

Valentine Williams, Douglas Valentine

*Successful Exploration
through the Interior
of Australia*

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William John Wills was born at Totnes, in Devonshire, on the 5th of January, 1834. He had, therefore, attained the full age of twenty-seven at the time of his death. Even in infancy, his countenance was interesting and expressive. He began to speak and walk alone before he had completed his first year. His lively disposition gave ample employment to his nurses, though I cannot remember that he ever worried one, through peevishness or a fractious temper. As soon as he could talk distinctly, he evinced an aptitude to name things after his own fancy; and I may fairly say, that he was never a child in the common acceptance of the term, as he gave early indications of diligence and discretion scarcely compatible with the helplessness and simplicity of such tender years. About the time of his completing his third year, Mr. Benthall, a friend and near neighbour, asked permission to take him for a walk in his garden. The boy was then in the habit of attending a school for little children, close by, kept by an old lady. In less than an hour, Mr. Benthall returned to ask if he had come home. No one had seen him, and we began to be alarmed lest he might have fallen into a well in the garden; but this apprehension was

speedily ascertained to be groundless. Still he returned not, and our alarm increased, until his mother thought of the school, and there he was found, book in hand, intent on his lesson. He knew it was the school hour, and while Mr. Benthall was speaking to the gardener, had managed to give him the slip, passing our own door and proceeding alone to the school, on the opposite side of the square. Mr. Benthall, who can have seen or heard very little of him since, was one of the first, on hearing of his recent fate, to send a subscription to his monument, about to be erected at Totnes. Perhaps he remembered the incident.

Another anecdote of the child bears upon a leading characteristic in the after life of the man. My late lamented brother, W.T. Wills, who has since died at Belleville, in Upper Canada, was on a visit at my house from abroad. He had occasion to go to Plymouth and Devonport, and I engaged to drive him over in a gig. A petition was made to his mother, that little Willy might accompany us. It was granted, and we put up for the night at the Royal Hotel, at Devonport, where he became quite a lion. The landlady and servants were much taken by their juvenile visitor. The next morning, my brother and I had arranged to breakfast at ten, each having early business of his own to attend to, in different directions. When we returned at the appointed time, the boy was missing. None of the household had seen him for an hour. Each supposed that someone else had taken charge of him. After a twenty minutes' search in all directions by the whole establishment, he was discovered at the window of a nautical instrument maker's shop, eight or ten doors below the inn, on the same side of the street,

within the recess of the door-way, gazing in riveted attention on the attractive display before him. The owner told me that he had noticed him for more than an hour in the same place, examining the instruments with the eye of a connoisseur, as if he understood them. His thirst for knowledge had superseded his appetite for breakfast. About twelve months subsequent to this date, we had nearly lost him for ever, in a severe attack of remittent fever. At the end of a fortnight, the danger passed away and he was restored to us. As he lay in complete prostration from the consequent weakness, our old and faithful servant, Anne Winter, who seldom left him, became fearful that his intellects might be affected; and I shall never forget her heartfelt delight and thankfulness when she saw him notice and laugh at the ludicrous incident of a neighbour's tame magpie hopping upon his bed. The effect of this fever was to alter the contour of his features permanently, to a longer shape, giving him a more striking resemblance to his mother's family than to mine. His utterance, also, which had been voluble, became slow and slightly hesitating.

For some time after this he resided at home, under my own tuition. Our intercourse, even at this early age, was that of friendly companionship. Instructing him was no task; his natural diligence relieved me from all trouble in fixing his attention. We were both fond of history. From what I recollect, he took more interest in that of Rome than of Greece or England. Virgil and Pope were his favourite poets. He was very earnest with his mother in studying the principles of the Christian religion. More than once my wife remarked, "that boy astonishes me by the shrewdness with

which he puts questions on different points of doctrine." In his readings with me he was never satisfied with bare statements unaccompanied by reasons. He was always for arguing the matter before taking either side. One question, when very young, he would again and again recur to, as a matter on which the truth should be elicited. This was a saying of our old servant, above named, when she broke either glass or earthenware: that "it was good for trade." His ideas of political economy would not permit him to allow that this axiom was a sound one for the benefit of the state; and on this point, I think, Adam Smith and Malthus would scarcely disagree.

The pleasure I enjoyed in my son's society when a boy, was greater than that which intercourse with many grown men contributed; for I may strictly repeat, as I have already said, that he was never a child in intellect although juvenile enough in habits and manners. He never made foolish remarks, although not in the slightest degree uncomfortably precocious or pragmatical. I had no fear of trusting him with anything, and was often reprov'd for allowing so young a child to handle a gun, which he was accustomed to do as early as eleven years of age. His first practice was on some young rooks which he brought down with unerring aim, from a rookery on the grounds at our country residence. He was so particular in his general demeanour that I designated him Gentleman John, and my Royal Boy. His brothers, all younger than himself, styled him, Old Jack, and Gentleman Jack. He had a wonderful power of attaching animals of all kinds. Nothing moved him to anger so readily as seeing one ill-used. Beating a horse savagely would excite his disgust, as

well as his dislike to the person who did it. Not having a dog, he used to take a fine cat we had, which would accompany him to any distance in the fields, and hunt the hedges and hedgerows for him. Never feeling that I could have too much of his company, I frequently made him my companion in long country walks, during which he incessantly asked for information. For the science of astronomy he evinced an early taste. When a very little boy, I began to teach him the names and positions of the principal constellations, the revolutions of the earth on its axis, and the fixity of the polar star. I believe we were the first to notice a comet in 1845, which was only a short time visible here, having a south declination, and which we afterwards knew to have been a fine object in the Southern hemisphere.

At the age of eleven he went to school at Ashburton. Although the distance was not more than six miles from the cottage of Ipplepen, my then general place of residence, it was with much reluctance that I consented to the separation. Several friends urged on me that I was not doing him justice by keeping him at home; that a public seminary where he could mix with other boys was an advantage, even though he might not learn more. It also happened that, at this time, a gentleman with whom I had been long acquainted, and of whose talents I held a high opinion, was elected to the head-mastership of that school, which held its chief endowments from Gifford, the satiric poet, and Dr. Ireland, the late Dean of Westminster. I remember how I returned in gloomy spirits after leaving him there. As I had four other children, it may be said that I showed undue partiality for this one, but my conscience clears me from the

charge. I deeply felt the loss of his companionship. He was so suggestive that he set me thinking; and whilst I was endeavouring to teach, I acquired more knowledge than I imparted. There was nothing remarkable in his progress at school. I experienced no disappointment because he did not return home at the end of every half-year with the head prize. He merely brought his six months' bill, and a letter commending his steady diligence and uniform propriety of conduct. In viva voce examinations he had scarcely an equal chance with one of inferior intellect who might be quicker in expression; for besides the trifling hesitation of speech I have already noticed, he would have been ashamed to give a wrong answer from eagerness. A remark of Mr. Page, his tutor, confirmed me in my own previous impression on this point. "It vexes me," he said, "that John does not take a top prize, for I see by his countenance that he understands as much, if not more, than any boy in my school; yet from want of readiness in answering he allows very inferior lads to win the tickets from him." On the whole, I think he derived much benefit from Ashburton; for besides his scholastic improvement he became an adept at the usual games, and a social favourite out of school hours.

At the age of sixteen he left the grammar-school, and I find the 30th of May, 1850, to be the date of his articles to me as surgeon. I had at that time taken a partner, Henry Manly, Esquire, now resident at Ippepen, with a view of introducing and resigning to him my Ippepen practice. Being in a country place, five miles from Totnes, where there was no chemist or dispensary, my son readily acquired his duties, which were to distribute the medicines and

appliances directed for our patients by my partner and myself. In all cases his caution was extreme and we had no fear of his making mistakes. The ordinary operations of extracting a tooth or breathing a vein when a bumpkin presented himself as a patient, he speedily mastered. The absurd practice of going to be bled on any occasion that might strike the fancy of the party, without the advice of the doctor, was not at that time so completely obsolete as in this advanced age I hope it is, and ought to be. I remember, during the time of my own articles, that I frequently performed venesection five or six times in a day on persons who requested and fancied they required it; and I seldom indulged in the liberty of asking, wherefore.

In 1851, I took my son to London to show him the Great Exhibition. His chief attractions there, were the instruments and mechanical inventions. If, after a day or two, I chanced to deviate from the leading thoroughfares and missed my way, he would set me right in a moment. This was rather mortifying to one who fancied himself well acquainted with London from frequent visits, but he smiled when he saw I was not a true guide. I asked him how he acquired this apt knowledge. "On the second day," he replied, "when you were out, I took the map and studied it for two hours, so that now I am well versed in it." My subsequent experience made me think he had some instinctive power in matters like these, such as horses and carrier-pigeons possess, for the darkest night never baulked him. On a visit to Windsor, being told that it was considered a feat to climb the statue of King George the Third at the end of the long walk, he accomplished it in a very short time. At Hampton Court he

unravelled the mystery of the Maze in ten minutes and grew quite familiar with all its ins and outs.

In the following spring, 1852, I took him again to London, at the opening of the session for medical students. As there was no anatomical class he studied that branch of science by visiting the museum at Guy's. Having myself been a student at that school, I introduced him to my late respected teacher, Charles Aston King, Esquire, through whom he obtained permission to attend. Surgical operations he witnessed at the theatres of any hospital on the regular days. The only class he entered was that of practical chemistry, under Dr. John Stenhouse, LL.D., at Bartholomew's. When the course had nearly terminated, I saw Dr. Stenhouse, and inquired whether my son evinced any particular talent in that line. Dr. Stenhouse came from the lecture-room, and walked with me through Newgate-Street into Cheapside, earnestly requesting me not to take from him one of the most promising pupils he had ever had. "I venture an assurance," he said, "that in two years, in practical chemistry, he will be second to few in England." Dr. Stenhouse at that time was engaged in analyzing the different articles of food sold in the shops, and found my son useful and suggestive. His testimonial ran thus:--

I have much pleasure in certifying that Mr. W.J. Wills attended a course of practical chemistry at this medical school during the summer season of 1852. He obtained considerable proficiency, and invariably distinguished himself by great propriety of conduct.

(Signed) JOHN STENHOUSE LL.D.,
Lecturer to the Medical School of St. Bartholomew's

Hospital,

September 1st, 1852.

At the house where he lodged, kept by an old couple and their servant, he was as one of themselves, and amused them greatly by the discoveries he made of the tricks practised by vendors of goods in the street; tricks they had no idea of, although they had lived in London all their lives. They used to say he would be a great genius in the detective department of the Police.

CHAPTER 2.

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During the summer of 1852, I formed the intention of joining the exodus, then pouring out from England to Australia. I had been in treaty with the "Melbourne Gold Mining Company," recently started, in which promising speculation, on paper, I held some shares. The late Earl of Devon was chairman. I was to go in the Sarah Sands, in my professional capacity. My two sons, William John, and his younger brother, were to accompany me; but on further investigation of the modus operandi, I gave up all idea of attaching myself to the scheme, sold my shares at a slight discount, and engaged as medical attendant on the passengers, taking my two sons with me, in a fine new ship, the Ballaarat, on her first voyage. This arrangement I considered final. But a few days after William returned home, he came to me when I was sitting alone, engaged in writing, and with that expression in his countenance so peculiarly his own, said; "My dear father, I have a favour to

ask of you." "My dear boy," I replied, "there is nothing you would venture to ask that I could possibly refuse." "Then," continued he, "it is this. I see my mother is grieving, although she says nothing, at our all leaving her together. Let Tom and I go alone: I will pledge myself to take care of him." After a consultation with my wife this new plan was agreed upon. I released myself from my engagement with Messrs. Simpkin and Marshall for the Ballaarat, and secured two berths for the boys in one of Mr. W.S. Lindsay's ships, which at that time were conveying living freights to Melbourne, their Channel port of departure being Dartmouth.

By the advice of Mr. Lindsay himself I took steerage passages for them. He shrewdly remarked, "They will be there as soon and as safely as the cabin-passengers, and their money will be saved." This sounded so like an axiom in practical economy that my dear boy never attempted to argue the question. Having obtained permission to knock two cabins into one, my sons considerably diminished their expenses, and had quite as agreeable a voyage as if they had paid sixty guineas each; for I have lately learned by experience, in a homeward passage, that you have to put up with companions in the cabin, as objectionable as can be imagined in almost any situation of life.

At Dartmouth, a day or two before the ship started, I found that William had expended some money on a quantity of stuff rolled up like balls of black ropeyarn. I exclaimed with astonishment, "In the name of goodness, are you going to chew or smoke all the way to Australia?" for the commodity was the good old pig-tail tobacco. He said,

smiling, "This is to make friends with the sailors: I intend to learn something about a ship by the time we reach our destination." I dare say the worthy skipper of the good ship Janet Mitchell, should he be still alive, has some recollection of him. His mode of proceeding, as he told me, was first to secure the good graces of the crew through the persuasive medium of the pig-tail; then, to learn the name and use of every rope, and of every part of the ship's tackle from stem to stern. He soon acquired the art of splicing and reefing, and was amongst the first to go aloft in a storm, and to lend a hand in taking in topsails. When I arrived in Melbourne at a later period, several of his fellow-passengers spoke to me with praise and wonder, referring to his activity, and readiness to leave an unfinished meal, on the slightest indication of danger or difficulty. His journal of this voyage, is now before me, from which I extract a few remarks:--

1852. October 1st.--Left Dartmouth--Slightly sick for the first few days--My brother much more so, but got right again--Foretopmast carried away by a squall, just at the crosstrees, bringing down with it the main top-gallant mast--'We look a precious wreck! '--Remember the Honourable Michael de Courcy, brother of Lord Kingsale, saying to me on the quay at Dartmouth, the day before we sailed, that the first gale would carry away the fore-top-gallant mast--I believe the Janet Mitchell is quite a new ship, on her first voyage--The remark speaks well for the judgment of a young officer.

19th.--Sailors prigged some spirits in the hold and got very drunk--A passenger so drunk that he became mad, and

was put in irons.

20th.--Sailors not yet recovered from their drunkenness--A naval captain, passenger on board, insulted by one of them; struck him with his fist and cut his face open.

22nd.--Fine weather--Getting hot--Latitude north 21, longitude west 36--The Great Bear getting low--Sunsets and risings very fine, particularly the former.

November 1st.--Shark taken, of which I had a large share and rather enjoyed the novelty of the feed.

5th.--Crossed the Line--Sailors shaved and ducked a good many--Tom and I got off very well. (Query--effects of the pig-tail?)

16th.--Stormy weather--Obtained some books on navigation and studied trigonometry.

20th and 21st.--Passed Tristan da Cunha, Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands, about 37 south latitude, 12 longitude west. --Saw a great many whales, mostly sperm, thousands of birds, albatross, Cape pigeon, and many others, the names of which I am ignorant of.

23rd.--A shoal of porpoises passed us. A sailor struck one with a harpoon, but it got off again. They are of a salmon colour, no more like pigs than horses, just the shape of salmon, only much larger. In swimming they turn on their sides.

December 1st.--Smart breeze this morning which soon increased to a gale--Assisted in furling top-gallant sail--sailors only half dressed--After breakfast, had to double reef top-sails and main-sail. I like reefing very much.

2nd.--Waves not so high as I expected. It is amusing to see how the birds ride them.

27th.--Saw an eclipse of the moon last night, which lasted three hours; little more than three quarters were eclipsed--Some of the passengers discontented with the provisions--wonder that some of them ever thought of leaving home.

1853. January 1st.--Saw land this morning--Reached Cape Otway in the afternoon; much the appearance of Berry Head, with a slight haze on it--Coast to the west very like that about Dartmouth--Cliffs, high; could fancy I saw Rock Vale.*

[* Footnote: The residence of a gentleman, near Dartmouth, with whom he had been on a visit a short time before his departure.]

3rd.--Dropped anchor--Captain and Doctor going ashore will post my journal and our letters.

His own was short:--

Port Phillip, January 3rd, 1853.

MY DEAR FATHER,

We have this morning dropped anchor, just off Williamstown. There are a fine set of ships here: amongst them are the Great Britain, Cleopatra, Ballarat, Aberfoil, and an immense number of others, great and small. The Great Britain leaves early to-morrow, so I cannot finish my letter. We have been ninety-five days on our passage. The Cleopatra has only arrived two days. There are a great many vessels coming in. The day before yesterday we overtook and passed the Jane, and Truth, of London, which left Plymouth a fortnight before we sailed from Dartmouth. I

hear already that things are very dear in Melbourne. Our pilot says he gives 200 pounds a year for a small four-roomed cottage, two miles from the town.

To show how well prepared the young adventurer was for life in Australia,--notwithstanding letters of introduction and means of obtaining money if required--after remaining only a few days in Melbourne, and disbursing but a small modicum of the limited supply of cash he had taken with him, anxious to see the interior of the Island Continent, he obtained employment for himself and brother, a lad only fifteen years of age, at a large sheep station two hundred miles up the country. The following letter, dated February 12th, 1853, describes their proceedings to that date:--

MY DEAR FATHER,

We are at Deniliquin. And where in the world is that? you will say. Well; it is about two hundred miles north from Melbourne, on the Edward River, in the New South Wales district, and nearly five hundred miles from Sydney. The station belongs to the Royal Bank Company. We have engaged as shepherds at 30 pounds per annum each, and rations. We are very comfortable, in a hut by ourselves, about four miles from the station. We have between thirteen and fourteen hundred rams, by far the smallest and easiest flock, under our charge. We take the hut-keeping and shepherding in turns. The hut is a very nice one, built of split wood, and roofed with bark. It is close beside a pleasant creek or river, where there are plenty of fish and ducks. I assure you we make ourselves quite snug here. One of us rises almost as soon as it is light, gets some breakfast, and

starts off with the sheep; lets them feed about until ten o'clock, then brings them slowly home, where they lie down until four; after that, they go out again until sunset. The other stays within to clean up the hut and prepare the meals. We can kill a sheep when we like.* The worst part serves for the dogs, of which we have three--a sheep dog, and two kangaroo dogs.** The latter are good, and keep off the native curs at night. The sheep dog was the only one the former owner had last year, to watch a flock of five thousand sheep.

[* Footnote: Not the rams. There were a few others kept for the purpose. I stayed a few days with them, when I went out myself, at the end of the year.]

[** Footnote: They had a horse when I visited them, but not, I conclude, at the time when this letter was written.]

But you will want to hear something of Melbourne and how we came here. The first discovery we made after we got into port was, that we had to take ourselves and things ashore at our own expense. There was a good deal of fuss made about it to no purpose. It was four shillings each by steamer to Melbourne, and thirty shillings per ton for goods. It cost us about 2 pounds altogether. At Melbourne we found everything very dear; no lodgings to be had, every place full. At length we were offered lodgings at sixty shillings a week, to be paid in advance, and twenty-five persons sleeping in the same room; but we preferred the Immigrant's Home, a government affair, just fitted up for the accommodation of new-comers, where you pay one

shilling a night, and find yourself. You must not stay more than ten days. We got there on Friday and remained until the Saturday week following. We then obtained this situation, and started on the same afternoon. Twenty-three of us came up together. Drays were provided to carry our luggage, but we ourselves had to walk. We were three weeks on the journey, through the bush, sleeping, of course, in the open air.

He then proceeds to describe Melbourne, as it then was:--
Melbourne is situated, as you know, on the Yarra Yarra,* which has not nearly so large a bed as the Dart, although more navigable. It is narrow but very deep, and so far resembles a canal rather than a river. The town, or city, as they call it, is situated low, but laid out on a good scale. The streets are very wide, and I think when filled with houses it will be a fine place; but what spoils the appearance now is, the number of wooden buildings they are throwing up, as they cannot get workmen for others. When we were there, butter was from two shillings and fourpence to three shillings per pound, bread fourpence, milk eightpence per pint, vegetables enormous, butcher's meat and sugar, as at home. Fruit very dear; a shilling would not purchase as much as a penny in England. Beer and porter, one shilling per pint in Melbourne, but from two shillings to two and sixpence here. The town of Melbourne is all on one side of the river, but on the opposite bank is Canvas Town, connected with Melbourne by a good bridge of one arch. Canvas Town takes its name from being entirely composed of tents, except a few wooden erections, such as a public-

house, and the Immigrant's Home, where we had lodged. I do not like Melbourne in its present state. You are not safe out after sundown, and in a short time you will not be safe during the day. There were some men taken out of the river drowned, suspected to have been murdered, and several attempts at robbery, while we were there. I sold my box of chemicals, after taking out what I wanted, for 4 pounds, and the soda-water apparatus for 2 pounds 5 shillings. I also sold some books that we could not carry, but got nothing for them. Scientific works do not take. The people who buy everything here are the gold-diggers, and they want story books. A person I know brought out 100 pounds worth of more serious reading, and sold the lot for 16 pounds.

[* Footnote: A native term, which means "always running."]

We started from Melbourne on a Saturday, with the drays, eight bullocks to each, laden entirely with the luggage of the party, twenty-three in number. We made only five or six miles that afternoon, and slept under some gum trees. Our clothes were nearly saturated with dew; but as we advanced farther inland, the dews decreased, and in a night or two there was no sign of them. The land for a few miles is dry and sandy, but improves as you proceed. The woods extensive, sometimes without interval for two or three days' march. There was no scarcity of water, except for the first fifteen miles, after leaving Melbourne. We enjoyed the journey much, and shot many birds, which constituted our principal food. Ducks abound in the creeks,* and up this way there are fine white cockatoos, which are

good eating, and about the size of a small fowl. There is also a bird very plentiful here which they call a magpie. It is somewhat the colour of our magpie, but larger, and without the long tail; easily shot and eatable, and feeds, I believe, much like our wood-pigeons.** The pigeon here is a beautiful bird, of a delicate bronze colour, tinged with pink about the neck, and the wings marked with green and purple. They are tame, and nicer eating than those at home. Where we are, we have abundance of food; plenty of mutton, and we can get a duck, pigeon, or cockatoo whenever we like, almost without going out of sight of our hut, besides a good supply of fish in the river; Murray cod, which in the Murray are said sometimes to weigh eighty pounds, but in our creeks generally run from two to twelve; also a kind of mussel, and a fish like a lobster, not quite so large, but good eating.***

[* Footnote: Watercourses, running in flood time, but partially dry in dry seasons.]

[** Footnote: It feeds more on insects.]

[*** Footnote: Crawfish; the river lobster.]

Everyone who comes out does a very foolish thing in bringing such a quantity of clothes that he never wants. All you require, even in Melbourne, is a blue shirt, a pair of duck trousers, a straw hat or wide-awake, and what they call a jumper here. It is a kind of outside shirt, made of plaid, or anything you please, reaching just below the hips, and fastened round the waist with a belt. It would be a very nice dress for Charley.* I should wear it myself if I were in

England. It ought to be made with a good-sized collar, and open at the breast, like a waistcoat, only to button at the neck, if required. We brought out the wrong sort of straw hat, as they are only fit for summer, but we sold all but two. One I made six shillings of, but the cabbage-tree hat is worth a pound. No one should bring out more than he can carry on his back, except it be to sell. Boots and shoes are at a great price, but they should be thick and strong. Wages are very high for butchers, carpenters, and bakers. A butcher's boy can get 3 pounds a week, with board and lodging. Bullock-drivers get the same. Innkeepers are making fortunes. I know a public-house, not larger than the Two Mile Oak, [Footnote: A small public-house between Totnes and Newton.] that cleared 500 pounds in three months, so it was reported. Sydney, I hear, is as cheap to live in as London. As to the diggings, I cannot say much about them. I have seen many who have made money there, and many who have lost it again. It is generally spent as fast as it is got. I hope we shall send you some specimens of gold dust soon. Please to give my love to my mother and all at home.

[* Footnote: His youngest brother, at home.]

From your affectionate and dutiful son,
W.J. WILLIS.

His subsequent letters were of the same kind, descriptive of his management in his shepherd's life in the bush. He tells how he converted legs of mutton into excellent hams by pickling and smoking them; and how he also obtained

preserves of melons, by sowing seeds which produced abundantly. The flies and ants were their greatest torment, particularly the former. The heat was not great, as there was a constant breeze from one quarter or another. Deniliquin is in between 35 and 36 degrees south latitude. The trees are almost exclusively gum trees, but they differ in appearance and leaves, according to age and locality. This gives the appearance of variety, when, in fact, there is none. The wood is hard and splits easily. The bark is tough and thick, and can be converted into canoes by closing the ends of a piece taken from half the circumference of a tree, and tying a cord round the centre to keep it from spreading. The colour is of a beautiful red. A moisture sometimes exudes from the leaves in such abundance as to convey the idea of an animal having been slain under the branches. It has the smell of carraways and is agreeably sweet. "How it would delight Bessy and Hannah," (his young sisters, then quite children), he says, "to go into the woods, picking up comfits under the trees!"

He then speaks of the blacks in that district; of their habits and ideas; but expresses a low opinion of their intellectual powers, and thinks little can be done with them. In May, he wrote to his mother and myself conjointly, fearing his former communications might not have reached us, and briefly recapitulating their purport. I afterwards heard at Deniliquin that he had successfully performed a surgical operation. A shearer had run the point of his shears into the neck of a sheep, and opened the carotid artery. My son having a small pocket case of instruments, secured the vessel and saved the animal. I remember when it was

considered a triumph in practice to effect this on a human subject. The letter I am now alluding to concludes by hoping that we were all as comfortable at home as he and his brother were in the bush. He never tired of expatiating on the beauties of Australia and its climate. His next, in August, gave a more extended account of local peculiarities and features. Deniliquin is at this time (1862) a place of considerable importance, with a thriving population. The island on which my sons shepherded their rams is formed by two branches of the Edward River, which is itself a branch of the Murray.

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I arrive in Australia.
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Appointed to take Charge of a Party.
Letters on various Subjects to his Mother and Brother at Home.

In the month of August, 1853, I reached Melbourne, after a good voyage, having obtained an appointment as superintending surgeon of a government emigrant ship, commanded by Captain Young, a perfect sailor, and a gentleman I shall always remember with pleasurable feelings. More than two months elapsed before I could discover where my sons were. Having, at length, ascertained their locality, I purchased a horse and performed the journey in four days, resting one day on the road, at the station of Mr. Jefferies, on the Campaspe. I started at daylight, and made my fifty miles before halting, as I generally did about two P.M. I arrived at the shepherds' hut at five o'clock on a beautiful summer's evening, having remained two hours at the hotel at Deniliquin to refresh.

Robberies on the road--stickings up as they are called--were rife at this period. Thefts also were common at the resting-houses. A gentleman who arrived at this hotel, not long before I was there, took the saddle off his horse, and

placed it under the verandah: when he returned, after leading his animal to a paddock hard by, he missed the saddle, which he supposed had been removed by some person belonging to the house, and threw down his bridle on the same place. After taking something to drink with the landlord he said, "You have got my saddle."--"No." "I left it under the verandah, where I have just placed my bridle." On going out to show the spot, the bridle also had disappeared: both stolen. A good saddle and bridle at that time would fetch twenty pounds readily.

At the station I took a native black for my guide. He brought me to a place where my horse had nearly to swim across the creek, pointed to a dry path, exclaimed, "There," then turned his own animal and rode off. I followed the track for about three miles, and found myself in front of the hut. My sons were both at home. Tom called the attention of his brother to my approach. They appeared as much astonished as he describes the blacks near the Gulf of Carpentaria to have been at sight of himself and companions. Presently came the recognition, a shout of joy, and a greeting such as may readily be imagined, on the part of two boys on seeing the father they had not long before supposed to be separated from them by some sixteen thousand miles.

A few days after, we all left Deniliquin, each mounted on a horse, my sons having first disinterred their money, buried at the foot of a gum tree on a hillock which they considered as a safe bank of deposit. It was their intention to have made a present of the greatest part, 100 pounds, to their mother, on the first eligible opportunity of forwarding it. On our way back we paid a visit to the Bendigo diggings.

William here evinced his skill as an explorer by leading us, with the aid of his compass, through a trackless bush, by which we saved a circuit of several miles. At Matthison's hotel, on the Campaspe river, where we halted for the night, an amusing conversation occurred. In the evening there was a great gathering of all nations in the parlour. I undertook to tell the different parties of English, by their dialect, from what particular quarter they came. A person present, who articulated with much difficulty from having nearly lost the roof of his mouth, declared that he would defy any one to identify him by his speech. We all agreed that it exceeded our powers, when he informed us with a great effort that he was "a Kashman," meaning Scotchman.

On our return to Melbourne, we made preparations for a removal to Ballarat. William remained with me at the latter place for twelve months, attending to any patient that might come in my absence. He also opened a gold office adjoining my tent and did very well. Here he perfected a plan of his own for weighing specimens containing quartz and gold, in water, so as to find the quantity of each component. But he was ever pining for the bush. The "busy haunts of men" had no attraction for him. He preferred the society of a few to that of many, but the study of nature was his passion. His love was fixed on animals, plants, and the starry firmament. With regard to medicine, he used to say that it was not clear and defined in practice. He wanted to measure the scope of a disease, and to supply the remedies by mathematical rule. He saw, too, that medical men were less valued for their real worth than for their tact in winning confidence through the credulity of the public. This was particularly exemplified