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PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF CENTRAL AUSTRALIA AND THE BURKE AND WILLS EXPEDITION.

From the times of earliest settlement in New South Wales there was much speculation as to the nature of the interior of this continent, the merest margin of which was known when Lawson, Blaxland, and Wentworth found a practicable track across the Blue Mountains. The vast extent of the "interior," and the many rivers which were found to flow inland, raised geographical questions which were not only investigated by the early explorers, but also led to hypotheses which were still accepted as late as 1858.

In reading the reports of the early explorers of New South Wales it is interesting to study their opinions of the physical geography of the Australian continent.

Before 1831 a convict named Barber—or "the barber"—escaped from custody and lived among the natives, to the northward of Port Macquarie, for some five years. On his voluntary or compulsory return to civilisation he said that a large river, originating in the highlands near Liverpool Plains and the mountains to the northward of them, pursued a north-west course to the sea.

In the years 1831-2 Major Mitchell made an expedition to ascertain the truth of this statement. He reported that the division of the waters falling towards the northern and southern shores of Australia was not, as had been supposed, in the direction of the Liverpool and Warabangle Range, but extended between Cape Byron on the eastern shores towards Dirk Hartog's Island on the west. (*a*)

Another hypothesis was formulated by Mr. Allan Cunningham, who, according to Sturt, entertained Oxley's views of the character

(*a*) Sturt, "Southern Australia," Vol. I., pp. 160-9.

and nature of the western interior. The quotation by Sturt is, shortly, this—"There is a vast area of depressed country in the interior between the parallels of 34° and 27° which is subject, in periods of prolonged rain, to partial inundation. It would seem, therefore, that either a portion of the distant interior is occupied by a lake of considerable magnitude, or the confluence of rivers—such as the Castlereagh, Gwyder, and Dumeresque—with many more waters form one or more noble rivers, which may flow across the continent to the north and escape to the sea." (b)

The belief in an "inland sea" was held fast by Sturt, who says, in the introductory chapter to the work in which he records his expedition into Central Australia—"I am still of opinion that there is more than one sea in the interior of the Australian continent; but such may not be the case." (c)

It seems that in the communication which Sturt sent to Lord Stanley, the Secretary of State, in 1843, he said—"If a line be drawn from lat. $29^{\circ} 30'$ and long. 146° N.W., 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." He also postulated a range of mountains about the 29th parallel of latitude.

Sir J. Barrow, to whom Sturt's communication was referred, also held the opinion that "about the 28° or 29° the surface rises to a sufficient height to cause a division of the waters, those on the northern side taking a northerly direction and those on the southern side a southerly direction." (d)

Even John McDouall Stuart, who was draughtsman in Sturt's party, evidently had this hypothesis in his mind in 1858, on his first expedition to the north-west of South Australia. According to his route-plan he was about at lat. $26^{\circ} 20'$ and long. $134^{\circ} 15'$, and remarks in his journal of July 9th—"We camped on a gum creek, about three miles to the west of the range. My only hope now of cutting Cooper's Creek is on the other side of the range. . . . If it is not there, it must run to the north-west and form the Glenelg of Captain Grey." (e) In his subsequent expeditions he followed up the waters which find their way into Lake Eyre through the Macumba, and it is therefore not surprising that no more is said of Cooper's Creek and the Glenelg.

Such were some of the opinions formed of the physical geography of Central Australia. But there is another opinion which materially

(b) Sturt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 154-5. (c) Sturt, "Central Australia," Vol. I., p. 34.

(d) Sturt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 53-5.

(e) "The Journals of John McDouall Stuart" (William Hardman), 1864, p. 18.

affected the exploration of the northern parts of South Australia. This is the hypothesis of a horseshoe Lake Torrens, which persisted to about the year 1858, when a crossing was discovered joining the Far North, as it was then called, to the newly discovered pastoral country in the north-west.

In 1836 Adelaide was founded, and within three years E. J. Eyre made his first attempt to explore the Far-Northern interior. (*f*) His furthest point was a hill which was afterwards named Mount Eyre by Governor Gawler. From the summit of this hill he discovered Lake Torrens. The view northwards was of low, rocky, sandy country, without trees or shrubs or any sort of growth except a few stunted bushes. On the east the view was backed by high, rugged ranges, very barren in appearance, and extending northwards as far as the eye could reach. To the west and north-west appeared a broad, glittering strip of water. This he named Lake Torrens. (*g*)

In 1840 the possibility of an overland communication between South Australia and Western Australia engrossed public opinion in Adelaide. Eyre volunteered to head a party and to pay one-third of its expense. The principal object of the expedition was to open up a practicable stock route. (*h*) Eyre favored a northern route—rather than one to the westward—as being a more promising opening either for the discovery of good country or of an available route across the continent; in fact, this objective of the expedition, if it had been carried out, would have made known the later discoveries of Babbage, Warburton, and Stuart.

The difficulties which Eyre encountered in his repeated endeavors to find a way from the Flinders Range into Central Australia were due in great part to a season of drought. But it was an unfortunate coincidence that in each of his attempts to find a passage he should have struck either Lake Torrens or the lakes which we know now as Lake Eyre, Lake Gregory, and Lake Blanche. Besides these he saw, from the summit of Mount Serle, another, which is Lake Frome.

He considered, and not unnaturally, that they were continuations of one and the same lake, and he thus defines the position in a summary of the facts on which he based that conclusion. He says, referring to the view from Mount Hopeless—“The lake was now visible to the north and to the east, and I had at last ascertained beyond all doubt that its basin, commencing near the head of Spencer’s Gulf and following the

(*f*) “Journals of the Expeditions of Discovery into Central Australia in the Years 1840-1: E. J. Eyre, 1845.

(*g*), (*h*) *Op. cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 5-6.

course of Flinders Range (bending round its northern extreme to the southward), constituted those hills—the termination of the island of South Australia, for such I imagine it once to have been.” (i)

It is therefore to Eyre, whose conclusions were confirmed by the report of Captain Frome in 1842-3, that we must attribute the first development of the idea of the horseshoe Lake Torrens, which would present insurmountable obstacles to any attempt to enter Central Australia from the direction of the Flinders Range.

Eyre, believing it to be impossible to find an overland stock route by way of the north, and after taking into consideration the possibility of reaching Central Australia by following up the Murray and Darling rivers, decided to strike from Mount Arden to Streaky Bay, and then, pushing westward, to see whether some favorable opening of country would enable him to turn northwards. This led him to make one of the most sensational of all the Australian expeditions.

The next expedition which was fitted out to explore Central Australia was that of which Captain Sturt was the originator and leader. Sturt was one of the early explorers who developed the knowledge of the interior of Australia from Sydney. They travelled with bullock teams, horses, convict servants, and, in some cases, with soldiers. Major Mitchell was a typical explorer of this class, and travelled under conditions of climate and surroundings differing altogether from those which the later explorers who attempted to enter Central Australia encountered.

Sturt was the last of the old type, having in his party no less than five bullock-drivers; but, in fact, he made his remarkable excursions from his depot into Central Australia during a protracted drought with horses only. Considering the new and formidable difficulties which he successfully encountered, Sturt stands pre-eminent among Australian explorers for the care with which he carried out his mission and the general success which attended him under exceptional seasons.

Sturt started from Adelaide on his great expedition to Central Australia on the 12th of August, 1844, and returned to Adelaide on the 19th of January, 1846, after an absence of nearly a year and a half. He decided that as Eyre had proved the existence of a horseshoe Lake Torrens to proceed by following up the Darling River to Williorara (Laidley's Ponds), referred to by Major Mitchell, and thence to gain the chain of hills, by the continuation of which he hoped to be able to reach the good country which he believed to exist near the tropics. He

made two excursions westward—the first bringing him to a point from which he could see Mount Serle; the second to Lake Blanche, which he considered to be part of the horseshoe Lake Torrens.

The principal results of his expedition were to make known Cooper's Creek and Eyre's Creek, and to add, as delineated on his map, a Sandy Desert and a Stony Desert to the horseshoe Lake Torrens. His report also strengthened the belief that Central Australia was practically a desert, unfitted for settlement.

For some 10 or 12 years after Sturt's expedition little was done to increase the knowledge of Central Australia, excepting that the country of the Flinders Range had been more or less occupied as runs for cattle or sheep. The desire for new pastoral country, however, led to some small expeditions on the west side of Lake Torrens by Hack, Swindon, and others.

In 1858 Mr. B. H. Babbage was appointed to lead an expedition to explore the country on the western side of Lake Torrens, and also northwards. Previous to this he had been employed in prospecting the settled districts for gold. The results of the explorations of Babbage and his successor (Warburton) were far-reaching, bringing about the ultimate exploration and settlement of Central Australia.

As different opinions have been formed by writers as to their merits and demerits, I shall discuss the questions at issue, and express my own opinions on them. Fuller details will be found in the Appendix. The instructions given to Babbage by the Commissioner of Crown Lands were briefly as follows:—He was to thoroughly explore, as far as practicable, the country lying between the western shore of Lake Torrens and the eastern shore of Lake Gairdner, and thence northwards. He was to survey and map the western shores of Lake Torrens, so as to remove the doubts existing as to the extent, direction, and outline of the lake; in like manner also the shore of Lake Gairdner, and, as correctly as possible, the longitude of all remarkable landmarks, ranges, watercourses, lakes, permanent freshwater springs, and waterholes. This was a large order, since Lake Torrens as then believed to exist would have extended 250 miles from its southern end in a northerly direction. The country between Lake Torrens and Lake Gairdner is some 100 miles in width, and the northern shores of the latter lake run west 100 miles at least. The greater part of this was little better than a desert, and with little or no permanent water. Having performed this service as completely as circumstances would admit of, he was at liberty to push his explorations northerly, to round the northern shores of Lake Torrens easterly, and, as far as

possible, to connect the information to be derived from a survey of the northern shores of Lake Torrens with the knowledge of its north-eastern shores as derived from Captain Sturt's explorations. Lake Torrens, as it was then supposed to be, included also Lake Eyre, Lake Gregory, Lake Blanche, Lake Frome, and other lesser intermediary lakes. He examined the country between Lake Torrens and Lake Gairdner, making surveys and carrying out the letter of his instructions, receiving a letter from the Commissioner of Crown Lands, dated the 30th of July, in which there was the following passage:—“Don't let it annoy you if you hear remarks have been made about the slowness of your progress. We fully appreciate your labors and the difficulties you have to contend with.”

At this time, however, there seems to have been much dissatisfaction that Babbage had not discovered country suitable for pastoral occupation, not only by the public, to which the press had given voice, but also in Parliament.

Six weeks after that letter, when the Commissioner could not have been in possession of any further information as to Babbage's movements, he wrote to Babbage, strongly censuring him for not carrying out the instructions in the sense in which they were intended. (*k*)

After carefully reading the correspondence printed in the Parliamentary Papers of South Australia and the minutes of the Select Committee (*l*) my opinion is that the strong feeling of dissatisfaction outside, the attacks made upon him by the press, and the adverse feeling in Parliament caused the Government to make a scapegoat of Babbage.

The Government decided to supersede Babbage, and appointed Major Warburton, the then Commissioner of Police, who had done some exploring work, to carry out their intentions.

Babbage, on receiving the letter censuring him, left his camp at the Elizabeth, and proceeded to Stuart's Creek, having received the necessary information from John McDouall Stuart himself. (*m*) From this point he traced down Stuart's Creek to a large lake, which he named Lake Gregory—now known as the Southern Lake Eyre—still thinking that he was on the western side of the great horseshoe, and it was there that Warburton met and superseded him in the command of his party.

(*k*) Parl. Pa., S.A., 1858, No. 25, p. 5, *also* Select Committee Evidence, 877; Parl. Pa., S.A., 1859, No. 21, p. 38.

(*l*) Parl. Pa., S.A., 1859, No. 21, Replies 66-68-72-73.

(*m*) “Journals of John McDouall Stuart,” p. 3, June 13th, 1858, footnote.

Having sent Babbage and his party back to Adelaide on the 8th November, Warburton, on the same day, started with two companions and two packhorses to try and cross Lake Torrens to the northern settlements. He did this without difficulty, and on the 15th reached an outstation near Fortress Hill. On the 18th he reported himself to the Government as having arrived at the Mounted Police Station at Angepina, and was in Adelaide on the 10th December, 1858.

We may now ask, was it Babbage who first recognised the independent existence of Lake Gregory, which is now known as the southern part of Lake Eyre, from Lake Torrens, and was it Babbage who first formed the idea of a practicable passage from "Stuart's Country" to the northern settlements, across what was believed to be the horse-shoe Lake Torrens?

In 1857 Babbage believed that there was only one passage practicable over Lake Torrens, and to be found near Mount Hopeless, at the north-east side of the horseshoe. (Appendix p. 39.)

In 1858 he wrote—"Either that Lake Torrens does not extend so far northwards as this latitude, viz., $29^{\circ} 37'$, or that, if it does, it must be reduced to a mere inconsiderable channel, and might be readily crossed." In the same letter, however, he says—"My own belief, from what I then and subsequently saw, is that Lake Torrens turns up to Yarrowurta at its northern end, as at its southern it does to the Beda Arm, and that between Yarrowurta and Lake Gregory there are only a few small isolated salt lakes, similar to Lake Phibbs, sufficient, however, to impress Eyre, who, I believe, only saw the country from a distance, with the idea that he saw the loom of a continuous lake." (Appendix p. 39.)

The despatch from which I quote was written from Port Augusta on the 21st of November, when he was on his way to Adelaide, having been superseded in his command on the 5th. On that date he had dissented from Major Warburton as to there being a passage across Lake Torrens, but changed his opinion when the latter told him that Stuart's blackfellow had urged him (Stuart) to return that way. (*n*)

In 1859 Babbage said, in evidence before the Select Committee, in reply to a question by the chairman as to whether the distance of the northern shore of Lake Torrens from Stuart's Creek would be 50 or 60 miles, "No; we here strike Lake Torrens, and I have proved it to be a portion of Lake Gregory." (*o*) The uncertainty of his opinions as to this matter is also shown in what he says as to the view he ob-

(*n*) Appendix, p. 39.

(*o*) Select Committee—Evidence, 456; Appendix, pp. 38-39.

tained from the top of one of the hills of the Hermit Range (?), that to the west and north-west, where he expected to see Lake Torrens, he saw no sign of a lake, nor anything except an extensive plain. As he reached the Hermit Range—by a route on the west side of Lake Torrens—it is manifestly impossible that he could have seen it to the “west and north-west,” since, if it existed at all in that latitude, it must have been to the east or north-east of him.

Babbage does not seem to have had a decided opinion on this subject till he gave evidence before the Select Committee, when he said, “Lake Torrens is part of Lake Gregory.”

There cannot be any doubt that it was Warburton who first formed an opinion that there was a practicable passage across the supposed horseshoe Lake Torrens, from the newly discovered north-west country. This is shown clearly by the documentary evidence. On the 30th September, when on his way to supersede Babbage, Warburton wrote to Mr. Hamilton in Adelaide, suggesting that Corporal Burrst should be instructed to proceed—about the 20th October—from the Mounted Police Station at Angepina to Mount Nor'-West, and to make a smoke signal, and keep a good lookout himself from the western side of the range. (*p*) This was done, but it was only in the early part of November that Warburton went across—leaving Stuart's Creek on the 8th, arriving at the police station at Angepina on the 17th, and being in Adelaide at the latest on the 10th of December, when he wrote to the Commissioner of Crown Lands. (*q*)

I think that Dr. Gregory has somewhat misunderstood this case, for he says in his late work, “The Dead Heart of Australia,” page 259, “As soon as Babbage had gone south, Warburton retreated to the nearest station to wait for the winter, and the expedition did nothing more.” No reference is given to the authority for this statement. I have not been able to verify it, but the mistake which Dr. Gregory has made is evidently due to the fact that he has not read the whole of the evidence contained in the Parliamentary Papers, the substance of which I give in the Appendix.

The Commissioner of Crown Lands wrote to Warburton on the 11th December, 1858, as to his criticisms of Babbage. The postscript to the letter asks Warburton as to the reasons which induced him to return from the exploration. Warburton gives his reasons for not “summering out,” so that instead of retreating to the nearest station to wait for the winter, he appears to have hurried back to Adelaide.

(*p*) Appendix, p. 37.

(*q*) Appendix, p. 39.

I have carefully studied the documentary evidence as to the merits and demerits of both Babbage and Warburton, and have endeavored, to the best of my judgment, to form a true and unbiased opinion, but I must add that it seems very probable that there was a, perhaps, not altogether unreasonable prejudice against Babbage, arising out of the somewhat unpractical manner in which he conducted his expedition when looked at from the point of view of exploration. On the other hand, Warburton, in his report written from the Elizabeth on the 17th of October, criticised Babbage in an uncalled for and objectionable manner, and thus raised a prejudice against himself. (r)

The idea of the northern extension of Lake Torrens, including Babbage's Lake Gregory, died hard, for it is evident that Stuart still held it in 1859, for in the journal of his third expedition there is the following passage:—"Friday, 2nd of December, Lake Torrens. Got up at the first peep of day and ascended the sandhill. I fear my conjecture of last night is too true. I can see a small dark line of low land all round the horizon. The line of blue water is very small. So ends Lake Torrens." (s) When Stuart wrote this he was where the Neale joins Lake Eyre.

It was in the year 1858 that I first became acquainted with that part of Central Australia of which the expeditions of Eyre, Babbage, Stuart, and Warburton had by degrees made known the difficulties, the dangers, and finally the actual conditions of what, at that time, was known as the "Far North" and the "North-West."

The good season when Warburton explored the North-West country and the extraordinary number of the springs which he discovered, together with other permanent waters, caused him to describe it in most favorable terms. Stuart also reported it as being good, well-watered pastoral country. Thus public opinion became altogether changed. The way into Central Australia was at length opened to the pastoralists, and it was said that—far from being a desert—it was of great promise for pastoral occupation.

I well remember the deep interest which was taken in Victoria in Warburton's discoveries, and it was this which caused my first acquaintance with that part of Central Australia.

One result of this lively interest was that what would now be termed a syndicate was formed in Melbourne, the object of which was to acquire a tract of this "Promised Land" sufficient, as its principal member explained to me, to carry 20,000 head of cattle. A small party, of which I was head, was fitted out for this purpose, and started

(r) Appendix, p. 37.

(s) *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

for Adelaide early in September of 1859, bound for the Far North, as it was then called, our point of departure for the new country in the North-West. The precise time of our departure from Adelaide was fixed indelibly in my memory by the fact that I saw Tolmer's expedition start a few days before, ostensibly to cross the continent. I also remember, in this connection, that we were told of two alternative routes—one being by way of Port Augusta, Beda, and the Pernatty Lagoon, to Stuart's Creek—in fact the way by which Babbage, Stuart, and Warburton all went to the newly discovered country; the other was by the way of the Flinders Range, and then to strike across from Fortress Hill over the dry land lying between Lake Torrens and the Lake Gregory of Babbage. After carefully considering all the information which we had obtained we decided on the latter route, because in the dry season then prevailing through the North it was quite uncertain whether the former route was practicable. In this, as it turned out, we were well advised, for when we returned to Adelaide from our trip we learned that Tolmer's expedition had proved to be, as indeed his own account of it shows, a complete fiasco. (*t*)

Our route from Adelaide to about Mount Remarkable lay mainly through a beautiful pastoral country, in the flush of spring, after bountiful rains; but beyond that little (if any) rain appeared to have fallen for many months—if not years; in fact, we rode into the Flinders Range country during a protracted drought.

To us, coming from Victoria, where the mountains are forest clad, the scenery of the Flinders Range was both novel and unexpected. I well remember how I was struck by the weird appearance of some of these mountains. Brown, rocky masses, devoid of timber, with precipitous cliffs, stratified in places, loomed through the desert haze of a hot north wind. Recollections of such mountain masses were brought vividly to mind when I saw similar bare rugged mountains, through such a desert haze, when passing through the Gulf of Suez. The atmosphere was often so clear that it was difficult to estimate distance; while at other times mirage produced such fantastic effects that one felt as if in an enchanted land.

What struck me, perhaps, as much as anything were the "gaps," or ravines, often with precipitous rocky sides several hundred feet in height. Such gaps are not only the channels of watercourses, but in places serve as roads, leading from plains on the one side to plains on the other side of a range. It was strange to us to see, where the tilted strata formed the bed of the channel in such a ravine, that water came

(*t*) "Reminiscences, Alexander Tolmer, 1882."

to the surface and then disappeared in the sand and gravel deposits beyond. These pools were very welcome to us in that thirsty land, and where there were sandy places near these pools rushes were growing, forming almost the only green vegetation which we saw. Everywhere else was barren and bare of grass, and in some places of feed bushes also. In places we came to plains lying between hills which were desolate wastes, across which wind-driven columns of dust stalked, reminding one of the Ghin in the Arabian Nights' story of a fisherman who dredged up a casket from the sea.

The country as we saw it might have been described, in the language used by Eyre, as desolate and barren; but when we passed over it we did not find even the plentiful grass which he speaks of here and there, because, the country being stocked, the cattle and sheep had eaten off every blade within reach of the watering-places. One settler, talking about the drought, told me that there had not been any rain to speak of for nearly three years, and that some of his cattle came in from a distance of four or five miles for a drink. All the stock we saw told by their appearance a sorry tale of starvation.

Our horses fared badly in passing through the drought-stricken mountains, but we hoped for better times when we reached the newly discovered Promised Land in the north-west.

Such were the impressions on our minds by seeing this country during a drought, and not in one of the seasons of plenty which also occur at times.

We had a sketch plan of the country which Parry had traversed the year before, and showing the various points we had to make, the first being Hermit Hill and Finnis Springs.

In time we worked our way to Strangways Springs, from which we made further excursions and inspected a good deal of country. All was new to us Victorians: the wide plains, some of soft soil, others so stony that when travelling at night those who were behind could see where the leading man was by the sparks his horse struck out of the stones at each step. It was all novelty to us: the sandhill country, with grass and bushes; the gum creeks, some with fresh, but more with salt, water; the rugged hills, much seamed by sharp-edged slates; then the distant table-topped hills, from which we continually saw rising what we took to be smoke signals. It was an interesting experience in a wonderful country, the mound springs being the greatest wonder of all; but it was not the kind of country that was wanted.

Our return was uneventful. We now knew the country, and made a short cut from Strangways Springs across some very rough and stony

country to the Shamrock Pool of Parry, which was about 50 miles from Fortress Hill. In time, and with the exercise of much care, we got our horses through the droughty country of the Flinders Range, and finally finished our ride of some 1,500 miles with the same horses at Mount Sturgeon, in Victoria.

Such was my apprenticeship in Central Australia, which in the near future was to stand me in good stead in a far more important expedition.

The renewal of interest in exploration of the unknown interior of Australia culminated in the fitting out of the Burke and Wills Expedition in 1860. An offer, made by Mr. Ambrose Kyte, of £1,000, on the condition that £2,000 should be given by the public for the purpose of exploring, initiated the scheme. The matter was taken up by the Royal Society. The Government promised assistance, and the Exploration Committee was formed, consisting, I believe, of 21 members, with whom rested the responsibility of organising the expedition and selecting its leader. Their choice fell upon Robert O'Hara Burke, and I assume they also selected the other members of the party. I was not in Melbourne at that time, being engaged in Gippsland as leader of a party in prospecting the mountainous country in which the Mitchell River takes its rise. From time to time, as the Melbourne papers reached our mountain camp, I read of the organisation of the party, of its start from Melbourne, and the difficulties met with in conveying its great outfit to Menindie. Then came the news of dissensions in the party, and of the resignation of Landells.

Naturally I felt a lively interest in this expedition, considering the facts by the light of my experience of the year before. I still clearly remember the day when, having learned from the papers received that Burke had divided his party at Menindie, leaving the greater part of his equipment there and pushing northwards himself with a small party and a slight outfit, I felt a strong foreboding of future misfortune for Burke and his companions. My party were all interested in the news, and I remember talking about it with some of the men by the camp fire in the evening. I said that I felt that Burke had no idea of what was before him in Central Australia, and, half in a joking mood, I said, "Who knows that they may not lose themselves? If so, then I might have to go and look for them." Two of my hearers—Alexander Aitkin and Weston Phillips—then said, "If you go, take us with you." These two did accompany me in my search for Burke and his companions, and proved themselves to be thoroughly trustworthy in every way.

It is easy to be wise after the event; but before I recount my reminiscences of the search for Burke's party and the finding of King it will be well to consider some circumstances connected with the expedition which have always struck me as being of momentous importance, either having led to the series of disasters which attended this party or being of such a nature as to have contributed to the final tragedy.

Reading of the start of the expedition, I was struck by the great amount of the outfit which had to be conveyed with it. Then I read of the dissensions in the party, the consequence of which was the resignations of Landells and of Dr. Beckler, though the latter withdrew his, I think, before Burke left Menindie. No expedition ever set out to explore the interior of Australia with such a lavish supply of outfit, equipment, and stores as this. I wondered by whom it had been selected, and I have since looked into the matter, as far as the written and printed evidence has been available.

It seems that the articles deemed necessary for the expedition were suggested first by Burke, (*u*) being provisions, forage for camels and horses, stores, medicines (including veterinary medicines), services, horses, and pack-saddles. It seems that the term "services" included the wagons. (*v*) The provisions were calculated to last for 18 months, and, to speak precisely, the total cost of all the items enumerated was £4,585 2s. 10d.

The provisions were selected by a sub-committee working with Burke (*v*). The wagons were supplied as being likely to be of great use in carrying stores from Menindie to Cooper's Creek. One very large wagon was fitted up as a boat for crossing rivers. (*w*) The fact that a boat carriage was taken reminds one of the equipment of the old type of exploring expeditions. But the climatic and physical conditions under which the old explorers travelled were quite different to those to be met with in Central Australia. Sturt started with bullock teams and drays; but he did the most important part of his great journey—namely, from Fort Grey to Eyre's Creek—with horses.

The available means of conveyance were insufficient for the amount to be carried. Wagons and teams were therefore hired, and yet there were constant delays, so that, before reaching Menindie, Burke found his progress impeded, and this seems to be one of the causes which gave rise to the friction between himself and Landells.

The difficulties and delays met with in conveying the stores—using that term in its widest sense—may be estimated when one con-

(*u*) Report of the Burke and Wills Commission, 1861-2, question 10.

(*v*) *Op. cit.*, question 44.

(*w*) *Op. cit.*, question 81.

siders that the total weight to be carried is said to have been 21 tons. (x) This had to be conveyed from Melbourne to Menindie—a distance of some 500 miles—before the real business of exploration commenced. Much of the loading, and also of the equipment, was left on the way up, showing clearly that the means of conveyance were insufficient, even when there was a road of some kind.

This was the first expedition which used camels as one of the principal means of carriage. Once before a camel was used by J. A. Horrocks, one of the earlier explorers of the country on either side of the head of Spencer Gulf. In the year 1846 he set out to explore north-westward from the further side of Lake Torrens, but he was accidentally shot while loading his camel. (y)

In Burke's party the camels caused some trouble, for Landells carried rum for them, and it seems that the shearers at McPherson's station got drunk on some of this rum, and Burke insisted on it being left behind, as it endangered the sobriety of his men.

From what I saw of the camels subsequently, and of the "sepoys" (as they were called) who looked after them, I came to the conclusion that any man who was good with horses could manage camels. Therefore, when on my relief expedition, I sent the "sepoys" back to Melbourne, and placed the camels under the charge of Brahé, who did the work to my complete satisfaction. When I received the camels they were suffering from scab, but were soon cured by the use of creosote.

On my way to Menindie, when setting out with the relief expedition, I came across some of the equipment and stores which had been left behind at Balranald and at Tarcoola Station, on the Darling River. Among these things were two of the wagons, one of which carried the boat; six sets of wagon harness; a spare wagon axle; and two spare hind wagon wheels. The other things seemed to be an assortment of the tools, implements, and general equipment of the party. At Menindie I found a still larger assortment, some of which, in my opinion, need never have been taken, while there were other things left behind which would certainly be required and could not be obtained when wanted beyond the settlements.

Burke's instructions were explicit. He was to "form a depot of provisions and stores at Cooper's Creek, and to make arrangements for keeping open a communication to the Darling or by way of the South Australian police at Mount Serle."

(x) J. E. T-Woods' "History of Discovery and Exploration of Australia," Vol. II., p. 39.

(y) Woods, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 350.

Without doubt he departed from his instructions by his hasty advance to Cooper's Creek without taking the necessary steps to ensure that the stores and equipment, which had been left behind, were brought on to Menindie. Burke's disregard of this part of his instructions seems to show that he was impatient of delay, and thus neglected those precautions which, in compliance with his instructions, would have provided against mishap. More than this: had he waited at Cooper's Creek until his stores had been brought there, and meanwhile opened up a line of communication with the northern settlements of South Australia, he would have obtained a practicable route at all times by which to communicate with the committee and also to procure the supplies necessary for his party. Later on, when speaking of the attempt made by Burke, Wills, and King to reach Mount Hopeless, I shall have occasion to refer again to this.

The haste with which Burke pushed on—first to Menindie and then to Cooper's Creek, leaving the rest of his party and the great bulk of his equipment to follow as best it could—may, however, as I think, be explained, as well as the rush from Cooper's Creek to Carpentaria. The evidence of Sir William Stawell, given before the Royal Commission, (z) was that Burke “attended all the meetings, and heard the deliberations. . . . If Carpentaria could not be reached, it was not considered advisable to attempt exploration in a more north-westerly direction so as to reach the Victoria. This, however, the committee did not deem expedient to press, as it was supposed that Stuart had then, or would shortly have, discovered the route to the Victoria.”

Assuming, therefore, as I think we may, that Burke knew what Stuart was likely to carry out, it is then a reasonable conjecture that the haste with which he pushed forward was to enable him to cross the continent first, for it is reported he said that “provided he crossed the continent he did not care if he had only one shirt to his back when his journey ended.” (a)

This impetuosity has always appeared to me to have been one of the most serious of Burke's errors of judgment, and to have had the most serious results. Amongst other consequences it led to the appointment of Wright—as it seems to me, without sufficient inquiry as to his qualifications—who was to bring the rest of the party and the remainder of the stores and equipment to Cooper's Creek. Wright, as Burke intended and as the former promised, should have left Menindie on his journey as soon as possible after his return there in

(z) *Op. cit.*, question 1583.

(a) Woods, *op. cit.*, Vol. II., p. 354.

order to carry the stores thence to Cooper's Creek. But he remained there from the 5th November until the 27th or 29th of the following January. (*b*) In this he totally disregarded Burke's instructions, as well as his promise to Burke that he would take the remainder of the party out as soon as he returned. (*c*) The reasons for this otherwise unaccountable—one might even say criminal—neglect of duty appear to have been that some cheques of Burke's had been dishonored, and Wright would not move until his appointment had been confirmed and he had someone to fall back upon for his pay. (*d*) Finally, when he reached Bulloo, he remained there; partly because some of his party were ill, but perhaps mainly because, as he said, it would be difficult to find Cooper's Creek, as he had no tracks to guide him and no natives to take him there. (*e*) Wright was evidently incompetent, and Burke made a mistake in appointing him to so important a position.

Another mistake made by Burke was to again divide his party when he started from Cooper's Creek, apparently intending to make a preliminary excursion to Eyre's Creek, which might extend to a three or four months' absence. I draw this inference from the evidence of Brahé, McDonough, Patten, and King, and also from what the latter said when I found him at Cooper's Creek. (*f*) It seems clear that when Burke left the depot he told them he intended to go to Eyre's Creek, and to try to go to Carpentaria if he could do so without incurring any risk; that he was bound to be back in three months, as the provisions he took with him were scarcely sufficient for twelve weeks. That he had determined to try for Carpentaria is shown by what he said, according to King, after they left Cooper's Creek: that he would not turn his face backwards till he had reached the sea. This can be easily understood if one considers that they found practically no difficulties on their march to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The season was favorable, and if the committee's instructions had been followed the journey across the continent and the return to Menindie might have been made without any loss of camels or horses, and also without the lamentable loss of life caused by the "forlorn hope" led by Burke, which resulted, certainly, in success, but also in the death of three of the four who formed this gallant little party.

The first of the small party of four to succumb to the hardships of the return journey was Grey. He was thought to be shamming, but his

(*b*) Wright, in his evidence before the Commission, said the 27th; elsewhere, the date given is the 29th. (*c*) Evidence, 1235.

(*d*) Evidence, 543, 560, 561, 583, 1312. (*e*) Evidence of Dr. Beckler, 1912.

(*f*) Commission's Report—Evidence, 175, 222, 320, 447, 697.

physical breakdown was only too true, for he died at a place called Andaginni, about 40 miles from Brierili, where Wills died. It was the delay of one day spent there for the purpose of burying their deceased comrade that caused them to arrive at the depot in the afternoon of the day on which Brahé started on his return journey.

Andaginni was visited by McKinlay, who misunderstood the native guide, and believed that Burke and his companions had been killed by the blacks, and therefore named this place Lake Massacre.

My experience, subsequently, in going to the Diamantina from my depot showed me how easily the journey across to Carpentaria might be made. McKinlay's most successful journey from the northern settlements of South Australia to the Gulf and thence to Queensland is also proof positive of what Burke and Wills might have done had the instructions of the committee been properly carried out.

When Burke returned to the depot he buried a letter in the cache, from which he had removed the provisions which Brahé left there. (*h*) According to King, the cache was covered up as it was before they opened it, and with horse and camel dung spread over it. The necessity of leaving some mark to show that they had been there was overlooked. According to King, they thought that the word "Dig" would answer their purpose as well as it had Brahé's, who put it there. (*h*) This was a fatal error, and one which bore bitter fruit.

In Burke's opinion the provisions found in the cache would last them 40 days; and here occurs the final mistake, namely, the choice of the route by Mount Hopeless to the northern settlements of South Australia instead of their own track to the Darling, of which they knew all the stages and on which they would meet any party bringing them help. But in considering this matter it must be remembered that they were all in the last stage of exhaustion. Grey had died before reaching Cooper's Creek, and they were reduced to so low a state when they arrived at the depot that, as King said, it was as much as one of them could do to crawl to the side of the creek for a billy of water. (*i*) Had they decided to proceed to Menindie, and allowing 10 days to rest and recuperate at the depot, they would, according to Burke's calculations, (*j*) have had 30 days' provisions. Their journey up from Menindie to the depot took 25 days, counting the camps; but it is more than doubtful whether they, in the state in which they and their two camels were, could have done the back journey in that time.

(*h*) Report Royal Commission—Evidence, 1024, 1025, 1027, 1028, 1031.

{ (*i*) *Op. cit.*, 1032. (*j*) Evidence, 1042.

The journey from the depot to Petamorra, the cattle station, which is a little beyond Mount Hopeless, took me 14 days, with horses and camels in good working condition; but in the state in which Burke, Wills, and King were it would have required at least twice that time for them to get there, even if they had no hindrance on the way. According to the account given by Wills, they wandered about for 29 days (*k*) endeavoring to find a way out of their difficulties, and at last returned to die of starvation, Burke at Innamineka and Wills at Brierili—two heroes who sacrificed their lives to the ultimate benefit of their country.

I speak with some feelings of certainty as to the difficulties they would probably have had to meet on the route to Mount Hopeless, for the first thing I did after fixing my depot on my second expedition was to open up a line of communication with the northern settlements in South Australia. As there did not seem to have been any rain, I went provided for the worst. I took nine camels, which, in addition to the necessary food and personal requirements of the party of five, had all our water-bags full, the load being as much as they could carry, the smaller camels being obliged, in some places, to ascend the steeper sandridges on their knees. For the first three days from the depot we travelled over earthy plains and sandridges without any signs of grass. In many parts the dead bushes on the tops of the ridges were, so to say, standing on tiptoe, the sand having been blown away from them. Fortunately, however, summer rains had fallen at Strzelecki Creek, and thence onwards to Petamorra I had plenty of water. Before these summer rains the country was probably as bare and waterless as that we crossed during the first three days, and it would, under such conditions, have been impossible for Burke and his companions to have made their way through.

My return journey to the depot was made by following up the course of Cooper's Creek, and thus having permanent waters all the way.

When one considers all the circumstances which contributed to the disastrous ending of the Burke and Wills Expedition, one might well call them a series of misfortunes. But in considering them and the causes which produced them, I am of the same opinion as the Royal Commission, that the party "was most injudiciously divided at Menindie. It was an error of judgment on the part of Mr. Burke to

(*k*) "Andrew Jackson, Robert O'Hara Burke, and the Australian Exploration Expedition of 1860," p. 122, "Journal of the Trip from Cooper's Creek towards Adelaide, April, 1861."

appoint Mr. Wright to an important command . . . without a previous knowledge of him." (l) The greatest regret must be felt that Brahé should have happened to leave on the morning of the day on which Burke returned. But there is some doubt whether Burke expected, when he left the depot, to go further than Eyre's Creek, or to be absent longer than three months. As he did not give any instructions in writing to Brahé when he left, it is quite possible that he did not remember all that passed in conversation with those he left behind. It seems to me that Brahé has been blamed too strongly for what was an unfortunate mischance.

Taking everything into consideration, I think that the unfortunate occurrence of mischances was due, primarily, to errors of judgment on the part of Burke, and that these arose because he did not possess that kind of knowledge which is absolutely necessary to enable even the bravest and most determined man to be the successful leader of such an expedition as was committed to his charge. It is evident to me that at no time was there the necessary means of conveying the 21 tons of equipment and stores from Menindie to Cooper's Creek. This could only have been done if an organised train of packhorses or camels, or both, had been arranged, and the most important parts of the loading conveyed there first, leaving such things as spare supplies, duplicates, &c., to the last. But such an organised service neither Burke nor anyone else in the party was, so far as I know, competent to arrange. Unfortunately, Burke had no experience of the work, and Wills—the best man Burke had, a man of noble character, who seems to have placed duty first—had not had the special bush training which would have enabled him to see what course would be necessary, and also to speak with the authority given by knowledge. Besides this, his duties were sufficient to fill the whole of his time, for he was the only one of the party who could take the necessary observations. It was he who really took Burke across the continent and brought him back to Cooper's Creek. Without Wills, Burke would have been absolutely helpless.

It is nearly half a century since these events took place, and they may now be considered as a matter of history calmly and without any bias one way or the other. I have said that Burke on several occasions showed a fatal error of judgment. If he had followed his instructions, and established a depot of supplies at Cooper's Creek, he might have crossed to Carpentaria and returned without difficulty. But there seems to have been a complete change in his plans after the expedition

(l) Royal Commission, Report, par. 1.

left Melbourne. The enormous outfit was practically abandoned, some of it on the road up, the greater part at Menindie; and Burke hastened on with seven of his party, 15 horses, and 16 camels, conveying stores calculated to last six months. There need not have been the fiasco of Wright's attempt to take the remainder of the party and some of the stores to Cooper's Creek, nor the terrible loss of life which followed. There would not have been the necessity for search parties to be sent out to seek for Burke and his companions, nor the very great expenditure which was thereby incurred by the several colonies. I feel with regret that this was brought about by the unwise haste with which Burke pushed on ahead of his party and its supplies, apparently determined to cross the continent before Stuart.

As time went on and no word came from Burke great uneasiness was felt in Victoria, and on the 18th of June, 1861, the Exploration Committee decided to send out a party in search of the expedition. I was chosen for the important position of leader, and, with three companions, started by Cobb's coach for Swan Hill, where I was to purchase the necessary horses and otherwise complete my outfit. But my plans were altered by meeting Brahé at the Loddon, on his way to Melbourne to report the arrival at Menindie of Wright, and also to report that Burke had left Cooper's Creek, with Wills, Grey, and King, on the 16th December.

In view of the serious position indicated by this information, no time was lost in reorganising my party, so that on the 14th of July I again started, with an increased party and outfit. I was to purchase horses at Swan Hill, to procure the necessary supplies at Menindie for a five months' absence, to follow Burke's track, and ascertain, if possible, what had become of him and his three companions.

Menindie, our point of departure from civilisation, was at that time an infant among townships. It consisted mainly of a public-house, a store, and a lockup. It was a place on the frontier of settlement, and, apart from the pastoral interest localised in sheep and cattle runs on the River Darling, essentially belonged to exploration. As I wrote at that time, it was a place where parties were fitted out for trips in search of country for new runs, and the principal conversation was about who was out and who had come in, what country they had seen, what country they had taken up, the new waters discovered, and especially what parties had had "brushes with the niggers." The conduct and the qualifications of explorers were discussed in a critical manner by the bearded conclave which assembled at the public-house. The people about had a thorough veteran bushman look, and beards,

pipes, and cabbage-tree hats were the fashionable wear. I remember that a favorite way of passing the time was to criticise the stores and provisions offered at the store for the use of explorers; and on one occasion some dried beef was talked over, smelt, and tasted with the air of connoisseurs.

Although Menindie cannot be included in Central Australia, it was on the verge of it when I started on my search for Burke and Wills and their comrades, because it was then the outside settlement, beyond which was the unknown interior. When I say "unknown" I must qualify that term to some extent by saying that all known of it was from Burke's despatch from Torowotto; from Gregory's account of his expedition down the Barcoo, in search of Leichhardt; and the more distant expedition of Sturt, who discovered Cooper's Creek, the Great Stony Desert, and Eyre's Creek.

My personal reminiscences of Central Australia in connection with the Burke and Wills Expedition practically commence with the start of my party from Menindie. It is not necessary to say more of the country passed over in the first 13 days than that we were following Burke's track, as delineated upon Wills's route plan. The horses were becoming accustomed to the camels, and everything worked satisfactorily. On the fourteenth day we left Burke's track to avoid a long *detour* to the north-east before it turned north-westerly to strike Cooper's Creek. We were, therefore, in new country, much to the eastward of Sturt's route from Fort Grey.

There is a passage in Wills's report of the 15th December, 1860, which is worth noting here. In speaking of the country passed over between Torowotto and Cooper's Creek he mentions that they found the tracks of drays—four distinct tracks, two of which appeared to be those of heavy horse drays, the other two might have been made by light ones or spring carts—and he says they were unable to make out the tracks of the horses and cattle. This was near Burke's Camp 54 (that is, according to the route plan prepared by Wills), on a creek, apparently a tributary of the Bulloo River. Wills attributes these tracks to De Rinsey, and adds, "who, I believe, had some drays with him, and reported that he had been somewhere in this direction." (m) I mention this because we also found dray tracks, or what were taken for them. They looked like the tracks of a bullock-dray and a spring cart, which had been travelling when the ground was soft, after rain. We also were unable to make out "the tracks of the horses and cattle," and this caused me to follow them for some distance along the flats

(m) Andrew Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5.

bordering the creek. The "bullock-dray track" finally ceased at the edge of a steep bank at the creek. The other track, when we traced it further, ended at a log and at two stumps of broken branches. It was thus evident that these seeming tracks were made by logs carried across the flats by flood waters, and the absence of tracks of cattle or horses, which should have been visible if the drays had crossed in wet weather, was accounted for. It possibly also accounts for the fact that Burke's party could not find the cattle or horse tracks. I was pleased to be able to solve this puzzle, because one of my party—Sampson, an "overlander" of great experience—firmly maintained that they were dray tracks until he saw the logs at the end of the "wheel" tracks.

The journey for the next three days was uneventful, excepting that we found a creek in our way running bank and bank. It kept us back for a day, which we spent in getting our equipment and stores across by swinging them with a rope fastened to a tree growing on a small island, and in crossing our horses and camels. The latter positively refused to go into the water, but were circumvented by making them sit down on the bank, and then as they rose up and were off their balance we toppled them into the stream and hauled them across. A more helpless beast under such circumstances I never saw, and as they waded through the deep mud on the other side they drew their feet out of it with a sound like drawing a gigantic cork.

On the fourth morning we ascended stony hills, which Sturt saw from a distance and named the Stokes Range. On the side we ascended the range sloped gently upwards, the ground being covered with sharp fragments of flinty stone. Numerous deep gorges intersected the range lying across our course and making travelling difficult, while the half-dead mulga made it worse by tearing our packs and clothes. We camped at the edge of a deep, scrubby gorge, with plenty of dry grass, but no water.

On the following morning we had difficulty in crossing the gorge, which was overgrown with mulga, interspersed with numerous great blocks of stone. For several hours we forced our way over similar country, including two dry creeks, flanked by precipitous stony ranges. It was a happy chance that none of the horses or camels as they floundered about among the blocks of stone did not disable themselves. I could not believe that camels could have carried their loads up and down such places as we crossed that day. Then we ascended to a stony tableland, almost devoid of vegetation, from which we could see some remarkable flat-topped hills, the characteristic desert sandstone

of Central Australia. At noon we suddenly came out at the edge of a bluff overlooking the Cooper's Creek country. It took an hour to descend from it to a wide basin of open country some 700ft. or 800ft. below—a descent that was bad for horses and worse for camels. The flats were literally paved with angular and rounded fragments of loose stone. We slowly picked our way over this kind of ground for several hours, the horses becoming fagged and some very footsore, and the camels tired. It had been a heavy day, with a hot sun and no water. We camped without any, and with very little feed.

From a steep square-topped hill near the camp I had an extensive view to the north-west. The ranges terminated a few miles beyond, succeeded by open plains. Beyond them I could see sandhills extending to the horizon, ridge beyond ridge, scrub-covered, with here and there a tree, until the outlines were lost in the haze of distance. Here was the mysterious vastness of the desert interior, which held, somewhere, the secret which it was our mission to discover.

For some reason, perhaps because of their contrast, this view and another which I had seen nearly twelve months before in the Gippsland Alps have impressed themselves indelibly on my memory. Then, as I ascended a mountain summit on the Dargo River, a wonderful, far-stretching view burst upon me. For many miles the snowy plains stretched northwards to where, on the horizon, the chain of the Bogong Mountains rose, lustrous in their white mantle of snow, resplendently pure, under the cloudless deep blue of the winter sky in the Australian Alps. This came before me mentally as I stood on that hill and beheld its contrast on our first approach to Cooper's Creek.

We made an early start next morning, for the horses were close at hand, not having gone far among the rough rocks and stones, and they looked very much cut up with their hard work and no water.

The plains to which the small valley we had camped in led us were so stony that we had to travel slowly for some hours, traversing the most stony wilderness imaginable. When we reached the sandhills the travelling became good, and we had our first interview with the native inhabitants. We came across a number at a dry watercourse who all ran away excepting an old man and woman and one or two others, who waited till we came up. They were in a very excited state, waving boughs and shouting. My blackboys could not understand them, and it was only by pantomime that I got the old man to understand that we wanted water and could persuade him to guide us. As I walked beside him my horse suddenly neighed in his ear, whereupon he climbed up a tree and remained there, at the top, enshrouded in

the leaves until we left him. Proceeding in the direction in which he had pointed for water, we came into the bounds of the rainfall, and one of the packhorses, who kept persistently at the outside of the party, on the lookout for water, found a narrow channel full of it before we came up to it. Here we remained, and, with thought for the future, excavated a small tank, into which we led the water from some claypans. Here our difficulties were over, because it rained heavily in the night, leaving a supply of water ahead of us on the way next day, so that without difficulty we struck Cooper's Creek about half a mile above Camp 60 of Burke, which we had steered for, and which Mr. Welch, our surveyor, had cleverly hit off. (*n*)

From Burke's 60th camp we followed the course of Cooper's Creek, passing his first depot and then coming to his second depot, Fort Wills, which was three miles beyond my Camp 30. The country we crossed consisted in great part of earthy plains, cracked and fissured in all directions, and often without any trace of vegetation; while in other places the dried stalks of plants, higher than a horse, showed what the country would be like after floods. This was varied by occasional sandhills or stony ridges. Where we camped the night before reaching Burke's second depot there was a fine sheet of water between rocky banks.

Among the many questions which I put to Brahé about Cooper's Creek on our way up there was one the reply to which surprised me. I asked him about fish and fishing, and he told me that, although he had seen the blacks with fish, none of the party had caught any, excepting when they bailed out a small hole and caught a few small ones. When we camped at that fine reach of water with rocky banks I felt certain that there must be fish in it, and as soon as I had unsaddled my horse and let him go I got out a fishing line, and, having shot one of the ever-present crows, baited my hook and dropped it into the water. I immediately caught a good-sized fish, and then others of the party became fishermen, with much success. We camped there again on our way back to Menindie, and a large haul of fish was caught. So far as I remember it was over a hundredweight. It must be remembered that this "Fish Pond," as we called the place, was only three miles from Burke's depot. Poor Wills, in one of the last pathetic entries in his journal, speaks of the craving which he felt for fat and sugar. These fish, which occur in all the waters at Cooper's Creek, are extraordinarily

(*n*) Brahé brought down with him the field-books of Wills up to the time when Burke started northward. We therefore knew where to look for the Camp 60 of Burke.

fat, and supplied us with much excellent food, while the fat was used for many purposes. I never could understand how it was that Burke, Wills, and King did not catch fish, for King had hooks when we found him.

The only way in which I can account for the inability of Burke, Wills, and King to do more for their sustenance than collect nardoo is that not one of them had bush experience or knowledge of the food which the natives procured. Among many other sources of supply there were fish, crayfish (yabbies), and mussels in the waterholes, and plenty of pigeons.

While we were at the depot Brahé pointed out the place where he made the cache and the tree on which he cut the words and figures "Dig. 21 April, 1861." I carefully examined the place, and Brahé said, in reply to my questions, that everything was just as he left it, the "plant" untouched, and nothing removed of the useless things left but a piece of leather. I noticed that there were the ashes of three small fires, which appeared to show that the blacks had been there, but the loose, sandy soil was so run over by the tracks of birds and small animals that no traces of footprints could be seen. It seems, however, that the three small fires were made by Burke, Wills, and King individually. I was surprised that the blacks had not found the cache, because of the self-evident fact that something was buried there. As we were supplied with stores for fully five months, there was no need for the things which Brahé had buried there, and we went on, thus leaving, for the time, the answer to the question which we had come so far to solve.

It has been asked why Burke did not add something to the inscription on the tree when he left to try and get to Mount Hopeless. The explanation is to be found in King's evidence before the Royal Commission: (o) "We did not expect the party to return; we thought the word 'dig' would answer our purpose as well as it would theirs." This was a mistake, because Brahé was with me; otherwise the word "dig" would have at once suggested my doing so. From this place we had to look out for tracks, and in a few miles we found the track of a single camel going eastward. That evening we camped about a quarter of a mile below the place to which Brahé accompanied Burke and the advance party on their outward trip. During the day we had again seen the track of a camel, and where we were camped we saw camel droppings—where Brahé said he was sure Burke's camels had not been on his outward journey. On Burke's journey outwards the

(o) *Op. cit.*, Evidence, 1032.

camels were led, and those at the depot were herded. These tracks were, therefore, puzzling, and I thought it possible that one of Burke's camels had got away and returned.

The next morning I went ahead of the party with one of my two blackboys, to try and pick up Burke's tracks. We were now well beyond the stony hills which had, in a sense, confined the river. The country was opening up evidently towards the north. I thought that Wills might have seen an opportunity for making a departure for Eyre's Creek, for we were, I thought, approaching that part of the creek where Sturt had crossed on his northern journey. While I went on ahead I left Mr. Welch in charge, to follow down the river with the party.

At the lower end of a large reach of water I saw where a horse had been running recently, and for some time. At the same place I found the handle of a claspknife. I then struck out a little south of the creek, being on that side, and again found the same track of a single camel, and camel dung, apparently some months old. The track was, as before, going eastward. I then left the blackboy to follow down the creek, and went myself to the other side of the channel, striking out to the north over some sandy country, where I might have a better chance of finding tracks than along the river or over the flats near it—where they are soon obliterated by birds and animals running about—or on the paths used by the blacks in travelling from one point to another. After about five miles without seeing any tracks, I turned towards the river, and came to it near the lower end of a very large sheet of water, and where I saw, on the opposite side of the dry channel, a number of native huts. I crossed, and at a little distance again found the same track of a single camel going up stream. At the same time I saw a blackfellow and a woman, who had been picking up sticks for firewood. The latter hastened off to the camp, while the former remained, holding the firewood on his head with one hand, and with the other making a number of gestures and signs. He was very excited, shouting out—what I could not understand—holding up one hand with some fingers extended, and then patting the ground, then again holding up his hand, and waving it towards the camp. As I was some little distance from him, I rode nearer, upon which he receded, and as I again came nearer to him he went off in a hurry to his camp. As I could not make out what he wanted, and as I had not seen my party for a considerable time, I rode up the left bank for some distance, following the camel track, and then crossed to the other side, where I cut the track of the party. Following it I then saw

that they had halted where I had crossed, and as I came in sight the blackboys left them and rode toward me. As we met the elder one said, "Find em whitefella; two fella dead boy and one fella livo." Hastening on and crossing over to the native camp, I found John King sitting in one of the wurleys. He was a melancholy object, and hardly to be distinguished as a civilised being by the remnants of the clothes on him. He was not only very weak, but much overcome by our arrival, and it was at first difficult to make out what he said. It seemed that we were expected, for two of the young blacks who came to our first camp on Cooper's Creek travelled down to bring the news of white men having come.

It was Mr. Welch who, riding in the lead, first saw a strange figure sitting on the bank and said, "Who are you?" To which the reply was, "John King, the last survivor of Burke's party. Thank God, I am saved!"

I was pleased that this part of the rescue fell to Mr. Welch's share, for he was a pleasant companion, a good comrade, and a man whom I was sincerely sorry to part with when I was starting on my second expedition.

We remained in camp where we found King for ten days, to enable him to recover strength, and even in two days there was a marked change in his appearance for the better. He had plenty to eat, and sugar and fat seemed what he craved for most. I may anticipate by saying that by the time we reached Menindie the clothes which I found for him became too small, and had to be let out. During this time there were several important matters to attend to. While he was too weak to go far from the camp I employed the time in writing down all that he could tell me about their journey to the gulf and the return to the depot. This is what has been printed as "King's Narrative." Then there were two melancholy duties, namely, to go to the places where Burke and Wills died, and to see that their remains were decently interred. I first went to Brierili, where Wills died while King was away with Burke on his last march. I took with me Brahé, Welch, Dr. Wheeler, and King. Brierili is about seven miles lower down than Goyapidri, where we found King and were camped, and in going there we crossed the branch which leads from the main channel, southward, and is probably the feeder of Strzelecki's Creek. Here we found a native path, which led us to where the explorers camped after their unsuccessful attempt to reach Mount Hopeless.

We found the two native wurleys, in which they took shelter, pretty much as King had described them, situated on a sandbank

between two waterholes, and about a mile from the flat where they gathered the nardoo on which they tried to exist. We collected the remains of poor Wills, which the drifting sands no longer covered, and placed them in a grave near a tree close by, on which we cut the inscription—

W. J. WILLS
 XLV yds
 w N w
 A H

We also recovered the field-books, a note-book belonging to Burke, various small articles—of no intrinsic value—but now sacred relics of the honored dead.

I found that King, though improving, was not yet strong enough to make a pilgrimage with me to where he left the remains of Burke, and, therefore, on the 21st of September, I went to the place described to me by King, accompanied by Brahé, Welch, Dr. Wheeler, and Aitkin. We searched the banks of the creek upwards for eight miles, and at length, strange to say, found the remains of Burke lying in a small hollow among the dried stems of tall plants, within 200yds. of our last camp and not 30 paces from our track. It was still more extraordinary that I, with three or four of the party and the two black-boys, had been close to the spot without noticing anything. The bones were entire with the exception of one hand and the feet. The body had been moved from the spot where it first lay, and where the natives had placed branches over it, to about five paces away. I found the revolver, which Burke held in his hand when he expired, partly covered with leaves and earth, and corroded with rust. We interred the remains in a grave dug at the foot of a box tree, on which the following inscription was cut:—

R O'H B
 21 9 61
 A H

Before we left on our return journey I got all the blacks together, who came to the camp in a long straggling procession of men, women, and children. They were made happy by the presents which they received, and I think they understood that these were given to them for their kindness to the white men, and especially to King. It had also the effect of making it easy for me, on my second expedition, to place myself in friendly relations not only with them, but also with the neighboring tribes to the north, and to find guides ready and willing

to accompany me in my excursions from the depot. Then, on the 25th of September, we turned our faces homewards to restore King to civilisation, and to the recognition of his faithful services to his less fortunate companions.

At the time when I returned to Menindie with King there were search parties out, and it was deemed necessary to provide a central depot with supplies for any of them who might come in to the Cooper.

I was again selected to be the leader of the party, to form a depot, to open up a line of communication with the northern settlements of South Australia, to carry out such explorations as would not cause an absence from the depot of more than a month, and, finally, to bring down the remains of Burke and Wills in order that they might receive the honor of a public funeral and monument.

This time I slightly varied my route, starting from Mount Murchison, now called Wilcannia.

While we were preparing to leave the Darling it unfortunately happened that Mr. Welch, my second in command and the surveyor to the expedition, became almost blind by an accident when taking an observation of the sun, and had to leave the party and return to Melbourne. Not only was this a great loss to the party, but we regretted losing a good comrade, who had proved his worth on our search expedition. There was no time to replace him by another qualified officer, but, fortunately, I knew enough of navigation to take the necessary sidereal observations to plot my route and delineate the features of the country through which we might be travelling. Taking warning by what had happened, I taught two of my most trusted men—Weston Phillips and Alexander Aitkin—to keep a dead reckoning and to take observations, so that if any accident happened to me the expedition would not be left without someone who could bring it back safely.

In my reminiscences of those times there are two which I may mention as showing the varied kind of interest which was felt in my expedition. One person gravely recommended—as the great difficulty in exploring the interior seemed to be the scarcity of water—that a pumping plant should be erected at Menindie, by which water could be supplied to my party through a hose, which we were to carry with us and uncoil as we progressed, and thus obtain a water supply at any time by merely turning it on! Another suggestion was that we should carry with us some carrier pigeons, and, as the proposer offered to supply the pigeons, we took them. They travelled to Cooper's Creek in a wicker cage, and arrived there safely, excepting that their tail feathers were rubbed down to stumps. However, when King was found, and

the fate of his companions ascertained, it seemed worth while to test their homing powers. The first thing to be done was to repair their tails, and to enable me to do this I shot several crested pigeons and spliced the necessary parts of their tail feathers on the stumps of the carrier pigeons' tails, the splices being secured with waxed thread. This proved to be a complete success, as the birds could now fly about the aviary we made with a tent apparently as well as ever. Next morning we started the pigeons on their journey, having previously tied a message on the leg of each bird. On throwing them up in the air they commenced by wheeling round, but separated, one being chased by a large hawk. The others, after flying round in various directions for some time with great speed, drew across the creek southwards and disappeared. The fourth bird, after making a wide circle, pitched into a tree about half a mile off. Afterwards one was found under a bush, where a kite was watching it. One had been killed after we lost sight of the three, for the feathers were seen some distance from the camp. Nothing was ever heard of the others, but in all probability they were killed by some of the birds of prey which are always on the lookout for food.

Another of my reminiscences of Central Australia may find a place here as a comparison to a somewhat similar case which happened when despatches were sent from the Exploration Committee for Burke from Menindie by Mounted Constable Lyons and MacPherson, one of Burke's party. About three weeks after I reached Blanchewater, when I came through to open a route from Cooper's Creek, despatches for me were received at the Angepina Mounted Police Station, with instructions to convey them to me. Supplied with a lithograph of my route plan, they started to run my tracks back, with the help of a Dieri blackboy. He followed them till they were three days' distance from the creek, and then lost them in the drift-sand. Fortunately Corporal Wauchop and Trooper Poynter were both good men in the bush, and took the necessary measures to get through. To secure the blackboy he was handcuffed to one of them at night, and the corporal told him from time to time from my route plan what the country would be ahead of them, so that by-and-by the blackboy would say "What name that paper yabber now?" They were three days crossing waterless country, having only a little for themselves in their water-bags. At the end of the last day, when they reached the first water at Cooper's Creek, and the blackboy had had a long and welcome drink, he said to the corporal, "No blooming gammon alonga that one blooming paper!" But his expressions were somewhat stronger.

The performance of the duties placed upon me by my instructions on my second expedition caused me to make several journeys to Blanchewater, one to Angepina, and also several trips northward, which were full of interest. Thus a considerable part of my time was spent away from the depot. It was most gratifying to me, and creditable to the members of my party, that during my absence the depot was maintained and all their respective duties carried on in such a manner that no friction was apparent among those who remained there, and that the horses and camels were properly looked after and kept in good health and condition. I attributed the very satisfactory relations between the members of the party when I was absent in great measure to the tact and discretion of Alexander Aitkin, whom I selected to hold authority during my absence. This was against the wish of Dr. J. P. Murray, who had volunteered to accompany the expedition in his professional capacity. My experience of him on my way up caused me to select Aitkin in preference, and his subsequent action in the McIntyre-Leichhardt Search Expedition, and after that in the notorious Carl "blackbirding" case, fully confirmed my opinion.

Owing to the dryness of the season there was a scarcity of feed for our 34 horses, which, in consequence, were scattered in small lots over a frontage of 20 miles above and below the depot. This required two of the men to be constantly on the move looking after them. In doing this they found a horse running wild, where we had seen the tracks on our first journey. He was of a remarkable roan skewbald color, and was so wild that it was with great difficulty he was captured. This was not surprising, for he had a broken rib—probably by a club or a boomerang having been thrown at him. It was a great regret to us all that he was injured in being caught and died of inflammation. So far as I can form an opinion, he was a horse left by Sturt on his last trip to Cooper's Creek.

At the times when I was at the depot I fostered the good feeling between the native tribe there and ourselves. By the kindness of Mr. Frank James, the manager of the Blanchewater Station, I obtained a blackboy belonging to the Narrinyeri tribe who spoke the Dieri language, and thus was able to communicate not only with the Dieri, but also with the Yantruwunta blacks at Cooper's Creek, where we were, who understood that language. In this way I was, before long, able to make myself understood sufficiently for ordinary purposes. Thus I was able to obtain a guide to any place within their ken, which extended for a radius of over a hundred miles. But there was another advantage which I had, for the old men of the tribal group which were located

where we were used to come and bring news to me which messengers had brought them from the Yaurorka, who lived at the southern edge of Sturt's Stony Desert, who had received it from the tribe on the Diamantina River on the other side of it. This news related to John McKinlay, the explorer, who was known to the blacks by the name of "Wheelpra Pinnaru"—that is the head man or elder with the "cart." The word *wheelpra* seems to me to be the native form of our word "wheelbarrow," which has become part of the "pigeon-English" used by the tame blacks, and which is transmitted from tribe to tribe as settlement progresses. The reason why this word was applied to McKinlay was because he had a cart or dray with him. I was told at one time by my native informants that "Wheelpra Pinnaru" was surrounded by a great *arimata*, or flood, and could not get out; then, after a time, it was that the *arimata* had gone away, and that "Wheelpra Pinnaru" had gone away they did not know where to, and that he had thrown his *wheelpra* away—that is, left it behind.

Having made myself acquainted with that part of the Barcoo delta which lay to the north, and as far as the southern edge of the Stony Desert (which the blacks call *Murda pinna*, or Great Stones, or Stony Place), I determined to go further afield to where it was said the great *arimata* had surrounded McKinlay.

This trip was interesting in many respects. Sturt, for instance, when he penetrated into Central Australia as far as Eyre's Creek, did so during a protracted drought. He discovered and graphically described the Great Stony Desert as the dried bed of a former sea. He also described the condition of the country beyond it as a waterless desert—that is, the country which we now know as the Everard or Lower Diamantina.

The route which I followed on my trip was nearly that taken by Sturt; but the conditions of climate were very different to those he experienced. Although the season had been persistently dry at Cooper's Creek, I saw, on several occasions, that heavy rains must be falling far to the north. When I went out that way this proved to have been the case. The country north of that part of Cooper's Creek was a land of lakes, fed by the divergent channels of a great delta, by which the flood waters found their way to the very edge of the desert.

It was in July that I made this journey, and on the 8th of that month we camped at a place called Appenparra by the blacks, and near to the southern edge of the desert. We were five in all, being Dr. Murray, Weston Phillips, Williams, McWilliams, the blackboy Charley, and also one of the Yaurorka tribe.

The conditions of the Stony Desert as I saw them were different from the idea which I had formed from Sturt's account, and I think it will be best to quote my notes made at the time.

“*Wednesday, July 9th.*—Edge of the Stony Desert. This morning, on leaving the camp, we travelled for three miles across sandhills in a north-west direction to one of the chain of large, shallow lakes through which the flood waters find their way to Lake Lipson. These I believe to be the Hope Plains of Sturt. The banks are grassy, and the whole appearance of the country is exactly like that of the neighborhood of Lake Hope. This lake appears to have contained water when McKinlay passed it, judging from the camel footprints on its banks. The rain waters ceased here, and for about 10 miles we travelled across high ridges of loose sand with an occasional large gravelly flat, all vegetation being perished with drought, and the scene was a picture of desolation. The landscape could have been painted in sepia and Indian ink. At noon we came to a dry salt lake, rather boggy towards the centre, and with a fall, as had the whole country here, towards the north. At 2.30, after crossing ridges of red sand covered with porcupine grass, and where there were no living bushes but a few acacias, we came on to the edge of the desert—the sandhills running out in various lengths into it. It was very much as I expected it would be, namely, extensive stony plains, like some I had seen on the south-west side of Lake Eyre. We crossed about five miles of these stones, the travelling not being bad, and camped on a sandridge, beyond which the stony plains extended northwards to the horizon. There was scarcely any feed for the horses; nothing but the dried remains of grass, which looked as if it owed its origin to the deluge. The only green plants to be seen were a few plants of *Portulaca*, which some shower had freshened up. We seem to be getting into rainfall again, as there are some small puddles now only just dry. Distance, 25 miles.

“*Thursday, July 10th.*—Sturt's Desert. Started early—having watched the horses all night to make sure of an early start—there being neither feed nor water for them. In less than three miles, on a north-west course, we came across numerous pools of rain water, a godsend for our horses. The plains are covered with stones, in some places closely packed together like a pavement, in others larger in size and loosely strewn about over a spongy soil. Passed a dry lake about three miles wide, the stony ground sloping to it from three sides, with a sandridge on the other. About 11 o'clock we came in sight of a good deal of stunted timber, principally a kind of prickly acacia, and this our guide announced to be the creek he had spoken to me about.

On reaching it, however, it turned out to be a small oasis in the desert of stones: a tract of sandy and clayey ground well clothed with acacias, saltbush, and grass, and with plenty of surface water lying about. Black Tommy now changed his course more north, and said the creek was over the next rise—a proceeding which led me to surmise that he knew very little about the creek at all. Keeping on the new course we travelled over a large earthy plain, then over a stony tract, then a second patch of sandy country with grass and saltbush, then stones again, till, finding that we might go on to the night for all our stupid guide knew, I halted in some very good grass, with several good claypans of water close at hand. We have had a high ridge of sand on either hand all day, at about five miles distance from each other, and almost on the same course that we have come. Taking all in all, the travelling is not at all bad, and, thus far, the celebrated Great Stony Desert is very little different from large tracts of the stony country which I have seen in what is called in South Australia the Far North and the North-West, excepting that there is comparatively little saltbush here.

“As soon as we had camped Tommy set to work catching rats, and soon had 11 singeing whole on the coals; they were then covered up with ashes and baked. On taking them out he first pulled off all the tails, made a bunch of the lot, and ate them like radishes; then he disposed of the bodies *seriatim*, eating each by biting off pieces as he might have done to a sausage.

“After sundown, ducks, swans, and native companions passed over us, going northwards.”

When we started on the following morning I steered for a high, white sandhill, to enable me to decide on the direction in which it would be best to direct our course, but on ascending one of the stony undulations which varied the scene, there opened before us an unexpected view—a wide expanse of saltbush flat, covered with a thick coating of native clover and other herbage of luxuriant growth. In descending from the ridge I noticed on a steep descent the sharply defined line of drift marking the level of the flood waters, so marked, indeed, that I halted my horse on it, with his hind feet in the desert and his front on the growing plants. We were in the wide valley of the Diamantina, and I may anticipate what I ascertained later on by saying that the flood waters, as we crossed to the other edge, had extended to a width of not less than 20 miles.

For 17 days we traversed this flooded country, finding everywhere lakes, water channels, lagoons—with wide extents of earthy plains—

now covered with a growth of the tall plants, looking like great white hollyhocks in flower. Everywhere there was an extraordinary growth of fine herbage, in which our horses revelled. We spoke with some of the blacks, but learned nothing of the movements of McKinlay, whose camps we sought in vain. But we found what were evidently his tracks, when on his way northwards, and also two working bullocks, which we assumed must have been his. But what was more interesting to us was finding the tracks of a number of camels and of one horse, much older than his could have been, and probably made by Burke and his companions on their outward journey.

We turned homewards with great reluctance, when our time and our provisions were becoming short, and it was somewhere about where Sturt also turned back on his desperate journey to Fort Grey. He relates how, before leaving, he ascended a hill about 150ft. above the level of the plain, and says—"From it the eye wandered hopelessly for some bright object on which to rest. Behind us to the south-east lay the sandhills we had crossed, with the stony plain sweeping right round them, but in every direction the dark-brown desert extended. The line of the horizon was broken to the north-west and north by hills similar to the one we had ascended; but in those directions not a blade of grass, not a glittering spot, was to be seen." (p)

He was then 50 miles from water, and he sat there undecided for more than half an hour before he retraced his steps to his camp and commenced his retreat, the necessity of which was proved by one of his horses falling dead of thirst before noon.

I remember well how I ascended just such a hill as Sturt speaks of, and thought of his remarks as I looked round over the country in the full luxuriance of vegetation after the occurrence of a great inundation. I could see the stony hills and the distant sandhills, but the "brown desert" was covered with the rich vegetation which covers it in times of plenty. For miles I could trace the rank growth of the tall mallow-like plants, higher than a man on horseback, looking like vast beds of tall hollyhock plants in full bloom. I thought how great the consequences might have been had Sturt been so fortunate as to have had such a season as that when I followed his footsteps to this classic spot. Even the Stony Desert would have been deprived of its terrors in such a season, and have been no more exceptional than any other of the bigger plains which are now merely the commonplace occurrences of a great part of Central Australia.

Among the many reminiscences of Central Australia there is one which I may select to round off my tale of the past. When the time

came for me to bring back my party, and having left a cache of things for any of the parties still out who might come that way, I made a short cut to Lake Hope across 90 miles of waterless sandhills. When I got there I was interviewed, as it would now be said, by a deputation of the old men of that part of the Dieri tribe, who made two requests. This was done by the head man, no less than the well-known Jalina Piramurana, whose acquaintance I had made on one of my trips to and from Blanchewater. The first request was that I should go with them and kill the Koonabura men, who were very bad people, and that then he and the other men of the Bando-pinna (Lake Hope) would bury them and take the women. The second request was that I would tell the whitefellow, who they heard was coming up to "sit down" at Lake Hope, that he should remain on the one side of the lake and they would remain on the other. The first request I put off as a kind of joke, and the second I promised to attend to if I saw the whitefellow on my way down to Adelaide. A strong commentary on the Koonabura request was made when we camped on the other side of the lake the next afternoon, for we saw a large number of armed blacks trooping over the sandhills towards our camp. My friend Jalina said, "Koonabura kana"—that is, the Koonabura men. I thought that we should now see a fight, but behold! when they reached the camp, they and the Lake Hope men all fraternised. I had heard before, from the Yantruwunta blacks of the Cooper, about the "tiira-pinnana" of the Dieri—that is, their quarrelsome character—and could now well believe it.

The return of all the search parties terminated the episode of the Burke and Wills Expedition: the eastern half of the continent had been crossed and recrossed. It was no longer considered an unknown and desert tract, but a pastoral region of the greatest possibilities, to be occupied by adventurous pastoral pioneers.

In South Australia the veteran explorer, John McDouall Stuart, by his persistent and determined explorations, had made his way across the continent to the Indian Ocean, thus marking out the track along which the transcontinental telegraph line was successfully laid by South Australia—a work of national importance, with which the name of Sir Charles Todd will always be connected.

Thus closed what I may call the middle chapter of Australian exploration. The next era, thanks to the great public and private generosity of this State, sent forth a new generation of explorers, represented by Giles, Gosse, Tietkins, Lewis, and many others, thoroughly trained and efficient bushmen, who have left little unknown of the former mystery of Central Australia.

APPENDIX.

Parliamentary Paper, 1858, No. 127. In a despatch by Major Warburton, from the Elizabeth, dated the 17th October, there is the following passage :—“ I am amazed when I consider Mr. B.’s ignorance, indifference, and rashness. I do not know his plans for the summer ; yet I am able most positively to say that, *whatever they may be*, they are *impracticable* ; and further, *supposing* his plans were not only practicable, but were already actually carried into effect, even then they would be *useless*. He cannot cart in summer, because the horses can’t work without water ; he cannot cart in winter, over the country westward or northward of here, because the carts would stick in the first bit of rotten stony country when it was wet. No teams on earth could do the work with such carts ; but were all done that Mr. B. so unreasonably expects his *men* to do (he takes no concern about the matter himself), what would it amount to ? Simply this—that as an offset to the risk incurred by man and beast, and the expense of wages and rations to all the party during the whole summer, Mr. Babbage’s party would have gained from *eight to ten days* out of next winter ! I have directed Sergeant-Major Hall to wait upon you, that he may answer any questions. I hope you will be so kind as to give publicity to the simple fact that myself and party are all quite well. I beg to assure you that I will endeavor to do all that reason and prudence permit, but that I dare not throw good lives after bad ones by attempting to follow Mr. B. My breaking up his camp here makes him no worse than he was before, as he could not have got help without *sending* for it, and those who were to send it could not remain here for the purpose after the water had dried up.—I have, &c., P. EGERTON WARBURTON, Commissioner of Police. To the Commissioner of Crown Lands. P.S.—I hope you will excuse this scratch ; I could not help it.”

Parliamentary Paper, South Australia, 1858, No. 151. In this paper a letter is printed from Major Warburton to Mr. Hamilton dated 30th September, from Port Augusta.—“ I am in a hurry at this moment, and cannot write to Mr. Dutton, but will mention what I think might perhaps be done, and leave it in your hands. The line of communication between Port Augusta and Lake Campbell, Stuart’s Creek, and all the country there may be to the north and north-west of Lake Campbell, is very bad for stock, and it seems desirable to endeavor to establish a better line through Parry’s country. When I get on Stuart’s Creek, about lat. 29° 30’, long. 137°, I shall have Mount Nor.’-West nearly due east about 50 miles. Now, I am sure Burrt could find his way to the western side of Mount Nor.’-West Range, and I might meet him from the eastward. Thus there would, if we could join, be an easy and unbroken line through good country. . . . I cannot say when I shall be in sight of Mount Nor.’-West, but it may be about the 20th October. If Burrt is sent out, he must get well on the western

side of the range and make a smoke signal on the most prominent westerly point of the range, keeping a good lookout westward himself. There is water at Mount Nor.-West, though it may be on the western edge of the range."

Parliamentary Paper, 1858, No. 151. A communication from Mr. Babbage to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, acknowledging his letter of 23rd September, informing him that the Government had decided to instruct Major Warburton to supersede him in the command of the expedition, and instructing him to make arrangements for his return to Adelaide forthwith. Mr. Babbage writes from Port Augusta, on the 21st November, 1858, reporting his proceedings on his journey northward, and at page 9 there is the following passage:—"On proceeding down the Stuart we found near the junction from the south-east, since named the "Margaret" by Major Warburton, a pool of fresh water, and here I halted my party whilst I went out myself to examine the country before us, having, however, previously traced down the Stuart into a large salt lake, which I named Lake Gregory. My first trip was made in company with Jones to the nearest hill of the Hermit Range, situated about 20 miles west of my position. At about 16 miles we found a gum creek, with salt water, but no fresh water, although it might be probably met with higher up the creek. On ascending the hill, which stands up out of a plain, excepting in the western side, where high sandridges butted up against it, I could distinctly trace the shores of Lake Gregory, trending northwards; but to the west and north-west, where I expected to see Lake Torrens, nothing but an extensive plain met my view—not a sign of a lake of any kind being visible. Immediately to the north-north-west was also an extensive plain of a somewhat higher level than the western plain, presenting low bluffs at its sides. To the south-east were the other isolated hills of the Hermit Range, and beyond them a distant blue hill of the Flinders Range, very probably Eyre's Mount Nor.-West. To the south were several small, isolated salt lakes, and extensive plains covered by low sandridges and scrub. According to the map of the "Recent Explorations," the Hermit Hill should be about 30 miles west of Eyre's tracks; but I found subsequently that a more recent map, supplied to Major Warburton, gave the distance as only 15 miles. The height of Hermit Hill is about 363ft. above the ground at its base, and probably considerably more above the western plain. I feel, therefore, confident, from my view from this elevation, either that Lake Torrens does not extend so far northward as this latitude, viz., $29^{\circ} 37'$, or that, if it does, it must be reduced to a mere inconsiderable channel, and might be readily crossed. I pointed this out to Major Warburton, explaining my reasons for my belief, and offered to accompany him in an examination of it. As this proposal did not appear to suit his plans, I requested him to let one of my late party—Jones—accompany me, that I might examine the country in this direction, and, if I found it practicable, return to Adelaide by Eyre's tracks on the eastern side of the lake; and that, if not, I might at any rate have a companion in the long ride to Port Augusta, *via* the

Elizabeth, Pernatty, and Beda. The Major, however, refused my request, and I had no alternative but to leave to others to reap the fruit of my own labor, and I have no doubt but that the Major, with his accustomed energy, will solve this question, now made easy by the late rains, before his return to town. My own belief, from what I then and subsequently saw, is that Lake Torrens turns up to Yarrawurta at its northern end as at its southern end it does to the Beda arm, and that between Yarrawurta and Lake Gregory there are only a few small isolated salt lakes, similar to Lake Phibbs, sufficient, however, to impress Eyre, who, I believe, only saw this country from a distance, with the idea that he saw the loom of a continuous lake."

Parliamentary Paper, South Australia, 1858, No. 159. Letter with enclosure from Major Warburton relative to exploration in the neighborhood of Lake Torrens — "Police Commissioner's Office, Adelaide, December 10th, 1858. Sir—Since I had the honor of transmitting my report of the 3rd instant I have read Mr. Babbage's official despatch of the 21st November, 1858. The annexed extract from that despatch requires some notice from me, because either I, by the suppression of truth, have assumed to myself a credit which is not due to me, or else Mr. Babbage, by a direct statement of what is not true, has endeavored to conceal his own incapacity by robbing others of such credit as might fairly belong to them. I have underlined the particular portion of Mr. Babbage's despatch to which I solicit your attention. *Extract*—'I pointed out this place to Major Warburton, explaining my reasons for my belief, and offered to accompany him in an examination of it. As this proposal did not seem to suit his plans, I requested him to let one of my late party—Jones—accompany me, that I might examine the country in this direction, and, if I found it practicable, to return to Adelaide by Eyre's tracks on the eastern side of the lake, and, if not, I might at any rate have a companion in the long ride to Port Augusta, *via* the Elizabeth, Pernatty, and Beda. The Major, however, refused my request, and I *had no alternative but to leave to others to reap the fruit of my own labor.*' It would appear from Mr. Babbage's account that the 'labor' of discovering a passage across Lake Torrens was his, whilst I have reaped the fruit of labor not my own. I am compelled to give an emphatic contradiction to Mr. Babbage's statement, and I leave you to judge on whose side the preponderating evidence shows the truth to rest. In the first place, I make my plea by declaring solemnly and sincerely, on my honor as a gentleman, that in finding the crossing of Lake Torrens I received *assistance* from no one, excepting my immediate companions—Mr. A. J. Baker and Corporal Coward. The views I had *previously formed* received *confirmation* by what Mr. Forster told me on the 2nd October. He stated that when at Stuart's Creek the native had wished Mr. Stuart and himself not to go further, but to return direct to the northern settlements. Before leaving Adelaide I had determined to *try* and find a passage; but whilst on board the *Marion* it struck me that Corporal Burr, of the mounted police, stationed at Angepina, might, if I succeeded, be useful in conveying the intelligence to Adelaide, and for

this purpose I suggested his being sent to the westward of Mount Nor'-West. . . . Mr. Babbage did not open the subject of there being a passage to me: I opened it to him on the 5th November. When I opened it he at first dissented from my views, stating that he did not think there was any passage *there*. I then showed him a different map, and repeated to him what Mr. Forster had told me. *After* this, Mr. Babbage changed his opinion, admitting that there might be a passage and adding that he had ascended Hermit's Hill, from which he thought he could see at least fifteen miles—he appealed to his brother-in-law to confirm this extreme range of vision—and no lake was visible. . . . I think it was on the last morning we were together that Mr. Babbage came to the camp fire, where Mr. Baker, myself, and, I believe, some others were sitting, and said, as nearly as I can remember the exact words—'Major Warburton, do not let us misunderstand each other. You will understand distinctly that I have expressed my desire to go and find a passage across Lake Torrens, and my reason for wishing to do so is that the public will say it is an additional proof of my incapacity that I was in the very spot for finding the passage and yet took no steps to find it.' I replied that 'It was very probable the public would say what Mr. Babbage supposed, but that it was no fault of mine that the time for his exploring was past, that the idea of finding a passage had never entered his head till I put it there, and that he could not expect me both to give him the idea and the means of carrying it into execution to my own prejudice.' This, I believe, ended our conversation on the subject.

Parliamentary Paper, South Australia, 1858, No. 159, p. 3. "Police Commissioner's Office, Adelaide, December 9th, 1858. Sir—I beg to transmit, for your perusal, an extract from an official report of Mr. Babbage's presented to Parliament, and as I think you were present on two occasions when the subject referred to in this extract was under discussion between Mr. Babbage and myself, I should feel obliged if you would favor me with a statement, as nearly as your memory will permit, of what you on those occasions heard.—I have, &c., P. EGERTON WARBURTON, Commissioner of Police. To Mr. Arthur J. Baker, Kent Terrace, Norwood."

"Kent Terrace, Norwood, December 9th, 1858.—Sir—In reply to yours of this date, enclosing an extract from Mr. Babbage's official report to Parliament, which I have read, I beg to state that the conversation which I heard between Mr. Babbage and yourself was quite the reverse of the extract now before me, and herewith annexed. The following is, as near as I can remember, an exact statement, viz., you had been giving Mr. Babbage a description of the springs and country you had discovered, and then went on to describe your plans, and stated you intended to try and find a practicable route from Stuart's Creek into Parry's country, so that the stock might be brought through from the northern runs, and avoid the horrible desert *via* Beda and the Pernatty Plains. At this time Mr. Babbage would not entertain the idea of a practicable crossing over Lake Torrens, nor did he appear to have any faith in your plan until you told him that the black-

fellow who accompanied Stuart and Forster had tried to persuade them to return that way. The next day, on our march back to Stuart's Creek, Mr. Babbage said to me that he intended to ask you to allow him to have one man and sufficient provisions to enable him to reach the nearest stocked run east of Lake Torrens. On the Monday morning, before leaving Stuart's Creek, Mr. Babbage came down while we were at breakfast, and before all the men belonging to both parties asked you to allow him to have one man and sufficient provisions that he may try and cross Lake Torrens, and return to Adelaide by that route. Your reply was, 'My instructions were to recall you, Mr. Babbage—not to prolong your exploration duties, as I should be doing were I to allow you to seek for a crossing over Lake Torrens; nor do I think I could, in justice to myself and party, send you to reap the credit of my plans, should there prove to be a practicable crossing; nor do I think you ought to expect me to do so, knowing, as you do, that you had no idea of looking for a crossing until after I had laid my plans before you. By any known route you can return, and I shall be happy to allow you to take any one of your late party with you you choose.' Mr. Babbage then offered to accompany you, which offer you refused, stating that 'I cannot at present say which course I shall take; in fact, I shall most likely go back by the Elizabeth, after satisfying myself as to the practicability of crossing Lake Torrens. I have desired Mr. Charles Gregory to plant stores at the Elizabeth; I therefore think, for the sake of your own property left at the Elizabeth, you had better return there. However, you are welcome to go by any known route you please, and I shall be most happy to render you every assistance in my power to make your journey agreeable.' Mr. Babbage then made this reply aloud, and before the whole of the men, 'But, Major Warburton, only consider what the people of Adelaide will say, when they hear that I have been within a few miles of this crossing for the last three weeks, yet never went to explore it. They will bring this against me as another proof of my incapacity.'—I have, &c..

ARTHUR JOHN BAKER. To Major P. E. Warburton, Commissioner of Police, &c., Adelaide."

Parliamentary Paper, 1858, No. 166. In a letter, dated December 11th, 1858, the Commissioner of Crown Lands requested Major Warburton to add to his letter "some remarks more in detail as to the reasons which induced him to return, at the time he did, from the exploration which terminated at the Davenport Ranges." To this Major Warburton replied on the 14th December. The parts of this letter which I quote occur at pages 5 and 6, and are as follows:—

"I originally intended to try for a passage *before* proceeding northwards, because I thought that if I found a passage I should then, having a certainty of getting fresh horses at Angepina for my return, be able to take more work northward out of those I then had than I should have dared to take with the prospect of the long and bad journey back *via* the Elizabeth and Port Augusta. . . . I changed my plan: determining to make a short excursion north-west of Stuart's Creek first; then to return, run the creek down, look for Mr. Babbage's

tracks, try to find where the passage across the lake was, and, if Mr. Babbage's tracks were not found, turn back due west, zigzagging the country between Stuart's Creek and the Elizabeth, till I had either reached the latter place or, finding Mr. Babbage's tracks, had run him down. This plan was carried out so far as my arrival on my return from the North-West to within 20 miles of Stuart's Creek, when I cut Mr. Babbage's track on the afternoon of the 4th November; overtook him in 24 hours, and delivered the Government order verbally to him I cannot see what is the *use* of 'summering out,' unless a man is so far advanced that it would occupy a considerable portion of the *next season* to regain his position. I could get back easily; and, what is more, I could (accidents excepted) run out again to my furthest permanent water, the Strangways Spring, in 17 days from the time of leaving Port Adelaide; or, as a more fair way of estimating it, 10 days from Mount Serle Police Station would give me exactly the same advantages, in point of position, as I should have possessed had I summered out. By staying out, therefore, I should have gained nothing but 10 days, whilst I put the colony to expense, idled away my own time, risked the health of my men, and, in all probability, rendered it necessary for them to return to the settlement to recruit when the best season for pushing into the interior had again come round"

Parliamentary Paper, 1859, No. 37. "Crown Lands Office, January 4th, 1859. Sir—The duty to which you were specially appointed by the Government in connection with the northern expedition having terminated, I have the honor to inform you that the Government are satisfied with the energy and vigor you have on this, as on former occasions, displayed when in employed in exploring new country. The discovery by you of well-watered pastoral country beyond the limits attained by Mr. Stuart and Mr. Babbage in a northerly direction, but especially your valuable discovery of a practicable route from the northern runs into the new country, over what was hitherto considered to be the bed of Lake Torrens, have, whilst adding to your reputation as a bushman, fully justified the Government in entrusting to you the execution of the service of emergency which had arisen. In appreciation of these services I have the honor to inform you that the Government have authorised the Treasurer to pay you the sum of £100 out of the exploration funds. In conveying to you the approval of the Government for the way in which you have carried out the duty entrusted to you, it is also incumbent upon me to inform you that the Government disapprove of the terms in which you write of your predecessor in the command of the expedition in the despatches which you addressed to me from the Elizabeth. The Government are quite willing to make every allowance for the circumstances under which the despatches were written; but they are, nevertheless, compelled formally to convey to you their disavowal of the sentiments expressed by you.—I have, &c., FRANCIS S. DUTTON, Commissioner. Major Warburton, Commissioner of Police, late commanding Northern Exploring Expedition."

“Police Commissioner’s Office, Adelaide, January 13th, 1859. Sir—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt (this day) of your letter—40-59—dated 4th instant, and beg, in reply, to express my grateful acknowledgments of the remuneration which Government have been pleased to grant me. I trust Government will do me the credit to believe that I am exceedingly sorry for having expressed my real sentiments in the official form which led to their publication and consequent disavowal of Government. No one can be more sensible than myself of the mistake which I made, my regret for which is all the more felt as I fear that the apparent unavoidable publication of those letters may have embarrassed the Government. Had it been possible I would most gladly have withdrawn the letter altogether, but it would have been useless for me on my return, after their publication, to make any such offer, unless I could at the same time have publicly acknowledged the statements I had previously made were founded on incorrect information, and that my opinions were changed. This I could not conscientiously do, whilst nothing less would have satisfied Mr. Babbage.—I have, &c., P. EGERTON WARBURTON, Commissioner of Police. The Hon. Commissioner of Crown Lands.”

