

TWELVE YEARS' LIFE IN AUSTRALIA FROM 1859 TO 1871

(This is the story of one amazing Corner Country pioneer woman, Matilda Wallace. With her husband Abraham, Matilda helped to establish Sturt's Meadow Station, and later Elsey Station in the Northern Territory.)

In 1859 on a roasting hot day in January, the good ship "North" arrived at the semaphore. My brother and sister came on board to meet me, I, was a girl of twenty-one, having left my native land (Somersetshire), father and mother. What for? I used often to ask myself. I was the youngest of five, and always considered delicate, and the one who must be taken care of. I shall never forget my first "beverage" in Australia; it was "shandy-gaff," they said, and its very name was a puzzle to me. After being much refreshed with this cooling "nectar," my brother and I walked (over our ankles in sand) to the "Port." (I had made up my mind on leaving "home" to make the best of everything, so now was the time to begin). On arriving at the Port, we went by rail to the City of Adelaide; all that was to be seen en route gave me great pleasure. From Adelaide we went to Mitcham, where I had my first meal. The people I met at once decided I should never suit the Colony. After tea, I rode with my brother to "Curri Mantel Valley," which was my sister's home then; my brother-in-law coming out to meet us, gave the well-known "coo'ey," a sound quite new to my ears. Having arrived at our destination, I need not tell you how thankful I was for my bed, for when you think of it, walking, railway journey, coaching, and lastly riding 20 miles, was not so bad the day of arrival, after three months cooped up on board ship. My waking thoughts were varied, and the scenery I beheld on rising was most charming; and after a very hearty breakfast, two of my little nieces took me for a stroll, during which I came to the conclusion that life in Australia could be endured.

Two years and a half I spent very happily amongst friends and relations in almost every inhabited part of South Australia, at last settling in the South East with friends, from whose house I was married in the year 1861, and where we spent the first eighteen months of our married life, and buried our first little baby.

My husband not caring to remain any longer in these parts, / we started for Queensland equipped thus: a waggon and pair of horses, bedding and provisions, our trap answering the purpose of house by day and night, it being well fitted up with canvas and green baize.

Our route was from South East to Swan Hill, where we stayed a night; then from Swan Hill to Talbot's Pont; from there to Balrandeel, and from there to Scott's Back Country, where all our troubles began, having to travel ten miles through "Malee" desert (no road) sand up to the horses' knees, and where we were told the natives were in scores on the alert to eat "white man ;" consequently our chance of coming out alive seemed very poor. My husband wanted me to go in the back of the waggon to be out of their sight should they attack us, but feeling quite as safe by his side I preferred to keep my place; however, we arrived safely on the other side by sun down, having only seen two of those "dark sons of Australia's soil," who were comfortably shepherding a flock of sheep in the desert, which desert, I must here tell you, my husband had to walk through whilst I drove, he having to cut and pull down trees and bushes to make a way to drive through, and well was he rewarded, for what should meet our gaze when through this labyrinth, but a most delightful lake of fresh water, hundreds of wild duck and other birds, a shepherd's hut and a flock of sheep-most picturesque. We camped here for a day or two; the shepherd looked on us as great curiosities, having made our way through, and wanted to know where we were bound for. He told my husband he had made a great mistake in bringing his wife into such rough scenes and country, that I was not at all suited for such a life as these parts of the country offered. He told us it was about thirty miles from here to the River Darling, which we thought we could do in two days; so we started, leaving the pleasant scenes to find the country very sandy, but pretty and nicely covered with timber, and here and there beautiful clear lakes of fresh water, bordered with box trees and covered with game.

By one o'clock we reached the banks of the "River Darling," and on its waters was a boat (the largest then on the river), "The Lady Daly." It was a pretty sight after seven weeks' travelling, though I was too to appreciate anything, suffering from the impure water I drank the other side of the desert.

However, this harbour of rest and "aqua pura" I made sure would make me well at once. This delightful spot proved to be a station, owned by a Mr. Phillips, and called "Tarcoola." The manager's wife being in town and he leaving for one of the out stations, he kindly offered us the accommodation of his house during his absence, which we accepted, staying there a week. The second morning I fancied I was better and (my husband not being at all well) got up to get breakfast, and went out for some wood to light the fire. On my return to the kitchen I fell in a faint on the floor; the noise brought my husband in, and he carried me to our room and put me to bed again, where I remained a week, at the end of which time I begged him to take me away or I should die; so he put in the horses, made up my bed most comfortably in the waggon, and carried me out to it. We started for the next station, ten miles distant. After a mile or two I felt better, but yet unable to go the whole way; so we camped about four miles from the next station, and after a good night's rest I felt much better in the morning.

After breakfast we made for the station managed by a Mr. Frazer (a cattle station), whose wife we found to be a very kind, nice little woman. I was very pleased to be with her for a few days, she being the first woman I had seen for eight weeks. I soon regained my strength. From here we started for "Tarlona" station, where we had to stay a fortnight on account of all the creeks being flooded and quite impassable. At the end of this time we made a start for a creek, "Tally Walker," which we, with all our belongings, crossed in a canoe; then my husband had to go over for the horses, which had to swim over, and then, in consequence of the canoe having to be sent for the mail man, to float the trap, which unfortunately sank; so there it had to remain all night, it being too dark when the canoe was at our disposal again; this was my first experience of camping out with nothing but the canopy of heaven over me. Next morning, after getting the wreck ashore, and packing up our belongings, we started for a creek called "Charlie's Stones Creek," which we were told was quite passable, but when we arrived there we found about a quarter of a mile of flooded ground (apparently quite firm), with a stream about 500 yards wide running through the centre, the bottom of which seemed firm, "Polignium" growing in the middle. Thinking it the safest plan, I got out of the trap, my husband taking out our things and putting them on the horses. I, to pass the time, tried to find the means of crossing a little further down, and coming to a part that looked like terra firma made the attempt; but alas! ' things truly are not what they seem,' and down I was going; having lost one shoe I thought it best to pull off the other, and waded through minus shoes and stockings too, as I found on getting through this quagmire. Not caring to let my husband see me in this "sorry plight," I walked to where our luggage was landed (he still bringing over the remainder); I put on my boots and stockings, and looking up I saw him up to his knees in the middle of the stream, one of the horses having stumbled. The horse was loaded with two cases, one outweighing the other, and the current being so strong, drew him over, and there he was, with his head resting on a "Polignium" bush, eating away quite calmly, his master having to carry over the cases ere he could rise; that being done, dinner was the next item, after which meal it was found to be quite impossible to get the trap over without assistance; so my husband started for Minindie, a distance of seven miles over very boggy country (leaving me to my own devices), hoping to get some one to help him; he returned at dusk with a black boy (the only assistance he could get) and a coil of rope. Now real work began, for it was no small matter bringing over such a large article. However, "where there's a will there's a way," so they tied the rope on to the axles and brought it over to the horses on dry land, harnessing them to it. It was indeed by a "long pull and a strong pull," with several drawbacks, such as ropes breaking, and many unlooked-for accidents. Suffice it to say, it was at last brought over. We took six days going to Minindie, my husband and the boy working like slaves, for in several places it was too boggy, and they had to carry the things every now and then to lighten the trap. When we did get to Minindie, after crossing the Darling, we stayed there a day, it being Sunday. On the following day we started for Mount Murcheson, that being the only place where you could go on to the banks of the river when flooded (as then) for 300 miles.

I not being strong enough to travel, we stayed here and opened a store. After sending to Adelaide for goods, my husband then applied to the New South Wales Go for land to purchase; in four months' time we received an answer that we could buy land, and that a surveyor had instructions to survey it; in the meantime my husband put up & house 28 by 18, divided into two rooms, in which we had to pack our stores as well as ourselves, but as the surveyor never made his appearance, of course we could not open a store. My husband got discontented having nothing to do, and started hawking to dispose of his goods, having gone first a distance of 200 miles for his license, leaving me without even cat or dog for company. 'He was away eight days, having had to swim creeks and wade through water going and coming; and unfortunately, when within two miles of home, his horse "gave in" right in the middle of a stream, and turned back, taking with him his master's boots, which were strapped on to the saddle; so the rest of his journey had, to be footed bootless. A painful meeting it was, the poor fellow looking so ill and wan; his feet were full of "burrs," which took me several days to pick out for him, giving him great pain. After he had rested and recovered from his fatigue, we had to prepare for his hawking expedition, and when all ready, he started for a month's journey, leaving me quite alone once more, for the second time in my life. Two hours after he had gone, what should appear but a company of blacks, twenty-four in number, from the back country, camping close to the house. Only one of the mob could speak English and understand it. I, of course, then was perfectly ignorant of their "lingo," and felt fearfully afraid of them, dreaming nightly of their making an attack on me in my loneliness. Fear, I may say, was quite uncalled for, as it proved, for they were very friendly to me, and the old King seemed to think it quite his right to protect me, making me understand it was very wrong of "big one white fellow no good leave you along y'rself, black fellow no leave min lubra." He and his lubra used to go out in their canoe and catch wild duck and bring me more eggs than I could possibly make use of; but I was very thankful they were so peaceable. They only stayed a fortnight, for which I felt pleased and yet sorry, for the loneliness was dreadful to bear, yet I never felt quite sure of them. The mail man was a week behind his time in consequence of floods, and I never saw a soul. I must here tell you the air night and day was black with mosquitos, preventing me from reading or writing unless I s to keep them away. After having tried to write some letters I went for a stroll, leaving some fuel burning to try and kill these pests; the wind arose and it blazed up and set fire to a fly catcher and then the lining of the room. Having turned round to gaze on my lonely cot I noticed smoke coming from all parts of it, and ere I could get home it was in a blaze. Little could I do to extinguish the flames, but what could be done I did, running down to the river and bringing up some buckets of water to throw on them. Most providentially there were some sheep-washers on the other side, and hearing my cry for help, they came across in a canoe to my assistance, and with their manly aid the fire was soon put out; they pulled down the remainder of the lining, and by so doing the rest was saved—alas! the debris. However, it gave me occupation to put my little homestead in order again ere my husband's return, though I was very ill from the fright the fire had given me. My husband returned at the end of the month; then I was

very ill indeed for three weeks, having a little son and losing him. During my convalescence I used to go out with my husband while he shot wild duck and pigeons. As soon as I was fairly recovered from my late illness he left me again for another month, in which time I made up my mind never to be left alone again. Where he went there would I go too, for I was getting so fearfully low spirited that though I longed, yet I dreaded to see the mail man coming with the letters, feeling sure I could not speak to him. On my husband's return I told him of my decision, and as hawking did not seem his forte, he decided to give it up and do the best he could with the remaining stores, and continue his journey to Queensland. While he was forming plans for the future, a Pioneer from the "Paroo" (a distance of 100 miles) arrived, and as he was looking for stores, he bought all we had left. The difficulty was, how these stores were to be got to the "Paroo," for he had no means of taking or sending them there. My husband agreed to deliver them; this would take two months to accomplish, and as I was going too, he could not take all at once, so he left the overplus at the nearest station four miles off, and made two journeys.

Our waggon packed, off we started, and our trip was rather an eventful one. The third day was very hot, and the roads being heavy and sandy, the horses were soon knocked up. A traveller who passed us said we should reach water in less than four miles off. As the horses were so done up, my husband took them out and left the trap. Having a saddle horse that was tied behind the waggon, off we started for water, taking with us a kettle, a tin of sardines, coffee, and some biscuits, for it had been far too hot all day to care to eat. We looked forward to a pleasant tea on the banks of the river, but alas! what was our chagrin to find the four miles nearly double that distance, and it was quite dark when we at last found the water. Oh readers, perhaps you may never have been so famished, so you cannot imagine our feelings on untying the silk handkerchief (in which our store had been put) to find all gone but the sardines, which was not a very nourishing repast. I could not eat them, but my husband did. It was too dark to return that night to our waggon, so here we camped. Morpheus soon overtook my better half, but I spent the night trying to keep the mosquitoes off. At daybreak, after watering the horses, we started back to our waggon, hoping to make a good break fast. We had left some water in a cask, but the fates seemed against us, for our dog, which we had left in charge of the stores, had by some means turned the cask over, and of course out all the water ran. My husband insisted on my riding back to the river, which I did, once again taking coffee, biscuits, and kettle. I made a fire and had a most enjoyable meal. After my repast, my first thought was how to take some water back to my husband, so after washing out the kettle (as that served as coffee pot too) I filled it with water. The next difficulty was to keep it cool, as the thermometer was 120 in the shade and a fear fully hot wind was blowing. I wrapped the kettle up in a skirt; that kept it from sun and wind. Now, how am I to mount my steed with the said kettle. On looking round, I saw the fates had favoured me this time, for there was a stump on which I was able to put my precious burden, and when fairly settled in my saddle, I took it in front of me, and off we went to meet my husband, which was not till I had ridden six miles; he was then

quite “knocked up” for the want of some water. I only let him have a very little, as it was really quite cold to his parched lips; and a quantity would have done him more harm than good. I then made a fire and gave him some coffee, which quite refreshed him.

After a little resting we made another start to the Paroo, the rest of the journey being uneventful. Having delivered our goods, we retraced our steps to Mount Murcheson for the remainder. Whilst there for a week, prior to our departure for the Paroo’ again, the river came down over its banks. We made a start, never expecting the river would be so high, as it was then a most unusual occurrence. En route, we fell in with a married couple who were travelling on horseback, and as they were going to the same station as we were, we travelled together. It was quite an impossibility for them to go by the road and “make stations,” the floods coming down so quickly, and they being on horseback, could not carry provisions, nor could they go from station to station as they intended, so we asked them to share ours. On the second day of our journey, instead of being on the banks of the river, we were twenty miles back from it, and “rounding the water,” which was then rolling in a body of about three feet deep and at the rate of six miles an hour. Third day we headed the water, crossed a very rotten flat, and camped on a sand hill which we supposed safe. My husband turned the horses out, then went for a survey to see how far the water was from us, but not being able to see a sign of it, that night we felt safe and made our camp there. Next day another survey was made, and the result was the water was 2 miles from where we would have to cross another rotten flat half a mile from our camp: so the greatest haste was made, but still we found the water had won the race, for it had crossed the rotten fiat and was two miles further on, so there was no choice but to drive through it or wait to be drowned where we were. Although the water had so lately flowed over the ground, it was not so very soft or even boggy.

I took the reins and drove, and with the man on one side and my husband on the other on horseback, we urged the animals through this desert of water, a special providence watching over us, for I may here remark that it was the only time one of our horses ever went through water—he always seemed to dread it, and would lie down at once. The woman followed her husband on horseback too; the water was up to the flaps of the saddle. That being accomplished, we pushed further on, having eighty miles to travel ere we reached a station, our provisions running terribly short, and we had to live by the gun, wild fowl being most plentiful ; but oh how we wished for some bread. Tea and sugar we had. After a fort night’s toil we arrived at the Paroo again. Took a rest, and then resumed our journey to Queensland, which I rather enjoyed, the scenery being very pretty, and every here and there in the first hundred miles we traversed, we came to a sur face spring of lovely fresh water, little mounds from one to fifteen feet high, with water bubbling out of the top. After travelling two hundred miles over the border into Queensland, we retraced our steps (having found out that the government would not then allow stock to cross over from any other colony) to Mount Murcheson, where the first object that met our view was

a steamer, "The Albury". Captain Johnstone and crew stared in astonishment at us, having heard we and all our belongings had been drowned in the floods. My husband had some business to settle up the river, and the captain saying they would return in five days, he took this opportunity of going, leaving me alone with waggon, horses, and a little dog for a companion, and £750 for my pillow every night. My nearest neighbour was four-and-a-half miles off, but I could not visit him, as I was surrounded by water. The five days were prolonged to three weeks, the steamer having to go much further up the river than they expected. The gentleman who owned the station four-and-a-half miles off was a Mr. Bonny, and he very kindly rowed across the flood and asked me to go to the station till my husband's return, and he would send a black fellow to look after my trap and horses, but some how I preferred being where he left me, expecting him hourly after the fifth day. As it turned out it was a most fortunate thing I did stay, for in a few days the river rose to such a height that it actually washed them out of house and home, so they came to my quiet spot and pitched their tents round about, so the rest of my waiting was not so lonely.

On my husband's return we started for Adelaide via Minindie and Barrier Ranges. We stopped a day or two at the former place, and some people there said we must be mad to think of crossing the ranges; no one had ever gone that way. The publican begged of me to go by boat if my husband would persist in such a very dangerous route, for if no other trouble assailed us, the blacks would soon make "short work" of us. I told him whatever dangers one was subject to the other should share, and for "weal or woe," go I would, for then I should know the worst, and share the same fate as my husband.

So next day we started on our travels to explore the Ranges, and after four days' severe hardships, being two days and nights without water, we arrived at a place called "Mungarie," about eighty miles over the border in South Australia, and the first sight which cheered our hearts was several tubs of clear water. A woman who was living here seemed very frightened. Our horses would drink the water, for they were nearly wild when they saw it. The woman told my husband he would have to take them four miles further to the creek, but invited me to stay with her, which I need hardly say I did, although she was not very hospitable, for although we told her the distance we had travelled, she did not offer me either a glass of water or cup of tea, the kettle boiling on the fire at the time. I did not ask for any then, but I feel sure were I placed in that position now I would soon do so. On my husband's return he asked me if I had had some tea, and then she begged my pardon, her excuse being that not having seen a woman for so long she forgot her manners. Here I will pass over ten weeks of our travels. Having been to Adelaide and South East, we are now back to "Mungarie," where we were not even met by "inhospitality," as the place was quite forsaken, the people having gone eighty miles further up. So here we are with a buggy, twenty-five head of horses, and a dray with eighteen months' provisions, two men, and the aforesaid eighty miles to travel, and not a drop of water on the road. My husband not knowing his whereabouts went on horseback to explore, leaving me

with men and horses to look after for two days, while he was away. A man on horseback rode up to us en route to Mr. N's station; he stayed with us till my husband's return, when he offered to take the loose horses further on to the station, where they could be watered. At first it was proposed I should ride on with him, but feeling far from well that morning, and not at all equal to an eighty mile ride, I stayed behind to drive the buggy. After giving our horses water, we filled a cask and put it on the dray, and started off on the horse track. After two days and a night we arrived at Mr. N's, where we heard from the man that he had lost half the horses at a creek five miles further back; we supposed he had fallen asleep there and let them get away.

After two days' rest my husband took a horse and went to look for them. After ninety miles' travelling he found one, the youngest of the mob, at a well where they had been watered a day or two before, but as no one was living there they could not get water from the well, so the others went further on leaving the weak one to do his best. My husband stayed with him, as he was a young and valuable creature, giving him water out of his hat, and in a day or two he was able to travel and be brought back to Mr. N's. It was Christmas morning, and just as the sun was rising, I saw my husband coming over the sand hills leading one horse and driving the other, all three decidedly "knocked up," after having travelled ninety miles with only one tin can of water, having done the journey in twenty-four hours. We stopped here a week, bought some sheep (1,400); after drafting and paying for them, we started for our own country, which was the other side of the ranges. After three days' travelling we t to the foot of the ranges, where there was a nice water ole, and sixteen or seventeen natives. While my husband and his man were gathering the sheep into camp, I thought I would give these old blacks a pannikin of flour each. One old man was the king of the tribe, and when I gave him his share he wanted to keep the pannikin too, and shook his "nella nella" (or wadie) in my face, but when he saw a revolver he made off, and his lubra came for the flour. We had great difficulty to make them understand that we meant them no harm; one of them was able to interpret our language, so they camped there. Next morning, after watering the sheep, the man and one black fellow, started with them across the ranges. Ourselves, horses, cow, and black fellow (a most intelligent youth) started to find our way as best we could through creeks, hills and rocks, till within three quarters of a mile to the tops of the range, when the black fellow said, "Bel more pull away allabout yarra man tumble down," meaning the country was so rough we could go no further. However, with a little difficulty we did get to the top and camped there for the night. After a day and night's travelling we came to water; we intended making our home here, the blacks telling us the water was permanent although in the sand. We arrived at 5 am. Meeting the sheep here, the next thing was how to water them. My husband and his man set to work and sunk seven feet of a well, made a trough out of a tarpaulin, watered the sheep and twenty-five horses, all before 11 a.m. We got the blacks to shepherd the sheep, whilst my husband and man set about building a house on a very pretty spot, where we intended making our home. This clone, there was little

else to do but water the sheep every other day, and my husband started to explore the country around. At the end of six weeks ye found there was not sufficient water for the sheep, as the spring began to fail, so my husband told me he would have to save me here and take the sheep to the river, which would take him three weeks, unless he found water nearer. So he and a black fellow started with the sheep, having started our an to Mr. N's station for the mail, which I was to send after him, but when he did return he was in no humour to follow his master, there being no road. I thought it best to go with him—a journey of twenty-five miles through scrub and timber, without a track of any sort, except here and there sheep's footmarks.

At sunrise we started on horseback, I taking on my saddle a bucket, a leg of mutton, loaf of bread, a pair of boots (for the black boy), an American shovel, and an axe, the man refusing to carry any of these articles, declaring his horse would not stand it, hence the reason of my having such a load. At 12 a.m. I arrived at "Nartaubulla," where my husband was waiting. No doubt it is very pleasant to have a groom in attendance, but mine proved anything but a help, and would not stir unless I took the lead in these unknown parts. The day was very hot, and we had nothing to drink on the road, but on arriving at the depot the black boy gave me a pannikin of tea, a perfect "nectar." I even now remember with what a relish I drank it. My husband was very much surprised to see me, never thinking I would attempt such a journey. Being too far to return I stayed with him that night, but started for our new home by myself, and unfortunately I dropped my whip, and of course had to dismount, and in picking it up I had turned my horse round, and when remounted he refused to go the way I wanted him, but feeling sure he would either take me back to my husband or to our home, I let him choose the road, it being such a dull foggy day that it was quite impossible to see any landmark. After going for a quarter of a mile the sky cleared, and I saw he was taking me home direct, where I arrived at 1 p.m. Picture my life for eight days after. (I forgot to say that my brother let me have one of his sons, a boy of ten years old to be a companion to me.) We watered eleven horses every day, that being our amusement and duty.

The wild dogs howled at night incessantly, making the air resound with their cries, which was imot very cheerful for us. At last my husband returned, having left man and boy with the sheep at Creek, some fifty-five miles off, where I found we were to go and make our abode till rain came, when we could return. So we packed up once more all that we possibly could (leaving the rest behind without the slightest fear of any one coming to disturb it) and made for the Creek—my husband, little Tom, and I. We camped the first night at the depot "Nartaubulla" before leaving we filled all our utensils with water, as our journey would be through dry and very hilly country, and if we found any water at all it would be brackish. Imagine, then, my dismay, on uncovering one of the utensils, to find water, which when put in was as clear as crystal, now like ink, from a plant which I had put in to keep it cool and steady. Thinking it would do no harm, I boiled some to make tea with, and we drank to our cost, as it threw us into a high fever, and we had no other means of quenching our

extreme thirst but by drinking it, till we got to our next camp eight miles off, where the water was brackish. At any other time, had we drank it to such an excess, it would have been most injurious, but it now acted as an antidote.

Next day our journey brought us to the Creek and sheep, and here my husband told me, while we were having our tea, that he must leave in the morning, and ride to the river to report having brought sheep over the border, being the first that ever crossed it except by the river. So in the morning he left me. The man was to put up a tent for me, and the black boy to mind the sheep. The next morning at daybreak I heard a noise in the tent, and on sitting up in bed, I saw to my horror a black fellow just coming into the tent with a wadie in his hand, thinking, I suppose, to find me asleep, but on seeing me awake and a revolver at my side, he fled, and did not make his re-appearance. At the time it made me feel very frightened, though I never told my husband till years after. Here we stayed six months. Generally it was only little Tom and I, as my husband was of such a roving disposition and such an explorer by nature, that he used to go away for weeks at a time, leaving me to superintend the sheep and horses.

The water here being dried up, there was nothing left for us to do but go back to where we passed the brackish water fifteen miles back, and open what was termed a "surface spring." After pitching our tent here, and being fairly settled, my husband went off on a "voyage of discovery." When he returned, he got the sheep shorn with the help of a man from the river. Unfortunately my husband cut his hand very severely, and the man, too, had hurt himself before they had quite finished shearing, leaving five sheep yet to be done, and as the poor creatures had to be shut up till they were shorn, I thought I would like to release them, and try my hand at shearing, which I may here tell you was a great success, though as to how long it took me need not here be said. My poor husband suffered very much with his hand. The shearing over, he started for Adelaide to arrange about getting up a load of goods. I was left again in full charge of two men, sheep, horses, and home, Tom being my companion. One night a week after, the man came home with only half the sheep; seeing this, I spoke to him about it, but he declared he had all. However, I counted them, and found half were gone. Now what was to be done? The sheep must be found. We could not afford to lose them, and let the wild dogs tear them to pieces, and not being able to trust the man to look for them, I mounted my horse and went among the ranges to look, and after a few hours' searching I found them and brought them home, but only to find the careless man had lost four or five hundred more; this decided me to part with him at once, and I sent a black boy and little Tom to shepherd them instead. My husband was ten weeks away. During that time the heat was intense, and the water so bad that it was perfect martyrdom having to drink it; each day it threatened rain, but still weeks went on and it came not. I was getting so ill that I never expected to live to see my husband again. The little lambs, too, were suffering from the heat and want of water. For a week little Tom and I used to catch and drench two hundred and fifty every day till they were able to drink themselves;

then the fix was, how were they to do so, as they would not drink out of the creek, the flocks making it so muddy. I shepherded the sheep while the man made a trough out of a gum tree, and-made a stone yard so that they could have a drink of clean water, and by these means all our little lambs were saved. Though I had Tom and a black boy, yet most of the shepherding fell to my shoulders (or rather my feet, for on leaving Adelaide I brought up nine pairs of the very best kid boots, all of which I wore out in nine months, and by the time my husband came back I had not a pair to my feet, and had to make a pair from bullock hide we had with us for making leather straps, little thinking when the boots were bought to what use they would be put, otherwise I should certainly have invested in a stronger make). However, the old proverb, "Where ignorance is bliss it's a folly to be wise" proved true.

Christmas, 1864, my husband still away, and no rain, our provisions getting terribly short, we having lent some to Mr. Ns, which he assured us would be returned soon; but that day never came. I had to make scones for each meal, as any left from breakfast would be quite uneatable three hours later. The same with the meat; we could not keep it a day, though we tried all sorts of means. For our Christmas dinner we had lamb and scones. I intended making a pudding of some dried apples, and before going out to the sheep, put them on to boil, and on my return, I found them and the pot burnt black so adieu to our Christmas pudding. Five days after we had a delightful thunderstorm and rain, which I may say saved our lives, for the extreme heat and privations were telling on us and our animals. The rain filled all the water holes, but was not sufficient to make the feed grow, though it freshened up the dry bushes. On the 2nd of January, 1865, my husband returned, leaving a team with stores under the care of my brother at Bulkainatta, two hundred miles off, not being able to bring them any further for the want of water. On the 16th Inst. it began' to rain in earnest and continued for three days and nights. On the second day my husband, with man and black boy, took the sheep out of the yard and put them across the creek, where they were obliged to leave them all night in consequence of the creek having risen. On the third day they went to look after and put them together. It not only rained but simply poured, as though the heavens had opened. The sheep had to be left on the other side of the creek as the only place of safety, there being a hill there. The very creek that my husband and party had crossed in the morning was, a few hours after, twenty-five feet high, and of course, not crossable, so they had to walk four miles further up to the head, where it opened out on a plain, and here it was only about two feet deep and two hundred yards wide, and running with such rapidity and force as to tear a pair of new doeskins from foot to waist, and it was only with the assistance of poles they safely reached the other side and came home. Next morning the waters "had abated," and again they crossed over to gather up the sheep, or what was left of them, as two-thirds of them were dead either from the cold or had been washed down with the current, which not only took sheep, but huge lime trees bodily. After a "storm truly came a calm," which was very charming to view from one of the hills; you could well imagine it was the sea before you, as the low-lands was one sheet of water.

What a contrast from a few days before, when all was brown and dried up. After this the grass grew, and the whole country was an “emerald.” I really thought it wrong to tread on the beautiful grass as it came up, being so long accustomed to see the parched-up ground. The next thing my husband had to do was to go back to the team and take delivery of two thousand sheep he had bought on his way home last time. Delivery had to be taken on the 25th inst. While he was away, I, with the help of a man, scoured all the wool, to have it in readiness when the team came to take it away to Minindie to be forwarded to the city. One day while I was very busy scouring, a visitor appeared on the scenes; this was quite “a red letter day,” as I had not seen a stranger for eleven months. Our introduction was not a very pleasant one, as he was the manager for the gentleman who owned the country we were living upon. He had made two attempts to reach us before the rain, and each time had failed, and the last time nearly lost his two men, and did lose two horses. When he found the “major domo” was away—and thinking, I suppose, it was no use to grumble at me—he kept his wrath, and was very friendly, asking me if he could have a cup of tea and stay the night. Next morning before he left he told me we should have to leave this place, as they were going to stock the country. After which he took the whole honour of being the first to stock the back country between the barrier and the river, which was a slight mistake, as we had occupied that country twelve months prior to his appearance, and we were the first to cross the border either with or without stock.

My husband returned, having left the team and sheep on the road. We packed up and started back to within fifteen miles of our first camp, which was a very beautiful spot, with lakes and pastures green and wild fowl in hundreds. Here we built a house, and made our home, and as soon as settled my husband started north to explore some country he had taken up in South Australia, leaving me for three weeks, and knowing there were twenty-five or so natives on the lake a few miles off. I did not relish my loneliness, with only Tom as my companion, though he was a great comfort to me. My husband seeing my tears seemed quite hurt, saying it was poor comfort to him while away to think of his wife being so sentimental. About a quarter of an hour after he had departed, seven blacks, after watching him go, made for the house. Imagine my fear at being accosted by these men, all armed with war implements, and clothed in nature. Seeing them coming I went outside and sat by a fire, trying to put on an air of indifference, which, believe me, I did not feel. They all stuck their spears round the fire; one of the men was chosen by the others as spokesman, he being the only one who could understand my language. He having been with us for a short time quite understood what our possessions were, and he asked for sheep, clothes and tobacco, all of which I refused. He told me I had plenty in the house. I said, “Well, if black fellow think so, go and see.” That made him think I had a revolver or sword; therefore he was afraid to go in. I told them my husband would be home that night, and if they did not go away he would come down and shoot them. Then they came to an arrangement that if they would go away altogether white man would not be cross to them. So I promised them it should be so

if they left, which they did, and I never saw them again for two years. Next day I and a lubra walked twenty miles to be sure they had gone, for I felt too uncomfortably till I knew they had left the district and gone amongst the ranges. My husband returned and stayed at home ix weeks, when he left ti take some eight hundred fat sheep to Adelaide, where he got 25s per head for them, leaving me with me little nephew, a Dutchman, and one thousand eight hundred sheep to lamb. A few days after he had gone the man began to shirk his work, and expected little Tom to shepherd while be idled in his tent all day, only going out to meet him in the evening, and if there were any young lambs he would not bring them home, but left them for the wild dogs to eat, telling the child he was master now and would do as he liked. I thought it best to dismiss him at once, and if the dogs did eat the sheep, it was no use paying him to let them do so.

With the help of Tom and an old lubra I looked after them, sending him with them the first thing in the morning, and I went out afterwards to gather up the lambs, for if any were left out the dogs would eat them. Many a time have I sat on the sand hills and had a good cry, and then thought how very wrong it was of me, as all went on so well—the sheep giving me little or no trouble, for wherever I put them there they could be found, and everything I did seemed to prosper, and my health was good, for which I used to thank God as I drove my flock home.

My husband returned after ten weeks' absence. He branded 105 per cent. lambs. Six weeks out of the ten we never saw a soul. We were a fortnight without meat, as neither of us three had courage to kill a sheep. At last the old lubra got desperate and killed one. I need not say how long it took her but we were thankful for it when it was cooked. Now four years have elapsed, and we are now off to the Grey Ranges on the Bulka, to some country my husband took out in South Australia, arriving at our destination in 1868, New Year's Day. Got a stone house put up. In February I had a little son, which we buried the end of April. In July, finding the water was drying .up and the distance too far for wool to go down or stores to come up, we left this place for our first camp again, where we built a new house, and where I lost another little son. Two years after I left my home for Minindie, where my little daughter was born. It was the first time I had seen civilization in its entirety for seven years.

For seven years after I left home for Minindie where my little daughter was born, it was the first time I had seen civilization. The inhabitants of Minindie stared at me in wonderment. They were quite surprised to see the small woman I was. Evidently they expected to see quite a giantess, hearing of the rough life I led out back. The hotel keeper told me afterwards, he never was so much astonished at anything, as when my husband helped me down out of the buggy and introduced me as his wife. He expected "from what he had heard," to see a big, rough woman, while I was only a middle-sized, delicate-looking woman.

When my little baby was only three weeks old I took her with me back to our camp. Her first night in the bush was spent in an old hut on Topoa. In the morning my

husband said he had something wonderful to show me, and when I went out he pointed out the ground covered with rat tracks. The rats had passed in thousands during the night, all travelling south. For about three weeks our rat visitors were a great nuisance to us; we could hardly keep any eatables out of their reach. I may mention this rat invasion happened in March, 1871.

When we arrived home my husband started men to well sink. The water in the lake was drying up very fast." Anid he thought that water was to be got at a hallow depth on the edge of the lake. When my husband got the men fairly started at the well he left for Adelaide.

I felt rather strange, as my husband had discharged all the men during my absence in Minindie, "except one." It was his first attempt at housekeeping by himself, and he amused himself sending off the old servants and getting new ones.

My husband is now started for Adelaide with some fat sheep, leaving me and my little baby alone. He was to have been away ten weeks; but it's quite three months before he arrives back. I should not have said I was left alone, for I had my dear little baby, and you can imagine, dear reader, what a great comfort my baby was to me after so many years of loneliness. I often prayed fervently to the Lord to spare my darling to me. The water in the lake was getting very low indeed, and we had to filter it through sand before we could use it. I had to send the sheep away for to look for food and water where they could got it. I now had been ten weeks by myself. The well sinkers were down over 200 feet, and no sign of water; the men think they will come on water soon, so I keep them on until my husband comes home.

A traveller going past told me the men I sent out to take care of the sheep were not doing their duty, so I took my baby and drove out thirteen miles, camped out all night and discharged one of the men in the morning. When I got home I found the door locked, and the traveller, "who was a police constable," had taken the key away in his pocket. He found out what he had done when he travelled about twenty-five miles, and he left the key of my house at Langewirra Station.

So thus I was locked out of my own house, and by a man who was given permission by me to rest a day. How to get in now was the question. I had no alternative but to get the door forced open. And it was some weeks before I got the key over from Langewirra.

When my husband came home he knocked the well-sinkers off, and went back to meet the waggons, which were bringing stores and shearing supplies, and took the teams to Langewirra, where he went to shear the sheep, leaving me to pack up and meet him there. I shall never forget that packing up. The wind was blowing a gale, and clouds of dust flying all day long. I got a cold on that occasion, from which I have not got over get.

The shearing now being over, and the wool started for Adelaide, we make a start for "Bencannia," a place fifty miles from our first camp, where there was water in a lake. After we had been there two months, the water began to dry up, and no signs of rain coming, we had to take our sheep seventy miles further up to Cobam Lake, which was supposed to be permanent water. Now my husband has to go back to the Burra to take delivery of five thousand sheep that he bought six months ago. I being in delicate health and my baby so young, did not feel equal to undertake the hard ships of travelling and removing the sheep. Telling my husband this, he asked me if I was going to give in now, and whether I had lost all heart and courage; and if I would only try for another six months, he expected to get water in the wells, and that we would have a settled home; so I made up my mind to try once more and do my best, and a fortnight after my husband left for the Burra. The water being almost dried up, I had to get the sheep gathered up and make a start to travel the seventy miles between the last camp and Cobam. The weather was dreadfully hot, and the dusty track was not at all pleasant travelling along. My little baby was blind with sandy blight, and we had to travel the sheep two days (hot windy days) without being able to give the poor things a drink. You can imagine with what delight we welcomed the sight of a big hole full of water, in a creek eighteen miles from Codam Lake. We camped for the night there and refreshed our thirsty stock.

Started next morning, and got to Cobam about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. There we found plenty of water, and an empty house of two rooms, which I took possession of. The owners had given me permission to occupy the house, they having left some time previously. Feeling very tired, I partly undressed and lay down to rest with my baby. I had not been laying down very long when I heard footsteps in the apartment outside, and on looking up, to my astonishment, in the doorway a policeman in uniform, revolver in hand, pointed at me. I do not know which was the most astonished—the policeman or myself. He did not know the hut was occupied, and seeing smoke issuing from the chimney, he came to the conclusion he had found what he was looking for, namely, a bushranger of the name of "Burns." After we got over the first misunderstanding and he had explained how matters were to me, I found that the man he was looking for was camped about four miles from us, on the creek, at a blacks' camp, the blacks having given me the information. Letting the policeman have one of my black boys to go with him and his two men, they went and arrested "Burns," and brought him back in custody that very night. Next morning they started for Wilcannia. So now, here I am a fixture until rain comes, with about one hundred blacks camped within a quarter of a mile of me. Not pleasant no although they were extremely kind to me; they brought me wild fowl, fire wood, and looked after the horses. I spent here six weeks very miserably. The weather was close, hot and thundery, threatening rain every day. The water at Cobam Lake, although twenty feet deep, was so very bad in the middle of the lake that it was difficult to use it, were one ever so thirsty. What with sand flies by day and mosquitoes by night, the poor horses were almost beside themselves. I have seen the horses for hours in the middle of the day standing in the lake with the water rolling over their backs, and

when once the sun went down they would gallop about for hours together. The horses were quite fat when I went to Cobam, and at the end of six weeks they were dog poor. When I was there six weeks we had two days' beautiful rain. I made up my mind to turn my face towards home, and I only got half-way, as far as the Packsaddle, when I found the rain had fallen no farther. However, at the Packsaddle I found the creek running full of beautiful water.

Two days after I had arrived at the Packsaddle, my husband came up to me, 'he having come back with the sheep he went to the Burra for. We decided to remain at the Packsaddle until the rain came farther down, or until we found water in the well which was now being sunk.

Here we stayed for three months, when one of the men came up with the joyful tidings that they had struck water in the well. My husband once more left me, this time with one white man, and we had eighteen thousand sheep to look after. My other help was natives; he took all the other white men with him to start putting up a house. At the end of one month he came back after putting up a house. Need I say with what pleasure I started on the journey that brought me to what was to be my permanent home at last. I must not forget to mention the little adventure between the blacks. The Murray blacks went up to Cobam to steal wives. They took a few from each camp as they went by, intending to wind up with a few from the Packsaddle. The blacks in the back country were too much afraid of the more civilized ones to defend their lubras. But the Cobam blacks sent one of their number ahead asking us to protect their wives when they reached us. We were prepared for the Murray blacks when they arrived, and not thinking we would interfere with them, they allowed the lubras to come up and ask for provisions. As they came we detained them until we had them all but two. Those two the blacks refused to let come up to camp. So we had to go over to the blacks' camp and take them. After taking the lubras, the thing was how to protect them. There were twenty-five black fellows camped within a short distance of us, and only my husband and I there. But as we were debating how best to manage, a gentleman rode up, and he stayed all night and assisted us. The first thing we did was to erect a tent for the lubras to stay in during the night, and my husband and our visitor kept watch all night, armed with a gun and sword.

These Murray blacks went away next morning, and when they wished us good morning they assure us they would come some other time and take them. Some time during the day the husbands belonging to the rescued lubras arrived, when we were well repaid for our trouble. The thanks the poor fellows could not express they showed by dancing around us and the Corrobborees they got up for our entertainment for some days after were very numerous and amusing.

In July, 1872, I arrived at what was to be my permanent home. We had splendid rains and a very good supply of good stock water in the new well. After getting my home nicely arranged, in about four mouths I started with my little daughter for

Adelaide, which is the first visit I had paid that city for twelve years. I now have recorded the most stirring incidents of my life in the bush, so I will say good-bye to my readers.