensure, as far as possible, success in what has generally been considered an undertaking of great difficulty and hazard, particularly in the dry season; for although the country is found well supplied with water when located and duly examined, there is very little time on a journey of such length to look for so necessary an article. I therefore took means for carrying twenty gallons of water.

The road to Warriup, about 75 miles distant from the Sound, had been opened and well-marked by Mr. Hillman, of the Survey Department, and Lieut. Armstrong, of the 21st Regt.; and Mr. Hillman, on this occasion, volunteered, with the permission of the Governor, to lead the party. **On the 21st of February**, our preparations being complete, we started in high spirits at 10 o'clock in the morning, having been delayed by the straying of two of the horses.

Our party consisted of Lieut. Armstrong, and eight men of 'the 21st, Mr. Hillman, myself and a driver, Messrs. Taylor, of Gandeup, and Dr. Harrison. We were also accompanied by a cart of Mr. Sherratt's, a driver, and a boy; a native named Kartrull, who wished to visit the Swan, also went with us. We intended to have reached Chorkurup, but owing to our late start, we brought up for the night two and a half miles below Chorkurup, in very indifferent feed for our horses, and muddy water for ourselves. The next morning our eccentric friend Harrison left us, to return to the Sound, surrounded, as usual, by a crowd of natives, who generally accompany him in his walks through the bush. We proceeded on our route at 6 o'clock, reached Chorkurup at 8, got a little water, and went on, expecting a better supply in two or three miles, but were disappointed, and pushed on to Thokokup, ten miles, where there is an extensive lake of fine fresh water. Rested here an hour, and went on, in a heavy rain, to the foot of Mount Barker, where we were met, by appointment, by Messrs. Seymour Spencer and Townsend, from Sir Richard Spencer's stock-farm, on the Hay River. These Gentlemen shewed us, close at hand, a running stream of fine water, issuing, apparently, from swamps situated high up the Mount. Here we brought up for the night.

On the 23d, at 6 in the morning, our friends Messrs. Spencer and Townsend having left us, we continued our journey to Lake Matilda (about 13 miles), crossing the Kalgan by the way, where we halted for the night. This lake is very extensive and contains deep fresh water the whole summer; the water is held up by a narrow bank of sandy earth, so regularly formed as to appear as if artificially formed. The feed within the banks is plentiful, but coarse. On the 24th, started at 7 o'clock, and at 4 in the afternoon arrived at a large river, running from E. to W., with large and wide pools of fine fresh water. This appears to be the River Gordon, crossed last year by the Hon. the Surveyor-General more to the eastward. From the dry state of the country, we had passed through, all the smaller watercourses being dry, Messrs. Hillman and Armstrong were very doubtful whether water would be found in the valley marked for the new station, 12 miles further on; the latter Gentleman therefore deemed it prudent to remain with the detachment on the river till that important point was ascertained. The carts were unloaded, and we determined to rest one day, and then proceed to the next station, on the Williams' River.

On the 25th, Mr. Taylor accompanied me, with one of the natives, on an excursion up the river about 4 miles; the land on each side is very indifferent; — we enjoyed a capital opossum hunt, the little animal for a long time baffled all our efforts to dislodge him from the trees he was sheltered in; — is remarkable that in the immediate proximity of many of the large rivers the land is of that character; the good is to be found at distances from them varying from 3 to 6 or 8 miles. This, however, is not always the case; but where it is good, springs are not wanting; so that no inconvenience will be felt on that score.

On the morning of the 26th, Mr. Hillman and I, with an escort of two soldiers, my own cart and driver, and the native Kartrull, or Handsome, started for the intended station, distant twelve miles, which we reached about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and prepared to search for water. The day had been oppressively hot and sultry, and we had scarcely released the horses, when we were visited by one of the most tremendous storms of thunder, lightning and rain I ever remember to have witnessed; it rained heavily for an hour, and then cleared up, when I mounted one of the horses and rode down the valley along a watercourse to the eastward, dry, except where the recent rain lodged. Others of the party looked a little way to the westward but found no water. I rode about 4 miles, and at one place, in the rushy bed of a watercourse, I found a pool, too large, I think, to have been filled by the rain just fallen, but it is doubtful; it gave us, however, an ample supply for our journey. The road marked by Messrs. Hillman and Armstrong here terminated, and we felt great anxiety as to our further progress, the line of country being unknown as to its resources in water and feed. The country we had passed through is varied. From the Sound to Mount Barker (30 miles) we passed through some of the most heavily timbered mahogany country I have seen, with very few situations on which sheep-farms can be established; but in the neighbourhood of the lakes some cattle stations may be formed. The country is in many places swampy, and travelling with wheels will be difficult in winter, until the road has been more used. From Mount Barker, the country is more high and dry, and on the line of road farms may be established. There is good land on the grants of Mr. Roe and Mr. Brown, and the situations of both are romantic and pleasing. On the Kalgan, where we crossed it, a good sheep farm might be taken, and other good situations will, no doubt, be found on the banks of this stream. Mr. Taylor is at present building on his farm, about forty miles lower down the river, at Kandeup. I have already stated that the land in the immediate neighbourhood of the river is not good; it is not destitute of grass, and our past experience of the country has taught us not to come to hasty conclusions as to the value of such districts, as the alternations from bad to good country are frequently sudden and unexpected. A number of settlers who had grants on the Hotham River, were so much deceived by the generally unfavorable appearance of the lands on its banks, as to ask and obtain permission to exchange their grants for others on the Williams, 25 miles south of the Hotham, and yet some of the richest portions of land found in the Colony have been since discovered at the distance of from 3 to 5 or 6 miles from the river, with fine springs of fresh water in all directions; the whole of which country is still open for location. It is impossible to come to a safe conclusion by merely passing through a country. —

On the 27th, at 7 o'clock, after filling all our kegs to the amount of 22 gallons, we again started, and commenced marking trees for the future road, Mr. Hillman leading, N. 25.W. (by compass.) On approaching the intended station from the S., there was a remarkable change in the aspect of the country, which became grassy, and free from scrub. The valley in which it is situated appears to be very fine, but burnt on every side, except a few patches, sufficient to feed the horses. We now went over five miles of beautiful rich grassy country; we met with no water on our course, but, from the numerous birds and general appearance of the country, I believe it will be found sufficiently watered. There is a deep dry watercourse about 2½ miles from the station, which we examined about a mile; the valley through which it runs is one of the richest I ever saw, abounding with green feed, at present; — a quantity of wild celery and thistles growing in all directions betoken the moist condition of the soil.

The next five miles, making ten from the station, were over more indifferent country, but seldom without tolerable grass, at present much burnt. We now again entered a rich granite country, with good feed, and stopped for the night, — found no water, but were sufficiently supplied from our kegs.

On the 28th, proceeded at 6 o'clock, and continued in a beautiful country five miles, when we fell in with eight natives. They were much astonished, and, I believe, would not have approached us, but for the invitation of our King George's Sound native. They left their spears, and we grounded our arms, and with much hesitation they came to us. Kartrull, our native, could scarcely understand them. They intimated that they had heard of white people but had never seen them. They were very much afraid of the horses, and pleased with the use of the axe, which they wished to borrow, but, for fear of misunderstanding, we declined to lend them. Kartrull gave them a spear, and exchanged his cloak, and some of us followed his example and gave our red woollen shirts in exchange for their dirty kangaroo skin cloaks, which, to please them, we wore a short time. These mutual civilities put them into good humour and gave them confidence in us, and they led us about a couple of miles N.N.W., through a splendid country, to a permanent fresh-water spring. We stayed about an hour, and filled all our kegs, and watered the horses. Mr. Hillman shot two cockatoos, to the great astonishment of the natives. We gave them bread, which they did not like; but a piece of roasted kangaroo was more to their taste. Hearing their women about to approach, they sent one of the party to prevent them. This is usual with natives who are strangers to us. This spring would be an excellent situation for the permanent station, being in the centre of an extensive and rich district — and the water is good. The natives call the place Kojocup. We took leave of the friendly natives, and went on through good country, crossing some dry watercourses, two or three miles; the country then became alternately good and indifferent. At the end of twelve miles we brought up for the night, on the west bank of a broad and shallow grassy watercourse. —

March 1. Our course this day, till eleven o'clock, was through bad country, with occasional patches of good land; except one beautiful valley, about a mile over, and with indications of extensive good country right and left of our course. Met with no water, but birds were numerous. We had now travelled 11 miles and stopped the driver and gave our horses half a bucket of water each from our now scanty store, and drank sparingly ourselves, being uncertain of our distance from the Beaufort River, which we expected might prove salt; we had only about a gallon of water left. At 3 o'clock we resumed our course, through a mile of sandy plain, then through gently undulating scrubby country, and over a broad and shallow watercourse another mile; — saw a pigeon but found no water. Went on two miles further, and reached the Beaufort, to our great joy, having suffered much from thirst, and afraid to use the scanty remainder of our water. We came upon a very large pool of fine fresh water and halted for the night. The land in the immediate vicinity of this large river was, like that of the last, very indifferent. —

March 2. Started at 7 o'clock, cutting our way over a dry portion of the river, and went three miles through alternately good and second rate land—the bad for a mile; when we crossed another river, with fresh and salt water pools. Watered the horses, and went on through bad country about two miles, when we arrived at another river, with pools of excellent water, which made three rivers within a distance of six miles; the two latter are probably tributary to the Beaufort. Continued to travel till six o'clock, when we halted for the night, in indifferent feed, — having recently crossed another broad and shallow watercourse. We travelled this day upwards of 16 miles. —

March 3. Country still continued poor, with occasional patches of good, and one or two of rich, land. There were appearances of good districts near our line of road. We intended to make an effort to reach the River Arthur to-day, and therefore started early, but we were detained an hour, by the loss of our tea-kettle, which our native

went back to look for and found ; and in the fore -noon Mr. Hillman was very unwell, from having, as we supposed drank too much water during the heat of the day before at the rivers we had passed ; one of the soldiers was also unwell, and we consequently rested earlier than usual, in the forenoon. We started again at 3 o'clock. Our course had been, in the forenoon, over rough and scrubby country; — it still continued rough, intersected by several rich valleys of excellent soil and grass, till we arrived at a deep watercourse, trending to the eastward. Mr. Hillman here changed our course to ENE, along the bank of the watercourse about 1½ mile, when we changed to N. half a mile, when we arrived at another dry watercourse, and brought up for the night in excellent feed —

March 4. Resumed our old course N.25.W. 1¼ mile, through beautiful country. It had for the last four or five miles been generally good. We arrived at a river, with pools of fine water, which we supposed to be the Arthur, as we had seen nothing of that river where we expected to find it. After cutting our way across some thick spear-wood, a dry portion of the bed of the river, we found, on the opposite bank, a marked tree, which Mr. Hillman recognised as the western boundary tree of Mr. Bull. We were on the Williams, to our great delight, as we had now accomplished the most arduous part of our journey, without accident. The place where we struck the Williams was immediately opposite the end of the road from Kelmscott to the Williams — the very point we wished to arrive at. Mr. Hillman was equally pleased, having completed and marked the whole line between Kelmscott and the Swan. We struck merrily up the right bank of the river to my son's farm and the military station. On the way, the accidental discharge of a gun was immediately answered by another, and in a few minutes we were joined by my son, who was on his way to visit his flock of sheep and cattle de-pasturing a few miles below the station.

On the Williams we remained three days, and arrived at the Swan on the **11th of March**; having performed the journey from King George's Sound to York in twelve days actual travelling, exclusive of delays at Warriup and the Williams. We were, of course, hindered in our progress from the necessity of marking the road, or the journey would have been accomplished in less time. Thus, a journey which was thought to be impracticable with carts, without much expense in forming the road, has been effected with ease and rapidity, and has completely overturned an idea of difficulty, which was merely founded on prejudice.

Both the inhabited ends of the Colony are now connected by a good practicable road for carts, and the whole community, in a manner, united. The new station will be in the midst of thousands of acres of rich country, with much intermediate good land. The road is well watered. I am aware that all this will grievously disappoint our old enemy Mr. Gouger and his friends, the South Australian speculators, who will, no doubt, in future be a little more careful in their statements respecting the condition of this Colony, after the very just observations of Lord Glenelg on the subject of their gross misstatements. We have had an accession of highly respectable settlers, more are expected by the *Hero*,— and they will find no difficulty in selecting good land. I have, in this slight sketch, avoided minute particulars, which Mr. Hillman's Journal will furnish, on inquiry at the Surveyor-General's Office, where every part of the line of road suited for location may be ascertained.

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