



I turned inland towards the high conical forest-hill, on the range to the northward of Coohalli creek.

*6th day.*—We saw this morning the principal body of the Bellengen tribe of natives. Among the number were several blacks, who had been noticed, as foremost in the outrages upon the whites, already referred to. One man, in particular, had been pre-eminently remarkable from his tallness and herculean proportions; the sawyers up the Nambucca, had distinguished him by the name of “Cobbaun (big) Bellengen Jack.”—I never saw a finer specimen of the Australian aborigines than this fellow; the symmetry of his limbs was faultless, and he would have made a splendid living model for the students of the Royal Academy. The haughty and dignified air of his strongly marked and not unhandsome countenance, the boldly developed muscles, the broad shoulders, and especially the great depth of his chest, reminded me of some antique torso. These blacks were quite ignorant of the jargon, which the stockmen and sawyers suppose to be the language of the natives, whilst they suppose it to be ours, and which is the ordinary medium of communication between the squatters and the “tame blackfellows.” Bellengen Billy left us here to join the tribe; as he had been of some service to me from his knowledge of the brushy country north of the Bellengen, I presented him with an old red handkerchief, in which the tobacco had been tied up. Not having expected a

present, he was quite taken by surprise, and grinned with satisfaction. We now descended a water-course running into Coohalli creek, which we traced down to the long narrow salt-water lagoon, into which it empties itself. Some beautiful pine grew to a large size in the narrow brushes bordering on this lagoon, and in some parts the young fine saplings formed an underwood to the larger timber, giving quite a novel appearance to the landscape. We now crossed the brackish creek, over a huge tree of extraordinary length, which had fallen across it. Between Coohalli creek and the Nambucca, the country that we passed over, consisted of undulating grassy forest land, heavily wooded by iron bark, stringy bark, black-butt, and casuarinæ, and intersected by many deep salt creeks, which we waded through, or sometimes got over by means of fallen trees. The soil was of an inferior description, being overgrown by many Xanthorrhææ.

When we arrived on the banks of the Nambucca, within half a mile of the bar, we could not find any trees from which we could procure a sheet of bark sufficiently compact to make a native canoe; for the weather having been very dry, and not being the proper season for stripping bark easily, we could get none without breaking it. Our only plan therefore of crossing the river here, was to swim it, which we could easily do, as it was not more than half a mile wide. Unfortunately one of my men, Matthew Boot, was unable to swim. I therefore

ordered them to cut some branches of white-cedar, and other brush-trees, (for all the forest trees, are of greater specific gravity than water), and make two small rude rafts; one being for our guns, clothes, and ammunition, and the other for the accommodation of Boot. Having instructed two of the blacks to tow Boot's raft across, the third black, and my man, who could swim, started with the other raft; and having waited myself to see Boot safely launched, I swam after the others as quick as I could on account of the sharks, which are extremely numerous, both in the MacLeay, Nambucca, and Bellengen, near the mouths of these rivers. When I had landed, and looked back, I was surprised to see the blacks swimming across without Boot, whom I could perceive on the shore. It appeared that after I left him on the raft, on which he was kneeling, it suddenly broke loose, as the branches, which composed it, were only bound together by long pieces of the creeping cane, which grows in the brushes. Of course Boot was soused headlong into the water, but the blacks brought him up in a twinkling, and conveyed him on shore, and then swam over to tell us of his mishap. I was now in a great dilemma, for I saw it would not be safe for him to be brought over on so frail a raft, especially as a north-east wind had just sprung up, which furrowed the surface of the river with splashy waves. It was essentially necessary that I should communicate with him, that he might know what to do;

as the river was not fordable until ten or twelve miles higher up, and he would be then obliged to cross its other two arms also. It was in vain that I tried to persuade the blacks to go over to him; promises and threats were equally disregarded. At length, having told them that they should not have the reward I had promised them, "the Bullock" was at last induced to swim across. I directed this black to remain with Boot, and ascend the Nambucca with him to the ford on the north arm: I also gave "the Bullock" the remains of our damper, and bacon, in a small bag, which he fastened on the top of his head, among his long hair, that it might not get wet as he swam.

Whilst I was watching "the Bullock's" progress across the water, the other blacks speared some fish. I had sent the last remnant of our provisions across to Boot, as we were now only eight miles from the cedar sawyers' huts at Werral creek; but as I felt rather hungry from our walk and swim, I was glad to eat a broiled fish, without either bread or salt. We now walked along the sea beach, on which I shot a couple of that beautiful kind of sea-bird which the colonists call Redbills. We slept this night at Werral creek, and next day reached my station at the MacLeay. Boot arrived two days afterwards.

This excursion of mine to the Bellengen, was of no use with regard to the object I had in view, in proceeding thither, for both the valley of the river, and the mountains enclosing it, were covered with such dense brushes, as to afford very little country

fit for grazing purposes. If agriculture were sufficiently profitable in New South Wales to cover the expenses of clearing land of heavy brushes, the rich narrow glen of the Bellengen, might in that case be highly available, especially if rice, cotton, tobacco, &c. were the objects of cultivation.

Just before I left the colony, I heard that the cedar dealers at the MacLeay had succeeded in getting a vessel across the bar of the Bellengen, and that the sawyers had gone over there, from the Nambucca, to cut cedar.