

NARRATIVE
OF THE
UNITED STATES
EXPLORING EXPEDITION.

DURING THE YEARS

1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842.

BY

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COMMANDER U. S. N.

Dr. Osborne, R. N., has a farm likewise, near Lake Illawarra, which is now divided by a narrow sand-beach from the sea. This lake is shallow, and is about six miles long, by four miles wide. It contains a great quantity of fish, principally mullet.* Large quantities of shells are to be seen on its banks. These are burnt into lime, which is used both for building and as manure. On the borders of the lake reside several fishermen, and it is a general resort for the natives. Mullet, caught in large quantities, are salted and dried.

Daisy Bank, the seat of Dr. Osborne, is about ten miles from Woolongong. Here also our gentlemen met with that kind hospitality which reigns throughout this country. This part of the district is nearly all brought into cultivation. The mountain scenery is fine, and a few very large trees are conspicuous objects in it. The side of the mountain affords a good field for making botanical collections, as it is not easily accessible to cattle. A large accession was made to our collection of seeds. The woods were alive with birds, among which were the white cockatoo, which collects in flocks, and does infinite mischief to the wheat-fields. They are difficult to approach in consequence of the good look-out kept by the old birds. The small species of the kangaroo, called the wallaby, is found here, as are large black and diamond snakes, lizards, black and white cockatoos, and sand-leeches. The latter is much dreaded, as its bite is venomous, and produces ulcers. It is very troublesome, crawling up and attaching itself to the flesh, where it gloats upon the blood, and not unfrequently bursts from reptation.

This district is level, and was thought to resemble some parts of our own country, after the harvest was gathered in. Silicified wood is very common in Illawarra, and many stumps of it are seen in passing along the road. In some of them the texture of the wood is well preserved; and so natural is their aspect, that at first sight they appear as if they were now standing where they had originally grown. The diameter of some of them is about two and a half feet, and the whole mass is completely petrified. They are quite black, except where bleached by exposure.

The Illawarra district extends from Woolongong to Shoalhaven, and is the most interesting portion of Australia to visit. In this small compass is found some of the most remarkable of the sandstone scenery, and there is also an opportunity of viewing a basaltic formation, which is no where else to be found in the colony.

Kiama is remarkable for the number of deep and wild caverns,

* One of our gentlemen was assured by the fishermen that there were thirteen kinds of fish in Illawarra Lake.

through which the sea forces a passage to the distance of one hundred yards or more, sweeping along at a furious rate; and when the noise of its progress has nearly died away, loud thunderings are heard rushing through its vaults. The Blow-Hole of Kiama Point is already a place of some celebrity, and it merits to be so. A subterranean passage of about twenty feet broad by eighteen high, receives the advancing wave, which passes quietly along for two hundred feet. It then meets a basaltic wall, against which it dashes with a sullen roar, and passes upwards through a narrow opening above, rising at times to a height of one hundred feet, throwing off innumerable jets in all directions, and which fall around in ever-changing forms.

Some of the basaltic scenery about Kiama, will bear comparison with the far-famed Giant's Causeway, and the rocks of Staffa, if it does not surpass them, united as it is with the luxuriant and splendid forests of palms, tree-ferns, and the woody creepers of the tropics.

About Shoalhaven is one of the largest and finest farming and grazing districts in the colony. Its scenery is extremely picturesque, particularly when viewed from the summit of Coolomgata. The broad Shoalhaven river is seen to the southward, flowing through rich meadows and farms, enclosing a delta; while the deep and sinuous bays with which the coast is indented, and which enclose innumerable islets, appear like a crowded cluster of lakes.

To the north, a wide verdant plain extends to a mountain bluff, called Broughton's Head. Through this the Broughton river winds, and beyond it is seen the Illawarra mountain range.

On a wide platform around Woolongong Point, are to be seen at high-water mark, globular concretions, that resemble cannon-balls in appearance. They vary in size, from one inch to four in diameter, and are very compact and tough. They generally contain some foreign body, and in about a third of them, Mr. Dana found a single fossil shell in a beautiful state of preservation. For a full detail of the geological structure of this district, which is exceedingly interesting, I must refer to the Geological Report.

Mr. Hale and Mr. Agate made a jaunt to the Hunter river, and thence to Lake Macquarie, to the establishment of Mr. Threlkeld, the missionary employed among the aborigines.

The passage to Hunter river, a distance of eighty miles to the north of Sydney, is made in a steamer. The boat was small and ill-adapted for the sea.

Leaving Sydney just before dark, they reached Newcastle, at the mouth of the Hunter river, about noon the next day. They, however, had a head wind and much sea to contend against.

Among other accidents, the shipping of a sea caused much fright among the women on board, and threw one poor girl into hysterics. They were all glad to pass within the island of Nobbo, off the mouth of Hunter river, and to get on shore at Newcastle.

The town of Newcastle is a small village of seventy or eighty houses, built on the side of a hill; it contains two taverns and several grog-shops, a jail, convict stockade, hospital, court-house, and a venerable old-looking church. On one of the neighbouring hills is a flag-staff, and on another a windmill. The business of a coal-mine and that of the building of a breakwater for the protection of the harbour, give the place an air of life and animation.

Our travellers put up at Rowell's "Commercial Hotel;" and on proceeding to make inquiries relative to the mode of reaching Mr. Threlkeld's, they were referred to Dr. Brook, the surgeon of the hospital, and a friend of Mr. Threlkeld. He offered them every attention, and advised them to wait for Mr. Threlkeld's conveyance. This delay gave them an opportunity of seeing something of the place, and the natives, as well as to make drawings. The view of the surrounding country from the windmill was extensive, overlooking the town; the Hunter river was seen winding through a well-wooded country, rising occasionally into low hills. At a bend of the river the steamer was seen aground, on her way to Maitland, about twenty-five miles farther up the river. The coast trended to the north, and was visible as far as Port Stephens, about fifty miles distant.

There are two coal-pits, one on the hill, the other in the valley. The former is the older, and has been worked about eight years. Both are the property of the Australian Agricultural Company, and are under the direction of Mr. James Steel. The coal is first seen along the cliffs, forming black horizontal strata, separated by sandstone and clay shale, from twenty feet to forty feet in thickness. They formerly quarried it from the cliff, but the greater part of the coal is now obtained by mining.

From the older coal-pit they have excavated an area of twenty-four acres. The shafts are carried down about one hundred feet, to the fifth or lowermost coal-seam, which is about sixty feet below the level of the sea. The coal is at first taken out in small narrow areas, the passages in which are but four feet high, leaving about as much standing as is removed, the roof above being of fragile shale, and requiring propping every three or four feet. The work is all performed by convicts, who, after digging the coal out, take it in small carriages on railways, which pass to the shaft, where it is raised by steam-power. The lower bed only is considered sufficiently extensive

and pure to pay for its exploration, and is about three feet thick. The coal is pure, except a layer of one and a half inches of bluish sandstone. It is bituminous, and burns readily, with abundance of flame, somewhat like kennel coal. It is compact, though less so than the best Pittsburg and Liverpool, and is of fair quality, although sometimes impregnated with clay, which causes it to leave a large quantity of ashes.

Pyrites is occasionally disseminated in masses through it. Coal abounds throughout the valley of the Hunter, appearing at the surface in many places.

The average quantity of coal produced is sixty tons a day, which is piled up near the mouth of the pit, and thence sent to the pier on a railway, where it is shipped to Sydney, Van Diemen's Land, and even to the Cape of Good Hope.

The new shaft in the valley is only sixty feet deep, the difference of the two being in the height of the hill.

Dr. Brook was formerly superintendent of this station, and gave a droll account of the summary manner in which marriages were concluded with the female convicts. If he saw a man who had just come in from the country with a clean shirt on, he was sure he had come for a wife, and the event always justified his surmise. The man usually intimated his wish with a modest sheepish grin. The fair frail candidates for matrimony were paraded for his inspection, and if he found one whose looks pleased him, he put the plain question at once, "Will you have me?" He was seldom answered in the negative, for marriage liberates the lady from the restraint she was under. The banns were then announced by the parson for three Sundays, when the lucky swain returned to claim his bride.

From the known licentious and unruly character of the female convicts, it is not to be supposed that these marriages can be very fruitful of happiness; but as both parties had been felons, they are probably as well matched as could be expected.

The greatest difficulty the superintendent of a station has to contend with, is the management of the female convicts.

Captain Furlong, commandant of the garrison, was kind enough to show the convict stockade; it encloses a prison for the convicts, and a guard-house for the soldiers. The convicts all belong to the iron-gang, composed here, as at Sydney, of those who have been guilty of some crime in the colony. They were kept constantly in irons, and are employed on the public works. They eat and sleep in the same apartments, and their bed is a blanket on the floor; to guard two hundred convicts, there are seventy soldiers stationed here.

At Dr. Brook's they had the pleasure of meeting with Mr. Dawson, the first agent of the Australian Land Company, and the founder of Port Stephens, who is well acquainted with this colony, and has published a popular work in relation to it. He of course possessed much information, and among other opinions seemed to entertain the idea that no free colony can succeed, and that in all cases the first settlers of a new country ought to have the use of slave labour, in order to be successful. He argued that these only had realized fortunes; where they had been left to their own resources they had generally failed, and left it to their successors to reap the advantages of their labour. As evidence of this opinion he contrasted the settlements of New South Wales and Swan River. At the latter establishment it is well known that the first settlers have lost almost every thing, and have struggled with every difficulty, and that they now desire to have the advantages of convict labour. This remark, however, is not true as respects South Australia; and its general accuracy would undoubtedly much depend upon the location.

In their walks they came across a group of several blacks (natives) seated around a small fire; they were pointed out as the remnant of the tribes which about forty years ago wandered in freedom over the plains of the Hunter and around the borders of Lake Macquarie. Their appearance was wretched in the extreme: emaciated limbs, shapeless bodies, immense heads, deep-set glaring eyes, thickly-matted hair, and the whole begrimed with dirt and red paint, gave them an aspect hardly human. The dress (if such it could be called) of the women, was a loose ragged gown, and of the men, a strip of blanket wrapped round the middle, or a pair of tattered pantaloons, which but half performed their office.

Mr. Threlkeld's conveyance did not arrive, and not being able to get another, they determined to walk to Lake Macquarie, and for this purpose they resorted to the natives as guides, and by a great deal of coaxing and promises of bull (grog), their natural repugnance to make an exertion was overcome. An evidence of the pride which characterizes these natives was shown in this interview. One of them, whose *sobriquet* was Big-headed Blackboy, was stretched out before the fire, and no answer could be obtained from him, but a drawing repetition, in grunts of displeasure, of "*Bel (not) me want to go.*" After promises and expostulations enough to overcome all patience, Mr. Hale, tired of his obstinacy and stupidity, touched him slightly with his foot, telling him to get up and listen. He immediately arose, and seizing his spear, which was lying near him, turned his side towards Mr. Hale, and stood looking at him askance, with an expres-

sion of demoniac malice, as though he would have run him through with pleasure; but he did not speak a word in reply to all that was said to him.

Friday, 13th December, the morning being chilly, the blacks, who are very susceptible to cold, did not make their appearance till some hours after sunrise. At half-past eight our travellers set out in company with a troop of natives, headed by the two whom they had hired. The first of these was named *Jemmy*, the best-natured and most intelligent of all; the other was Big-headed Blackboy, who had got over his sulks. *Jemmy* refused to start until he had received a couple of shillings, which he forthwith converted into a loaf of bread and a bottle of grog. When about a mile from the town he asked permission to take a drink; and a cup of bark was produced from a thicket where it had been hidden, whereupon the contents of the bottle as well as the loaf were shared out among the troop. The two guides took no more than an equal portion; for, according to the custom of the natives, all share alike. The cup was made of a piece of the bark of the *ti tree*, which resembles that of the birch, about a foot square. The ends were folded in and tied together, to form a cavity of trough-like shape. Such cups are called by them *taudé*. The path or cart-road they followed, passed through a hilly country covered with forests. The gum trees were the most prevalent, and many of them were of great size, growing close together without any underwood.

The gum tree, of which there are many kinds, is peculiar to New Holland. It has an inner bark of about an inch thick, enclosed by an outer one which is quite thin. The latter is shed every year, which gives their trunks and branches a peculiar appearance of many colours, from pure white, through all the shades of yellow, olive, and red, to a deep brown. These colours, showing through the green foliage, produce a very striking effect on a stranger, and the contrast is heightened by an occasional sight of a black and withered trunk, from which the bark had been stripped by the natives to make canoes, or by settlers to roof their houses.

Ten miles brought them to Lake Macquarie, but on the opposite side to Mr. Threlkeld's house, and they found themselves disappointed in finding a canoe, which they were assured would be met with at a settler's on the banks of the lake. They were thus obliged to walk ten miles further. The guides were here again taken with sullenness, and refused to proceed. They were proof against all promises and abuse, and kept replying, "*Me marry (very) tired, bel (not) me want to go.*" Through the kindness of Mr. Warren, the settler referred to, this obstacle was overcome, by his offering to send his son as guide,

with a horse to carry the portmanteau. This offer was thankfully accepted.

After proceeding a few miles they came upon a little encampment of natives, crouching around fires in front of their huts, which were as rude as possible, made of a few pieces of bark laid against a stump and covered with bushes; they barely sufficed as a screen to keep off the wind. One of the women was quite good-looking, with large black eyes, white teeth, and small features. She was better dressed, too, than any of the others, and the pretty half-caste child that was clinging to her skirts, made it sufficiently evident in what manner her finery had been obtained. As a part of the lake was said to be fordable, it was determined to take advantage of it, in order to shorten the route. One mounted the horse to pass over. Whilst they were proceeding quietly along, the horse suddenly reared and plunged, relieving himself of his rider and load, which were thrown into water two feet deep, without any further injury than a good ducking, and the disparagement of the wardrobe. It was found that the horse had trodden upon a stingray, which fully accounted for his sudden gambols. It was sunset when they arrived at Mr. Threlkeld's station, which at first sight appeared like a comfortable farm-house, such as is often seen in our western country. Mr. Threlkeld was found busy attending to his cattle, and gave them a warm and friendly reception, which made them at once feel at home.

As Mr. Threlkeld has occupied a conspicuous place in this colony, it may be well to give a short sketch of his labours in the missionary field, in order to show the progress he has made, and the difficulties he has had to contend with. I do this more readily from the feeling that great injustice has been done him, and that he has suffered much contumely and persecution from those who were too prone to listen to the scandalous reports of interested individuals.

Mr. Threlkeld left England in 1814, as a missionary to the Society Islands; he resided with Mr. Williams, at Raiatea, until 1824, when the death of his wife determined him to pay a visit to England. About this time the inspectors of missionaries, Messrs. Tyerman and Bennet, arrived at the islands, and he took passage with them to Sydney. On their arrival at Sydney, these gentlemen, supposing that a favourable opportunity offered to establish a mission among the Australian aborigines, requested him to take charge of it, which he consented to do. Moreton Bay was at first proposed as the location, but it was afterwards changed to Lake Macquarie, the latter place being a favourite resort of the natives. Ten thousand acres were granted by government to the Missionary Society, in trust for the natives. The

establishment was accordingly begun on this lake, on the opposite side to that now occupied by Mr. Threlkeld, who at once planned his station on the only footing by which he thought a reasonable chance of success would be insured, that of a farming establishment, extensive enough to give employment to the natives, and induce them to settle. Their number, as is usually the case, had been greatly overrated; he soon, however, collected about fifty around him, and began to employ them in felling trees, turning up the ground, and building; at the same time labouring with them himself, in order to obtain such a knowledge of their character, language, habits, &c., as might enable him to become useful on the great subjects of his mission.

The expense of forming such an establishment was far greater than had been anticipated, but was indispensable in a country like New South Wales, where all the necessaries of life, at the commencement of a settlement, have to be purchased. Added to this are the droughts to which they are subject, and the expenses of transportation.

In consequence of the demands made upon them, the directors of the Society became alarmed, and after reproving him severely for his extravagance, finally dishonoured one of his drafts, and refused to pay it until compelled by a lawsuit. This, of course, broke his connexion with the Society, as Mr. Threlkeld was naturally indignant at the undeserved disgrace to which they had subjected him.

The directors offered to pay his passage to England, but this he refused, having determined to carry on the work by his own unassisted efforts.

That he might be independent of any funds of the Society, and to prevent its being said that he had derived any profit from them, he removed in 1828 to the opposite side of the lake, a position far less advantageous.

After struggling for two years to conduct the mission and maintain his large family, he received a stipend of one hundred and fifty pounds from the government, with the assignment of four convicts. With this assistance he has been able to provide for his family, and devote himself to the instruction of the aborigines; but he has found his means inadequate to keep a number employed about his station, in such a manner as to overcome their natural tendency to a wandering life.

The consequence was, that the blacks, from the attraction held out to them of indulging in drunkenness and other vices, left his neighbourhood to frequent the towns, where they had been rapidly diminishing in number.

Mr. Threlkeld did not find the natives deficient in intelligence; but he has not been able to overcome their aversion to a fixed residence.

In proof of this, they abandoned comfortable and substantial huts, which he built for them, after a few days' residence, on the plea that they were infested with vermin.

Frequently, they would all quit him to attend some meeting of their tribe, for war, hunting, or some religious ceremony, and stay away for months.

He laboured in vain against these disadvantages, and it is not difficult to perceive how impossible, under such circumstances, it would be to meet with success in teaching and converting a set of savages, so wedded to their usages.

Mr. Threlkeld's labours have, however, been turned to some advantage. He has published a grammar, and translated several of the books of the New Testament. His influence has been productive of a better tone of feeling between the blacks and the settlers than prevails elsewhere, and has prevented those outrages which have occurred in other parts of the country. He has been able to render essential service as an interpreter, both to the natives and government, in the courts.

A circumstance occurred about two years ago, which was the means of setting Mr. Threlkeld's whole conduct in its true light before the public.

The Rev. Dr. Lang, a minister of considerable notoriety in New South Wales, established a newspaper, which was in the habit of holding up and assailing all the abuses in the colony. Among others, he attacked Mr. Threlkeld, accusing him of malversation, unfaithfulness, and incapacity in his trust, and in a style of gross abuse, seconded by vulgar doggerel, gave grounds to the belief that he was actuated by any other than a proper zeal in the cause of missions. After great forbearance, Mr. Threlkeld wrote him a letter of remonstrance, which was at once published in the newspaper, accompanied with insulting comments. Mr. Threlkeld then instituted an action for libel, and obtained a verdict in his favour, which, although the damages were only nominal, is an uncommon thing in New South Wales, when a libel case is submitted to a jury. In the progress of the trial, the merits and sacrifices of the missionary were made apparent, and the faithfulness and diligence with which he had laboured, under so many disadvantages, became well known, for ever silencing the aspersions of his enemies. He had, in consequence, the satisfaction, not long since, of receiving a letter from the directors of the London Missionary Society, expressing their regret that they should have been led into such unjust suspicions and misplaced severity towards him.

Macquarie Lake communicates with the sea by a narrow inlet. Its shape is irregular, having several long narrow bays extending into the

land, and from this cause it is in reality much more extensive than it appears. The soil around is sterile, and its principal ingredient is sandstone. The lake is surrounded by the sombre green of the gum trees, and the landscape is uninviting.

Many ant-hills were passed, each appearing to contain a numerous colony of different species of ants. They are of various colours, red, black, gray, and yellow, and of all sizes, from that of minute animalculæ, to that of a wasp. Most of them were said to give poisonous bites, and those of the largest kinds had visible stings. Most of the snakes, small as well as large, are venomous to a high degree.

Mr. Threlkeld, like many others in the colony, had convict servants assigned for the use of the station. It is thought almost impossible for a settler to manage his affairs without them, and it is somewhat curious to see a clergyman associated and in daily intercourse with thieves and abandoned felons. There is scarcely a person in comfortable circumstances, who has not derived much of his fortune from their exertions, although not without suffering very much from the constant vexations attendant on such aid. Mr. Threlkeld had hired a family of emigrants as intermediate assistants, but he was doubtful if he had benefited himself by it.

The difference between the two kinds of servants is great. The convict, on the one hand, is obliged to do the work his master appoints, and in the exact manner he directs; but the master suffers from his vices and dishonesty; and on the other hand, the emigrant is under all his English prejudices: self-willed, and conscious of his superiority over the other servants, he will not be driven, and is hardly to be coaxed into adopting the necessary alterations which the difference of soil and climate requires. Both try, in no small degree, the temper of a settler in New South Wales.

At Mr. Threlkeld's, Mr. Hale saw M'Gill, who was reputed to be one of the most intelligent natives; and his portrait was taken by Mr. Agate. His physiognomy was much more agreeable than that of the other blacks, being less strongly marked with the peculiarities of his race. He was about the middle size, of a dark chocolate colour, with fine glossy black hair and whiskers, a good forehead, eyes not deeply set, a nose that might be described as aquiline, although depressed and broad at the base. It was very evident that M'Gill was accustomed to teach his native language, for when he was asked the name of any thing, he pronounced the word very distinctly, syllable by syllable, so that it was impossible to mistake it. Though acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, and all the comforts and advantages of civilization, it was impossible for him to overcome his attachment to the

customs of his people, and he is always a prominent leader in the corrobories and other assemblies.



M'GILL.

Mr. Threlkeld has a son, who is also engaged in missionary labours near Darling river, about three hundred miles in the interior, and who understands the language. A boy was sent down by the son for the father to take charge of. There was no difference perceived between him and the natives of the Hunter river.



NEW HOLLAND BOY.

Inquiries for their implements of the chase and warfare, caused M'Gill, King Ben, and Shingleman, to set to work to furbish up their

arms, including spears, shields, boomerengs, clubs, &c. The natives are seldom seen without arms, for they have not only to fear attacks from other tribes, but assaults from their own. This not unfrequently happens; and it is not long since the brother of King Ben was speared while asleep, for some private grudge, by Dismal; and it is said that Big-headed Blackboy, who has already been introduced to the reader, has committed several murders, and not long since burnt his mother nearly to death, in revenge for the loss of his brother, who died whilst under her care. This was not because he had any suspicions of unfair conduct, but simply from one of the unaccountable customs or superstitions of these people, which holds the nearest relative of a person accountable for his death, if it takes place under his care.

From the destructive influence of their own vices, and those of the community, these blacks are rapidly dying off. As an instance of this, Mr. Threlkeld mentioned that a tribe which occasionally visited the lake, and consisted at the time of his arrival of sixty, is now reduced, after a lapse of fifteen years, to twenty, only five of whom are females.

During our travellers' stay, two natives of some note arrived: King Ben and King Shingleman. The natives had no distinctions of rank among themselves, but when a native had performed any great service for one of the settlers, he was rewarded by giving him a large oval brass plate, with his royal title inscribed thereon. At first the natives were greatly pleased and proud of this mark of distinction, but as is the case every where, when the novelty was over, and these honorary medals became common, they began to hold them in disrepute, and now prefer the hard silver.

Sheep-shearing is performed in the neighbourhood of Lake Macquarie by men who make it their business. This operation was witnessed by some of our party, and was thought to be performed in a slovenly manner. It generally takes place in November and December.

Some others of our gentlemen paid a visit to Peuen Beuen, the seat of Mr. Stevens, near the head waters of the Hunter river. The route was by steamboat to Newcastle and thence to Maitland. The river at Newcastle is about one-third of a mile across, and the distance to Maitland, by water, about thirty miles, although it is only about twenty miles by land. The tide reaches Maitland, where the water is found to be brackish.

The banks of the river are extended flats. This is one of the principal agricultural districts of the colony, the soil enjoying the advantages of being naturally irrigated; but on the other hand, the crops are liable to destruction from heavy floods. These floods fre-

quently occur, when there has been no sign of bad weather on the coast; but storms of rain occur seventy or eighty miles in the interior, which raise the streams thirty or forty feet, doing great damage.

On the way up the Hunter, a steamboat was seen building. The best ship-timber is said to be the flooded gum tree. The steamboat stopped at Green Hill, and they rode to Maitland, about three miles. Maitland is a widely-scattered village, with many neat dwellings, stores, and shops, &c., built of brick and other materials, and much better than could have been anticipated. Near Harper's Hill, a place noted for the fossils which have been found there, a chain-gang was seen at work on the road, with their attendant guard. They were generally young and hearty-looking men.

Some natives were passed who were quite naked, but they did not attempt to approach. There are no wild tribes in this vicinity. These poor creatures are becoming rapidly exterminated by the whites, who are not over-scrupulous as to the means. The natives have now and then committed a murder, but in general they are more sinned against than sinning. It is remarkable that they do not complain of their lands being taken from them, but confine their lamentations to the destruction of the kangaroos by the whites; and they think it very hard that they should be punished for killing the white man's kangaroo, (a sheep or a bullock.)

Mr. Hale made a journey to the Wellington Valley, about two hundred and thirty miles to the northwest of Sydney, and on the frontiers of the colony. It was first occupied, seventeen years ago, as a military post, when several small brick buildings were erected, and some of the land, which is considered the most fertile in the colony, brought into cultivation. It was afterwards converted into a penal station, for a description of convicts called "Specials," or such as were superior in education and social rank.

In 1832, it was granted by government to the Church Missionary Society, in trust for the aborigines, with an annuity of five hundred pounds, in part as the support of a mission establishment on the grant; and ever since, there have been two ministers of the Society resident at the place, employed in endeavouring to convert and civilize the natives.

The only conveyance is the mails, unless a vehicle is purchased, the outlay for which would be about four hundred dollars. The mail was taken in preference to this mode, both as avoiding cost and as less liable to the dangers of journeying alone. On account of the numerous Bush-rangers and runaway convicts, travelling in New South Wales is not considered safe.

The mail leaves Sydney once a week for Wellington Valley. There is some difficulty in procuring a seat, and the fare is thirty-two dollars and fifty cents; a very exorbitant charge considering the mode of conveyance, which was a two-wheeled vehicle, with seats for five persons. It had no top, and was in all respects a very uncomfortable conveyance. Formerly more commodious coaches were employed; but the government, finding that the contractors, in their anxiety to obtain passengers, were accustomed to delay the mail, ordered that none but two-wheeled vehicles should be used. The party left Sydney about 5 P. M. Three miles from town is an inn at which the mail-carts from all parts of the country meet, so as to enter the city in company at 8 A. M. For every minute of delay after this hour, the penalty of a shilling is exacted.

The post-office department is now under excellent regulations; the number of miles of mail route travelled in the colony is nearly three hundred thousand, and the gross revenue amounts to eight thousand three hundred and ninety pounds, being two thousand pounds more than the expenditure. The rate of postage is high, especially on ship-letters. The post was established in 1828, and at the end of the first year only eight post-offices were opened. In 1830, there were forty, showing the great increase of population and business.

The route towards Wellington Valley lay through Paramatta; and about 11 P. M. Penrith, thirty-six miles from Sydney, and on the Nepean, was reached. The mail left Penrith at four o'clock in the morning, and crossed the river on a raft. The Nepean, on its course towards the sea, assumes the name of Hawkesbury, and becomes the largest stream in the eastern part of the colony. At Penrith it is about one hundred and fifty yards wide, and forms the eastern boundary of the Emu Plains,—an interval of level ground, five or six miles broad, between the river and the Blue Mountains.

These mountains are the dividing range between the lands of the coast and the interior, and were, for many years after the establishment of the colony, considered as impassable, although many unsuccessful attempts to cross them were made previous to the administration of Governor Macquarie. During his administration, he sent out many expeditions by land and sea, and in 1814, a passage was effected, and the plains of Bathurst were discovered.

On reaching this part of the country, one is no longer surprised that these mountains were considered impassable. The barrier consists of a broad belt of mountainous country, about fifty miles in width, and varying in height from one thousand to three thousand five hundred feet, according to Mitchell. The route which was followed through