

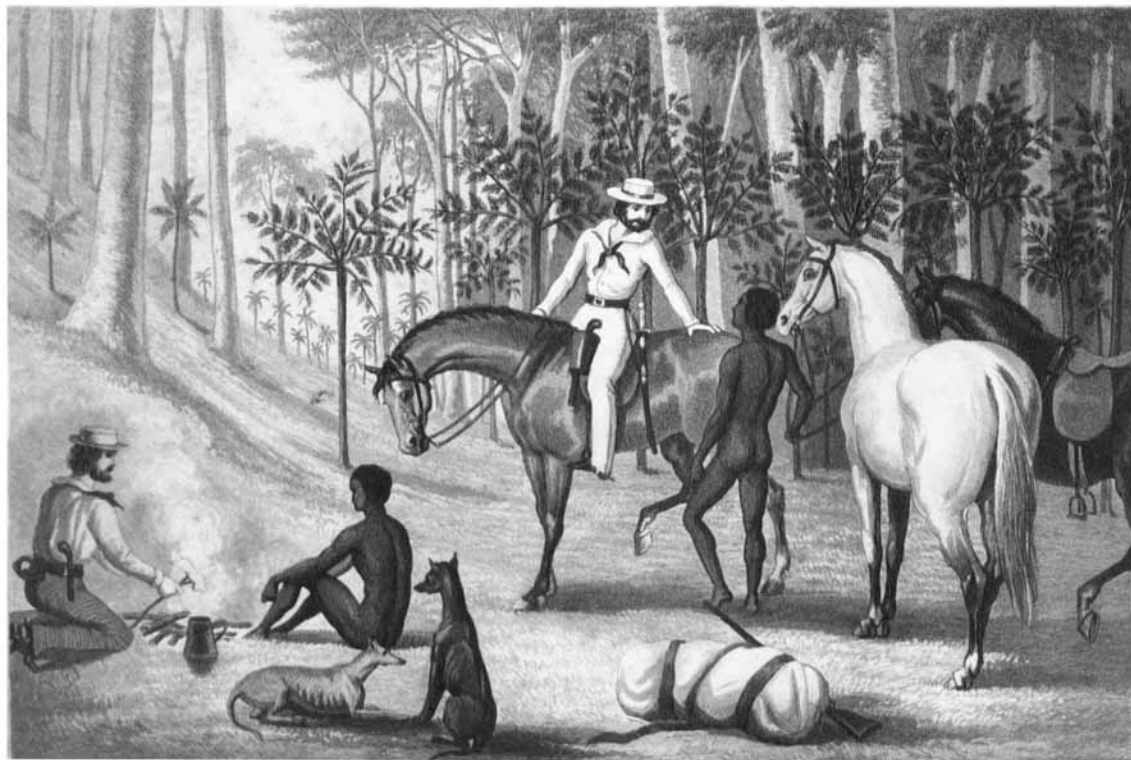
black-butt gums, and other eucalypti, and abundantly watered with numerous permanent chains of water-holes, and gravelly water-courses in brushy hollows. Having unloaded the pack-horse, tethered out our horses, and lit a fire, we suddenly heard the loud shrill *couis*\* of the natives, who turned out to be some old friends of mine belonging to the Tanban tribe. Having heard that they were now at peace with the tribes we should have to encounter on our journey towards the Bellengen, I persuaded a couple of them to accompany me, by the promise of a red shirt each, and plenty of *smoke*, (tobacco,) whilst they remained with me; for I was well aware that they would be of great utility in searching out the best crossing places for our horses over the creeks, cutting a passage through the entangled creepers of the brushes, and acting as interpreters to the wild blacks. They had just succeeded in killing a kangaroo, and good-naturedly offered us some of it. Having finished our supper, we laid down to sleep with our saddles for pillows, but were much teased during the night by the clouds of musquitos which issued forth from the dense brush to attack us.

*March 7th.*—Having boiled our tea, and breakfasted on toasted bacon, and *bush biscuit*, (thin cakes of flour and water baked on hot embers,) I started on our journey soon after six o'clock. After a ride of half an hour, we crossed the first large brook

\* Native call.

which flows into the Nambucca river. I gave it the native name of Oankihi creek ; it was flowing on a bed of dark blue rock, which appeared to be limestone. In the thick brushes which skirt this stream, I saw a great number of gigantic ferns, which are common enough at Illawarra, and many other parts of the colony, but which I had never seen in the MacLeay river brushes. After proceeding a few miles farther, over a country of alternate low ranges, and gravelly water-courses in brushy hollows, we crossed a high leading range of grassy forest hills ; a descending spur of which brought us to the brink of a rapid stream, dashing along in a very irregular bed of slaty rock, the strata of which had a great inclination. We had some trouble in getting our horses across the jagged and pointed rocks, which rose out of the water. The native name of this stream was Algomerra. On the other side of the Algomerra, we entered a dense brush, which continued unbroken for several miles. Here we had to dismount, and assist the blacks in cutting a passage for our horses through the masses of briars and creepers, that bound the trees together. On emerging from this brush, we continued crossing a never-ending succession of densely-wooded ranges, and brushy gullies, containing small gravelly water-courses, and at length reached one of the main streams flowing into the Nambucca. It was about one hundred feet wide here, being a limpid, shallow stream, with a gravelly bed. On entering

the brush bordering on this river, we experienced considerable annoyance from the great quantity of nettle-tree saplings. My hands and arms soon ached from the poisonous touch of its leaves, and our horses suffered very much; one of them threw himself on the ground, snorting convulsively with pain. The nettle-tree attains a very large size at the MacLeay and Nambucca, being often six feet in diameter, and of a corresponding height; its wood is very soft and spongy, and its leaves, which are of great size, resemble in shape the leaves of the mulberry, and at the same time possess the bright green velvet appearance of the geranium leaf. The slightest touch of one of these leaves occasions a most acute stinging pain; but horses suffer infinitely worse than men from contact with the leaves of the nettle-tree, as their skin rises in large blisters, and great temporary constitutional derangement seems to take place. Our blacks killed a large carpet-serpent near here, which was carefully preserved for their next repast. Having already halted for one hour, for our horses to have some grass, and to take some refreshment ourselves, we pushed through the brush, and emerged on some good undulating forest land, intersected by small brushy water-courses; and at length began ascending a long thickly-wooded slope, which led us to the summit of a high range, extending to the westward in an undulating outline of conical summits. This range was timbered by very large black-butt trees, and covered with luxu-



*A halt near a Fern tree Scrub*

riant grass ; we passed also through a long patch of plants in full bloom, resembling the English vetch.

We had a beautiful view from the summit we were now upon. To the westward, amidst a confused mass of mountains rising beyond mountains, covered with universal forest, the eye could trace the deep, narrow valleys full of brush, of the streams forming the Nambucca, curling into the deep mountain recesses. Looking towards the north-west, the direction in which I wished to proceed, tier beyond tier of mountains rose in serrated ridges of steep, high conical summits; the view in that direction being bounded by the dim, blue outline of a level crested range of surpassing altitude. Looking east, the eye embraced the dense forest and swamps on the Nambucca river, the silvery glare of its tranquil reaches, and the blue surface of the boundless Pacific Ocean, which was about twenty-five miles distant. To the south-east, the isolated position of Mount Yarra-Hapinni made it stand forth in bold relief; and as I had fixed the position of both Yarra-Hapinni, and Arakoon Hill, in my surveys, I now, with a pocket compass, took the bearings of these hills, which of course would enable me to obtain a very rough approximation of the position on which I then stood. We descended from this range, along a narrow spur, with shelving gullies on each side, and after crossing two or three small water-courses running north-east, we halted at night-fall on a low grassy forest range. We had

scarcely taken the saddles off our horses when it began to rain heavily ; however, we set ourselves busily to work, and by the light of the fire, for it was now quite dark, we soon managed to strip off two or three sheets of bark from the surrounding black-butt trees, and erect with them a precarious shelter from the rain. After having collected enough wood to keep up a large fire all night, and eaten our supper, we lay down to sleep. About midnight we were awakened by the loud barking of my dogs, and starting up, were very much astonished to see a number of blazing torches advancing towards us. We thought, at first, that we were going to be attacked, and accordingly snatched up our pieces to be in readiness for our supposed enemies ; however, it proved to be a false alarm, for it appeared that our black companions, whose keen senses had detected the smell of the smoke from the fires of a black tribe in our vicinity, had slipped off, after we were asleep, to see them, and these wilder blacks, unable to restrain until morning their impatience to see the “ white fellows,” thought proper to pay us this nocturnal visit.

*March 8th.*—Having got our clothes somewhat dry, we started early in the morning, and soon encountered the whole tribe of natives. They drew up in a body as we passed them, and after gazing on us in silence, they commenced following us, keeping about one hundred yards in our rear ; however, they soon came close to us, talking loudly with my

two tame blacks. They seemed inclined to be pretty friendly, and were of great assistance in enabling us to get rapidly through the entangled briars in the brush, which they beat down with their boomerangs; and in showing us the best crossing places over the rocky, steep-sided creeks and gullies, which we continually encountered. We soon crossed another large stream flowing to the Nambucca over a pebbly bed, with magnificent cedar trees in its brush; and after travelling over a succession of low, brushy ranges for several miles, we crossed another stream of similar size, with abundance of cedar on its banks. The enormous fig-tree was very common here; the fruit was now ripe, and scattered in great quantities under the trees. We ate plentifully of these figs, as their flavour was agreeable enough, being of an acid sweetness. Large numbers of the crested flock-pigeon were feeding on this fruit. We halted a little distance beyond this stream for a short time, during which there was a violent thunder-storm. I amused the natives very much by placing my compass on the ground, and making the needle move about with the point of my sword; they laughed uproariously at this, as though it were a good joke. This tribe now left us to go on a pademella hunt; five of their number remained, however, with my tame blacks, and were of the greatest assistance, for without them I could never have reached the Bellengen river with horses. I am sorry to observe, that this tribe,

which behaved so well to me, was the one which subsequently attacked and murdered the cedar sawyers on their first migration to the Nambucca river.

We had been rising from the last stream along a brushy, narrow ridge, with dense brushy hollows on both sides of us, and we now came to a very steep ascent. Although my pack-horse had a very light load, we were here obliged to take it off, and distribute it among the blacks, who carried their burdens on their heads; and dismounting ourselves, we toiled up to the summit, leading the horses after us. I now perceived I was on a high range, dividing the last crossed stream from the deep, narrow valley of another stream, which lay at my feet enveloped in brush. Beyond this was an abrupt range of much greater altitude than the one I was upon, rising in very steep pointed summits, and densely wooded all over; whilst, between each of its narrow, razor-backed spurs, deep gullies, and chasms full of brush, dived down into the glen below. Beyond this range I could distinguish two other chains of mountains, of still greater elevation, and running parallel to it, in an east and west direction; the most distant being the elevated level ridge of mountains already noticed, and which evidently divided the Bellengen river from the Clarence river. We descended the range we were on by a steep, grassy slope, which became invaded by the brush as we got lower down; and we now arrived at the last stream which flows to the Nambucca. Here we had great trouble in crossing,