

**Jules Verne's
The Children of
Captain Grant**



A Journey Around the World

**In Search of
the Castaways**

Book 2: Australia

LES ÉVÉNEMENTS
DU
CAPITAINE GRANT

VOYAGE AUTOUR DU MONDE



VOYAGES EXTRAORDINAIRES

The Children of Captain Grant

A Journey Around the World
In Search of the Castaways

An Extraordinary Voyage
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Book 2: Australia

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Chapter I

The Return Onboard

THE FIRST FEW MOMENTS BACK ON BOARD THE *DUNCAN* WERE DEVOTED TO THE HAPPINESS of being reunited with their friends and loved ones. Lord Glenarvan did not want the failure of their search to take away everyone's joy, so his first words were "Trust me, my friends! Captain Grant is not with us, but we are sure to find him!"

Only such an assurance as this could have restored hope to those on board the *Duncan*. Lady Helena and Mary Grant had been sorely tried by the suspense as they stood on the poop waiting for the return of the boat, trying to count the number of its passengers. Sometimes the girl was desperate; at others she imagined seeing her father. Her heart throbbed and she could not speak, and indeed could scarcely stand. Lady Helena put her arm around her waist to support her, but John Mangles — who stood close beside them — spoke no encouraging word, for his practiced eye plainly saw that Captain Grant was not there.



"He *is* there! He *is* coming! Oh, Father!" murmured the young girl. The searchers were not a hundred fathoms from the yacht when not only Lady Helena and John Mangles, but Mary herself — her eyes bathed in tears — had lost all hope, but for the reassuring voice of Glenarvan.

After the first embraces, Lady Helena, Mary Grant, and John Mangles were informed of the main events of the expedition, and especially of the new interpretation of the document, due to the sagacity of Jacques Paganel. Glenarvan also praised Robert, of whom Mary might well be proud. His courage and devotion — and the dangers he had run — were all emphasized, until the modest boy did not know where to hide if his sister's arms hadn't offered him a refuge.

"No need to blush, Robert," said John Mangles. "Your conduct has been worthy of your name." And he leaned over the boy and pressed his lips on his

cheek, still wet with Mary's tears.

The Major and Paganel, it need hardly be said, came in for their due share of welcome, and Lady Helena only regretted she could not shake hands with the brave and generous Thalcave. MacNabbs, after the first outbursts, slipped away to his cabin and began to shave himself as coolly and composedly as possible. Paganel fluttered about here and there, like a bee sipping the sweets of compliments and smiles. He wanted to embrace everyone on board the yacht, beginning with Lady Helena and Mary Grant, and finishing with Mr. Olbinett, the steward, who could only acknowledge so polite an attention by announcing that breakfast was ready.

"Breakfast?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes, Monsieur Paganel."

"A real breakfast, on a real table, with a cloth and napkins?"

"Certainly, Monsieur Paganel."

"And we shall neither have *charqui*, nor hard eggs, nor fillets of rhea?"

"Oh, Monsieur!" said Olbinett, in an aggrieved tone.

"I don't want to hurt your feelings, my friend," said the smiling geographer. "But for a month that has been our usual bill of fare, and when we dined we stretched ourselves full length on the ground, unless we sat astride on the trees. Consequently, the meal you have just announced seemed to me like a dream, or fiction, or chimera."

"Well, Monsieur Paganel, come along and let us prove its reality," said Lady Helena, who could not help laughing.

"Here is my arm," said the gallant geographer.

"Has Your Honour any orders to give me for the *Duncan*?" asked John Mangles.

"After breakfast, John," replied Glenarvan. "We'll discuss the program of our new expedition *en famille*."

Mr. Olbinett's breakfast seemed quite a *fête* to the hungry guests. It was pronounced excellent, and even superior to the feasts of the Pampas. Paganel helped himself twice to each dish, "by distraction," he said.

This unfortunate word reminded Lady Helena of the amiable Frenchman's propensity, and made her ask if he had ever fallen into his old habits while they were away. The Major and Glenarvan looked at each other with a smile; and Paganel burst out laughing, and pledged "on his honour" that he would never be caught distracted again during the whole voyage. After this prelude, he gave an

amusing recital of his disastrous mistake in learning Spanish, and his profound study of Camões.

"After all," he added, "it's an ill wind that blows no good, and I don't regret the mistake."

"Why not, my worthy friend?" asked the Major.

"Because not only do I now speak Spanish, but also Portuguese. I have gained two languages instead of one."

"Upon my word, I never thought of that," said MacNabbs. "My compliments, Paganel! My sincere compliments."

Everyone applauded Paganel, but he did not skip a single bite. He ate and talked at the same time. He was so much taken up with his plate that one little fact quite escaped his observation, though Glenarvan noticed it at once. This was that John Mangles had grown particularly attentive to Mary Grant. A slight sign of Lady Helena to her husband told him that it was "like that!" Glenarvan looked at the two youngsters with affectionate sympathy, but when he spoke to John Mangles it was on a different subject.

"And your journey, John?" he asked. "How did it go?"

"We had excellent conditions; but I must apprise your Lordship that I did not go through the Straits of Magellan again."

"What? You doubled Cape Horn, and I wasn't there!" exclaimed Paganel.

"Oh, hang yourself!" said the Major.

"Égoïste! You only say that because you want the rope!" said the geographer. [fn1](#)

"Come, my dear Paganel," said Glenarvan. "Unless you have the gift of ubiquity you can't be everywhere. While you were crossing the plains of the Pampas you could not be doubling Cape Horn."

"That doesn't prevent my regretting it," said Paganel.

They dropped that subject, and John Mangles continued his account of his voyage. He had hugged the American coast, and observed all the western archipelagos without finding any trace of the *Britannia*. On arriving at Cape Pilares he had found the winds dead against him, and therefore continued south. The *Duncan* had followed the coast of Desolation Island, and after reaching the [57th](#) [fn2](#) degree of southern latitude, had doubled Cape Horn, passed by Terra del Fuego and through the Straits of Lemaire. Then they followed the Patagonian coast northward again. At Cape Corrientes they encountered the terrible storm which had assaulted the travellers so violently — but the yacht had handled it well — and for the last three days they had cruised off the coast, until the welcome signal-

gun of the expedition was heard announcing the arrival of the anxiously-looked-for party. As for Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant, the Captain of the *Duncan* would be unjust in disregarding their rare fearlessness. The storm did not frighten them, and if they manifested any fears, it was for their friends wandering the plains of the Argentine Republic.

After John Mangles had finished his narrative, and received the compliments of Lord Glenarvan, he turned to Mary. "My dear Miss Mary, the Captain has been doing homage to your noble qualities, and I am happy to think that you do not dislike being aboard his ship!"

"How could it be otherwise?" said Mary, looking at Lady Helena, and perhaps at the young Captain too.

"Oh! My sister likes you, Mr. John!" said Robert. "And so do I."

"And I like you too, my dear boy," said the Captain, a little disconcerted by Robert's words which had brought a faint blush to Mary's cheek.

He shifted the conversation to less fraught ground. "Since I have finished telling of the *Duncan's* journey, will Your Honour give us some more details of your crossing of America, and the exploits of our young hero?"

No story could be more agreeable to Lady Helena and Mary Grant; Lord Glenarvan hastened to satisfy their curiosity. He related, incident by incident, the entire march from one ocean to another: the passage over the Andes, the earthquake, the disappearance of Robert, his capture by the condor, Thalcave's gunshot, the episode of the red wolves, the dedication of the young boy, Sergeant Manuel, the flood, the refuge in the *ombú*, the lightning, the fire, the caimans, the waterspout, and the night on the Atlantic shore. All these details, happy or terrible, excited laughter and terror in turns in his listeners. Many circumstances were reported that earned Robert hugs from his sister and Lady Helena. Never before was a boy so much embraced, or by such enthusiastic friends.

"And now, friends, we must think of the present." said Lord Glenarvan when he had finished his story. "The past is gone, but the future is ours. Let us come back to Captain Harry Grant."

Breakfast was over; the guests returned to Lady Glenarvan's private cabin and seated themselves around a table covered with charts and plans, and the conversation began immediately.

"My dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan, "I told you, when we came on board a little while ago, that though we had not brought back the castaways of the *Britannia*, our hope of finding them was stronger than ever. Our passage through

America has resulted in the conviction, or I should say the certainty, that the catastrophe did not take place on the Pacific or on the Atlantic coasts. The natural inference is that, as far as regards Patagonia, our interpretation of the document was erroneous. Fortunately, our friend Paganel, enlightened by a sudden inspiration, discovered the error. He has demonstrated that we have been on the wrong track, and interpreted the document in such a way as to leave no hesitation in our minds. I will ask Paganel to go over it for your benefit."

The learned geographer, thus called upon, began to speak in the most convincing manner. He declaimed on the syllables "gonie" and "indi", and extracting *Australia* out of "austral." He pointed out that Captain Grant, on leaving the coast of Peru to return to Europe, might have been carried away with his disabled ship by the southern currents of the Pacific right to the shores of Australia. His hypotheses were so ingenious and his deductions so subtle that even the matter-of-fact John Mangles, a difficult judge, and most unlikely to be led away by any flights of imagination, was completely satisfied.

At the conclusion of Paganel's dissertation, Glenarvan announced that the *Duncan* would sail immediately for Australia.

But before the order was given to head east, Major MacNabbs asked to make a simple observation.

"Say away, MacNabbs," replied Glenarvan.

"My aim," said the Major, "is not to weaken the arguments of my friend Paganel, still less to refute them. I find them serious, sagacious, worthy of all our attention, and they must rightly form the basis of our future search. But I want them to undergo a final review so that their value is indisputable and undisputed."

No one knew where the prudent MacNabbs was going, and they all listened with some anxiety.



The learned geographer, thus called upon, began to speak

“Go on, Major,” said Paganel. “I am ready to answer all your questions.”

“They are simple enough, as you will see. Five months ago, when we left the Firth of Clyde, we had studied these same documents, and their interpretation seemed obvious to us. No other coast but the western coast of Patagonia could possibly, we thought, have been the scene of the shipwreck. We had not even the shadow of a doubt on the subject.”

“That’s true,” said Glenarvan.

“A little later,” continued the Major, “when Paganel, in a moment of providential distraction, came on board the *Duncan*, the documents were submitted to him and he approved our plan of to search the American coast without reservation.”

“I do not deny it,” said Paganel.

“And yet we were mistaken,” said the Major.

“Yes, we were mistaken,” said Paganel. “It is only human to make a mistake, but to persist in a mistake, a man must be a fool.”

“Wait, Paganel, don’t excite yourself; I don’t mean to say that we should prolong our search in America.”

“What is it, then, that you want?” asked Glenarvan.

“An admission, nothing more. The admission that Australia now seems to be the scene of the sinking of the *Britannia* as evidently as America did before.”

“I willingly admit it,” said Paganel.

“I take note of it,” said the major, “and I take advantage of it to engage your imagination in challenging these successive and contradictory interpretations. Who knows if, after Australia, another country will not offer us the same certainties, and if this new search is made in vain, it will not seem ‘obvious’ that it must be recommenced elsewhere?”

Glenarvan and Paganel looked at each other silently, struck by the justice of these remarks.

“I should like you, before we actually start for Australia, to make one more examination of the documents.” said the Major. “Here they are, and here are the charts. Let us take up each point in succession through which the 37th parallel passes, and see if we come across any other country which would agree with the precise indications of the document.”

“Nothing is easier, and less time-consuming,” said Paganel, “for happily, land does not abound in this latitude.”

“Come,” said the major, unfolding an English Mercator projection map of the

entire globe.

He placed it before Lady Helena, and they all stood around so as to be able to follow Paganel's demonstration.

"As I have said already," said the learned geographer, "after having crossed South America, the 37th degree of latitude meets the islands of Tristan da Cunha. Now I maintain that none of the words of the document could relate to these islands."

The documents were scrupulously examined, they all agreed that Paganel was correct. There was nothing in the documents that indicated Tristan da Cunha.

"Let us continue," said Paganel. "After leaving the Atlantic, we pass two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Indian Ocean. Only one group of islands is found on this route, the Amsterdam Islands. Now then, we must examine these as we did Tristan da Cunha."

After a close survey, the Amsterdam Islands were ousted in their turn. Not a single word, or part of a word, French, English or German, applied to this group in the Indian Ocean.

"Now we come to Australia," said Paganel. "The 37th parallel meets this continent at Cape Bernouilli, and leaves it at Twofold Bay. You will agree with me that, without straining the text, the English fragment 'stra' and the French one 'austral' may relate to Australia. I trust that this is obvious enough." Everyone agreed with Paganel's conclusion; this interpretation seemed quite reasonable.

"Let us keep going," said MacNabbs.

"After leaving Twofold Bay, we cross this stretch of sea eastward to New Zealand. Here I must call your attention to the fact that the word 'contin' from the French document irrefutably indicates a continent. So Captain Grant can not have found refuge on New Zealand, which is only an island. Be that as it may, examine and compare, and turn over each word, and see if — by any possibility — they can be made to fit this new country."

"In no way whatever," said John Mangles, after a careful observation of the documents and the map.

"No," agreed all the rest, including the Major, "it cannot be New Zealand."

"Now," continued Paganel, "in all this immense space between New Zealand and the American coast, there is only one solitary barren little island crossed by the 37th parallel."

"And what is its name," asked the Major.

"Here it is, marked in the map. It is Maria Theresa, a name of which I can find

no trace in any of the three documents.”

“None,” said Glenarvan.

“I leave you, then, my friends, to decide whether all these probabilities — not to say certainties — are not in favour of the Australian continent?”

“Of course,” said the passengers and the Captain of the *Duncan*.

“Well, then, John,” said Glenarvan, “the next question is, have you provisions and coal enough?”

“Yes, Your Honour, I took in an ample store at Talcahuano, and besides, we can easily replenish our stock of coal at Cape Town.”

“Well, then, give the—”

“Let me make one more observation,” interrupted MacNabbs.

“Go on then.”

“Whatever likelihood of success Australia may offer us, wouldn’t it be advisable to stop a day or two at the Tristan da Cunha and Amsterdam Islands? They lie in our route, and would not take us the least out of the way. Then we should be able to ascertain if the *Britannia* had left any traces of her shipwreck there?”

“The incredulous Major!” exclaimed Paganel. “He sticks to his idea.”

“I especially don’t want to retrace our steps, if by chance, Australia should disappoint our hopes.”

“It seems to me a reasonable precaution,” said Glenarvan.

“And I’m not the one to dissuade you from it,” said Paganel. “Quite the contrary.”

“Then, John,” said Glenarvan, “set your course for Tristan da Cunha.”

“Immediately, Your Honour,” replied the Captain, and he returned to the deck, while Robert and Mary Grant gave Lord Glenarvan their most sincere thanks.

Soon, the *Duncan* had left the American coast, and was running eastward, her swift bow splitting the waves of the Atlantic Ocean.

[fn1.](#) It was a common nineteenth century superstition that it was good luck to possess a piece of the rope used to hang a man. — DAS

[fn2.](#) Verne has them reaching the 67th degree, which would put them inside the Antarctic Circle, and run them into the Antarctic Peninsula. 57° S still clears Cape Horn by a respectable margin. — DAS

Chapter II

Tristan da Cunha

IF THE YACHT HAD FOLLOWED THE LINE OF THE EQUATOR, THE 196 DEGREES WHICH separate Australia from America, or, more correctly, Cape Bernouilli from Cape Corrientes, would have been equal to 11,760 nautical miles;[fn1](#) but along the 37th parallel these same degrees, owing to the shape of the Earth, only represent 9,480 nautical miles.[fn2](#) From the American coast to Tristan da Cunha is 2,100 miles[fn3](#) — a distance which John Mangles hoped to cross in ten days if east winds didn't slow the yacht. But any worry on that score was soon allayed for toward evening the breeze noticeably lulled and then changed, and the *Duncan* was able to display all her incomparable speed on a calm sea.

The passengers had resumed their ordinary shipboard life, and it hardly seemed as if they had been gone for a whole month. Instead of the Pacific, the Atlantic stretched itself out before them, and there was scarcely a shade of difference in the waves of the two oceans. The elements, after having handled them so roughly, now seemed to be uniting in their favour. The ocean was peaceful, and the wind was on the beam, so that the yacht could spread all her canvas to lend its aid to the indefatigable steam stored up in the boiler.

The crossing was completed without incident or accident. The closer they came to Australia, the more their confidence grew. They began to talk of Captain Grant as if the yacht were going to take him on board at their Australian port of call. His cabin was prepared, and berths for his men. Mary delighted in arranging and decorating it with her own hands. It had been ceded to him by Mr. Olbinett, who was now sharing a cabin with his wife. This cabin was next to the famous number six, which Paganel had taken possession of instead of the one he had booked on the *Scotia*.

The learned geographer spent most of his time shut up in his cabin. He was working from morning till night on a work entitled *Sublime Impressions of a Geographer in the Argentine Pampas*. They could hear him repeating elegant phrases aloud before committing them to the white pages of his notebook; and more than once — unfaithful to Clio, the muse of history — he invoked in his transports the divine Calliope, the muse of epic poetry.

Paganel made no secret of it, either. The chaste daughters of Apollo willingly left the slopes of Helicon and Parnassus at his call. Lady Helena paid him sincere compliments on his mythological visitants, and so did the Major.

“But above all,” he added, “no distractions, my dear Paganel. And if by chance you take a fancy to learn Australian, don’t go and study it in a Chinese grammar!”

Things went smoothly on board. Lady Helena and Lord Glenarvan watched the growing attraction between John Mangles and Mary Grant with interest. There was nothing to be said against it, and, indeed, since John remained silent, it was best not to mention it to him, either.

“What will Captain Grant think?” Lord Glenarvan asked his wife one day.

“He will think that John is worthy of Mary, my dear Edward, and he’ll be right.”

The yacht was making rapid progress. Five days after losing sight of Cape Corrientes on the 16th of November, they fell in with fine westerly breezes, the very ones which take the ships which round the tip of Africa against the regular south-easterly winds. The *Duncan* covered herself with canvas, and under her foresail, brigantine, topsail and topgallant, studsails, jibs and stays, she ran on the port tack with daring speed. Her screw was barely biting the receding waters cut by her bow, as if she were running a race with the *Royal Thames Yacht Club*.

Next day, the ocean was covered with immense sea-weeds, looking like a vast pond choked with grass. It was one of those sargasso seas formed of the debris of trees and plants torn off the neighbouring continents that Commander Murray had described. The *Duncan* seemed to be gliding over a broad prairie, which Paganel compared to the Pampas, and her speed slackened a little.

Twenty-four hours later, at dawn, the man on the look-out was heard calling out “*Land ho!*”

“In what direction?” asked Tom Austin, who was on watch.

“*Leeward!*” said the sailor.

This excited cry had everyone popping up on deck. Soon a telescope made its appearance, followed immediately by Jacques Paganel.

The scientist pointed his instrument in the direction indicated, but could see nothing that resembled land.

“Look in the clouds,” said John Mangles.

“*Ah,*” said Paganel. “Now I do see it. A sort of peak, but very indistinctly.”

“It is Tristan da Cunha,” said John Mangles.

“Then if my memory serves me right, we must be eighty miles from it,” said Paganel. “For Tristan’s peak, seven thousand feet high, is visible at that distance.”

“Precisely,” said Captain John.

Some hours later, the sharp, lofty crags of the group of islands stood out clearly on the horizon. The conical peak of Tristan looked black against the bright sky which seemed all ablaze with the splendour of the rising sun. Soon the main island emerged from the rocky mass, its triangular peak inclining toward the north-east.

Tristan da Cunha is situated at 37° 8' of southern latitude, and 10° 44' of longitude west of the Greenwich meridian.^{fn4} Inaccessible Island is eighteen miles to the southwest, and Nightingale Island is ten miles to the southeast. They make up a solitary little group of islets in the Atlantic Ocean.

Toward noon, the two principal landmarks which are used as recognition points by sailors were sighted: a rock, shaped like a ship under sail on Inaccessible Island, and two islets similar to a ruined fort at the northern point of Nightingale Island. At three o'clock the *Duncan* entered Falmouth Bay of Tristan da Cunha, sheltered from the westerly winds by the tip of Bon-Secours point.

A few whaling ships were lying quietly at anchor there, for the coast abounds in seals and other marine animals.

John Mangles' first concern was to find good anchorage, for this bay is very vulnerable to northwest and northwesterly winds. It was at precisely this place that the English brig *Julia* was lost in 1829. The *Duncan* came to rest half a mile from shore, and dropped anchor on a rocky seabed, twenty fathoms deep. All the passengers, both ladies and gentlemen, got into the long boat and were rowed ashore. They stepped out on a beach covered with fine black sand, the debris of the volcanic rocks of the island.

The capital of the Tristan da Cunha group consists of a little village overlooking the bay on a large, murmuring brook. There were about fifty houses, quite clean, and arranged with the geometrical regularity which seems to be the last word in English architecture. Behind this miniature town lay 1,500 hectares of meadow,



The conical peak of Tristan looked black against the bright sky

bounded by an embankment of lava. The conical peak rose 7,000 feet above this plateau.

Lord Glenarvan was received by a governor from the English colony at Cape Town. He inquired at once respecting Harry Grant and the *Britannia*, and found the names entirely unknown. The Tristan da Cunha Islands are out of the shipping lanes, and therefor rarely visited. Since the famous wreck of the *Blendon Hall* on the rocks of Inaccessible Island in 1821, two vessels have stranded on the main island — the *Primanguet* in 1845, and the American three-master *Philadelphia* in 1857. These three events comprise the whole catalogue of maritime disasters in the annals of the da Cunhas.

Lord Glenarvan had not expected to glean any more precise information, and only asked the governor for the sake of thoroughness. He even sent the boats to make the circuit of the island, the circumference of which was not more than twenty-five miles.^{fn5} London or Paris wouldn't fit on the island, even if it were three times larger.

In the interim the passengers walked about the village and the neighbouring coast. The population didn't exceed 150 inhabitants, and consisted of Englishmen and Americans, married to Hottentots from Cape Town who leave nothing to be desired in terms of ugliness. The children of those heterogeneous households are very disagreeable compounds of Saxon stiffness and African darkness.

The tourists extended their promenade along the shore, glad to feel the firm ground beneath their feet. Wide spreading pastures stretched upward from the beach, the only part of the island which was cultivated. Everywhere else the coast was composed of steep, craggy, lava cliffs, where enormous albatrosses and stupid penguins congregated in hundreds of thousands.

The visitors, after examining the igneous rocks, went up to the plain. Sparkling, burbling brooks ran here and there, fed by the eternal snows which crowned the cone. Green bushes on which the eye could count almost as many sparrows as flowers, enlivened the meadows. One species of tree, a kind of *Phyllica* grew twenty feet high, and the *Spartina arundinacea*, or tussac grass, grew in large bamboo-like clumps in the fertile pastures. Acaena, a low bush with reddish flowers and a fruit covered in barbs that clung to clothing, a few perennial shrubby plants whose balsamic scents filled the breeze with penetrating scents, mosses, wild celery, and ferns formed a small but opulent flora. Eternal spring seemed to smile on the island. Paganel enthusiastically maintained that this was the famous Ogygia sung of by Homer. He proposed that Lady Glenarvan should seek a grotto, like Calypso,

and asked for no other use for himself than to be “one of the nymphs who served her.”

The party returned to the yacht at nightfall, talking, and admiring the natural riches displayed on all sides. Herds of cattle and sheep grazed in the neighbourhood of the village. Fields of wheat, maize, and vegetables — imported forty years before — spread their wealth to the edges of the capital.

The boats returned to the *Duncan* as Lord Glenarvan was coming back aboard. They had gone around the entire island in a few hours, without coming across a trace of the *Britannia*. The only result of this circumnavigation was to strike the name of Tristan Island from the search programme.

The *Duncan* could now leave these African Islands and resume her course eastward. The reason that she did not set sail that same night was that Glenarvan had given permission to his crew to hunt the innumerable seals which, under the name of calves, lions, bears, and marine elephants, crowd the shores of Falmouth Bay. Right whales were formerly also very numerous about the island, but they have been chased and harpooned by so many ships' crews that scarcely any were left. Amphibious animals, on the other hand, gathered there in herds, and the crew of the yacht resolved to spend the whole night in hunting them, and to devote the next day to making a good supply of oil. So the *Duncan's* departure was postponed until November 20th.

During supper, Paganel gave some interesting details about the Tristan Islands. He informed his listeners that the group was discovered in 1506 by a Portuguese mariner, named Tristão da Cunha, one of Albuquerque's companions, but they remained unexplored for more than a century. These islands were believed, and not without reason, to be the nests of tempests, and had no better reputation than Bermuda. They were scarcely ever approached, and no ship landed there, unless driven by Atlantic gales.

In 1697, three Dutch ships of the East India Company stopped there, and determined their coordinates, leaving to the great astronomer Halley the task of reviewing their calculations in the year 1700. From 1712 to 1767, some French navigators became acquainted with them, and La Pérouse^{fn6} visited them during his famous voyage of 1785.

It was not until 1811 that an American, Jonathan Lambert, undertook to colonize them. He and two others landed there in the month of January, and courageously commenced their labours as colonists. The English governor of the Cape of Good Hope, hearing that they prospered, offered them the protection of

England, which Jonathan accepted, and hoisted the British flag over his hut. He seemed to have reigned peacefully over his people — namely an old Italian and a Portuguese mulatto — until one day during a reconnaissance of the shores of his empire he either drowned himself or was drowned; it is not known which. Then came the year 1816, when Napoleon was imprisoned at St. Helena, and to guard him more securely, the English government placed a garrison on Ascension Island, and another on Tristan da Cunha. At Tristan the garrison consisted of a Cape artillery company and a detachment of Hottentots. In 1821, on the death of Napoleon, the troop was sent back to Cape Town.

“A solitary European, who was a corporal, and a Scot—”

“Ah, a Scot!” said the Major, always interested in his countrymen.

“His name was William Glass,” said Paganel, “and he remained alone on the island with his wife and two Hottentots. Not long afterwards, two Englishmen — a sailor and Thames fisherman, and an ex-dragoon in the Argentinian army — joined the little party, and in 1821 one of the survivors of the shipwrecked *Blendon Hall* and his young wife took refuge on the island. This raised the number of inhabitants to six men and two women. In 1829 there were seven men, six women, and fourteen children. In 1835 the number rose to forty, and now the population is tripled.”

“So begin nations,” said Glenarvan.

“To complete the history of Tristan da Cunha, I will add that this island deserves to be called a Robinson Crusoe island as much as Juan Fernandez, for if two sailors were castaways successively on Juan Fernandez, two scholars narrowly escaped being left on Tristan da Cunha. In 1793 one of my countrymen — the naturalist Aubert Dupetit-Thouars — carried away by his passion for botanical research, lost himself, and only managed to rejoin his ship at the very moment the anchor was being lifted. In 1824 one of your compatriots, my dear Glenarvan, a skilful draughtsman named Augustus Earle, was left on the island for eight months. The Captain of his ship had forgotten he was on land, and sailed for Cape Town without him.”

“Well, that’s what I call an absent-minded captain,” said the Major. “Probably one of your parents, Paganel.”

“If he was not Major, he deserved to be!”

During the night the *Duncan’s* crew had such good hunting that upward of fifty large seals were caught; and as Glenarvan had authorized the hunt, he could not

but allow his men to make the most of it. The following day was spent in dressing the skins, and in preparing the oil of the lucrative animals. The passengers used the day for a second excursion around the island. Glenarvan and the Major took their rifles with them in hopes of finding game. This walk extended to the foot of the mountain on a soil strewn with broken rocks, slag, porous and black lava, and all sorts of volcanic detritus. The foot of the mountain was a chaos of tottering rocks. It was hard to mistake the nature of the enormous cone, and the English captain Carmichael was right to recognize it as an extinct volcano.^{fn7}



The *Duncan's* crew had a good hunt

Several wild boars were seen by the hunters, one of which was shot by the Major. Glenarvan contented himself with killing a few brace of black partridges, which made an excellent salmis when cooked. A large number of goats were seen at the top of the high plateaus. Numerous feral cats, fierce, proud, powerful creatures, formidable even to dogs, promised one day to become very ferocious beasts.

At eight o'clock everyone returned on board, and during the night the *Duncan* set sail, and left the shores of Tristan da Cunha, never again to revisit them.

^{fn1.} [5,450 leagues](#) (21,800 kilometres. — DAS)

^{fn2.} [4,400 leagues](#) (17,600 kilometres. — DAS)

The *Hetzel* version seems to have goofed in its arithmetic again, giving incorrect distances in its footnotes. The distances given in nautical miles in the text is correct. — DAS

^{fn3.} [875 leagues](#) (3,380 kilometres. — DAS)

^{fn4.} [13° 4' west of the Paris meridian](#). The difference between these two meridians is 2° 20'.

^{fn5.} [Verne gives the island a circumference of only seventeen miles.](#) — DAS

^{fn6.} [Jean-François de Galaup, comte de Lapérouse](#) was a French naval officer and explorer who vanished in the vicinity of the Solomon Islands in 1788. — DAS

^{fn7.} Not so extinct. The Tristan da Cunha volcano last erupted in 1961, causing a two year evacuation of the island. An offshore eruption in 2004 nearly caused another evacuation. — DAS

Chapter III

Amsterdam Island

AS JOHN MANGLES INTENDED TO PUT IN AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE FOR COAL, HE WAS obliged to deviate a little from the 37th parallel and go two degrees north. The *Duncan* was south of the belt of the trade winds, and the strong westerlies sped her on her way.^{fn1} In less than six days she cleared the 1,500 nautical miles^{fn2} which separate the tip of Africa from Tristan da Cunha, and on the 24th of November, at three o'clock, Table Mountain was sighted. At eight o'clock they entered the bay, and cast anchor in the port of Cape Town.

Paganel, as a member of the *Society of Geography*, could not ignore that the tip of Africa was first reached in 1486 by the Portuguese admiral Bartolomeu Dias, and doubled in 1497 by the famous Vasco De Gama. And how could Paganel have ignored it, since Camões sang of the glory of the great navigator in his *Lusiades*? But in this regard he made a curious remark: if Dias, in 1486, six years before the first voyage of Christopher Columbus, had doubled the Cape of Good Hope, the discovery of America might have been indefinitely delayed. The Cape Route was a shorter and more direct way to the East Indies. Columbus was seeking a route to the "Spice Islands," so, once the Cape was doubled, his expedition would have been without purpose, and he might not have gone.

Cape Town, situated on Table Bay, was founded by the Dutchman Van Riebeck in 1652. It is the capital of an important colony which was ceded to the English by the Treaty of 1815. The passengers of the *Duncan* took advantage of their stop to go ashore. They had only twelve hours to spend on a walk, for one day was enough for Captain John to renew his supplies, and he wanted to leave on the morning of the 26th.

But this would be long enough to traverse the regular squares of this chessboard which is called Cape Town, on which thirty thousand inhabitants, some white and others black, play the role of kings, queens, knights, pawns, and perhaps fools. At least that was Paganel's opinion of it. When you have seen the Castle at the southeast of the town, the Government House and Garden, the Exchange, the Museum, and the Stone Cross erected by Bartolomeu Dias at the time of his discovery; and when you have drunk a glass of Pontai, the first growth of the Constantia wines, it remains only to leave. This is what they did at dawn the next day. The *Duncan* sailed under her jib, staysail, foresail, and topsail, and a few hours later she doubled the famous Cape of Storms, to which the optimistic King

of Portugal, John II, gave the very inappropriate name of *Boa Esperança*.

Between the Cape and Amsterdam Island lie 2,900 miles^{fn3} of ocean, but with a good sea and favourable breeze, this was only a voyage of ten days. The elements were now no longer at war with the travellers, as they had been on their journey across the Pampas. Wind and sea seemed in league to help them forward.

“Ah! The sea! The sea!” said Paganel. “It is the field *par excellence* for the exercise of human energies, and the ship is the true vehicle of civilization. Think, my friends, if the globe had been only an immense continent we would only know the thousandth part of it, even in this nineteenth century. See what is happening in the interiors of the great lands. Man scarcely dares to venture into the steppes of Siberia, the plains of Central Asia, the deserts of Africa, the prairies of America, the immense wilds of Australia, or in the icy solitudes of the Poles. The most daring shrink back; the most courageous succumb. We cannot penetrate them. The means of transport are insufficient. The heat, disease, and savagery of the natives form so many impassable barriers. Twenty miles of desert separate men more than five hundred miles of ocean! One coast is neighbour to another, but if only a forest separates us, we are strangers. England is contiguous to Australia; while Egypt, for instance, seems to be millions of leagues from Senegal, and Peking at the very antipodes of St. Petersburg! The sea is more easily crossed than any Sahara, and it is thanks to it, as an American scholar^{fn4} has justly said, that a universal kinship has been established among all the parts of the world.”

Paganel spoke with such warmth that even the Major had nothing to say against this hymn to the ocean. If the finding of Harry Grant had involved following the 37th parallel across the northern continents instead of the southern oceans, the enterprise could not have been attempted; but the sea was there, ready to carry the travellers from one country to another, and on the 6th of December, at the first streak of the day, they saw a fresh mountain emerging from the bosom of the waves.

This was Amsterdam Island, situated at 37° 47' latitude and 77° 24'^{fn5} longitude, whose high cone is visible from fifty miles away in clear weather. At eight o'clock, its form, indistinct though it still was, seemed almost a reproduction of Tenerife.

“And consequently it must resemble Tristan da Cunha,” said Glenarvan.

“A very wise conclusion,” said Paganel, “according to the geometrical axiom that ‘that two islands, similar to a third, resemble one another.’ I will only add that, like Tristan da Cunha, Amsterdam Island is also rich in seals and Robinsons.”

“So, there are Robinsons everywhere?” said Lady Helena.

“Indeed, Madame,” said Paganel, “I know of few islands which have not had their adventures of this kind, and the romance of your immortal countryman, Daniel Defoe, had been often enough realized before his day.”

“Monsieur Paganel,” said Mary, “may I ask you a question?”

“Two if you like, my Miss, and I will undertake to answer them.”

“Well,” said the girl, “would you be much afraid of being abandoned on a desert island?”

“Me?” exclaimed Paganel.

“Come, my friend,” said the Major, “don’t go and tell us that it is your dearest wish.”

“I don’t pretend that,” said Paganel. “But such an adventure would not be very unpleasant to me. I would begin a new life. I would hunt and fish. I would go home to a cave in winter and a tree in summer. I would make storehouses for my harvests; in a word, I would colonize my island.”

“All alone?”

“Alone, if necessary. Besides, are we ever alone in the world? Cannot one find friends among the animals, and tame a young kid, eloquent parrot, or amiable monkey? And if a lucky chance should send one a companion like the faithful Friday, what more is needed to be happy? Two friends on a rock, that’s happiness. Suppose the Major and I—”

“Thank you,” interrupted the Major. “I have no taste for that sort of life, and should make a very poor Robinson Crusoe.”

“Dear Monsieur Paganel,” said Lady Helena, “you are letting your imagination run away with you. But reality is very different from the dream. You are thinking of those imaginary Robinsons, thrown onto a carefully chosen island, and treated like spoilt children by nature. You only see the beautiful side.”

“What, Madame! You don’t believe a man could be happy on a desert island?”

“I do not. Man is made for society, not for isolation. Solitude can only engender despair. It is a question of time. At the outset it is quite possible that material wants, and the very necessities of existence may engross the poor shipwrecked fellow just snatched from the waves, but afterwards, when he feels himself alone, far from his fellow-men, without any hope of seeing country and friends again, what must he think, what must he suffer? His little island is all his world. The whole human race is shut up in himself, and when death comes, which utter loneliness will make terrible, he will be like the last man on the last day of the

world. Believe me, Monsieur Paganel, such a man is not to be envied.”

Paganel regretfully acknowledged the arguments of Lady Helena, but still kept up a discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of isolation, until the very moment the *Duncan* dropped anchor about a mile off Amsterdam Island.

This isolated group in the Indian Ocean consists of two distinct islands, thirty-three miles apart, and situated exactly on the meridian of the Indian Peninsula. To the north is Amsterdam, or Saint Pierre Island, and to the south Saint Paul, but they have been often confounded by geographers and navigators.

These islands were discovered in December 1796 by the Dutchman Vlaming, and observed again by d’Entrecasteaux, who led the *Esperance* and *Recherche* expedition to search for La Pérouse. It is from this voyage that the confusion of the islands dates. The sailor Barrow, the cartographer Beautemps-Beaupré in his atlas of the d’Entrecasteaux expedition, then Horsburg, Pinkerton, and other geographers, have constantly described Saint Pierre Island for Saint Paul Island, and vice versa. In 1859, the officers of the Austrian frigate *Novara*, in her circumnavigation voyage, avoided making this mistake, which Paganel particularly wanted to rectify.

Saint Paul Island lies south of Amsterdam Island, and is nothing but an uninhabited islet, a conical mountain that must be the remains of an ancient volcano. On the other hand, Amsterdam Island — to which the long boat conveyed the passengers of the *Duncan* — is about twenty miles^{fn6} in circumference. It is inhabited by a few voluntary exiles, who have become used to their dreary life. They are the guardians of the fishery which belongs, along with the islands, to a M. Otovan, a merchant from Reunion. This sovereign, though not yet recognized by the European powers, enjoys a civil list of 75,000 to 80,000 francs,^{fn7} by fishing, salting, and exporting a fish called the *Cheilodactylus*, also known more commonly as “cod.”

Moreover, Amsterdam island was destined to become and remain French. In fact, it first belonged, by right of first occupation, to M. Camin of Saint-Denis, Bourbon; then it was ceded — by virtue of some international contract — to a Pole, who had it cultivated by Madagascan slaves. But who says Polish says French, so much so that from Polish the island became French again in the hands of Sieur Otovan.

When the *Duncan* visited the island on December 6th the population consisted of three people — a Frenchman, and two mulattoes — all three employed by the merchant proprietor. Paganel was delighted to shake hands with a countryman in

the person of respectable M. Viot. This “wise old man” did the honours of the island with much politeness. It was a happy day for him when he received friendly foreigners. Saint Pierre was only frequented by seal fishermen, and now and then a whaler, the crews of which are usually rough, coarse men.

M. Viot presented his subjects, the two mulattoes. They composed the whole living population of the island, except for a few wild boars in the interior, and myriads of penguins. The little house where the three islanders lived was nestled in a natural harbour on the southwest, formed by the collapse of a portion of the mountain.

It was long before the reign of Otovan Ist that Saint Pierre served as a refuge for shipwrecked men. Paganel related an interesting story about this, which he called “The History of Two Scots, cast away on Amsterdam Island.”

It was in 1827 that the English ship *Palmira*, passing within sight of the island, noticed smoke curling in the air, and on approaching the shore, saw two men making signals of distress. The Captain sent a boat ashore, and brought them back to his vessel. The two poor fellows were hardly recognizable. One was a young man named Jacques Pain, about 22 years of age, and the other was older, 48 years old, whose name was Robert Proudfoot. For 18 months they had been almost without food or fresh water, living on shell-fish, and fishing with an old bent nail. Occasionally they had caught a young wild boar, but they often went for three days at a time without food, watching like vestals over the fire which they had lighted with their last piece of tinder, never letting it go out, and carrying it with them in their excursions, as a thing of priceless value. Such was the life of misery, privation, and suffering which they had led. Paine and Proudfoot had been landed on the island by a schooner engaged in seal fishing. According to the usual custom of seal fishermen they were to remain on the island a month, and collect a supply of oil and skins, waiting for the return of the schooner. The schooner did not reappear. Five months afterwards, the *Hope*, bound



The little house where the three islanders lived was nestled in a natural harbour

for Van Diemen's, put in at the island, but her captain, by a barbarous and inexplicable caprice, refused to take the poor Scots on board, and went away without even leaving them a biscuit or a lighter. The unfortunate men would likely have perished, but for the timely arrival of the *Palmira*.

The second adventure related by Paganel in the history of Amsterdam Island — if such a rock can have a history — was that of Captain Peron, a Frenchman this time. This adventure, moreover, begins like that of the two Scots and ends likewise: a voluntary release on the island, a ship which does not return, and a foreign ship that the chance of the winds brings to this group after forty months abandonment. Only a bloody drama marked the stay of Captain Peron, and it offers many curious points of resemblance to the imaginary events which occurred in the history of Defoe's hero.

Captain Peron had landed on the island with four sailors, two of them English and two French, intending to hunt sea lions for fifteen months. They were very successful, but when the fifteen months came to an end, no vessel returned, and their provisions dwindled, international relations became difficult. The two English sailors revolted against their captain, and would have killed him but for the interference of his fellow countrymen. From that moment the two parties watched each other night and day, always armed for attack, and alternately conquerors and conquered. They led a frightful existence of misery and anguish. In the end one faction would have undoubtedly slain the other, if some English ship hadn't repatriated these unfortunate men that a miserable question of nationality divided on a rock of the Indian Ocean.

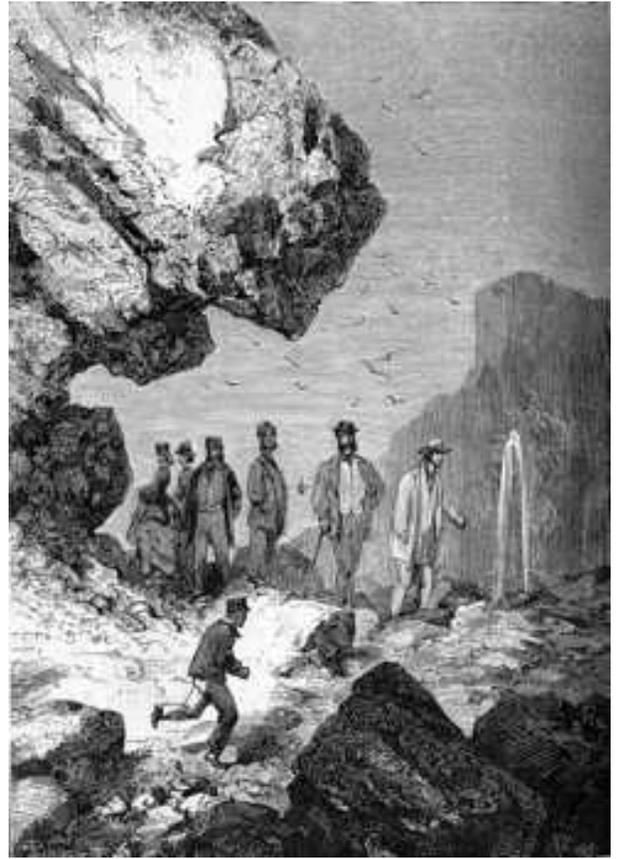
Twice then, had Amsterdam Island become the home of abandoned sailors, providentially saved from misery and death. But since these events no vessel had been lost on its coast. Had any shipwreck occurred, some fragments must have been thrown on the sandy shore, and any poor sufferers from it would have found their way to M. Viot's fishery. The old man had been on the island for many years, and had never been called upon to exercise such hospitality. Of the *Britannia* and Captain Grant he knew nothing. Neither Amsterdam Island nor St. Paul Island, which whalers and fishermen often visited, had been the scene of this catastrophe.

Glenarvan was neither surprised nor saddened by his answer. His object in asking was to establish the fact that Captain Grant had not been there, rather than that he had. This done, they were ready to proceed on their voyage next day.

They rambled about the island until evening, as its appearance was very inviting. Its fauna and flora would not have filled the octavo of the most prolific

naturalists. The orders of quadrupeds, birds, fish, and cetaceans, contained only wild boars, snow petrels, albatrosses, perch, and seals. Here and there thermal springs and chalybeate waters escaped from the black lava, and thick vapours rose above the volcanic soil. Some of these springs were very hot. John Mangles held his thermometer in one of them, and found the temperature was 176 degrees Fahrenheit^{fn8}. Fish caught in the sea a few yards off cooked in five minutes in these almost boiling waters, which persuaded Paganel not to attempt to bathe in them.

Toward evening, after a good walk, Glenarvan bid farewell to the honourable M. Viot. Everyone wished him all the happiness possible on his desert island. In return, the old man gave his blessings to the expedition, and the *Duncan's* boat brought her passengers back on board.



Here and there thermal springs escaped from the black lava

^{fn1}. These winds run counter to the trade winds below the 30th parallel.

^{fn2}. 700 leagues. (2,800 kilometres. — DAS)

Verne had 1,300 miles and 600 leagues. — DAS

^{fn3}. 1,350 leagues. (5,400 kilometres. — DAS)

^{fn4}. Commander Matthew Fontaine Maury. (“The Father of Modern Oceanography.” A particular favourite of Verne’s. He gets several mentions in *20,000 Leagues Under the Seas*, as well. — DAS)

^{fn5}. 75° 4' east of the Paris meridian.

^{fn6}. Verne had twelve miles. — DAS

^{fn7}. \$15,000 to \$16,000, £3,000 to £3,200. — DAS

^{fn8}. 80° C.

Chapter IV

The Wagers of Jacques Paganel and Major MacNabbs

ON THE 7TH OF DECEMBER, AT THREE IN THE MORNING, THE *DUNCAN*'S BOILERS WERE already building pressure. Sailors turned the capstan, pulling the anchor free from the sandy bottom of the little harbour, and up to its davit. The screw was set turning, and the yacht set sail. By eight o'clock, when the passengers came on deck, Amsterdam Island had almost disappeared into the mists of the horizon. This was the last stop on the 37th parallel, until they reached Australia, three thousand nautical miles [fn1](#) away. If the west wind continued to blow fair, and the seas remained calm, the *Duncan* would reach Australia in twelve days.

Mary Grant and her brother could not gaze at the waves through which the *Britannia* must have cruised but a few days before her shipwreck without feeling sadness. Here, perhaps, Captain Grant with a disabled ship and diminished crew had struggled against the formidable hurricanes of the Indian Ocean, and been driven toward the coast by an irresistible force. Captain Mangles pointed out and explained the different currents to Mary on the ship's charts. There was one running through the Indian Ocean straight to the Australian continent, and it continued on through the southern Pacific and Atlantic oceans, circling the entire globe. It was doubtless this current which had carried the *Britannia*, dismasted and rudderless, unable to maneuver, until she had broken on the Australian coast.

A difficulty about this hypothesis presented itself. The last news of Captain Grant in the *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette* was from Callao on the 30th of May, 1862. How was it possible that on the 7th of June, only eight days after leaving the shores of Peru, the *Britannia* found herself in the Indian Ocean? But to this, Paganel, who was consulted on the subject, found a very plausible solution.

It was on the evening of December 12th, six days after leaving Amsterdam Island. Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Robert and Mary Grant, Captain John, MacNabbs, and Paganel were talking on the poop. As usual, the main topic of the conversation was the *Britannia*, as it was the only thought on board. The aforesaid difficulty was raised incidentally, and had the immediate effect of stopping all conversation.

Paganel's head came up sharply at Glenarvan's remark. Without saying a word, he went and fetched the document. After perusing it, he still remained silent, and simply shrugged his shoulders, as if ashamed of troubling himself about such a trifling matter.

“Well, my dear friend,” said Glenarvan, “at least give us an answer.”

“No,” said Paganel, “I will merely ask Captain John a question.”

“Yes, Monsieur Paganel?” said John Mangles.

“Could a well fitted ship cross the Pacific Ocean from America to Australia in a month?”

“Yes, making two hundred miles a day.”

“Would that be an extraordinary speed?”

“Not at all; clipper ships often go faster.”

“Well, then, instead of ‘7 June’ on this document, suppose the sea has eaten one digit from that date, and it should read ‘17 June’ or ‘27 June,’ and all is explained.”

“Indeed,” said Lady Helena, “from May 31st to June 27th...”

“Captain Grant could easily have crossed the Pacific and found himself in the Indian Ocean.”

Paganel’s theory met with universal acceptance.

“That’s one more point cleared up,” said Glenarvan. “Thanks to our friend, all that remains to be done now is to get to Australia, and look for traces of the *Britannia* on the western coast.”

“Or the eastern,” said John Mangles.

“Indeed, John, you may be right, for there is nothing in the document to indicate which shore was the scene of the catastrophe, and both points of the continent crossed by the 37th parallel must therefore be explored.”

“Then, my Lord, it is doubtful, after all?” said Mary.

“Oh no, Miss Mary!” John Mangles hastened to reply, seeing the young girl’s apprehension. “His Honour will wish to point out that if Captain Grant had gained the shore on the east of Australia, he would almost immediately have found refuge and assistance. The whole of that coast is populated with English colonists. The crew of the *Britannia* could not have gone ten miles without meeting fellow countrymen.”

“I quite agree, Captain John,” said Paganel. “On the eastern coast Harry Grant would not only have found an English colony easily, but he would certainly have found some means of transport back to Europe.”

“And he would not have found the same resources on the side we are making for?” asked Lady Helena.

“No, Madame,” replied Paganel. “The coast is deserted, with no communication between it and Melbourne, or Adelaide. If the *Britannia* was wrecked on those rocky shores, she would be as much cut off from all chance of

help as if she had been lost on the inhospitable shores of Africa.”

“But then,” said Mary, “What has become of my father, these two years?”

“My dear Mary,” replied Paganel, “you believe it is certain that Captain Grant reached Australia after his shipwreck?”

“Yes, Monsieur Paganel.”

“Well, once on this continent, what became of Captain Grant? The suppositions we might make are not numerous. They are confined to three. Either Harry Grant and his companions have found their way to the English colonies, or they have fallen into the hands of the natives, or they are lost in the vast loneliness of Australia.” Paganel fell silent, and looked into the eyes of his listeners for any objections to his hypotheses.

“Go on, Paganel,” said Lord Glenarvan.

“I reject the first hypothesis: Harry Grant could not have reached the English colonies, or he would have been back with his children in Dundee, long ago.”

“Poor father,” murmured Mary. “Away from us for two whole years!”

“Hush, Mary,” said Robert. “Monsieur Paganel has more to tell us.”

“Alas, my boy, I cannot! All I can say is that Captain Grant is a prisoner of the Australians, or—”

“But these natives,” interrupted Lady Helena. “Are they...?”

“Reassure yourself, Madame,” said Paganel, understanding where her thoughts were leading. “These natives are savage, stupid, at the lowest level of human intelligence,^{fn2} but of gentle morals, and not bloodthirsty like their New Zealand neighbours. If they took the survivors of the *Britannia* prisoner, their lives have never been threatened, you may be sure. All travellers are unanimous in declaring that the Australian natives abhor shedding blood, and many a time they have found in them faithful allies in repelling the attacks of bands of convicts, far more cruelly inclined.”

“You hear what Monsieur Paganel tells us, Mary,” said Lady Helena, turning to the young girl. “If your father is in the hands of the natives, as the document suggests, we will find him.”

“And what if he is lost in that immense country?” asked Mary.

“Well, we’ll still find him,” declared Paganel, confidently. “Won’t we, my friends?”

“Most certainly,” said Glenarvan. And, anxious to turn the conversation in a less gloomy direction, he added “But I won’t admit the supposition of his being lost.”

"Neither will I," said Paganel.

"Is Australia a big place?" asked Robert.

"Australia, my boy, is about four-fifths the size of Europe. It is somewhere about 775 million hectares."

"As much as that?" said the Major,

"Yes, MacNabbs, within a yard. Do you believe now that such a country has a right to be called a 'continent,' as the document does?"

"Certainly, Paganel."

"I may add," continued the scholar, "that there are few accounts of travellers being lost in this immense country. I believe that Leichhardt is the only one whose fate is unknown, and shortly before my departure I learned from the *Geographical Society* that McIntyre had strong hopes of having discovered traces of him." [fn3](#)

"Has all of Australia been explored?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, Madame. Far from it! This continent is not much better known than the interior of Africa, and yet it is not for lack of enterprising travellers. From 1606 to 1862, more than fifty men have been engaged in exploring Australia along the coast, and into the interior."

"Fifty! Really?" exclaimed the incredulous MacNabbs.

"Yes, MacNabbs, as many as that. I speak of the sailors who braved the dangerous shoals and reefs to chart the Australian shores, and explorers who have traversed the continent."

"Nevertheless, fifty is a great deal," said the Major.

"And I might go farther, MacNabbs," said the geographer, impatient of contradiction.

"Farther still, Paganel!"

"If you doubt me, I can give you the names."

"Oh!" said the Major, coolly. "That's just like you scientists. So sure of yourselves."

"Major, will you bet your Purdey Moore and Dickson rifle against my Secretan telescope?"

"Why not, Paganel, if you'd like?"

"Done, Major!" said Paganel. "You may say good-bye to your rifle, for it will never shoot another chamois or fox unless I lend it to you, which I shall always be happy to do, by the way."

"And whenever you require the use of your telescope, Paganel, I shall be equally obliging," said the Major, gravely.

“Let us begin, then. Ladies and gentlemen, you shall be our jury. Robert, you must keep count.”

Lord and Lady Glenarvan, Mary and Robert, the Major, and John Mangles, whom the discussion amused, prepared to listen to the geographer. The *Duncan* was sailing toward Australia, after all, and a lesson on its history could not be more timely. Paganel was invited to begin his mnemonic tricks without delay.

“Mnemosyne! Goddess of Memory, mother of chaste Muses!” he called. “Inspire thy faithful and fervent worshipper! Two hundred and fifty-eight years ago, my friends, Australia was still unknown. The existence of a great southern continent was suspected. Two charts in the library of your British Museum, Glenarvan, dated 1550, mention a land south of Asia, which the Portuguese called Great Java. But the authenticity of these charts is questionable. In the seventeenth century, in 1606, Queirós, a Spanish navigator, discovered a land which he named *Australia de Espiritu Santo*. Some authors believe that this was the New Hebrides group, and not Australia. I am not going to discuss the question, however. Count Queirós, Robert, and let us pass on to another.”

“One,” said Robert.

“In that same year, Luís Vaz de Torres, the second in command of the fleet of Queirós, pushed further south to reconnoitre the new lands, but it is to Theodoric Hartog, a Dutchman, that the honour of the great discovery belongs. He landed on the western coast of Australia at 25° of latitude, and called it *Eendrachtsland*, after his ship. After his time, more navigators came. In 1618, Zeachen discovered the northern parts of the coast, and called them Arnheim and Diemen. In 1619, Jan Edels went along the western coast, and christened it with his own name. In 1622, the *Leeuwin* went down as far as the cape which became its namesake. In 1627, De Nuyts, and De Witt, the one at the west the other at the south, filled in the discoveries of their predecessors, and were followed by Commander Carpenter,



“Will you bet your rifle against my telescope?”

who penetrated the immense gulf, still called the Gulf of Carpentaria, with his ships. Finally, in 1642, the famous Tasman rounded Van Diemen's Land, an island which he supposed to be joined to the continent, and gave it the name of the Governor-General of Batavia, a name which posterity justly changed to Tasmania. The whole continent had now been rounded. It was known that the Indian and Pacific Oceans washed its shores, and in 1665 the name of New Holland, which it was not to keep, was bestowed on this great southern island — just about the time when the roll of Dutch navigators in its exploration was about to end. How many have we now, Robert?"

"Ten."

"Very well. I pass on to the English. In 1686, a buccaneer, a Brother of the Coast, one of the most celebrated freebooters of the southern seas, William Dampier, after many adventures mingled with pleasures and miseries, arrived in his ship, the *Cygnets*, off the northwest coast of New Holland at latitude 16° 50'. He entered into communication with the natives, and brought home a very complete description of their manners, their poverty, and their intelligence. He came back in 1699 to the same bay where Hartog had landed, but not as a freebooter. He was in command of the *Roebuck*, a ship of the Royal Navy. Up to this time, the discovery of New Holland had been simply an interesting geographical fact; there was little thought of colonizing it.



The stories of Paganel

For almost three quarters of a century, from 1699 to 1770, it remained unvisited by any navigator. But at last came Captain Cook, the most illustrious sailor in the whole world, and it was not long until the new continent became a field for European emigration. James Cook landed in New Holland during all three of his famous voyages. The first time was on the 31st of March, 1770. After being fortunate enough to witness the transit of Venus across the sun at Otahiti^{fn4}, Cook sailed his little ship, the *Endeavour*, to the western Pacific Ocean. There he mapped the coast of New Zealand, and subsequently

reached a bay on the west coast of Australia, which he found so rich in new plants, that he gave it the name of Botanical Bay. Its present name is Botany Bay. His relations with the half-witted natives were not very interesting. From there he went north, and at 16° of latitude, near Cape Tribulation, the *Endeavour* struck a coral reef eight leagues from shore. The danger of sinking was imminent. Provisions and cannon had to be thrown into the sea; but the following night the tide re-floated the lightened ship. It was found that her sinking was prevented by a piece of coral that had stopped up the hole in her bottom, and Cook succeeded in bringing her safely into a small cove at the mouth of a river which he called the Endeavour. During the three months that it took for the repairs to be completed, the English tried to establish useful communication with the natives, but they met with little success. On putting out to sea again, the *Endeavour* continued her route northward. Cook wished to find out whether a strait existed between New Guinea and New Holland. After encountering fresh dangers and risking his ship twenty times or more, he caught sight of the sea spreading out toward the southwest. The strait existed; he had passed through it. Cook landed on a little island where he took possession of the whole coast he had explored in the name of England. He gave it the very British name of New South Wales. Three years later the daring sailor commanded the *Adventure* and the *Resolution*. Captain Furneaux, of the *Adventure*, went on to explore the coast of Van Diemen's Land, and came back supposing that it was joined to the mainland and formed part of New Holland. It was not until 1777, at the time of his third voyage, that Cook moored his ships, the *Resolution* and the *Discovery*, in Adventure Bay in Van Diemen's Land. It was from there, some months afterwards, he departed for the Sandwich Islands, where he died."

"He was a great man," said Glenarvan.

"The most illustrious sailor who ever breathed. It was Banks, his companion, who suggested to the British Government the idea of founding a colony at Botany Bay. Navigators of all nations followed in his wake. In the last letter received from Lapérouse, written in Botany Bay and dated February 7, 1787, the unfortunate sailor announced his intention of visiting the Gulf of Carpentaria and all the coast of New Holland, as far as Van Diemen's Land. He set out and never returned. In 1788, Captain Phillip founded the first English colony at Port Jackson. In 1791, Vancouver went a considerable distance around the southern coast of the new continent. In 1792, d'Entrecasteaux, sent in search of Lapérouse, made the tour of New Holland, west and south, discovering several unknown islands on the way.

In 1795 and 1797, Flinders and Bass, two young men in an eight foot long boat, courageously pushed their way along the southern coast, and in 1797 Bass passed between Van Diemen's Land and New Holland, through the strait that bears his name. In that same year, 1797, Vlamingh, the discoverer of Amsterdam Island, found the Swan River on the western shores, the banks of which abound with the most beautiful black swans. As for Flinders, he resumed his explorations in 1801, and at 138° 58' of longitude and 35° 40' of latitude, he met with two French ships in Encounter Bay: the *Geographe* and the *Naturaliste*, commanded by Captains Baudin and Hamlin."

"Ah! Captain Baudin?" said the Major.

"Yes. What about him?"

"Oh, nothing. Go on, my dear Paganel."

"Well, I have the name of one more navigator to add to the list — that of Captain King, who from 1817 to 1822 completed the exploration of the inter-tropical coasts of New Holland."

"That makes twenty-four," said Robert.

"Well, I have half your rifle already, Major. And now that I'm done with the sailors, let's go on to the explorers on land."

"Very good, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena. "Really your memory is astonishing."

"Yes," said Lord Glenarvan, "and it is strange enough it should be in a man so —"

"So *distract*," interrupted Paganel. "Oh, I only remember dates and facts, that's all."

"Twenty-four," repeated Robert,

"Well, twenty-five is Lieutenant Dawes. It was in 1789, a year after the colony of Port Jackson was founded. The tour of the continent had been made, but no one knew what it contained. A long range of mountains, running parallel to the eastern shore, seemed to forbid all approach to the interior. Lieutenant Dawes, after nine days' march, was obliged to turn back and retrace his steps to Port Jackson. During the same year Captain Tench tried to cross the lofty chain, but could not succeed. These two failures deterred other explorers from any attempts for three years. In 1792, Colonel Paterson, a bold African explorer, made a fresh endeavour which proved equally unsuccessful. But the following year a simple quartermaster in the English navy, the courageous Hawkins, out-distanced all his predecessors by crossing over the impassable ridge and going twenty miles

beyond. He had only two imitators during the next eighteen years, and these were both unsuccessful. One was Bass, the famous sailor, and the other Bareiller, an engineer in the colony. I now arrive at the year 1813, when a passage was at last discovered to the west of Sydney. Governor Macquarrie ventured through it in 1815, and the town of Bathurst was founded beyond the Blue Mountains. After that I may mention the names of Throsby in 1819; Oxley, who went 300 miles into the interior; Hovell and Hume, who started from Twofold Bay, which is crossed by the 37th parallel, and Captain Sturt, who, in 1829 and in 1830 discovered the Darling and Murray rivers. All these are men who enriched geography with new facts, and helped to develop the colonies.”

“Thirty-six,” said Robert.

“*Excellent!* I’m ahead,” said Paganel. “I quote for the record Eyre and Leichhardt, who explored part of the country in 1840 and 1841; Sturt in 1845; the Gregory brothers and Helpman in 1846 in Western Australia; Kennedy in 1847 on the Victoria River, and in 1848 in Northern Australia; Gregory in 1852; Austin in 1854; the Gregory brothers in 1855 to 1858 in the northwest of the continent; Babbage, the discoverer of Lake Torrens and Lake Eyre. And I arrive at a traveller famous in the annals of Australian exploration, to Stuart, who crossed the continent three times. His first expedition into the interior was in 1860. Later, if you like, I will tell you how Australia has been traversed four times from south to north. Today, I am simply finishing this long list, and from 1860 to 1862 I will add to the names of so many hardy pioneers of science those of the Dempster brothers, and of Clarkson and Harper, Burke and Wills, Neilson, Walker, Landsborough, McKinlay, Howitt—”

“Fifty-six,” called out Robert.

“Well then, Major, I will give you good measure, for I have not yet mentioned Duperrey, Bougainville, FitzRoy, Wickham, Stokes...”

“*Enough!*” cried the Major, overpowered by the number.

“Neither Péron, nor Quoy,” Paganel went on, dashing along like an express train, “nor Bennett, nor Cunningham, nor Nutchell, nor Tiers—”

“*Mercy!*”

“Nor Dixon, nor Strzelecki, nor Reid, nor Wilkes, nor Mitchell...” [fn5](#)

“*Stop, Paganel!*” said Glenarvan, laughing heartily, “don’t completely crush poor MacNabbs. Be generous. He admits defeat!”

“And his rifle?” asked the geographer, triumphantly.

“It’s yours, Paganel,” said the Major, “and I am very sorry for it. But you have a

memory to gain an entire artillery museum.”

“It is certainly impossible to be better acquainted with Australia,” said Lady Helena. “Not the least name, not even the most trifling fact.”

“As to the most trifling fact, I don’t know about that,” said the Major, shaking his head.

“What do you mean, MacNabbs?” asked Paganel.

“Simply that, perhaps, not all of the incidents connected with the discovery of Australia are known to you.”

“For example?” asked Paganel, puffing up proudly.

“If I tell you one fact you don’t know, will you give me back my rifle?” asked MacNabbs.

“On the spot, Major.”

“Bargain?”

“Bargain!”

“All right. Well now, Paganel, do you know how it is that Australia does not belong to France?”

“It seems to me—”

“Or, at any rate, do you know the reason the English give?” asked the Major.

“No, Major,” said Paganel, with an air of vexation.

“It’s because in 1802, Captain Baudin, who was by no means a timid man, was so afraid of the croaking of the Australian frogs, that he raised his anchor with all possible speed, and fled, never to return.”

“*What?*” exclaimed Paganel. “Do they actually teach that version of it in England? But it’s just a bad joke!”

“Bad enough, certainly, but still it is history in the United Kingdom.”

“It’s an indignity!” exclaimed the patriotic geographer. “They seriously say that?”

“I am obliged to agree, my dear Paganel” said Glenarvan, amidst a general outburst of laughter. “Do you mean to say you have never heard of it before?”

“Absolutely! I protest! Besides, the English call us ‘frog-eaters.’ Now, in general, people are not afraid of what they eat.”

“It is said, though, for all that,” replied MacNabbs.

And that’s how the famous Purdey Moore and Dickson rifle remained the property of Major MacNabbs.

[fn1.](#) 1,400 leagues. (5,600 kilometres. — DAS)

[fn2.](#) Unfortunately, this is just the first of many extremely racist things that Verne will have to say about

the Australian Aborigines. — DAS

[fn3. Ludwig Leichhardt](#) disappeared in the Australian interior in 1848. In 1864 Duncan McIntyre discovered two trees marked with “L” on the Flinders River near the Gulf of Carpentaria, but further searching found no other traces. Leichhardt’s ultimate fate remains a mystery. — DAS

[fn4.](#) The passage of the planet Venus across the disk of the sun took place in 1769. This rather rare phenomenon presented a great astronomical interest as it made it possible to calculate the distance separating the Earth from the Sun.

[fn5.](#) Robert’s count is a bit off, as Paganel mentions a few people multiple times. Here is the full list of names. I have removed any duplicates. And Paganel should lose points for “Commander Carpenter,” who seems to be entirely fictitious. — DAS

1. [Queirós](#), 1606
2. [Luís Vaz de Torres](#), 1606
3. [Theodoric Hartog](#),
4. Zeachen, 1618
(Though mentioned in some early accounts of the exploration of Australia, his existence is questioned as he supposedly named ‘Diemen’ about twenty years before van Diemen was made Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies. One of Tasman’s ships was named *Zeehaen*, which may be where the confusion arose from.)
5. Jan Edels, 1619
(Likely meant Jacob d’Edel, who accompanied [Frederick de Houtman](#).)
6. [The Leeuwin](#), 1622
7. [De Nuyts](#), and
8. [De Witt](#), 1627
9. Commander Carpenter,
(Appears to be a figment of Paganel’s imagination. The Gulf of Carpentaria was explored, and named by [Jan Carstenszoon](#), in 1623. He named the gulf after the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, [Pieter de Carpentier](#).)
10. [Tasman](#), 1642
11. [William Dampier](#), 1686
12. [Captain Cook](#), 1770
13. [Captain Furneaux](#), 1773
14. [Banks](#),
15. [Lapérouse](#), 1787
16. [Captain Phillip](#), 1788
17. [Vancouver](#), 1791
18. [d’Entrecasteaux](#), 1792
19. [Flinders](#) and
20. [Bass](#), 1795 and 1797
21. [Vlamingh](#), 1797
22. Captains [Baudin](#) and
23. [Hamlin](#), 1801
24. [Captain King](#), 1817 to 1822
25. [Lieutenant Dawes](#), 1789
26. [Captain Tench](#), 1789
27. [Colonel Paterson](#), 1792
28. Hawkins, 1793
29. Bareiller,
30. [Governor Macquarrie](#), 1815
31. [Throsby](#), 1819
32. [Oxley](#),
33. [Hovell](#) and
34. [Hume](#),
35. [Captain Sturt](#), 1829, 1830
36. [Eyre](#), 1840

37. [Leichhardt](#), 1841
38. [The Gregory brothers](#), 1846
39. [Helpman](#), 1846
40. [Kennedy](#), 1847 and 1848
41. [Austin](#), 1854
42. [Babbage](#),
43. [Stuart](#), 1860 to 1862
44. [Dempster brothers](#),
45. [Clarkson](#),
46. [Harper](#),
47. [Burke](#) and
48. [Wills](#),
49. [Neilson](#),
50. [Walker](#),
51. [Landsborough](#),
52. [McKinlay](#),
53. [Howitt](#),
54. [Duperrey](#),
55. [Bougainville](#),
56. [FitzRoy](#),
57. [Wickham](#),
58. [Stokes](#),
59. [Péron](#),
60. [Ouoy](#),
61. [Bennett](#),
62. [Cunningham](#),
63. [Nutchell](#),
64. [Tiers](#),
65. [Dixon](#),
66. [Strzelecki](#),
67. [Reid](#),
68. [Wilkes](#),
69. [Mitchell](#)

Chapter V

The Wrath of the Indian Ocean

TWO DAYS AFTER THIS CONVERSATION, JOHN MANGLES ANNOUNCED THAT THE *DUNCAN* was at longitude 113° 37', and the passengers found after consulting the chart that Cape Bernouilli was only [twenty-five](#)^{fn1} degrees off. Between this cape and Point d'Entrecasteaux, the Australian coast describes an arc over the 37th parallel. If the *Duncan* turned north now, and ascended toward the equator, she would soon have reached Cape Chatham, a hundred twenty miles to the north. They were sailing into that part of the Indian Ocean which was sheltered below the Australian continent, and in four days they should see Cape Bernouilli appear on the horizon.

The yacht had been favoured by a strong westerly breeze, but it had been slackening, little by little, for the past few days. On the 13th of December the wind fell entirely, and her flaccid sails hung limply from her masts. Without her powerful engine, the *Duncan* would have been chained by the calm of the ocean.

There was no saying how long these conditions might last. Glenarvan consulted with John Mangles. The young Captain, seeing his coal bunkers emptying, was very much annoyed by this drop in the wind. He had covered his ship with sail, hoisting all his studsails and staysails to take advantage of the slightest breeze, but as the sailors said, there wasn't enough wind to fill a hat.

"In any case, we shouldn't complain, too much," said Glenarvan. "It is better to have no wind than a contrary one."

"Your Honour is right," said John Mangles. "But these sudden calms can presage a change in the weather, and that is why I dread them. We are close to the boundary of the monsoon^{fn2} which blows from the northeast from October to April. If we are caught in it, our journey will be very delayed."

"What are you worried about, John? If it happens, we will have to deal with it. It will only make our voyage a little longer."

"Yes, if it does not bring a storm with it."

"Do you think we are going to have bad weather?" Glenarvan examined the sky, which from horizon to zenith seemed absolutely cloudless.

"Yes," said the Captain. "I'm saying it to Your Honour, but I would not like to alarm Lady Glenarvan or Miss Grant."

"You are acting wisely, but what makes you uneasy?"

"Some indications of heavy weather. Do not trust the appearance of the sky, my

Lord. Nothing is more deceitful. For two days the barometer has been falling in a most disturbing manner, and is now at 27 inches.^{fn3} This is a warning I dare not ignore. There is nothing I dread more than the storms of the southern sea. I have struggled with them already. The vapours which condense in the immense glaciers at the South Pole produce a breath of air of extreme violence. Hence a struggle between the polar and equatorial winds, which results in hurricanes, tornadoes, and all those multiplied varieties of storm against which a ship is at a disadvantage.”

“Well, John,” said Glenarvan, “the *Duncan* is a good ship, and her Captain is a skilful sailor. Let the storm come, we’ll meet it!”

John Mangles, in expressing his fears, obeyed his duty as a seaman. He had a keen weather sense. The persistent decline in the barometer made him take all the necessary precautions on board. He expected a violent storm. Even if the sky remained clear, his barometer was telling him otherwise. The atmospheric currents flow from places where the column of mercury is high toward those where it is lower. The greater the difference over a shorter distance, the faster the equilibrium is restored, and the greater the wind speed.

John stayed on deck all night. About eleven o’clock the sky began to darken in the south, and the crew were called up. All the sails were hauled in, except the foresail, brigantine, topsail, and jibs. At midnight the wind freshened, and became very brisk, blowing at twenty knots.^{fn4} Before long, the creaking of the masts, the rattling of the cordage, the snapping of sails in sudden changes of wind, and the groaning of timbers awakened the passengers. Paganel, Glenarvan, the Major and Robert appeared on deck, some curious, others to help. When they had gone below the sky had been clear, and dotted with stars. Now it roiled with thick clouds, separated by clear bands spotted like a leopard skin.

“Hurricane?” asked Glenarvan simply.

“Not yet, but soon,” said the Captain.

He gave the orders to reef the topsail. The sailors sprang into the rigging, and — not without difficulty — they reduced the area of the sail by winding it with its bats on the yard. John Mangles wanted to keep up as much canvas as possible in order to steady the yacht, and soften her rolling in the rising sea.

With the sails reduced, he gave orders to Austin and the boatswain to make other preparations for the onslaught of the hurricane, which could not fail to break loose. The lashings of the boats and the moorings of the drome^{fn5} were doubled.

The hoists on the side of the gun were reinforced. The shrouds and backstays were tightened. The hatches were battened. John stood on the quarterdeck like an officer in a breach, in the teeth of the wind. He gazed at the stormy sky, trying to snatch its secrets.

The barometer had fallen to 26 inches, a dip that rarely occurs in the barometric column, and the storm glass^{fn6} indicated a tempest.

It was one o'clock. Lady Helena and Miss Grant, violently shaken in their cabins, ventured to come on deck. The wind had increased to fifty knots. It whistled in the rigging with extreme violence. The metal stays hummed like the strings of giant musical instruments, stroked by some gigantic bow. The pulleys strained. Ropes ran with a sharp sound in their rough grooves. The sails cracked like cannons. Monstrous waves rolled to assail the yacht, which was tossed like a toy on their foaming crests.

When Captain John saw the passengers, he hurried toward them, and begged them to go below again, immediately. The waves were already beginning to dash over the side of the ship, and the sea might at any moment sweep right over her from stem to stern. The noise of the warring elements was so great that his words were scarcely audible.

"Are we in danger?" asked Lady Helena during a slight lull.

"None, Madam," said John Mangles. "But you cannot remain on deck! Nor you, Miss Mary!"

Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant could not disobey an order that resembled a prayer, and they went back below deck as a wave, breaking over the transom, made the hatch windows shudder in their frames. At the same moment the wind redoubled its fury, making the masts bend under the pressure of the sails, and the yacht seemed to rise on the waves.

"*Brail up the foresail!*" shouted the Captain. "*Bring in the topsail and jibs!*"

The sailors rushed to their maneuvering stations. The halyards were loosened, and the brails drawn in. The noise of the jibs descending was, for a moment, greater than that of the storm. The *Duncan*, her chimney vomiting torrents of black smoke, rolled in the heavy sea, and the blades of her screw broke the surface of the water.

Glenarvan, the Major, Paganel, and Robert contemplated the *Duncan's* struggle against the waves with a mixture of admiration and wonder. They clung firmly to the railings without being able to exchange a single word, and looked at the flights of satanic petrels, those funereal birds of storms, which played in the wild winds.

Just then, a deafening whistle was heard over the hurricane. The steam was escaping violently, not by the funnel, but from the safety-valves of the boiler. The alarm whistle sounded unnaturally loud, and the yacht made a frightful pitch. An unexpected blow from the wheel overturned Wilson, who was at the helm. The uncontrolled *Duncan* turned broadside to the waves.

The Captain rushed to the bridge. "*What happened?*"

"*The ship is heeling over!*" cried Wilson.

"Have we lost the rudder?"

"*To the engine! To the engine!*" shouted the engineer.

John rushed to the hatch, and down the ladder to the engine-room. A cloud of steam filled the compartment. The pistons were motionless in their cylinders, the connecting rods were not imparting any movement to the crankshaft, and the engineer, seeing them jammed and fearing for his boilers, was letting off steam.

"What's wrong?" asked the Captain.

"The screw is bent or entangled! It's not turning at all!"

"Can't you clear it?"

"Impossible!"

This was not a problem that could be fixed under the current conditions. It was an indisputable fact that the screw could not turn, and the steam had been released through the valves. John had to fall back on his sails, and seek to make an ally of his most powerful enemy, the wind.

He went back up on deck, and after explaining in a few words to Lord Glenarvan how things stood, begged him to retire to the cabin with the rest of the passengers. But Glenarvan wished to remain above.

"No, Your Honour," said John Mangles firmly. "I must be alone here with my crew. Go into the saloon. The ship will have a hard fight with the waves, and they would sweep you over without mercy."

"But we might be a help."

"Go below, my Lord! *Go below!* I must insist on it. There are times when I must be the master on board, and you must retire! *I order it!*"

Their situation must indeed be desperate for John Mangles to speak in such a manner. Glenarvan realized it was up to him to set an example for the others. He left the bridge, followed by his three companions, and rejoined the ladies, who were anxiously awaiting the denouement of this war with the elements.

"He's an energetic fellow, this brave John of mine!" said Lord Glenarvan, as he entered the saloon.

“Yes,” said Paganel. “He reminds me of your great Shakespeare’s boatswain in *The Tempest*, who says to the King whom he carries on board ‘*What care these roarers for the name of King? To cabin! Silence! Trouble us not!*’”^{fn7}

John Mangles had not lost a second to pull his ship from the peril in which she was placed by the failure of her screw. He resolved to rely on the mainsail to keep the *Duncan* on course, as far as possible. It was therefore necessary to brace the sails obliquely to the wind. The topsail was reefed, a foresail was rigged on the mainstay of the mast, and the helm was crowded hard aport.

The nimble yacht wheeled about like a swift horse that feels the spur, and she turned to face the waves. Would this reduced sail hold? It was made of Dundee’s best canvas, but what fabric can withstand such violence?

The main advantage of keeping the mainsail up was that it presented the most solid portions of the yacht to the waves, and kept her on her original course. Still it involved some peril, for the vessel might get engulfed between the waves, and not be able to raise herself. But Mangles felt there was no alternative, and he resolved to keep the mainsail, as long as the masts and sails held. His crew stood there before his eyes, each man ready to go where he was needed. John, tied to the shrouds, watched the angry sea.

The remainder of the night was spent in this manner. It was hoped that the storm would diminish at dawn, but this was a vain desire. At eight o’clock the wind had increased to sixty-four knots: a hurricane.

John said nothing, but he trembled for his ship, and those on board. The *Duncan* made a frightful plunge forward. Her spars creaked, and the tips of the foresail whipped the crest of the waves. For an instant the men thought she would never rise again. Already they had seized their hatchets to cut away the shrouds from the mainmast, when the sails, torn from their ropes, flew away like gigantic albatrosses.

The *Duncan* had risen once more, but she now found herself entirely at the mercy of the waves, with nothing to steady or direct her. She pitched and tossed about so violently that the Captain expected the masts might break off at their roots at any moment. She could not bear such a roll for long. She was tiring in this blast, and soon her disjointed planks, her shattered seams, would give passage to the waves.

John had no choice but to rig a storm jib, and run before the gale. But this was

no easy task. It took hours of labour, undone by the storm twenty times over, so they had to start again. It was not until three o'clock that the jib was hoisted on the forestay and delivered to the action of the wind.

The *Duncan* surged forward under this piece of cloth, and began to flee the tailwind with incalculable speed. The hurricane pushed her to the northeast. Her safety lay in speed. Sometimes she would surge ahead of the waves which carried her along, and cutting through them with her sharp prow, plunge like a huge cetacean, and the ocean would sweep over her deck from stem to stern. At others, she would keep pace with the waves, her rudder lost all effect, and there was imminent danger of her being capsized. And sometimes the waves would run faster than the yacht, and the seas would jump the transom and sweep over the deck from stern to stem with irresistible force.



The *Duncan* surged forward under this piece of cloth

December 15th, and the ensuing night passed in this alarming situation amid dreadful alternations of hope and despair. John Mangles never left his post for a moment, not even to eat. Though his impassive face betrayed no symptoms of fear, he was tortured with anxiety, and his steady gaze was fixed on the north, as if trying to pierce through the thick mists that enshrouded it.

There was, indeed, great cause for fear. The *Duncan* was rushing toward the Australian coast with a speed which nothing could lessen. To John Mangles it seemed as if a thunderbolt were driving them along. Every instant he expected the yacht would be dashed into a thousand pieces against some rock. He reckoned the coast could not be more than twelve miles off. To make landfall now would mean the loss of the ship. It is a hundred times better to be out in the immense ocean, where a ship has a chance to defend herself, even if she may eventually yield. But when a storm throws her on land, she is lost.

John Mangles went to find Glenarvan, and had a private talk with him about

their situation, telling him frankly the true state of affairs, stating the case with all the coolness of a sailor prepared for anything and everything. And he wound up by saying he might, perhaps, be obliged to cast the *Duncan* on shore. "To save the lives of those on board, if it is possible, my Lord."

"Then do it, John," replied Lord Glenarvan.

"And Lady Helena? Miss Grant?"

"I will only warn them at the last moment, when all hope of keeping out at sea is lost. You will let me know?"

"I will, my Lord."

Glenarvan rejoined his companions, who felt they were in imminent danger though no word was spoken on the subject. Both ladies displayed great courage, fully equal to any of their companions. Paganel indulged in the most untimely theories as to the direction of the atmospheric currents. Robert made interesting comparisons between tornadoes, cyclones, and straight storms. The Major calmly awaited the end with the fatalism of a Muslim.

About eleven o'clock, the hurricane seemed to decrease slightly. The damp mist began to clear away, and a sudden gleam of light revealed a low-lying shore about six miles leeward. They were driving right down on it. Enormous breakers, fifty feet high, or more, were dashing over it. John knew that there must be shallow water before the shore to push the waves to such heights.

"There are sand bars," he said to Austin.

"I think you're right," said the mate.

"We are in God's hands," said John. "If we cannot find any opening for the *Duncan*, and if she doesn't find the way in herself, we are lost."

"The tide is high at present, it is just possible we may ride over those benches."

"But look at those breakers. What ship could stand them? God help us, my friend!"

The *Duncan*, under her storm jib, was approaching the coast with frightening speed. Soon she was within two miles of the sand banks, though the shore was still veiled in mist. John fancied he could see a quiet basin beyond the breakers, where the *Duncan* might find a haven, but how could she reach it?

All the passengers were summoned to the deck, for now that the hour of shipwreck was at hand, the Captain did not wish anyone to be shut up below. Glenarvan and his companions looked at the dreadful sea. Mary Grant turned pale.

"John," said Glenarvan softly to the Captain, "I will try to save my wife, or I

will perish with her. You take care of Miss Grant.”

“Yes, Your Honour,” replied John Mangles, raising his hand in a salute.

The *Duncan* was only a stone’s throw from the sand-banks. The tide was high. If it were calm, there would likely be enough water under the keel of the yacht to allow her to cross this dangerous bar; but the huge waves, alternately lifting her up, and then dropping her, would infallibly ground her. Was there any means of moderating the movement of these waves, of facilitating the sliding of their liquid molecules, of calming this tumultuous sea?

John Mangles had an idea.

“*The oil!*” he exclaimed. “My lads, get the oil! *Get the oil!*”

The crew understood him immediately. This was a known technique, that sometimes succeeds. The fury of the waves can be appeased by covering them with a sheet of oil. The sheet floats on the surface, and lessens the impact of waves, which it lubricates. Its effect is immediate, but it passes quickly. The moment after a ship has passed over the smooth surface, the sea redoubles its violence, and woe to anyone that follows. [fn8](#)

The barrels of seal oil were hauled up onto the forecastle by the crew, for the danger seemed to have doubled the men’s strength. They were axed open, and hung over the port and starboard railings.

“*Hang on!*” shouted John, looking out for the right moment.

In twenty seconds the yacht reached the bar, carried by a roaring tidal bore. Now was the time.

“By God! *Now!*” cried the young Captain.

The barrels were capsized, and streams of oil poured out. Instantly, the oily tablecloth levelled the frothy surface of the sea. The *Duncan* flew over the calmed waters, into a peaceful basin beyond the formidable bar. But the ocean, cleared of its fetters, burst forth again with all its fury, and the towering breakers dashed over the bar with increased violence behind her.



“By God! *Now!*” cried the young Captain.

[fn1.](#) Verne has them five degrees from Cape Bernouilli, which is way off. I thought he might have meant five degrees from Point d'Entrecasteaux, but its longitude is 116° so that still doesn't match.
— DAS

[fn2.](#) Extremely violent winds reigning in the Indian Ocean. Their direction varies according to the seasons, and the summer monsoons are generally in the opposite direction to the monsoons of the winter.

[fn3.](#) 686 millimetres. The normal height of the barometric column is 760 millimetres.

[fn4.](#) For some reason, Verne gives wind speeds in this chapter in fathoms per second. I've converted them to knots. — DAS

[fn5.](#) The cache of spare parts, lumber, etc. needed for making repairs, kept lashed on deck. Another perfectly cromulent word, though when I finally tracked it down in a dictionary of nautical terms, its usage citation pointed back to Verne's use of it here. — DAS

[fn6.](#) Glasses containing a chemical mixture that changes appearance depending on the direction of the wind and the electrical voltage of the atmosphere. The best are made by Messrs. Negretti and Zambra, opticians of the British navy.

[Storm Glasses](#) don't actually work, but they were popular in the 1860s, with many prominent advocates in the world's navies, including Admiral FitzRoy. — DAS

[fn7.](#) *The Tempest*, Act I, Scene I. — DAS

[fn8.](#) Thus the maritime regulations forbid captains from using this desperate means, when another ship follows them.

Chapter VI

Cape Bernouilli

JOHN MANGLES' FIRST CARE WAS TO MOOR HIS VESSEL SECURELY ON TWO ANCHORS. HE anchored in five fathoms of water with a hard gravel bottom which gave an excellent hold. There was no danger now of either being driven away, or stranded at low water. After so many hours of danger, the *Duncan* found herself in a cove, sheltered from the offshore winds by a high circular point.

Lord Glenarvan shook hands with John Mangles, simply saying "Thanks, John."

John felt generously rewarded by those two words. Glenarvan kept his secret anguish to himself, and neither Lady Helena, nor Mary or Robert suspected the grave peril they had just escaped.

One important fact had to be ascertained. Where on the coast had the *Duncan* be thrown by the storm? How far must they go to regain the parallel? How far to the southwest was Cape Bernouilli? These were the first questions addressed to John Mangles. He immediately took his bearings, and pointed out his observations on the map.

The *Duncan* had not deviated too far from her course: only two degrees. They were at 136° 12' of longitude, and 35° 07' latitude: at Cape Catastrophe in South Australia, three hundred miles from Cape Bernouilli.

Cape Catastrophe — an ominous sounding name — lies across Investigator Strait from Cape Borda, formed by a promontory on Kangaroo Island. Investigator Strait leads to two deep gulfs: Spencer Gulf in the north, and Gulf St. Vincent in the south. The port of Adelaide, the capital of the province of South Australia, lies on the eastern coast of Gulf St. Vincent. This city, founded in 1836, numbers forty thousand inhabitants, and many resources would be available there. But its people are too much taken up with the cultivation of their fertile soil, and with looking after their grapes and oranges and all their agricultural wealth to occupy themselves with great industrial enterprises. The population comprises fewer engineers than agriculturists, and the general spirit runs neither in the direction of commercial operations, nor mechanical arts.

Could the *Duncan* be repaired there? To answer that question the extent of the damages first had to be determined. Captain Mangles ordered some men to dive down below the stern to inspect the screw. Their report was that one of the blades of the screw was bent, and was jammed against the sternpost,^{fn1} which prevented

all possibility of rotation. This was serious damage, that could not likely be repaired with the resources available in Adelaide.

Lord Glenarvan and Captain John — after careful consideration — decided to sail along the Australian coast, looking for signs of the *Britannia*. They would stop at Cape Bernouilli to collect the latest information available there, and then continue south to Melbourne where the *Duncan* could easily be repaired. With the screw restored, they would proceed to cruise along the eastern coast to complete their search.

This proposal was approved. John Mangles resolved to take advantage of the first fair wind to sail. He did not have to wait long. By evening the hurricane had completely subsided. A manageable breeze followed it, blowing from the southwest. Repairs were made to the rigging, and new sails were taken from stores. At four o'clock in the morning, sailors turned the capstan. Soon the anchors were raised and the *Duncan* — under her foresail, topsail, topgallant, jibs, brigantine, and her staysails — ran on the starboard tack, close hauled to the wind, along the Australian shores.

Two hours later she lost sight of Cape Catastrophe, and found herself across Investigator Strait. In the evening they doubled Cape Borda, and came alongside Kangaroo Island. This is the largest of the Australian islands, and serves as a refuge for fugitive deportees. Its appearance was enchanting. The stratified rocks on the shore were carpeted with lush vegetation. As in the time of its discovery in 1802, countless mobs of kangaroos leaped through the woods and plains.

Next day, boats were sent in to minutely examine the coast while the *Duncan* was sailing offshore. They were now on the 36th parallel, and between that and the 38th, Glenarvan wished to leave no part unexplored.

On December 18th the *Duncan*, which flew along before the wind like a regular clipper, sailed close past Encounter Bay. It was here that the explorer Sturt came in 1828, after he had discovered the Murray: the largest river in southern Australia. They were no longer sailing past the green shores of Kangaroo Island, but a low and jagged coast of arid hills showing all the dryness of a polar continent. Sometimes the uniformity was broken by some grey cliffs, or sand promontories.

The boats did hard service during this journey, but the sailors never complained. Almost always Glenarvan and his inseparable companions, Paganel and young Robert, accompanied them. They wanted to search for some vestiges of the *Britannia* with their own eyes. But all this painstaking exploration revealed nothing of the shipwreck. The Australian shores revealed no more than the

Patagonian. However, it was not yet time to lose all hope. They had not reached the exact point indicated by the document. This extended search was a precaution, to leave nothing to chance. During the night, the Duncan hove to, so as to remain in place as much as possible, and during the day the coast was carefully searched.

On December 20th they arrived off Cape Bernouilli, at the end of Lacedpede Bay, without finding any trace of the *Britannia*. Still, this was not surprising for in the two years since the catastrophe the sea might, and indeed must, have scattered and destroyed whatever fragments of the three-master had remained. Besides, the natives, who scent a wreck as the vultures do a dead body, would have collected the smallest debris. Then Harry Grant and two his companions, taken prisoner the moment the waves threw them on shore, had undoubtedly been dragged into the interior of the continent.

But if so, what became of Paganel's ingenious hypothesis about the document? In the Argentine territory, the geographer could rightly contend that the figures in the document related not to the theatre of the sinking, but to their place of captivity. Indeed, the great rivers of the Pampas, with their numerous tributaries, were there to bring the precious document to the sea. Here, in this part of Australia, the rivers which cross the 37th parallel are scarce. Besides, the Patagonian rivers — the Rio Colorado and the Rio Negro — throw themselves into the sea along deserted beaches, uninhabitable and uninhabited, while the main Australian rivers — the Murray, Yarra, Torrens, and Darling — are tributaries to each other, or rush into the ocean by mouths which have become frequented ports. Ports where navigation is active. What was the chance, then, that a fragile bottle could have descended the course of these incessantly traversed waters and arrived at the Indian Ocean?



Boats were sent ashore to examine the coast minutely

This impossibility could not escape insightful minds. Paganel's hypothesis,

plausible in Argentina, would have been untenable in Australia. Paganel recognized this problem when it was raised by Major MacNabbs. It was evident that the position reported in the document related to the place where the *Britannia* was actually shipwrecked, and not to the place of captivity, and that the bottle therefore had been thrown into the sea on the western coast of the continent.

As Glenarvan correctly pointed out, this interpretation did not exclude the hypothesis that Captain Grant was a captive. The document anticipated that they were to be taken prisoners of the cruel natives, but there was no longer any reason to look for the prisoners on the 37th parallel, rather than any other.

After a long debate, the question was resolved with a final conclusion: if traces of the *Britannia* were not found at Cape Bernouilli, Lord Glenarvan would have to return to Europe. His search would have been fruitless, but he had done his duty courageously and conscientiously.

This saddened the passengers of the yacht, especially Mary and Robert Grant. On their way to the shore with Lord and Lady Glenarvan, John Mangles, MacNabbs, and Paganel, the Captain's two children said that the question of their father's salvation was about to be irrevocably decided. Irrevocable, indeed, they might consider it, for as Paganel had judiciously demonstrated, if the wreck had occurred on the eastern side the survivors would have long since found their way back to their own country.

"Hope! Hope! Always hope!" Lady Helena repeated to the girl, sitting next to her in the boat that was taking them to shore. "The hand of God will not leave us!"

"Yes, Miss Mary," said Captain John. "It is at the moment when men have exhausted human resources that Heaven intervenes, and by some unforeseen fact, opens new ways to them."

"From your lips to God's ears, Mr. John!" said Mary Grant.

The shore was only a cable away. The cape which extended two miles into the sea ended in gentle slopes. The boat put in at a sort of natural cove between coral banks still in the process of formation. In time they might form a reef belt around the southern part of Australia. Even now they were quite enough to destroy the keel of any ship that grounded on them, and the *Britannia* might have been dashed to pieces on them.

The *Duncan's* passengers landed without difficulty on an absolutely deserted shore. The coast was formed by cliffs of stratified rock, sixty to eighty feet high. It would have been difficult to scale without ladders or crampons. Fortunately, John Mangles discovered a breach half a mile to the south. Part of the cliff had

collapsed. The sea, no doubt, had beat this barrier of friable tuff during its great equinoctial rages, and caused the fall of the upper portions of the plateau.

Glenarvan and his companions entered the gully, and reached the summit of the cliff via a steep slope. Robert climbed like a young cat, and was first to the top ridge, to the despair of Paganel who was quite ashamed to see his long legs, forty years old, outdistanced by the young legs of a twelve year old. However, he was far ahead of the peaceful Major, who did not care otherwise.

The little troop, soon reunited, examined the plain that stretched before their eyes. It appeared entirely uncultivated, and covered with shrubs and bushes. It was an arid land which Glenarvan thought resembled some of the glens of the Scottish Lowlands, and to Paganel like some barren heaths of Brittany. But if this country appeared uninhabited along the coast, the presence of man, not the savage, but the worker, was revealed in the distance by some auspicious constructions.

“A mill!” exclaimed Robert.

Three miles away, the wings of a windmill were turning in the wind.

“It certainly is a windmill,” said Paganel after examining the object in question through his telescope. “Here is a small monument as modest as it is useful. It is a privilege to lay my eyes on such an enchanting sight.”

“It’s almost a steeple,” said Lady Helena.

“Yes, Madame, and if one grinds the bread of the body, the other grinds the bread of the soul. From this point of view they are very alike.”

“Let us go to the mill,” said Glenarvan.

They started on their way, and after walking about half an hour the country began to change, showing it had been worked by the hand of man. The transition from the barren countryside to cultivation was abrupt. Instead of scrub, hedgerows surrounded a recently cleared enclosure. A few oxen and half a dozen horses grazed in meadows surrounded by sturdy acacias transplanted from the vast nurseries of Kangaroo Island. Gradually fields of grain came in sight, a few acres bristling with blond ears of corn, haystacks shaped like large beehives, blooming orchards, a fine garden worthy of Horace, where the pleasant mingled with the useful. Then came sheds, well distributed out buildings, and last of all, a plain, comfortable house which the merry mill dominated with its sharp gable, and caressed with the moving shadows of its large sails.

A pleasant-faced man, about fifty years old, came out of the house, warned of the arrival of strangers by the loud barking of four dogs. He was followed by five

handsome and strong boys, his sons, and their mother, a tall, robust woman. There was no mistaking the little group. This man, surrounded by his valiant family in the midst of these new constructions, in this almost virgin countryside, was a perfect example of the Irish colonist: a man who weary of the miseries of his country, had come with his family to seek fortune and happiness beyond the seas.

Before Glenarvan and his party had time to reach the house, and present themselves in due form, they heard the cordial words "*Strangers! Welcome to the house of Paddy O'Moore!*"

Glenarvan took the man's outstretched hand. "Are you Irish?"

"I was," said Paddy O'Moore, "but now I am Australian. Come in, gentlemen, whoever you may be, this house is yours."

It was impossible not to accept an invitation given with such grace. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were led in by Mrs. O'Moore, while the gentlemen were assisted by his sturdy sons to disencumber themselves of their fire-arms.

An immense hall, light and airy, occupied the ground floor of the house which was built of strong planks laid horizontally. The hall was furnished with a few wooden benches fastened against the cheerfully coloured walls, a dozen stools, two oak chests on which there was a display of white porcelain and shiny pewter, and a large long table where twenty guests could sit comfortably. It was all in perfect keeping with the solid house and sturdy inhabitants.

Lunch was served. The soup tureen was steaming between roast beef and a leg of mutton, surrounded by large plates of olives, grapes, and oranges. The necessary was there, and there was no lack of the superfluous. The host and hostess were so pleasant, and the big table, with its abundant fare, looked so inviting, that it would have been ungracious not to have seated themselves. The farm-hands, on equal footing with their employer, were already in their places to take their share of the meal.



A plain and comfortable dwelling, crowned by a merry mill

Paddy O'Moore pointed to the seats reserved for the strangers, and said "I was waiting for you."

"Waiting for us?" asked Glenarvan.

"I am always waiting for those who come," said the Irishman. And then, in a solemn voice while the family and hands reverently stood, he recited the blessing. Lady Helena felt very moved by such a perfect simplicity of manners, and a glance from her husband made her understand that he admired it as she did.

Dinner followed immediately, during which an animated conversation was kept up on all sides. From Scottish to Irish is but a hand's breadth. The Tweed, [fn2](#) several fathoms wide, digs a deeper trench between Scotland and England than the twenty leagues of Irish Channel which separates Old Caledonia from Érin.

Paddy O'Moore related his history. It was that of all immigrants driven by misfortune from their own country. Many come to seek fortunes who only find trouble and sorrow, and then they throw the blame on bad luck, and forget that the true cause is their own idleness, and vice, and want of common sense. Whoever is sober and courageous, honest and economical, succeeds.

Such a one had been, and was, Paddy O'Moore. He left Dundalk, where he was starving, and came with his family to Australia. He landed at Adelaide, where he chose the hard work of a farmer over the more hazardous work of a miner. Two months later he started clearing his own land, and so prospers today.

The whole territory of South Australia is divided into eighty acre lots [fn3](#), and these are sold to colonists by the government. An industrious man, by proper cultivation, can not only make a living out of his lot, but lay aside eighty pounds [fn4](#) a year.

Paddy O'Moore knew this. His knowledge of farming served him well. He lived, he saved, and acquired new lots with the profits from the first. His family prospered, and also his farm. The Irish peasant became a landowner, and though his little estate was not yet two years old, he had five hundred acres cleared by his own hands, and five hundred head of cattle. He was his own master after having been a serf in Europe, and as independent as one can be in the freest country in the world.

His guests congratulated this Irish immigrant heartily as he ended his narration. Paddy O'Moore — his story over — waited, no doubt expecting the strangers to recite their own story in turn, but he didn't demand it from them. He was one of those discreet people who can say, "I tell you who I am, but I don't ask who you are." Glenarvan wanted to tell him of the *Duncan*, and how they came to

Cape Bernouilli, and of the search they pursued with tireless perseverance. But first he questioned Paddy O'Moore about the sinking of the *Britannia*.

The reply of the Irishman was not favourable. He had not heard of this ship. No ship had been wrecked on that coast for the past two years, neither above nor below the Cape. The catastrophe was only two years ago. He could declare with the greatest certainty that the survivors of the wreck had not been thrown on this part of the western shore.

"Now, my Lord," he added "may I ask what interest you have in making the inquiry?"

Glenarvan told the settler the story of the document, the voyage of the *Duncan*, and the attempts to find Captain Grant. He did not conceal that his dearest hopes fell before so clear a claim, and that he despaired of ever finding the shipwrecked *Britannia*.

Glenarvan's final words made a painful impression on the minds of his listeners. Robert and Mary's eyes filled with tears as they listened to him. Paganel couldn't find a word of hope or comfort to give them. John Mangles was suffering from a pain he could not soften. Despair was invading the souls of the generous people whom the *Duncan* had brought unnecessarily to these distant shores, when these words were heard:

"My Lord, praise and thank God! If Captain Grant is alive, he is on Australian soil!"

[fn1.](#) The upright structural member or post at the stern of a ship.

[fn2.](#) The river that separates Scotland from England.

[fn3.](#) One acre is 0.405 hectare.

[fn4.](#) £80 = \$400 = 2,000 francs.

Chapter VII

Ayrton

THE SURPRISE CAUSED BY THESE WORDS CANNOT BE DESCRIBED. GLENARVAN SPRANG TO his feet, pushing back his seat “*Who said that?*”

“I did,” said one of the farm hands, at the far end of the table.

“*You, Ayrton?*” said the settler, no less bewildered than Glenarvan.

“Yes, it was me,” said Ayrton in a firm, though somewhat agitated voice. “A Scot like yourself, my Lord, and one of the shipwrecked crew of the *Britannia*.”

This declaration produced an indescribable effect. Mary Grant fell back in Lady Helena’s arms, half-fainting from joy. Robert, Mangles, and Paganel jumped up and rushed toward the man that Paddy O’Moore had addressed as Ayrton.

He was a coarse-looking fellow, about forty-five years old, with very bright eyes, though half-hidden beneath thick, overhanging brows. In spite of his extreme leanness there was an air of unusual strength about him. He seemed all bone and nerves, or — to use a Scottish expression — he had not wasted time in making fat. He was broad shouldered, of middle height, and determined bearing. His face was so full of intelligence and energy that though his features were rough, he gave a favourable impression. The sympathy he inspired was further increased by the marks of recent suffering imprinted on his face. It was evident that he had endured long and severe hardships which he had borne bravely, and overcome.



He was a coarse-looking fellow, about forty-five years old

Glenarvan and his friends were drawn to him at once. Ayrton’s personality was obvious from the start. This meeting had evidently surprised both of them. Glenarvan took over, asking all the questions his friends wanted to ask, and to which Ayrton replied.

His first questions rushed out of him before he could think to put them in logical order.

“Are you one of the castaways of the *Britannia*?”

“Yes, my Lord. Captain Grant’s quartermaster.”

“Saved with him after the sinking?”

“No, my Lord, no. I was separated from him at that terrible moment, for I was swept off the deck as the ship struck.”

“Then you are not one of the two sailors mentioned in the document?”

“No. I didn’t know about any document. The Captain must have thrown it into the sea when I was no longer on board.”

“But the Captain? The Captain?”

“I thought he had drowned; gone down with all the crew of the *Britannia*. I thought I was the only survivor.”

“But you said just now, Captain Grant was alive.”

“No,” I said, ‘If the Captain is alive...’”

“And you added ‘he is on the Australian continent.’”

“Where else could he be?”

“Then you don’t know where he is?”

“No, my Lord. I say again, I supposed he was buried beneath the waves, or broken on the rocks. It was from you I learnt that he was still alive.”

“Then, what do you know?” asked Glenarvan.

“Simply this: if Captain Grant is alive, he is in Australia.”

“Where did the shipwreck occur?” asked Major MacNabbs.

This should have been the first question, but in the confusion caused by the unexpected event, and in his rush to learn of Captain Grant’s fate, Glenarvan had forgotten to ask it. After the Major’s question, the previously vague, illogical conversation — proceeding by leaps and bounds, touching on subjects without deepening them, mingling the facts, and swapping the dates — took on a more reasonable pace. Soon the details of this obscure story appeared, clear and precise in the minds of its listeners.



“I thought I was the only survivor.”

To the question put by the Major, Ayrton replied "When I was swept off the forecastle where I was hauling down the jib, the *Britannia* was running toward the Australian coast. She was not more than two miles from it. The sinking happened there."

"By 37° of latitude?" asked John Mangles.

"Yes, by 37°."

"On the west coast?"

"No! On the east coast," replied the quartermaster quickly.

"And at what date?"

"It was on the night of June 27th, 1862."

"That's *it!* That's *it!*" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"You see then, my Lord," said Ayrton, "why I say that if Captain Grant is alive, it is on the Australian continent that he must be sought, and not anywhere else."

"And we will look for him there, and we will find him, and we will save him, my friend!" exclaimed Paganel. "Ah, precious document," he added, with perfect naiveté, "you must admit you have fallen into the hands of uncommonly shrewd people."

But doubtless, nobody heard his flattering words. Glenarvan and Lady Helena, Mary and Robert huddled around Ayrton. They shook his hands. It seemed as if this man's presence was a sure guarantee of Harry Grant's salvation. If this sailor had escaped the dangers of the shipwreck, why shouldn't the Captain? Ayrton was happy to say that Captain Grant must be alive as well. Where, he could not say, but certainly on this continent. He answered the thousand questions that assailed him with remarkably intelligence and precision. Miss Mary held one of his hands in hers, all the time he spoke. This sailor was a companion of her father's, one of the *Britannia's* seamen! He had lived with Harry Grant, crossed the seas with him, and shared the same dangers. Mary could not take her eyes off his rough face, and she wept with happiness.

So far, no one had thought of questioning the veracity or the identity of the quartermaster. Only the Major, and perhaps John Mangles — less quick to jump to conclusions — began to ask themselves if Ayrton's word was to be fully trusted. There was something suspicious about this unexpected meeting. Certainly Ayrton had mentioned corresponding facts and dates, and the minuteness of his details was most striking. But details, as exact as they were, do not form certainty, and generally, it has been noted, a lie is affirmed by the precision of its details. MacNabbs reserved his opinion.

John Mangles' doubts didn't resist the words of the sailor for long. He was convinced that Ayrton had been a true companion of Captain Grant's when he heard him speak to the young girl about her father. Ayrton knew Mary and Robert quite well. He had seen them in Glasgow when the *Britannia* had sailed. He remembered them at the farewell dinner given on board the *Britannia* for the Captain's friends, at which Sheriff MacIntyre was present. Robert, who was barely ten years old, had been entrusted to Dick Turner, the boatswain, and he had escaped him, and climbed up to the topgallant's yards.

"That's right; I did!" said Robert.

And Ayrton recalled a thousand little facts, without appearing to attach the importance that John Mangles gave to them, and when he stopped, Mary Grant said, in her soft voice "Oh, go on, Mr. Ayrton, tell us more about our father!"

The quartermaster did his best to satisfy the girl's desires, and Glenarvan did not interrupt him, though a score of questions far more important crowded into his mind. Lady Helena made him look at Mary's beaming face, and the words he was about to utter remained unspoken.

It was in this conversation that Ayrton told the story of the *Britannia* and her voyage through the Pacific. Mary Grant knew most of it, as news of the ship had come regularly up to May of 1862. During this year, Harry Grant had landed at all the principal lands of Oceania. He touched the Hebrides, New Guinea, New Zealand, and New Caledonia, often encountering unjustified seizures, subject to the ill will of the English authorities, as his mission was reported in the British colonies. He had succeeded in finding a likely place on the western coast of Papua, where it seemed that a prosperous Scottish colony could be established. A good port of call on the Maluku and Philippine route would attract ships, especially when the completion of the Suez Canal supplanted the Cape of Good Hope route. Harry Grant was one of those who appreciated the great work of M. de Lesseps, and would not allow political rivalries to interfere with international interests.

After surveying Papua, the *Britannia* went to refuel at Callao, and left that port on the 30th of May, 1862, to return to Europe via the Indian Ocean and the Cape. Three weeks later, a terrible storm disabled the ship. It had been necessary to cut away the masts. A leak sprang in the hold, and could not be stopped. The crew were soon too exhausted to work the pumps, and for eight days the *Britannia* was tossed about like a toy in the hurricane. She had six feet of water in her hold, and was gradually sinking. The boats had all been carried away by the tempest; death stared them in the face, when, on the night of the 27th of June, as Paganel had

rightly supposed, they came in sight of the eastern coast of Australia. The ship soon neared the shore, and presently dashed violently against it. Ayrton was swept off by a wave, and thrown among the breakers, where he lost consciousness. When he recovered, he found himself in the hands of natives, who dragged him away into the interior of the continent. Since that time he had never heard the *Britannia's* name mentioned, and reasonably enough came to the conclusion that she had gone down with all hands on the dangerous reefs of Twofold Bay.

Here ended the story of Captain Grant. More than once sorrowful exclamations were evoked by the story. The Major could not, in common justice, doubt its authenticity. But after the story of the *Britannia*, Ayrton's particular story was of even more interest. Thanks to the document, they knew that Grant had survived the sinking with two of his sailors, like Ayrton himself. They should be able to deduce Captain Grant's fate from Ayrton's. He was invited to tell the story of his adventures. It was very simple and very short.

The seaman, a prisoner of a native tribe, was taken inland to those areas watered by the Darling River, four hundred miles north of the 37th parallel. He spent a miserable existence there — not that he was ill-treated, but the natives themselves lived miserably. He passed two long years of painful slavery among them, but always cherished in his heart the hope of one day regaining his freedom, and watching for the slightest opportunity that might turn up, though he knew that his flight would be attended with innumerable dangers.

One night in October, 1864, he managed to escape the vigilance of the natives, and disappeared into the depths of the immense forests. For a month he subsisted on roots, edible ferns, and mimosa gums, wandering through vast solitudes, guiding himself by the sun during the day and by the stars at night, often depressed by despair. He went on across marshes, rivers, and mountains, until he



He found himself in the hands of natives

had traversed the whole of the uninhabited continent, where only a few bold travellers have ventured. At last, in an exhausted and all but dying condition, he reached the hospitable house of Paddy O'Moore, where he found a happy home in exchange for his labour.

"And if Ayrton speaks well of me," said the Irish settler when the narrative ended, "I have nothing but good to say of him. He is an honest, intelligent fellow, and a good worker; and as long as he pleases, Paddy O'Moore's house shall be his."

Ayrton thanked the Irishman with a gesture, and waited for new questions to be put to him. He told himself, however, that he surely must have satisfied all legitimate curiosity. What could remain to be said that he had not said a hundred times already? Glenarvan was about to open a discussion

about their future plan of action, based on this encounter with Ayrton, and the information he had given them, but Major MacNabbs had one more question.

"You were the quartermaster, aboard the *Britannia*?"

"Yes," said Ayrton, without the least hesitation. But as if conscious that a certain feeling of mistrust, however slight, had prompted this question from the Major, he added "I have my contract with me; I saved it from the wreck."

He left the common room immediately to fetch this official document, and, though hardly absent a moment, Paddy O'Moore had time to say "My Lord, you may trust Ayrton; I vouch for him being an honest man. He has been in my service for two months now, and I have never once found fault with him. I knew all this story of the shipwreck and his captivity. He is a loyal man, worthy of all your confidence."

Glenarvan was about to reply that he had never doubted his good faith, when Ayrton came back with his contract papers. It was signed by the shipowners and Captain Grant. Mary recognized her father's writing at once. It certified that "Tom Ayrton, able seaman, was engaged as quartermaster on board the three-master



He reached the house of Paddy O'Moore

Britannia, Glasgow." There was no longer any doubt as to Ayrton's identity, for it would have been difficult to account for his possession of the document if he were not the man named in it.

"Now," said Glenarvan, "I wish to ask everyone's advice as to how we should proceed. Your advice, Ayrton, will be particularly valuable to us, and I shall be much obliged if you would let us have it."

"I thank you, my Lord, for the confidence you show toward me, and I hope to prove worthy of it," said Ayrton. After a moment's thought he went on "I have some knowledge of the country, and the habits of the natives, and if I can be of service to you..."

"Certainly," said Glenarvan.

"I think," said Ayrton, "that Captain Grant and his two sailors have been saved from the wreck, but since they have not found their way to an English settlement, nor been seen anywhere, I have no doubt that their fate has been similar to my own, and that they are prisoners in the hands of some of the native tribes."

"You repeat here, Ayrton, the arguments I have already made," said Paganel. "The castaways are obviously prisoners of the natives, as they feared. But should we think that, like you, they were dragged away north of the 37th parallel?"

"I should suppose so, sir; for hostile tribes would hardly remain anywhere near the districts under British rule."

"That will complicate our search," said Glenarvan, somewhat disconcerted. "How can we possibly find traces of the captives in the heart of so vast a continent?"

No one replied, though Lady Helena's questioning glances at her companions seemed to press for an answer. Even Paganel remained silent. His ingenuity, for once, unable to come up with an answer. John Mangles paced the common room with great strides, as if he were on the deck of his ship, evidently quite nonplussed.

"And you, Mr. Ayrton," said Lady Helena at last. "What would you do?"

"Madam," replied Ayrton at once, "I would embark on board the *Duncan*, and go straight to the scene of the shipwreck. There I would be guided by circumstances, and by any clues that chance might provide."

"Very good," said Glenarvan. "But we must wait until the *Duncan* is repaired."

"Ah! You have suffered damage?" said Ayrton.

"Yes," said John Mangles.

"Serious?"

"No, but repairs require tools we do not have on board. One of the blades of the screw is twisted, and we cannot get it repaired nearer than Melbourne."

"Can't you simply sail there?" asked the quartermaster.

"Yes, but if the *Duncan* encounters contrary winds, it could take a long time to reach Twofold Bay, and in any case she will have to pass by Melbourne."

"Well, let the ship go to Melbourne then," said Paganel, "and we will go without her to Twofold Bay."

"How?" asked Mangles.

"By crossing Australia as we crossed America, keeping along the 37th parallel."

"But the *Duncan*?" asked Ayrton, as if particularly anxious on that score.

"The *Duncan* can rejoin us, or we can rejoin her, as the case may be. Should we discover Captain Grant in the course of our journey, we can all return together to Melbourne. If we have to go on to the coast, then the *Duncan* can come to us there. Who has any objection to make? Have you, Major?"

"No," said MacNabbs. "Not if there is a practicable route across Australia."

"So practicable," said Paganel, "that I propose Lady Helena and Miss Grant should accompany us."

"Are you serious?" asked Glenarvan.

"Very serious, my dear Lord. It is a journey of 350 miles, [fn1](#) no more. At twelve miles a day, it will last a mere month, enough time to complete repairs to the *Duncan*. If we had to cross the continent farther north, at its widest part, and traverse the immense deserts where there is no water, and torrid heat, and go where the most adventurous travellers have never yet ventured, that would be a different matter. But the 37th parallel cuts through the province of Victoria, quite an English country, with roads and railways, and well populated almost everywhere. It is a journey you might almost make in a carriage, though a wagon would be better. It is no more difficult than a trip from London to Edinburgh."

"What about ferocious animals?" asked Glenarvan, wanting to know all of the potential hazards.

"There are no ferocious animals in Australia."

"And how about the savages?"

"There are no savages in this latitude, and if there were, they do not have the cruelty of the New Zealanders."

"And the convicts?"

"There are no convicts in the southern provinces of Australia, only in the eastern and western colonies. The province of Victoria not only refused to admit

them, but passed a law to prevent any convicts released from other provinces entering her territories. This year the Victorian Government even threatened to withdraw its subsidy from the *Peninsular Company* if their vessels continued to take in coal in those ports of Western Australia where convicts are admitted. How don't you, an Englishman, know that?"

"First of all, I am not an Englishman," said Glenarvan.

"What Mr. Paganel says is perfectly correct," said Paddy O'Moore. "Not only Victoria, but also South Australia, Queensland, and even Tasmania, have agreed to expel deportees from their territories. Ever since I have been on this farm, I have not heard of a single convict."

"And for my part, I have never met any," said Ayrton.

"You see, my friends," continued Jacques Paganel, "very few savages, no ferocious animals, and no convicts. There are not many countries in Europe for which you can say as much. Well, is it agreed?"

"What do you think, Helena?" asked Glenarvan.

"What we all think, my dear Edward." Lady Helena looked around at her companions. "Let us be off at once!"

[fn1](#). [140 leagues](#) (560 kilometres — DAS)

The Hetzel version has "1 200 lieues environs [1,200 leagues around]" here, which makes no sense, whatsoever. Even if Paganel meant the distance following the coastline, it only comes to about 1,200 km, or 300 leagues. — DAS

Chapter VIII

The Departure

GLENARVAN WAS NOT USED TO WASTING TIME BETWEEN THE ADOPTION OF AN IDEA, AND its execution. As soon as Paganel's proposal was accepted, he immediately gave orders for the preparations for the journey to be completed as soon as possible. The departure date was set for December 22nd, in two days.

What results could crossing Australia produce? The presence of Harry Grant on the continent having become an indisputable fact, this expedition could have immense consequences. Their chance of finding him had increased. No one flattered themselves with the idea that they would discover the Captain exactly on the 37th parallel, which they intended to strictly follow, but they might come upon his track, and in any event, they were going to the actual site of the shipwreck. That was the main point.

Besides, if Ayrton consented to join them and act as their guide through the forests of Victoria Province, to lead them to the eastern coast, there was every chance of success. Glenarvan was sure of it. He was particularly anxious to secure the assistance of Harry Grant's crewman. He asked his host if he would object to them taking Ayrton with them.

Paddy O'Moore consented, though he said he would regret the loss of his excellent worker.

"Well, will you follow us, Ayrton, on this expedition in search of the shipwrecked *Britannia*?" asked Glenarvan.

Ayrton did not reply immediately. He even showed signs of hesitation; then, on reflection, he said "Yes, my Lord, I will follow you, and if I do not lead you in the footsteps of Captain Grant, at least I will take you to the very spot where his ship wrecked."

"Thank you, Ayrton," said Glenarvan.

"Only one question, my Lord."

"Yes?"

"Where will you meet the *Duncan* again?"

"In Melbourne, if we do not cross Australia from one shore to another. On the east coast, if our search extends that far."

"And her Captain?"

"Her Captain will wait for my instructions in the port of Melbourne."

"Well, my Lord," said Ayrton, "you can count on me."

“I am counting on it, Ayrton,” said Glenarvan.

The quartermaster was warmly thanked by the *Duncan's* passengers, and the children hugged him. Everyone was happy with his decision, except the Irishman, who was losing an intelligent and faithful worker. But Paddy understood the importance Glenarvan attached to the quartermaster's presence, and resigned himself. Glenarvan commissioned him to procure the transportation needed for this trip across Australia, arranged a rendezvous with Ayrton, and their business concluded, the passengers returned onboard the *Duncan*.



They returned to the *Duncan*

It was a joyful return. Everything had changed. All hesitation disappeared. The brave searchers were no longer blindly following the 37th parallel. It could not be doubted that Harry Grant had found refuge on the continent, and everyone felt their hearts fill with the satisfaction of certainty after doubt.

In two months, if all went well, the *Duncan* would return Harry Grant to the shores of Scotland!

When John Mangles supported the proposal to cross Australia with the passengers, he supposed that this time he would accompany the expedition, so he conferred with Glenarvan. He put forward all sorts of arguments in his favour: his devotion to Lord and Lady Glenarvan, his usefulness as an organizer of the caravan, and his not being needed as Captain aboard the *Duncan*. He had a thousand more arguments marshalled, but he didn't need them.

“I'll only ask you one question, John,” said Glenarvan. “Do you have absolute confidence in your second?”

“Absolutely,” said John Mangles, “Tom Austin is a good sailor. He will take the ship to her destination, see that the repairs are skilfully executed, and bring her back on the appointed day. Tom is a slave to duty and discipline. Never would he

take it on himself to alter or retard the execution of an order. Your Honour may count on him as on myself."

"Very well then, John; you shall come with us." Lord Glenarvan smiled. "It will be good that you will be there when we find Mary Grant's father again."

"Oh! Your Honour," murmured John. That was all he could say. He paled for a moment, and seized the hand extended to him by Lord Glenarvan.

Next day, John Mangles, accompanied by the ship's carpenter and sailors laden with provisions, returned to Paddy O'Moore's farm to consult with the Irishman about the best method of transport.

The whole family was waiting for him, ready to work under his orders. Ayrton was there as well, and gave the benefit of his experience.

He and Paddy agreed on the main point: that the journey should be made in an oxcart for the ladies, and that the gentlemen should ride on horseback. Paddy could provide both the animals, and vehicle.

The vehicle was a wagon twenty feet long, covered over by a tarpaulin, and resting on four large wheels without spokes, or rims, or iron tires — simple wooden disks, in other words. The front and rear wheelsets were widely separated, and connected to the wagon by a rudimentary mechanism which did not allow the vehicle to turn sharply. A thirty-five foot pole extended out in front, to which six paired oxen were to be yoked. These animals, thus arranged, drew from the head and neck by the combination of a yoke fastened on their nape and a collar fixed to the yoke by an iron peg. It required great skill to drive this narrow machine, subject to long oscillations, and quick to veer aside, and to guide this team by means of a goad. The role of driver was assigned to Ayrton, for he had served his apprenticeship on the Irishman's farm, and Paddy vouched for his competence.



The preparation of the wagon

There were no springs in the wagon, so it was not likely to be very comfortable, but it was the best option available. If the rough construction could not be altered, John Mangles resolved that the interior should be made as cozy as possible. First, it was divided into two compartments by a means of a plank partition. The back one was intended for the provisions and luggage, and Mr. Olbinett's portable kitchen. The front was set aside for the ladies, and under the carpenter's hands, was to be converted into a comfortable room, covered with a thick carpet, and fitted up with a wash-table and two berths reserved for Lady Glenarvan and Mary Grant. Thick leather curtains could shut in this compartment if necessary, and protect the occupants from the chilliness of the nights. In a pinch, such as during heavy storms, the men might find refuge there, but a tent was to be their usual shelter when the caravan camped for the night. John Mangles strove to furnish the small space with everything that the two ladies could possibly require. He succeeded so well that neither Lady Helena nor Mary had cause to regret trading this rolling room for their comfortable cabins on board the *Duncan*.

Preparations for the rest of the party were simpler. Seven sturdy horses were provided for Lord Glenarvan, Paganel, Robert Grant, MacNabbs, John Mangles, and the two sailors, Wilson and Mulrady, who were to accompany their master in this new expedition. Ayrton had his natural place in the front of the wagon, and Mr. Olbinett, who was not inclined to riding, made room for himself among the baggage.

The horses and oxen were set to grazing in the Irishman's meadows, ready to fetch when the time came to leave.

After all arrangements were made, and the carpenter set to work, John Mangles escorted the Irishman and his family back to the yacht, for Paddy wished to return the visit of Lord Glenarvan. Ayrton had thought it fit to come as well, and at about four o'clock the party came over the side of the *Duncan*.

They were received with open arms. Glenarvan offered them dinner on board in return for their Australian hospitality. His offer was willingly accepted. Paddy was quite amazed at the splendour of the saloon: the furnishing of the cabins, the hangings, the tapestries, all the fittings of maple and rosewood excited his admiration. Ayrton, on the other hand, gave only moderate approval to these costly superfluities.

When he examined the yacht from a more marine point of view, the quartermaster of the *Britannia* was more impressed. He visited the bottom of the hold; he went down to the engine room, and inspected the machinery; he inquired

as to its power, and its coal consumption; he explored the coal bunkers, the galley, and the supply of powder; he was particularly interested in the armoury, and the cannon mounted on the forecastle. Glenarvan saw that he was dealing with a man who knew his ships. Finally, Ayrton completed his tour by inspecting the masts and the rigging.

"You have a beautiful ship, my Lord," he said.

"One of the best," said Glenarvan.

"And what is her tonnage?"

"She displaces 210 tons."

"If I'm not mistaken," said Ayrton, "I'd say she can easily do fifteen knots, at full steam."

"Say seventeen," put in John Mangles, "and you'd be right."

"Seventeen!" exclaimed the quartermaster. "Why, not a man-of-war — not the best among them, I mean — could catch her!"

"Not one," said John Mangles. "The *Duncan* was built as a racing yacht, and would never let herself be beaten."

"Even sailing?" asked Ayrton.

"Even sailing."

"Well, my Lord, and you too, Captain," said Ayrton, "allow a sailor who knows what a ship is worth, to compliment you on yours."

"You are welcome to join her company, then, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "The decision is yours."

"I will think on it, my Lord," was all Ayrton said.

Just then Mr. Olbinett came to announce that dinner was served. Lord Glenarvan and his guests made their way to the quarterdeck.

"That Ayrton is an intelligent man," said Paganel to the Major.

"Too intelligent!" muttered MacNabbs, who, without any apparent reason, had taken a great dislike to the face and manners of the quartermaster.

During the dinner, Ayrton gave some interesting details about the Australian continent, which he knew well. He asked how many sailors were going to accompany the expedition. When he learned that only two of them, Mulrady and Wilson, were to go with them, he seemed surprised. He advised Glenarvan to take all his best men, and even insisted upon it. An insistence which, it must be said, should have erased all suspicion from the Major's mind.

"But, our journey is not dangerous, is it?" asked Glenarvan.

"Not at all," said Ayrton, quickly.

“Well, then, we’ll leave all the men we can on board. Hands will be needed to sail the *Duncan*, and to help in the repairs. Above all, it is important that she should meet us at our rendezvous, wherever it may be, so, we won’t reduce her crew.”

Ayrton seemed to understand Lord Glenarvan’s point, and said no more on the matter.

Scottish and Irish separated when evening came. Ayrton and Paddy O’Moore’s family returned home. The horses and wagon were to be ready the next day. Departure was set for eight o’clock in the morning.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant made their last preparations. They were quickly done. Certainly more quickly than the meticulous preparations of Jacques Paganel. The scientist spent part of the night in disassembling, cleaning, polishing, and then reassembling the lenses of his telescope, so he was still sleeping when the Major woke him at dawn with a resounding bellow.

The luggage had already been transported to the farm by John Mangles. A boat was waiting to take the passengers, who soon took their places in it. The young Captain gave his final orders to Tom Austin. He impressed upon him that he was to wait at Melbourne for Lord Glenarvan’s commands, and to obey them scrupulously, whatever they might be.

The old sailor told John he might rely on him, and in the name of the men begged to offer His Honour their best wishes for the success of this new expedition. A round of thunderous hurrahs burst from the crew.

In ten minutes the boat reached shore, and a quarter of an hour later the travellers arrived at the Irishman’s farm.

All was ready. Lady Helena was delighted with the arrangements. The huge wagon, with its primitive wheels and massive planks, pleased her particularly. The six oxen yoked in pairs had a patriarchal air about them which quite took her fancy.

“*Parbleu!*” said Paganel. “This is an admirable vehicle. It beats all the coaches of the world. A house that moves: goes or stops wherever you please. What else can one wish for?”

“Monsieur Paganel,” said Lady Helena, “I hope I shall have the pleasure of seeing you in my salon.”

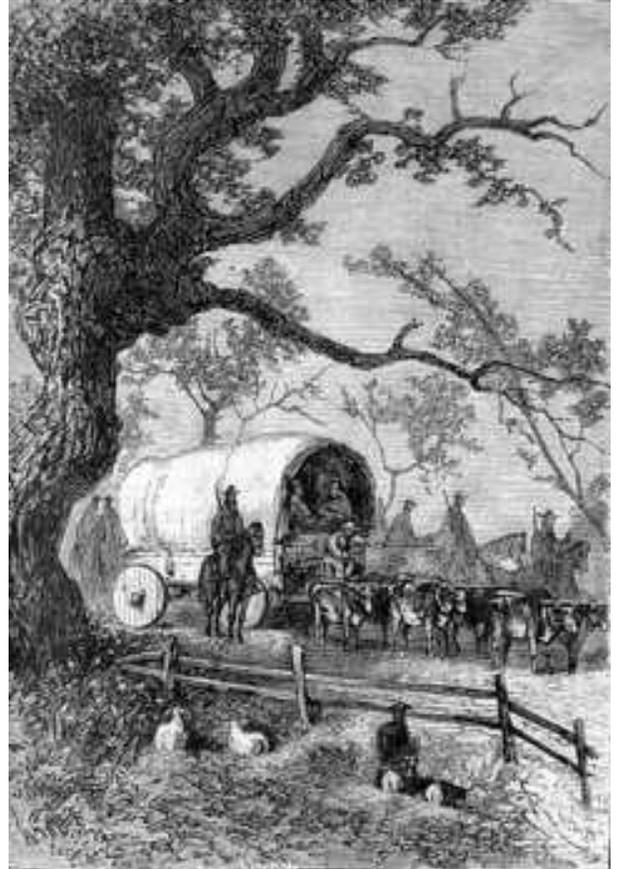
“Assuredly, Madame. I should count it an honour. Have you fixed a day?”

“I shall be at home every day to my friends,” said Lady Helena; “and you are —”

“The most devoted of all, Madame,” interrupted Paganel, gallantly.

This exchange of courtesies was interrupted by the arrival of the seven horses, all saddled by one of Paddy’s sons. Lord Glenarvan paid the sum agreed for his various purchases, adding his cordial thanks, which the worthy Irishman valued at least as much as the guineas.

The signal was given to start, and Lady Helena and Mary took their places in the reserved compartment. Ayrton seated himself in front, and Olbinett scrambled in among the luggage. Glenarvan, the Major, Paganel, Robert, John Mangles, and the two sailors, well armed with rifles and revolvers, mounted their horses. A “God help you!” was shouted by Paddy O’Moore, and echoed in chorus by his family. Ayrton gave a peculiar cry, and his team set off. The wagon shook, the planks crackled, the axles creaked in the hubs of the wheels. The searchers soon disappeared around the bend in the road leading eastward from the hospitable farm of the honest Irishman.



The signal to start was given

Chapter IX

The Province of Victoria

IT WAS DECEMBER [22ND](#), [FN1](#) 1864. DECEMBER IS A DULL, DAMP, DREARY MONTH IN THE northern hemisphere, but on the Australian continent it might be called June. Astronomically, summer was already two days old, for on the 21st the sun had reached the Tropic of Capricorn, and its presence above the horizon was already diminishing by a few minutes each day. So it was in the hottest season of the year and under the rays of an almost tropical sun that Lord Glenarvan started on his new expedition.

All English possessions in this part of the Pacific Ocean are called Australasia. This includes New Holland, Tasmania, New Zealand, and some nearby islands. The Australian continent is divided into vast colonies of unequal wealth. Anyone who glances at modern maps drawn up by Messrs Petermann or Preschoell is at first struck with the rectangularity of these divisions. The English have drawn straight lines which separate these great provinces, without consideration of mountain slopes or river courses, or the variations in climate or differences in race. The colonies are placed rectangularly, like pieces of inlay. In this arrangement of straight lines and right angles one sees the hand of the geometer rather than the geographer. Only the coasts, with their varied windings, fjords, bays, capes, and estuaries, protest in the name of Nature with their charming irregularity.

This chess-board regularity justly inspired Jacques Paganel's ire. If Australia had been French, the French geographers most certainly would not have carried a passion for the square and ruler to such lengths.

There are presently six colonies on the Big Island of Oceania: New South Wales, the capital of which is Sydney; Queensland, capital: Brisbane; Victoria, capital: Melbourne; South Australia, capital: Adelaide; Western Australia, capital: Perth; and Northern Australia, still without a capital [fn2](#). The coasts alone were populated by settlers. Hardly anyone had ventured more than two hundred miles inland, even from the major cities. The interior of the continent, an area equal to two-thirds of Europe, was almost entirely unknown.

Fortunately the 37th parallel did not cross these immense, lonely, inaccessible lands, which have already cost many victims to science. Glenarvan could never have faced them. He was dealing with only the southern part of Australia, which consisted of a narrow stretch of the province of South Australia, the full width of the province of Victoria, and finally the tip of the inverted triangle formed by New

South Wales.

It is scarcely sixty-two miles^{fn3} from Cape Bernouilli to the Victoria border. It was not more than two days' march, and Ayrton planned to sleep the next evening at Apsley, the westernmost town in the province of Victoria.

The beginnings of a trip are always marked by the enthusiasm of riders and horses. This is well enough in the riders, but it seemed appropriate to moderate the pace of the horses. Whoever wants to go far must spare his horse. It was therefore decided that they should try to average no more than twenty-five to thirty miles each day.

Besides, the pace of the horses was regulated by the slower pace of the oxen: truly mechanical engines which lose in time what they gain in power. The wagon, with its passengers and provisions, was the nucleus of the caravan, the travelling fortress. The horsemen might beat the flanks of their advance, but never ventured far away from it.

As no special marching order had been adopted; everyone was at liberty to follow his inclinations, within limits. The hunters could scour the plain, amiable folks could talk to the fair occupants of the wagon, and philosophers could philosophize. Paganel, who was all three combined, had to be — and was — everywhere at once.

The march across South Australia presented nothing of any particular interest. A succession of low hills rich in dust, a long expanse of wastelands which together constitute what Australians call "bush": some meadows covered by tufts of a salty shrub with angular leaves, which the sheep are very fond of, succeeded each other for many miles. Here and there they could see some "pig's faces," a species of sheep peculiar to New Holland that had a head like a pig, grazing between the poles of the telegraph line recently established to Adelaide on the coast.

These plains bore a singular resemblance to the extended monotony of the Argentinian Pampas. There was the same grassy flat soil, the same sharply-defined horizon against the sky. MacNabbs declared they had never changed countries, but Paganel assured him that the country would change soon. On his guarantee, they expected wonderful things.

About three o'clock the wagon crossed a large, treeless space known as "Mosquito Plains." The scientist had the satisfaction of proving for himself that the name had been worthily bestowed. Both horses and riders suffered severely from the incessant bites of these tormenting diptera. It was impossible to escape them,

but there was a salve made with ammonia carried in the wagon's portable pharmacy which eased their bites. Paganel could not help but damn those bitter mosquitoes that festooned his long person with their annoying stings.

Toward evening, a few quickset hedges of acacias enlivened the plain, and thickets of white gum trees were scattered here and there. A little further on they came to a freshly dug ditch, and then to trees of European origin: olives, lemon-trees, and holm oaks, and finally to well-kept fences. About eight o'clock, the oxen, urged on by Ayrton's goad, arrived at Red Gum Station.

The word "station" is applied to large cattle-breeding establishments — the principle wealth of Australia — the owners of which are called "squatters," people who sit on the ground.^{fn4} Certainly this is the most natural position a colonist would take when fatigued from a long journey through a vast unknown country.

Red Gum Station was a small establishment, but Glenarvan found the most sincere hospitality there. The table is invariably set for the traveller under the roof of these lonely dwellings, and in every Australian colonist one is sure to find an obliging host.

Ayrton harnessed his oxen the next morning at daybreak. He wanted to reach the Victoria territory that evening. The ground gradually became more uneven. A succession of small hills undulated as far as the eye could see, all sprinkled with scarlet sand. One might have imagined an immense red flag had been thrown over the plain, whose folds were swelled by a breath of wind. Some "mallees" with multiple straight, smooth trunks growing from a single root, spread their dark green branches and foliage over lush meadows swarming with merry bands of jerboa. Further on were vast fields of scrub and young gum trees. The fields became fewer, the shrubs became trees, and presented the first specimen of an



Both horses and riders suffered the incessant bites of these tormenting diptera

Australian forest.

As they approached the frontiers of Victoria, the country's appearance changed significantly. The travellers felt they were treading on new ground. Their imperturbable path was always a straight line, without any obstacle, lake, or mountain obliging them to change it into a curved or broken line. They invariably put into practice the first theorem of geometry, and followed, without turning aside, the shortest path from one point to another. They experienced neither fatigue, nor difficulty. Their march conformed to the slow pace of the oxen, and if these quiet animals did not go quickly, at least they went without stopping.

On the evening of December 23rd, after a sixty-mile trek in two days, the caravan reached the parish of Apsley, the first town in the province of Victoria, situated on the one hundred and forty-first degree of longitude, in the district of Wimmera.

The wagon was stored by Ayrton at an inn which, for lack of a better name, was called the *Crown Hotel*. Their supper, which consisting solely of multiple varieties of mutton, steamed on the table.

They ate a lot, but talked more. Everyone questioned the geographer, eager to learn about the peculiarities of the Australian continent. The amiable geographer needed no pressing, and described this Victorian province, which was named *Australia Felix*.

"Wrongly named!" he said. "It would have been better to call it 'Rich Australia,' for it is true of countries, as individuals, that riches do not make happiness. Australia, thanks to its gold mines, has been abandoned to wild and devastating adventurers. You will see this when we cross the gold fields."

"Is not the colony of Victoria of recent origin?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, Madame, she is only thirty years old. It was on the 6th of June, 1835, on a Tuesday—"

"At a quarter past seven in the evening," put in the Major, who liked to quibble



Red Gum Station

with Paganel about his precise dates.

"No," said the geographer, seriously. "It was at seven minutes past ten that Batman and Fawkner first began a settlement at Port Phillip, the bay on which the great city of Melbourne now lies. For fifteen years the colony was part of New South Wales, and recognized Sydney as its capital; but in 1851, she was declared independent, and took the name of Victoria."

"And has she prospered since?" asked Glenarvan.

"Judge for yourself, my noble friend," said Paganel. "Here are the numbers given by the latest census; and whatever MacNabbs thinks, I know nothing more eloquent than statistics."

"Go on," said the Major.

"Well, then, in 1836, the colony of Port Phillip had 244 inhabitants. Today the province of Victoria numbers 550,000. Seven million vines produce 121,000 gallons of wine, annually. There are 103,000 horses galloping over its plains, and 675,272 horned cattle graze in her immense pastures."

"Does she not also have a certain number of pigs?" asked MacNabbs.

"Yes, Major. 79,625, if you please."

"And how many sheep, Paganel?"

"7,115,943, MacNabbs."

"Including the one we are eating at this moment?"

"No, without counting that, since it is three quarters devoured."

"*Bravo, Monsieur Paganel,*" exclaimed Lady Helena, laughing heartily. "It must be admitted that you are well informed in geographical questions, and my cousin MacNabbs will not trip you up."

"But it's my job, Madame, to know this sort of thing, and to teach it when necessary. You can believe me when I tell you that this strange country holds many marvels."

"None so far, however," said MacNabbs, still enjoying teasing the geographer.

"Just wait, impatient Major," said Paganel. "You have hardly put your foot on the frontier, and you are already complaining! Well, I say, and say again, and will always maintain, that this is the most curious country on the Earth. Its formation, its nature, its products, and its climate, past, present and future, have amazed, are now amazing, and will amaze, all the scientists of the world. Think, my friends of a continent, the margin of which, instead of the centre, rose out of the waves like a gigantic ring; perhaps this ring encloses in its centre a partially evaporated sea, whose rivers are drying up daily; where moisture does not exist either in the air or

in the soil; where the trees lose their bark every year instead of their leaves; where the leaves present their profile to the sun instead of their face, and do not give shade; where the wood is often incombustible; where good-sized stones are dissolved by the rain; where the forests are low and the grasses high; where the animals are strange; where quadrupeds have beaks, like the echidna and platypus, and naturalists have been obliged to create a special order for them, called monotremes; where the kangaroos leap on unequal legs, and sheep have pigs' heads; where foxes fly about from tree to tree; where the swans are black; where rats make nests; where the bower-bird opens his salon to receive visits from his feathered friends; where the birds astonish the imagination by the variety of their songs and their aptitudes; where one bird serves for a clock, and another makes a sound like a postilion cracking a whip, and a third imitates a knife-grinder, and a fourth the motion of a pendulum; where one laughs when the sun rises, and another cries when the sun sets! Oh, strange illogical country, land of paradoxes and anomalies if ever there was one on Earth — the learned botanist Grimard was right when he said, 'So this is Australia, a kind of parody of universal laws, or rather a challenge, thrown in the face of the rest of the world.'" [fn5](#)

Paganel's tirade, launched at full speed, seemed unlikely to stop. The eloquent secretary of the *Geographical Society* was no longer self possessed. He went on and on, gesticulating furiously, and waving his fork to the imminent danger of his neighbours at the table. But at last his voice was drowned in a thunder of applause, and he managed to stop.

Certainly, after this enumeration of Australian peculiarities, there was no thought of asking Paganel to go on. But the Major could not help but to say "And is that all, Paganel?" in his calmest tones.

"Well no! That's not all," said the scientist, and seemed ready to relaunch himself.

"What?" asked Lady Helena. "There are more wonders still in Australia?"

"Yes, Madame: its climate. It is even stranger than its productions."

"For example?" they all asked.

"I am speaking of the hygienic qualities of the Australian continent, so rich in oxygen and low in nitrogen. It has no humid winds, since the trade winds blow parallel to its coasts, and most diseases are unknown here, from typhus to measles, and chronic afflictions."

"That is no small advantage," said Glenarvan.

"No doubt, but I am not referring to that," said Paganel. "There is one quality

to the climate here that is ... improbable."

"And what is that?" asked John Mangles

"You will never believe me."

"Believe what," asked his audience, determined to hear his response.

"Well, it's..."

"It's what?"

"It's *moralistic!*"

"Moralistic?"

"Yes," said the scientist with conviction. "Yes, *moralistic!* Metals do not oxidize in the air, here, nor men. Here, the pure, dry atmosphere whitens everything rapidly, both linen and souls. The virtues of this climate were known in England, when it was decided to send people here to reform."

"What? This influence is really felt?" asked Lady Helena.

"Yes, Madame, on animals and men."

"Are you joking, Monsieur Paganel?"

"I am not joking. Horses and cattle are remarkably docile. You will see it."

"It is not possible!"

"But it is a fact. And the convicts transported into this invigorating and salubrious air regenerate themselves in a few years. Philanthropists know this. In Australia, all natures grow better."

"But what of you then, Monsieur Paganel? You who are so good already," asked Lady Helena. "What will become of you in this privileged land?"

"Excellent, Madame," said Paganel. "Simply excellent."

[fn1.](#) The *Hetzel* edition has the 23rd, here, but that doesn't match with the previous, or next dates given.

— DAS

[fn2.](#) Darwin would be made the Northern Territory's capital in 1870. — DAS

[fn3.](#) 25 leagues. (100 kilometres. — DAS)

[fn4.](#) From the English verb "to squat", to sit down.

[fn5.](#) Grimard, Edouard. *The Plant, A Simplified Botany*. Paris: J. Hetzel, 1864.

Chapter X

The Wimmera River

THEY STARTED AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY, DECEMBER 24TH. THE WEATHER WAS HOT, BUT tolerable, and the road was level and favourable to the pace of the horses. They passed through a land of sparse scrub. In the evening, after a good day's travel, they camped on the banks of White Lake, the waters of which were brackish and undrinkable.

Jacques Paganel was forced to agree that this lake was no more white than the Black Sea was black, the Red Sea red, the Yellow River yellow, or the Blue Mountains blue. He argued and disputed the point for the sake of geographer's honour, but his arguments did not prevail.

Mr. Olbinett prepared the evening meal with his accustomed punctuality; then the travellers — some in the wagon, the others in the tent — soon fell asleep, in spite of the melancholy howls of the “dingoes,” the jackals of Australia.

A magnificent plain, thickly covered with chrysanthemums, extended beyond White Lake. Glenarvan and his friends would gladly have explored its beauties when they awoke next morning, but they had to be on their way. The land was flat, except for some distant low hills. A vast meadow stretched out as far as the eye could see, enamelled with flowers in all the profusion of spring. The blue flowers of slender-leaved flax intermingled with the bright red hues from a variety of acanthus peculiar to Australia. Many types of eucalyptus brightened this greenery, and salt impregnated land disappeared under the anserina, orache, and chard — some glaucous, others reddish — of the invasive *salsoloideae* family. These plants are useful to industry because an excellent soda can be produced by washing their ashes, after incineration. Paganel, who became a botanist when he found himself among flowers, called these various plants by their names, and — with his mania for enumerating everything — did not fail to state that there were upward of 4,200 species of plants, divided into 120 families, in the Australian flora.

Later in the day, after a quick march of about ten miles, the wagon wound its way through groves of tall acacias, mimosas, and white gum trees, whose inflorescence is so variable. The vegetable kingdom in this country of “spring plains” [fn1](#) is not ungrateful to the day star, and returned the sunlight given it with perfumes and colours.

The animal kingdom was more stingy with its products. A few cassowaries

were seen bounding over the plain, but it was impossible to get near them. The Major was skilful enough to hit one very rare and illusive animal in the flank with a bullet. This was the “jabiru,” the giant stork of the English colonies. This bird was five feet tall, and its black, broad, conical beak with an extremely sharp tip was eighteen inches long. The violet and purple hues of its head contrasted vividly with the glossy green of its neck, the dazzling whiteness of its shoulders, and the bright red of its long legs. Nature seemed to have used up all the primary colours of her palette on this bird.

The bird was greatly admired, and the Major would have had the honours of the day, had not Robert come across an animal a few miles further on, and bravely killed it. It was a shapeless creature, half hedgehog, half anteater, a sort of roughed-out animal belonging to the first ages of creation. An extendible tongue, long and sticky, hung out of its mouth in search of ants, which formed its principal food.

“It’s an echidna!” said Paganel, giving the monotreme its proper name. “Have you ever seen such an animal?”

“It’s horrible,” said Glenarvan.

“Horrible, but curious,” said Paganel. “And, what’s more, peculiar to Australia. One might search for it in vain in any other part of the world.”

Naturally, Paganel wanted to take the ugly echidna and stow it in the luggage compartment. But Mr. Olbinett protested the idea so indignantly that the scholar gave up the idea of keeping this monotreme specimen.

They passed [142°^{fn2}](#) of longitude that day. So far, few colonists or squatters had come in sight. The country seemed deserted. There was not even the shadow of an Aborigine, because the wild tribes wander further north, through the vast solitudes watered by the tributaries of the Darling and Murray.

But a curious sight interested Glenarvan’s troop, for they chanced upon one of



The rare and illusive “jabiru”

those immense droves of cattle which bold speculators bring down from the mountains in the east to the provinces of Victoria and South Australia.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, John Mangles reported an enormous column of dust on the horizon, about three miles off. What could be the cause of this phenomenon? Paganel's lively imagination tried to concoct some natural explanation. Perhaps it was caused by a meteor, or—Ayrton summarily cut off his conjectures. It was the dust from a moving herd of cattle.

The quartermaster was not mistaken. The thick cloud approached. A whole concert of bleating, neighing, and bellowing escaped from it. Human voices, in the form of shouts, whistles, and complaints mingled with this pastoral symphony.

A man came out of the noisy cloud. He was the chief conductor of this four-footed orchestra. Glenarvan advanced toward him, and friendly relations were quickly established. The leader, or to give him his proper designation, the "stockkeeper," was part owner of the herd. His name was Sam Machell, and he was on his way from the eastern provinces to Portland Bay.

The flock numbered 12,075 head: one thousand oxen, eleven thousand sheep, and seventy-five horses. All these had been bought in the plains of the Blue Mountains in a poor, lean condition, and were going to be fattened up on the rich pasture lands of South Australia, and resold at a large profit. Sam Machell expected to make two pounds on each ox, and a half-pound on every sheep, which would net him a profit of fifty thousand francs.^{fn3} This was a lot of money, but a great deal of patience and energy were required to conduct such a restive, stubborn herd to their destination, and many hardships had to be endured. The profit was well earned.

Sam Machell told his story in a few words while the flock continued their march among the groves of mimosas. Lady Helena, Mary, and the dismounted horsemen seated themselves under the shade of a wide-spreading gum tree, and listened to his recital.

It was seven months since Sam Machell had started. He was moving about ten miles a day, and his endless journey would last another three months. Twenty dogs and thirty men, including five blacks who were very skilled in tracking any stray animals, assisted him in this laborious task. Six wagons followed the army. The drivers, armed with stockwhips — a nine foot lash attached to an eighteen inch handle — circulated between the ranks, reestablishing order wherever it was disturbed, while the dogs, the light cavalry of the regiment, preserved discipline in the flanks.

The travellers admired the discipline maintained in the herd. The different breeds were kept apart, for sheep and oxen get along rather badly. The oxen would never have grazed where the sheep had passed along, and consequently they had to go first, divided into two battalions. Five regiments of sheep commanded by twenty drivers followed, and the herd of horses brought up the rear.

Sam Machell pointed out to his listeners that the army guides were neither men nor dogs, but oxen: intelligent "leaders" whose superiority was recognized by their peers. They advanced in the first rank with perfect gravity, choosing the best road by instinct, and fully convinced of their right to be treated with respect. They were well looked after, for the herd obeyed them without question. If it was convenient for them to stop, it was necessary to yield to their pleasure, for not a single animal would move a step until these leaders gave the signal to set off.

Some details added by the stockkeeper completed the history of this expedition, worthy of being written, if not commanded, by Xenophon himself. As long as the army marched over the plains, it was well enough, there was little difficulty or fatigue. The animals fed as they went along, and slaked their thirst at the numerous creeks that watered the plains, sleeping at night, travelling during the day, and gathered obediently to the dogs' voices. But in the great forests of the continent, through the thickets of eucalyptus and mimosas, the difficulties grew. Platoons, battalions, and regiments mingled or scattered, and it took considerable time to collect them again. Should a leader unfortunately go astray, he had to be found at all cost, on pain of a general mutiny, and the blacks would sometimes take several days to find him again. During heavy rains the lazy beasts refused to stir, and when violent storms came a disorderly panic could seize these animals, driving them mad with terror.

By dint of energy and activity, the stockkeeper triumphed over these ever increasing difficulties. He kept steadily on. Mile after mile of plains, woods, and mountains lay behind him. In addition to all his other qualities, there was one higher than all others that he needed. This was patience, unswerving patience, patience that could not only wait for hours or days, but for weeks. This was required for river crossings. There, the stockkeeper would be constrained in front of a stream that might be easily forded. There was nothing stopping him but the obstinacy of the herd. The oxen would drink the water and turn back. The sheep fled in all directions, rather than face the liquid element. The stockkeeper hoped that when night came he might manage them better, but they still refused to go forward. The rams were thrown by force, but the sheep would not follow. They

tried thirst, by depriving the flock of water for several days, but when they were brought to the river again, they simply quenched their thirst, and still declined to enter the water. The lambs were carried over, hoping the mothers would be drawn after them, by their bleating. But the lambs might bleat as pitifully as they liked, the mothers never stirred. Sometimes it lasted a whole month, and the stockkeeper didn't know what to do with his bleating, bellowing, neighing army. Then, one fine day, without rhyme or reason, by some whim, a detachment crossed the river. The only difficulty now was to keep the whole herd from rushing helter-skelter after them. Confusion set in among the ranks, and many animals were drowned in the passage.

Such were the details given by Sam Machell. During his story, a large proportion of the herd had filed past in good order. It was time for him to return to his place at the head of his army, to lead them away to good pastures. He took his leave of Lord Glenarvan, mounted an excellent native horse, which one of his men held waiting for him, and after shaking hands cordially with everyone, took his departure. Moments later, he had disappeared into the swirl of dust.

The wagon resumed its interrupted journey in the opposite direction, and did not stop again until they halted for the night at the foot of Mount Talbot.

Paganel made the judicious observation that it was December 25th, the Christmas Day celebrated by English families. The steward had not forgotten it and a succulent supper, served under the tent, earned him the sincere compliments of the guests. Mr. Olbinett had quite outdone himself. He produced from his stores an array of European dishes that are seldom seen in the Australian wilderness. Reindeer ham, slices of salted beef, smoked salmon, barley and oatmeal cakes, tea with discretion, whisky in abundance, and a few bottles of port made up this astonishing meal. The little party might have thought themselves in the grand dining hall of Malcolm Castle, in the heart of the Highlands of Scotland.

Nothing was missing from this feast, from the ginger soup to the mince pies for dessert. Paganel thought to make an addition with the fruit of a wild orange he found growing at the foot of the hills. It is called "moccaly" by the natives. The fruit is rather tasteless, but the crushed pips heat the mouth like cayenne pepper. The geographer persisted in eating them conscientiously for the sake of science, until his palate was on fire, and he could no longer answer the questions the Major overwhelmed him with about the peculiarities of the Australian wilderness.

Nothing of any importance happened the next day, December 26th. They came

to the source of Norton Creek, and a little later, to the half-dried Mackenzie River. The weather kept fine, and the heat quite bearable. The wind was from the south, and refreshed the atmosphere as a north wind in the northern hemisphere, which Paganel pointed out to his friend Robert Grant.

“A happy circumstance,” he added, “because the heat is greater on the average in the southern hemisphere than in the northern.”

“Why?” asked the boy.

“Why, Robert?” answered Paganel. “Have you never heard that the Earth is closer to the Sun during the winter?”

“Yes, Monsieur Paganel.”

“And that the cold of winter is due to the obliquity of the solar rays?”

“Certainly.”

“Well, my boy, that’s why it’s warmer in the southern hemisphere.”

“I don’t understand,” said Robert, opening his eyes wide.

“Think, Robert,” replied Paganel, “when it is winter in Europe, what is the season here in Australia, at the antipodes?”

“Summer,” said Robert.

“Well, and since it is precisely at this time that the Earth is nearest the Sun — do you understand?”

“I understand—”

“That the summer in the southern regions is warmer than summer of the boreal regions, because of this proximity.”

“Indeed, Monsieur Paganel.”

“So when we say that the Sun is nearer the Earth ‘in winter,’ it is only true for us who inhabit the boreal part of the globe.”

“That is something I hadn’t thought of,” said Robert.

“And now, go, my boy. And don’t forget it.”

Robert took this little lesson in cosmography with a good grace, and learned, in conclusion, that the mean temperature of the province of Victoria was 74° Fahrenheit. [fn4](#)

In the evening the troop camped about five miles beyond Lake Lonsdale, between Mount Drummond, which rose to the north, and Mount Dryden, whose mediocre summit dotted the southern horizon.

The following day, at eleven o’clock, the wagon reached the banks of the Wimmera River, on the 143rd meridian.

The river, half a mile wide, wound its limpid course between tall rows of gum and acacia trees: magnificent specimens of the *Myrtaceae*, the *Metrosideros Speciosa*, among others, fifteen feet high, with long, drooping branches adorned with red flowers. Thousands of birds — orioles, finches, and gold winged pigeons, not to mention the parrots — fluttered about in the green branches. Below, on the surface of the water, were a couple of shy and unapproachable black swans. This *rara avis* of the Australian rivers soon disappeared among the meanders of the Wimmera, which capriciously watered the attractive countryside.

The wagon stopped on a grassy bank, the long fringes of which dipped into the rapid current. There was neither raft nor bridge, but it was necessary to cross. Ayrton looked about for a suitable ford. About a quarter of a mile upstream the water seemed shallower, and it was here that he resolved to reach the other bank. Various soundings showed a depth of only three feet, which the wagon should safely negotiate.

“Is there any other way to cross the river?” Glenarvan asked the quartermaster.

“No, my Lord,” said Ayrton, “but the passage does not seem dangerous. We shall manage it.”

“Should Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant get out of the wagon?”

“Not at all. My oxen are surefooted, and I will keep them on track.”

“Very well, Ayrton,” said Glenarvan. “I trust you.”

The horsemen surrounded the heavy vehicle, and resolutely entered the river. Normally, when wagons have to ford rivers, they have empty casks slung all round them, to keep them floating on the water; but they had no such swimming belt with them on this occasion, and they could only depend on the sagacity of the animals and the prudence of Ayrton, who directed the team. The Major and the two sailors were some feet in front. Glenarvan and John Mangles went at the sides of the wagon, ready to lend any assistance the ladies might require, and Paganel and Robert brought up the rear.

All went well until they reached the middle of the Wimmera, but then the channel deepened, and the water rose above the axles. The oxen were in danger of losing their footing, and dragging the oscillating vehicle with them. Ayrton devoted himself courageously. He jumped into the water, and hanging on by the horns of the oxen, succeeded in dragging them back onto the right path.

The wagon gave a jolt that it was impossible to prevent; a crack was heard, and the wagon began to lean precariously. The water rose to the ladies’ feet; the whole concern began to drift, despite John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan clinging to the

sides. It was an anxious moment.

Fortunately a vigorous effort brought the wagon closer the opposite shore, and the bank began to slope upward, so that horses and oxen were able to regain their footing, and soon the whole party found themselves safe on the other side, wet, but satisfied.

The front of the wagon, however, was broken by the jolt, and Glenarvan's horse had lost a shoe.

This was an accident that needed to be promptly repaired. They looked at each other, hardly knowing what to do, until Ayrton proposed he should go to Black Point Station, twenty miles further north, and bring back a blacksmith.

"Yes, go, my brave Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "How long will it take you to get there and back?"

"Perhaps fifteen hours," said Ayrton, "but not longer."

"Start at once, and we will camp here, on the banks of the Wimmera, until you return."

A few minutes later the quartermaster, riding Wilson's horse, disappeared behind a thick curtain of mimosas.



The wagon leaned precariously

[fn1.](#) Plains watered by numerous springs.

[fn2.](#) Verne had 141° 30' here, which would put them still west of White Lake. — DAS

[fn3.](#) 50,000 francs = \$10,000 = £2,000. — DAS

[fn4.](#) 23.3° C. — DAS

Chapter XI

Burke and Stuart

THE REST OF THE DAY PASSED IN TALKING AND WALKING. THE TRAVELLERS FOLLOWED THE banks of the Wimmera, chatting and admiring the scene. The cranes and the ibises took flight at their approach, uttering hoarse cries. The satin bowerbirds hid among the upper branches of the wild figs trees. The orioles, wheatears, epimachus, and many other birds flitted about among the branches of the liliaceous trees. The kingfishers abandoned their usual fishing, but the civilized family of parrots: the blue mountain, clothed in the seven colours of the prism; the little rosella, with its scarlet head and yellow throat; and the red and blue lory; persisted in their deafening gossip at the top of the blooming gum trees.

The travellers admired this beautiful nature until sunset, sometimes resting on the grass beside the murmuring waters, sometimes wandering between groves of mimosas. At length the night, preceded by a momentary twilight, caught them about half a mile from camp. They returned, guiding themselves not by the pole-star, which is invisible in the southern hemisphere, but by the Southern Cross, which glittered in the sky half way between the horizon and the zenith.

Mr. Olbinett had laid supper in the tent, and they sat down to eat. The masterpiece of the banquet was a salmis of parrots, which Wilson had dextrously shot, and the steward had skilfully prepared.

Supper over, they only needed the slightest excuse to justify not going immediately to sleep on so lovely an evening. Lady Helena pleased everyone when she requested that Paganel relate the adventures of some of the great Australian explorers, a story which he had long promised.

Paganel wished for nothing better. His listeners stretched out at the foot of a magnificent banksia; the smoke of cigars soon rose to the foliage lost in the



The night caught them half a mile from camp

darkness, and the geographer, drawing on his inexhaustible memory, took the stage.

“You remember, my friends, and the Major will not have forgotten, the enumeration of the explorers which I made to you on board the *Duncan*. Of the many who have sought to penetrate to the heart of the continent, only four have succeeded in crossing it from south to north or from north to south. These four were Burke, in 1860 and 1861; McKinlay, in 1861 and 1862; Landsborough, in 1862; and Stuart, also in 1862. Of McKinlay and of Landsborough I shall say very little. The former went from Adelaide to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the latter from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Melbourne, both sent out by Australian committees to search for Burke who had not returned, and was never to return.

“Burke and Stuart are the two brave explorers of whom I am going to speak, and I will begin without further preamble.

“On August 20th, 1860, under the auspices of the *Royal Society of Melbourne*, an ex-Irish officer, and former police inspector at Castlemaine, named Robert O’Hara Burke, set out on his expedition. Eleven men went with him: William John Wills, a distinguished young astronomer; Dr. Beckler, a botanist; Gray; King, a young soldier of the Indian army; Landells; Brahe; and several sepoys. Twenty-five horses and twenty-five camels carried the explorers, their baggage, and provisions for eighteen months.

“The expedition was to make for the Gulf of Carpentaria on the northern coast, first following the Cooper River. They easily crossed the Murray and the Darling rivers, and arrived at Menindee Station, on the boundary of the colonies.

“There it was realized that the large baggage train was a source of great difficulty. This encumbrance, and a certain hardness of character in Burke, caused misunderstandings among the party. Landells, the manager of the camels, followed by some of the sepoys, separated himself from the expedition, and returned to the banks of the Darling. Burke continued his march northward. He descended toward Cooper Creek, sometimes through magnificent well watered pastures, and sometimes over stony tracts without any water. On November 20th, three months after his departure, he established a provision depot along the river.

“Here the explorers were detained for some time, unable to find a practicable route north on which they could be sure of a supply of water. After great difficulties they arrived at a camp, which they named Fort Wills. They built an enclosure surrounded by a palisade, halfway between Melbourne and the Gulf of Carpentaria. There, Burke divided his party into two parts. One, under command

of Brahe, was to stay at Fort Wills for three months, or longer if their provisions held out, and await the return of the other party, which consisted of Burke, King, Gray, and Wills. They took with them six camels, and three months' supplies — that is, three hundredweight of flour, fifty pounds of rice, fifty pounds of oatmeal, a quintal of dried horse meat, a hundred pounds of salt pork and bacon, and thirty pounds of biscuit — all to travel six hundred leagues, [fn1](#) there and back.

“These four men began. After the painful crossing of a stony desert they arrived on the Eyre River, at the extreme point reached by Sturt in 1845, and following as near as possible the 140th meridian, they kept going north.

“On January 7th they passed the tropic under a blazing sun. They continued north, deceived by disappointing mirages, often without water, sometimes refreshed by heavy storms. Here and there they met wandering natives, whom they attempted to avoid. In short, they were little disturbed by the difficulties of a route which was not barred by lakes, rivers, or mountains.

“On January 12th some sandstone hills appeared in the distance, including Mount Forbes, and then a succession of granite chains called ‘ranges.’ There, travel became difficult. They made very little progress. The animals would go no further. Burke wrote ‘Still on the ranges — the camels sweating from fear!’ in his journal. Still, by dint of their efforts, they arrived on the banks of the Turner River, then on the upper course of the Flinders River between curtains of palm and eucalyptus trees — seen by Stokes in 1841 — on its way to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

“The neighbourhood of the sea was indicated by a succession of marshes. One of the camels perished there. The rest refused to go further. King and Gray had to stay with them. Burke and Wills continued their journey to the north, and after great difficulties — only slightly described in their notes — they arrived at a tidal channel into which the sea flowed, but dense mangrove swamps barred them from the ocean, itself. It was February 11th, 1861.”

“So,” asked Lady Glenarvan, “these bold men couldn’t go any farther?”

“No, Madame,” said Paganel. “The swampy ground sank under their feet, and they were obliged to turn their thoughts to rejoining their companions at Fort Wills. A sad return, I assure you. Weak and exhausted, Burke and Wills dragged themselves back to the place where they had left Gray and King. Then the expedition, following the route they had come north by, made for Cooper’s Creek.

“The ups and downs, dangers and sufferings of this journey, we do not know exactly, because the notes are missing from the journals of the explorers, but it must have been terrible.

“At last, in April, three of them arrived in the Cooper Valley. Gray had died. Four camels had perished. Still, if Burke managed to reach Fort Wills, where Brahe and his depot of provisions were waiting for him, he and his companions were saved. They redoubled their efforts; they dragged themselves on for a few more days. On April 21st, they saw the palisades of the fort. They had reached it! But that very day, after five long months of hopeless waiting, Brahe had gone!”

“Gone!” cried young Robert.

“Yes, gone! The same day, by a deplorable fatality! The note left by Brahe was dated only nine hours ago! Burke could not hope to overtake him. The poor fellows fortified themselves a little from the cache of provisions left at the depot, but they had no means of transport, and 150 leagues^{fn2} still separated them from the Darling.

“It is then that Burke, contrary to the judgment of Wills, determined to try and reach the Australian settlement near Mount Hopeless, sixty leagues^{fn3} from Fort Wills. They set out. Of the two remaining camels, one perished in a marshy tributary of Cooper Creek; the other could not go a step farther; they had to kill it, and feed on its flesh. Soon all their food was gone. The three unfortunate wanderers were reduced to living on ‘nardoo,’ an aquatic plant whose sporocarps are edible. Without the means to carry water across the desert, they dared not leave the banks of Cooper Creek. A fire burned their cabin, and camp effects. Now they were lost indeed! Nothing remained for them but to die!

“Burke called King to him. ‘I have only a few hours to live,’ he said. ‘Take my watch and my notes. When I am dead, I want you to place a pistol in my right hand, and to leave me just as I am, without burial!’ After this, Burke did not speak, and expired the next morning at eight o’clock.

“King, horrified and distraught, went to look for an Australian tribe. When he returned, Wills had just succumbed too. As for King, he was picked up by natives, and in September he was found by Mr. Howitt’s expedition, sent in search for Burke at the same time as the parties under McKinlay and Landsborough. Thus, of the four explorers, only one survived the journey across the continent of Australia.”

Paganel’s story left a painful impression in the minds of his listeners. They all thought of Captain Grant wandering, perhaps like Burke and his comrades, in the midst of this fatal continent. Had the castaways escaped the sufferings which had decimated those bold explorers? The analogy was so natural that tears came to Mary Grant’s eyes.

"My father! My poor father!" she whispered.

"Miss Mary, Miss Mary!" cried John Mangles. "To endure such hardships, you must be in the interior. Captain Grant must be among the natives like King. And like King, he will be saved. He has never been in such a sorry plight!"

"Never," said Paganel, "and I repeat to you, my dear girl, the Australians are hospitable."

"May God hear you," said the girl.

"And Stuart?" asked Glenarvan, wishing to divert them from these sad thoughts.

"Stuart?" said Paganel. "Oh, Stuart had better luck, and his name is famous in Australian annals. As early as 1848, John McDouall Stuart — your countryman, my friends — as a prelude to his own travels, accompanied Sturt into the deserts north of Adelaide. In 1860, with only two men, he made an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate into the interior of Australia. He was not a man to be discouraged. In 1861, on January 1st, he left Chambers Creek at the head of eleven determined companions. But, his provisions exhausted, he was stopped only sixty leagues [fn4](#) from the Gulf of Carpentaria. He was obliged to return to Adelaide without having crossed the vast continent. He resolved to tempt fortune again, and organized a third expedition, which this time would attain the ardently-desired goal.

"The Parliament of South Australia generously patronized this new expedition, and voted a subsidy of two thousand pounds sterling. Stuart took every precaution suggested to him by his earlier experience. The expedition consisted of ten men in all, most of them friends and comrades from his previous explorations, including Thring, Kekwick, Woodforde and Auld. They were joined by Waterhouse the naturalist. He took twenty skins of American leather, which could hold seven gallons each, and on April 5th, 1862, the party was assembled at Newcastle Waters, beyond the 18th parallel of latitude, the point which Stuart had never been able to go beyond. His route followed the 131st meridian, nine degrees



The death of Burke

west of that followed by Burke.

“Newcastle Waters was to be the base of future explorations. Stuart, surrounded by dense woods, vainly strove to reach the Victoria River, to the northwest. Impenetrable bush impeded all passage.

“Stuart resolved to try moving directly north, and he succeeded in moving his camp into the Hower Marshes. Then, bearing east, he reached Daly Waters, in the middle of grassy plains which he followed north for thirty miles.^{fn5}

“The country was magnificent: its pastures would have been a joy and a fortune to a squatter, and the eucalyptus grew to a prodigious height. Stuart, marvelling, continued to advance. He reached the banks of the Strangway River and Roper Creek, discovered by Leichhardt. Their waters flowed amid palm trees worthy of this tropical region, and here he found native tribes who welcomed the explorers.

“From this point the expedition headed north-northwest; crossing a tract of sandstone and ferruginous rock they found the source of the Adelaide River, which falls into Van Diemen Gulf. They followed it across Arnhem’s Land, in the midst of cabbage-palms, bamboos, pines, and screw-palms. The Adelaide was widening, and its banks becoming marshy. The sea was near.

“On Tuesday, July 22nd, Stuart camped in the marshes of Fresh Water, blocked by the innumerable streams that cut his way. He sent three of his companions to look for a suitable path. The next day, sometimes turning aside at uncrossable creeks, sometimes bogging down in muddy ground, he reached some high plains covered with grass, where clumps of gum trees and trees with fibrous bark grew. There were flocks of geese, ibises, and wild water birds. Of natives, there was little sign, only smoke from distant camps.

“On July 24th, nine months after leaving Adelaide, at twenty minutes past eight in the morning, Stuart started north. He hoped to reach the sea that same day. The country became slightly elevated, dotted with iron ore, and volcanic rock; the trees became smaller, and began to look like coastal trees. A wide alluvial valley presented itself, bordered by a curtain of shrubs. Stuart distinctly heard the noise of the waves as they broke, but he said nothing to his companions. They entered a thicket, made almost impassable by wild vines.

“Stuart went on a few steps. He found himself on the shores of the Indian Ocean. *‘The sea! The sea!’* cried a stupefied Thring. The others ran forward, and three long hurrahs saluted the Indian Ocean.

“The continent had just been crossed for the fourth time!

“Stuart, following the promise he had made to Governor Sir Richard MacDonnell, dipped his feet and washed his face and hands in the waves of the sea. Then, he returned to the valley, and inscribed his initials, JMDS, on a tree. They camped beside a small stream.

“Next day, Thring went to see if they could reach the mouth of the Adelaide River from the southwest, but the ground was too swampy for the horses’ feet. It was necessary to abandon the idea.

“Stuart selected a tall tree in a clearing. He cut off the lower branches, and at the top he fixed a Union Flag, embroidered with his name. On the bark of the tree were cut these words, ‘Dig One Foot—S.’

“And if at some future day a traveller digs at the spot indicated, he will find a tin box, [fn6](#) and in this box the document whose words are engraved on my memory:

*SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GREAT NORTHERN
EXPLORING EXPEDITION.*

The exploring party, under the command of John McDouall Stuart, arrived at this spot on the 25th day of July 1862 having crossed the entire Continent of Australia from the Southern to the Indian Ocean, passing through the Centre. They left the City of Adelaide on the 26th day of October 1861 and the most northern station of the colony on the 21st day of January 1862. To commemorate this happy event, they have raised this flag bearing his name. All well. God save the Queen!



...and at the top he fixed the Union Flag

“Followed by the signatures of Stuart and his companions.

“This was a great event that had a tremendous impact, worldwide.”

“And did these brave men live to rejoin their friends in the South?” asked Lady Helena.

“Yes, Madame, all,” said Paganel. “But not without undergoing terrible trials. Stuart suffered most. His health was seriously compromised by scurvy when he resumed his journey to Adelaide. By the beginning of September his illness had

made such progress that he did not think he would reach the inhabited districts again. He could not sit in the saddle; he travelled lying in a stretcher suspended between two horses. At the end of October he was extremely ill, and spitting blood. They killed a horse to make him a broth. October 28th he thought death was at hand when a salutary crisis saved him, and on December 10th the whole little troop reached the first settlements.

“On December 17th Stuart received an enthusiastic welcome in Adelaide. But he had not recovered his health, and after receiving the gold medal of the *Geographical Society*, he took passage in the *Indus* for his beloved Scotland, his native land, where we shall see him on our return.”, [fn7](#)

“He was a man who possessed moral courage to the highest degree,” said Glenarvan, “And that, even more than physical strength, leads to the accomplishment of great things. Scotland is rightly proud to count him among her children.”

“Has no explorer attempted further discoveries, since Stuart?” asked Lady Helena.

“Yes, Madame,” replied Paganel. “I have often spoken to you of Leichhardt. He had already made a remarkable exploration of Northern Australia, in 1844. In 1848 he undertook a second expedition, to the northeast. That was seventeen years ago, and he has not been seen since. Last year the famous botanist, Dr. Mueller, of Melbourne, created a public subscription to defray the expenses of an expedition to search for him. The requisite sum was quickly raised, and a party of courageous squatters, commanded by the bold and intelligent McIntyre, started from the pasturages of the Paroo river, on June 21st, 1864. At this moment he has probably penetrated far into the interior of the continent, in his search for Leichhardt. May he succeed, and may we too, like him, find again the friends so dear to us!”

Thus ended the geographer’s story. It was late. Paganel was thanked, and shortly later all were peaceably sleeping, while the clock-bird, hidden in the foliage of the white gum trees, kept time all through the still night.

[fn1.](#) 1,500 miles, 2,400 kilometres — DAS

[fn2.](#) 375 miles, 600 kilometres — DAS

[fn3.](#) 150 miles, 240 kilometres — DAS

[fn4.](#) 150 miles, 240 kilometres — DAS

[fn5.](#) 12 leagues, 50 kilometres — DAS

[fn6.](#) The tree on which Stuart carved “JMDS” was located in 1883. The flag tree, and its tin box, have not been found. — DAS

[fn7.](#) James Paganel was able to see Stuart on his return to Scotland, but he did not long enjoy the

company of this famous traveller. Stuart died on June 5th, 1866, in a modest house in Nottingham Hill.

Chapter XII

The Melbourne to Sandhurst Railway

THE MAJOR HAD FELT SOME APPREHENSION AS HE WATCHED AYRTON DEPART THE Wimmera camp to go look for a blacksmith at Black Point Station, but he kept his misgivings to himself, and didn't breathe a word to anyone. He contented himself with watching the neighbourhood of the river. The tranquility of the glades was undisturbed, and after a few hours of night the sun re-appeared on the horizon.

Glenarvan's only fear was that Ayrton might return alone. If they failed to find a workman, the wagon could not resume the journey. This might detain them for many days, and Glenarvan, impatient to reach his goal, couldn't tolerate any delay.

Fortunately, Ayrton lost neither time, nor his way. He appeared next morning at daybreak, accompanied by a man who said he was a blacksmith from Black Point Station. He was a tall, powerful fellow, but with low, bestial, unfavourable features. But that was of no concern, provided he knew his business. He scarcely spoke, and did not waste his breath in useless words.

"Is he a good workman?" John Mangles asked the quartermaster.

"I know no more about him than you do, Captain," said Ayrton, "but we shall see."

The blacksmith set to work repairing the wagon, and it quickly became evident that he knew his trade. He worked skilfully and with uncommon energy. The Major observed that the flesh of his wrists was deeply furrowed, showing a black collar of bruising. It was the mark of a recent injury which the sleeve of an old woollen shirt could not conceal. MacNabbs questioned the blacksmith about these sores, which must have been painful, but the man continued his work without answering. Two hours later, the damage to the wagon had been repaired.

Glenarvan's horse was re-shod even quicker. The blacksmith had the foresight to bring horseshoes with him. The Major noticed an unusual feature of these shoes: a deep clover design cut into their bottoms. MacNabbs pointed it out to Ayrton.

"It's the Black Point brand," said the quartermaster. "That enables them to track any horses that may stray from the station, and prevents their being mixed with other herds."

The new shoes were quickly fitted to the horse's hooves. The blacksmith claimed his wage, and left without uttering four words.

Half an hour later, the travellers were on the move again. Beyond the curtains of mimosas bordering the river stretched a wide open country, which quite deserved its epithet of "open plain." Some fragments of quartz and ferruginous rock lay among the scrub and the tall grass, and there were fenced in areas where many flocks of sheep grazed. Some miles further the wheels of the wagon ploughed deep into the lacustrine soil, where irregular creeks murmured, half hidden among giant reeds. They skirted vast salty lagoons, rapidly evaporating in the day's heat. The journey was effortless and trouble free.

Lady Helena invited the horsemen of the party to take turns visiting her, as her salon was very small. But each of them was happy to take a break from riding, and amuse himself in conversation with this amiable woman. Lady Helena, assisted by Miss Mary, did the honours of their travelling house with perfect grace. John Mangles was not forgotten in these daily invitations, and his serious conversation was not unpleasing. Quite the contrary.

They cut diagonally across the mail road from Crowland to Horsham. This was a very dusty road, little used by pedestrians. They skirted the rumps of some low hills at the boundary of Talbot County, and in the evening the travellers reached a point about three miles above Maryborough. A fine rain was falling, which in any other country would have soaked the ground, but here the air absorbed the moisture so rapidly, that it was scarcely an inconvenience.

Next day, December 29th, the march was somewhat slowed by a succession of small hills, resembling a miniature Switzerland. It was a constant repetition of up hill and down, on rough roads that jolted the wagon so unpleasantly that the ladies preferred to leave it, and walk part of the way.

They arrived at the large town of Carisbrook at eleven o'clock. Ayrton was of the opinion that the wagon might be delayed going through town, and suggested going around it. Glenarvan agreed, but Paganel, always eager for novelties, wanted to visit Carisbrook. He was allowed to do so, while the wagon went slowly around it.

As usual, Paganel took Robert with him. Their visit to the town was brief, but it sufficed to give him an impression of a typical Australian town. There was a bank, a court-house, a market, a school, a church, and a hundred or so perfectly uniform brick houses. The whole town was laid out in rectangles, crossed with parallel streets in the English fashion. Nothing could be simpler, or less attractive. As the town grew, they lengthened the streets as you lengthen the trousers of a growing

child, and thus the primitive symmetry remains undisturbed.

Carisbrook was full of activity, a remarkable feature in these new towns. In Australia it seems that towns grow like trees in the heat of the sun. Busy people ran in the streets. Gold shippers crowded the exchange offices. The precious metal, escorted by the local police, was brought in from the mines at Bendigo and Mount Alexander. All of this little world was so absorbed in its own interests that the strangers passed unobserved amid the busy population.

After an hour of looking around Carisbrook, the two visitors rejoined their companions passing through the highly cultivated environs of the town. This was followed by long stretches of prairie known as the "Low Level Plains," dotted with countless sheep, and shepherds' huts. Then they came to a stretch of desert, without any transition, but with that abruptness peculiar to Australian nature. The Simpson Hills and Mount Tarrengower marked the point where the southern boundary of the Loddon district cuts the 144th meridian.

None of the aboriginal tribes living in the wild had been encountered so far. Glenarvan wondered if the Australians were wanting in Australia, as the Indians had been wanting in the Argentinian Pampas, but Paganel told him that, in this latitude, the natives were to be found in the Murray Plains, a hundred miles to the east.

"We are approaching the gold district," he said. "In two days we shall cross the rich region of Mount Alexander. This is where the swarm of miners came in 1852; the natives fled to the wilderness of the interior. We are in civilized country, even if it doesn't look like it. Later today we should cross the railway which connects the Murray with the sea. But I must confess that a railway in Australia does seem to me an astounding thing!"

"And why is that, Paganel?" asked Glenarvan.

"Why? Because it *chafes!* Oh, I know you English are accustomed to colonizing distant possessions. You, with your electric telegraphs and World Exhibitions, even in New Zealand.^{fn1} You think it is all quite natural. But it dumbfounds the mind of a Frenchman like myself, and confuses all his notions of Australia!"

"Because you look to the past, and not at the present," said John Mangles.

"Perhaps," said Paganel. "But the locomotives chuffing across wild plains, spirals of steam winding through the branches of mimosa and eucalyptus; echidnas, platypuses, and emus fleeing before speeding trains; savages taking the 3:30 express to go from Melbourne to Kyneton, to Castlemaine, to Sandhurst, or to Echuca: that sort of thing is erasing everything that isn't English, or American

from the world. With the coming of your railways, the poetry of the wilderness vanishes.”

“What does it matter as long as we make progress?” asked the Major.

A loud whistle interrupted the discussion. The party was within a mile of the railway. A locomotive coming slowly from the south stopped just where the road being followed by the wagon crossed the railway.

This railway, as Paganell had said, connected the capital of Victoria to the Murray, the largest river in Australia. This immense watercourse, discovered by Sturt in 1828, has its source in the Australian Alps. Augmented by its tributaries, the Lachlan and the Darling, it forms the northern boundary of the province of Victoria, and empties into Encounter Bay near Adelaide. It flows through a rich and fertile country, and squatter stations multiply along its course, thanks to the easy communication with Melbourne established by the railway.

This railway was then operating over a distance of 105 miles^{fn2} between Melbourne and Sandhurst, serving Kyneton and Castlemaine. The line, still under construction, continued for another seventy miles as far as Echuca, capital of the Riverine colony, founded that year on the Murray.

The 37th parallel intersected the track a few miles above Castlemaine, at Camden Bridge over the Loddon River, one of the many tributaries of the Murray.

Ayrton directed the wagon toward the bridge. The horsemen galloped ahead, attracted by curiosity over what was happening.

A considerable crowd was gathering at the railway bridge. The people from the neighbouring stations had left their houses, and the shepherds their flocks, and crowded the approaches to the railway. Every now and then someone shouted “*At the railway! At the railway!*”

Something serious must have occurred to produce so much agitation. Perhaps some great catastrophe.

Glenarvan, followed by the rest, urged his horse on. In a few minutes he arrived at Camden Bridge, and became aware of the cause of so much excitement. A terrible accident had occurred. Not a collision, but a derailment, and fall which recalled the worst disasters of the American railways. The river crossed by the railway was full of the wreckage of several carriages, and the locomotive. The weight of the train had been too much for the bridge, or the train had gone off the rails. Either way, five out of six carriages had fallen into the bed of the Loddon, dragged down by the locomotive. Only the last carriage, miraculously preserved by the breaking of the coupling, remained on the rails, three feet from the abyss.

Below it was a sinister pile of warped and blackened axles, shattered carriages, twisted rails, and charred sleepers. The boiler, burst by the shock, had scattered its plates to enormous distances. From this shapeless mass of ruins a few flames and wisps of steam and black smoke still rose. After the fall had come an even more horrible fire. Large streaks of blood, scattered limbs, and charred corpses were scattered around. No one could guess how many victims might lay under those ruins.

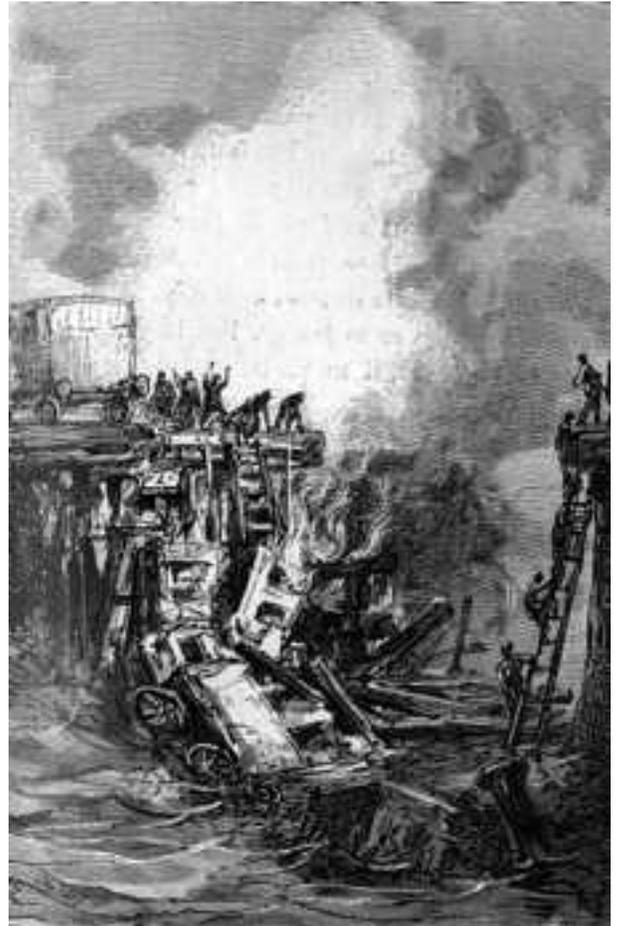
Glenarvan, Paganel, the Major, and Mangles mingled with the crowd, listening to what was being said. Everyone was trying to account for the disaster, while doing their utmost to save what could be saved.

"The bridge must have collapsed," said one.

"*Collapsed!*" said another. "The bridge is still intact! They must have forgotten to close it to let the train pass. That is all."

It was, indeed, a swing bridge which opened for the convenience of the river traffic. Had the guard, in an unpardonable act of negligence, forgotten to close it, and had the train, coming on at full speed, plunged into the bed of the Loddon? This hypothesis seemed very likely, for although one half of the bridge lay beneath the ruins of the train, the other half, drawn up to the opposite shore, hung by its chains, still undamaged. No one could doubt that negligence by the guard had caused the catastrophe.

The accident had occurred in the night to the ^{No}37 express train, which had left Melbourne at 11:45 in the evening. About a quarter past three in the morning, twenty-five minutes after leaving Castlemaine station, it arrived at Camden Bridge, where the terrible disaster occurred. The passengers and conductors of the last, and only remaining, carriage immediately tried to obtain help, but the telegraph line had been broken by the accident. Several poles were lying on the ground. It took three hours for the authorities from Castlemaine to reach the scene



A terrible accident had occurred

of the incident, and it was six o'clock in the morning when the rescue party was organized under the direction of Mr. Mitchell — the Surveyor General of the colony — accompanied by a detachment of police, commanded by an inspector. The squatters and their hands lent their aid, first working to extinguish the fire which raged uncontrollably through the wreckage. A few unrecognizable bodies lay on the slope of the embankment, but from that blazing furnace no living being could be saved. The fire had done its destructive work too quickly. Of the passengers on the train, the total number of which was unknown, only the ten from the last carriage had survived. The railway authorities sent an emergency locomotive to bring them back to Castlemaine.

Lord Glenarvan, having introduced himself to the Surveyor General, was talking with him and the police inspector. The inspector was a tall, thin man, imperturbably cool, and, whatever he may have felt, allowed no trace of it to appear on his face. He contemplated this calamity as a mathematician does a problem. He was seeking to solve it, and to find the unknown.

"This is a great misfortune," said Glenarvan.

"Better than that, my Lord," said the inspector.

"*Better than that?*" Glenarvan was shocked by the phrase. "What is better than a misfortune?"

"A crime!" said the inspector quietly.

Glenarvan, without being put off by the impropriety of the statement, turned to Mr. Mitchell, questioning him with his eyes.

"Yes, my Lord," said the Surveyor General. "Our investigation has led us to the certainty that this catastrophe is the result of a crime. The last luggage car was looted. The surviving passengers were attacked by a gang of five or six bandits. The bridge was intentionally opened, and not left open by the negligence of the guard. Connecting this fact with the guard's disappearance, it must be concluded that the wretched fellow was an accomplice of these criminals."

The inspector shook his head at this last inference.

"You do not agree with me?" said Mr. Mitchell.

"No, not as to the complicity of the guard."

"But with his complicity," said the Surveyor General, "we may attribute the crime to the savages who wander in the Murray countryside. Without the guard, these natives could never have opened the bridge. They know nothing of its mechanism."

"Correct," said the inspector.

“Now,” said Mr. Mitchell, “it is undisputed that, by the evidence of a boatman who passed Camden Bridge at 10:40 in the evening, that the bridge was closed after he passed.”

“True.”

“Well, after that, I cannot see any doubt as to the complicity of the guard.”
The inspector shook his head.

“But then sir,” said Glenarvan, “you don’t attribute the crime to the natives?”

“Not at all.”

“Who then?”

They were interrupted by a growing uproar, beginning half a mile up the river. A crowd was gathering, and grew quickly as it came closer. They soon reached the bridge, and in their midst were two men carrying a corpse. It was the body of the guard, already cold. He had been stabbed through the heart. The murderers had no doubt hoped that dragging his body away from Camden Bridge would mislead the police during their initial investigation. This discovery justified the doubts of the inspector. The natives had nothing to do with the crime.

“Those who dealt that blow,” said the inspector, “are people familiar with the use of this little instrument.” He produced a pair of “darbies,” a kind of handcuff made of a double ring of iron secured by a lock.

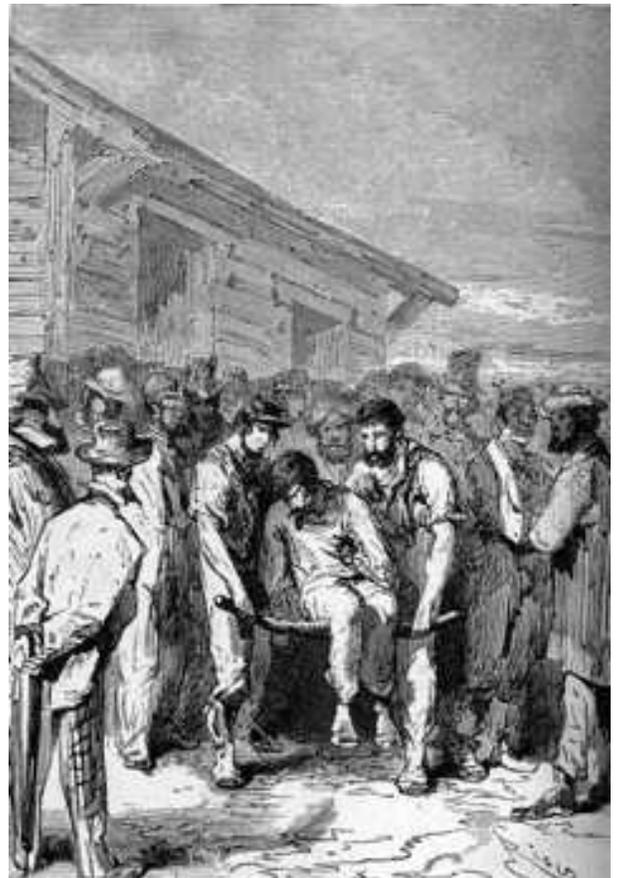
“Before long, I shall have the pleasure of presenting them with these bracelets as a New Year’s gift.”

“Then you suspect—”

“People who ‘travelled free in Her Majesty’s ships.’”

“What! *Convicts*?” cried Paganel, who recognized the euphemism employed in the Australian colonies.

“I thought that convicts were not allowed in the province of Victoria,” said Glenarvan.



It was the body of the guard

“Bah!” said the inspector. *“If they have no right, they take it! They escape sometimes, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, this lot have come straight from Perth, and, take my word for it, they will soon be there again.”*

Mr. Mitchell nodded acquiescence to the words of the inspector.

The wagon was approaching the railroad crossing. Glenarvan wished to spare the ladies the horrible spectacle at Camden Bridge. He took courteous leave of the Surveyor General, and signalled for the rest to follow him. *“There is no reason to delay our journey.”*

When they reached the wagon, Glenarvan merely stated to Lady Helena that there had been a railway accident, without saying what part the crime had played in the catastrophe. He also didn't mention the presence of a band of convicts in the neighbourhood, reserving that piece of information for Ayrton's ear, alone. The little troop crossed the railway a few hundred fathoms below the bridge, and resumed their eastward journey.

[fn1. The New Zealand Exhibition of 1865](#) — DAS

[fn2. 42 leagues, 170 kilometres](#) — DAS

Chapter XIII

A First Prize for Geography

Translator's Note:

This is the first chapter in which I was tempted to do a major rewrite of Verne's story. It wouldn't have been a change in any of the events, but I would have changed some of the characters' reactions to them.

I haven't done it, but if I did, I'd make Paganel angry about what has been done to Toliné, and not amused.

The practice of separating Aboriginal children from their families, and raising them in English religious schools was an abomination. There was nothing funny about what was done to those people.

Verne's intent here may have been to criticize the practice through satire, as the beliefs that Toliné has been indoctrinated with are so absurd, especially considering that this was written for a French audience. The encounter also takes place in an Aboriginal cemetery, being slowly obliterated by encroaching colonialism, just as Toliné's cultural identity has been obliterated by his indoctrination. But satire can be a very precarious bridge to cross, without falling off into giving the reader a very wrong impression of the author's intent. And translating satire, which may in part be based on the language and culture of the original target audience, is especially fraught.

If this was meant as a satirical critique of the destruction of Aboriginal culture, it does get pretty much lost in translation.

— DAS

A FEW HILLS SHOWED THEIR PROFILES ON THE HORIZON AT THE EDGE OF THE PLAIN, TWO miles from the railway. The wagon entered a succession of narrow gorges that wound capriciously up onto a low plateau, where beautiful trees — not gathered in forests, but spread out in isolated clumps — were growing with tropical luxuriance. Among the most admirable were the *casuarinas*, which seemed to have borrowed their robust trunk from the oak, their fragrance from the acacia, and their blue-green leaves from the pine. Their branches mingled with the elegant, slender cones of the *banksia latifolia*. Large shrubs with drooping branches

cascaded over the edges of the plateau, like green water overflowing the rim of a basin. The eye was so bewildered with the many wonders of nature, that one hardly knew which way to look.

Ayrton, on orders from Lady Helena, stopped the wagon. The big wooden disks stopped grating over the quartz sand. Long green carpets of grass lay beneath groves of trees, divided at intervals by little mounds arranged in almost chess-board regularity.

Paganel understood this verdant solitude at a glance, so poetically laid out for eternal sleep. These were funereal squares, slowly being erased by the grass, which the traveller finds so rarely in Australia.

"The groves of the dead," he said.

This was a native cemetery, but so green and shady, enlivened by the happy flocks of birds, and so engaging that it stirred no sad thoughts. It might have been gladly taken for a garden of Eden, where death was unknown. It seemed made for the living. But these tombs, kept with pious care by the Aborigines, were already disappearing under a rising tide of greenery. The conquest had driven the Australians away from the land where their ancestors were resting, and colonization will soon deliver these fields of the dead to the teeth of cattle. So these groves have become rare, and how many are trod under the feet of indifferent travellers who trample over past generations?

Paganel and Robert rode ahead of the others, exploring the small shady alleys of the tumuli. They talked and instructed each other, because the geographer maintained that he profited greatly from young Grant's conversation. They had not gone a quarter of a mile when Lord Glenarvan noticed them stop, dismount, and stoop down toward the ground. Judging by their expressive gestures, they were examining some very curious object.

Ayrton goaded his oxen into motion, and the wagon soon reached the two friends. The cause of their halt and astonishment was immediately recognized: a native child, an eight year old boy, dressed in European clothes, slept peacefully in the shade of a magnificent banksia. There was no mistaking the characteristic features of his race: the frizzy hair, the nearly black skin, the flattened nose, the thick lips, the unusual length of the arms, immediately classed him among the natives of the interior. But his face showed intelligent features, and certainly some education had relieved this young native from his low origin.

Lady Helena, very interested by this sight, got out of the wagon, followed by Mary, and presently the whole company surrounded the little native, who was

sleeping soundly.

"Poor child!" said Mary Grant. "Is he lost, in this wilderness?"

"I suppose that he came a long way to visit these groves of the dead," said Lady Helena, "Here, no doubt, rest some of those he loves."

"But we can't leave him here," said Robert. "He's alone and—"

His charitable impulse was interrupted by a movement of the young native, who rolled in his sleep. Everyone was very surprised to see a sign, pinned on his shoulders.

TOLINÉ,
TO BE CONDUCTED TO ECHUCA,
CARE OF JEFFRIES SMITH, RAILWAY
PORTER. PREPAID.



A native child...slept peacefully

"That's the English, for you!" said Paganel. "They ship a child like a parcel! They record it as baggage! I heard it was done, but I could not believe it before!"

"Poor child!" said Lady Helena. "Could he have been in the train that derailed at Camden Bridge? Perhaps his parents were killed, and he is left alone in the world!"

"I don't think so, Madame," said John Mangles. "That sign indicates that he was travelling alone."

"He's waking up," said Mary.

Indeed he was. Little by little, his eyes opened and closed again, pained by the glare of daylight. Lady Helena took his hand. He jumped up and looked about in astonishment at the group surrounding him. A momentary flash of fear appeared on his face, but the presence of Lady Glenarvan seemed to reassure him.

"Do you understand English, my friend?" asked the young woman.

"I understand and speak it," replied the child, in fluent enough English, but with a marked accent, similar to a Frenchman's.

"What is your name?" asked Lady Helena.

"Toliné," replied the little native.

"Ah, Toliné!" exclaimed Paganel. "If I'm not mistaken, doesn't that mean 'tree bark' in Australian?"

Toliné nodded, and looked around at the travellers.

"Where are you from, my friend?" asked Lady Helena.

"From Melbourne, by Sandhurst Railway."

"Were you in that train that derailed at Camden Bridge?" asked Glenarvan.

"Yes, sir," said Toliné. "But the God of the Bible has protected me."

"Are you travelling alone?"

"Yes. The Reverend Paxton put me in the care of Jeffries Smith. Unfortunately, the poor factor was killed."

"And you did not know anyone else on the train?"

"No one, sir; but God watches over children, and never forsakes them."

Toliné said this in soft, quiet tones, which went to the heart. When he mentioned the name of God his voice was grave, and his eyes beamed with all the fervour that animated his young soul.

This religious enthusiasm at so tender an age was easily explained. The child was one of those young natives, baptized by English missionaries, and raised by them in the austere practices of the Methodist religion. His calm replies, proper behaviour, and even his sombre garb, made him look like a little Reverend already.

But where was he going all alone in these deserted regions, and why had he left Camden Bridge? Lady Helena asked him about it.

"I was returning to my tribe in Lachlan," he said. "I want to see my family again."

"Australians?" asked John Mangles.

"Australians from Lachlan," said Toliné.

"Have you a father and mother?" asked Robert Grant.

"Yes, my brother." Toliné held out his hand to young Grant, whom the epithet of "brother" affected noticeably. He embraced the little native, and it was enough to make them a pair of friends.

The entire party was drawn into listening to the answers of the young native, and one by one they sat down around him and listened to him speak until the sun had already started to sink behind the tall trees. As this would make a good place to stop, and travelling a few more miles before sunset wouldn't make much difference, Glenarvan gave orders to prepare their camp for the night. Ayrton unfastened the oxen, hobbled them with help from Mulrady and Wilson, and turned them loose to graze at will. The tent was pitched, and Olbinett got the

supper ready. Toliné agreed to take his share, after some convincing, though he was hungry enough. He took his seat beside Robert, who picked out all the best pieces for his new friend. Toliné accepted them with a shy, charming grace.

The conversation did not languish. Everyone was interested in the child, and wanted to know his story. It was simple enough. He was one of the poor native children entrusted to the care of charitable societies by the tribes near the colony. The Australians are gentle and inoffensive. They do not profess the fierce hatred toward their conquerors which characterizes the New Zealanders, and perhaps a few of the tribes of Northern Australia. They often go to the large towns, such as Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, and walk about in their very primitive costumes. They go to trade small objects of their industry: hunting and fishing implements, weapons, etc., and some tribal chiefs — from economic motives, no doubt — willingly leave their children to profit from the benefit of English education.

This was what Toliné's parents had done. They were true Australian savages of Lachlan, a vast region lying beyond the Murray. The child had been in Melbourne for five years, and during that time had never once seen any of his family. Yet, the imperishable feeling of kindred still lived in his heart, and it was to see his tribe again, perhaps dispersed, and his family, decimated no doubt, that he had set out on this difficult journey through the wilderness.

"And after you have hugged your parents are you coming back to Melbourne?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Yes, Madame," said Toliné, looking at the lady with a tender expression.

"And what are you going to be some day?"

"I want to tear my brothers out of misery and ignorance! I am going to teach them, to bring them to know and love God. I am going to be a missionary!"

These words, spoken with such animation by an eight year old child, might have provoked a laugh in light and mocking wits, but they were understood and respected by the grave Scots, who admired the religious valour of this young disciple, already prepared to fight. Even Paganel was stirred to the depths of his heart, and felt genuine sympathy awakened for the little native.

To speak the truth, until now, this savage in European attire did not much please him. He had not come to Australia to see Australians in a frock coat! He preferred them simply tattooed, and this "proper" dress baffled his preconceived notions. But as soon as Toliné had spoken so ardently, Paganel changed his opinion, and declared himself an admirer. The end of this conversation, moreover,

was to make the good geographer the best friend of the Australian boy.

Toliné, in reply to a question asked by Lady Helena, said that he was studying at the *Normal School* in Melbourne, and that the principal was the Reverend Mr. Paxton.

“And what do you learn at this school?” asked Lady Glenarvan.

“They teach me the Bible, mathematics, geography—”

Paganel pricked up his ears at that. “Indeed! Geography?”

“Yes, sir,” said Toliné. “I even had the first prize for geography before the January holidays.”

“You had the first prize for geography, my boy?”

“Yes, sir. Here it is,” returned Toliné, pulling a book out of his pocket.

It was a well bound, 32mo Bible.^{fn1} On the reverse of the first page were written the words *Normal School, Melbourne. 1st First Prize for Geography, Toliné of Lachlan.*

Paganel was beside himself. An Australian well versed in geography! This was marvellous, and he kissed Toliné on both cheeks, just as if he had been the Reverend Mr. Paxton himself, on the day the prize was given. Paganel, however, should have known that this is not uncommon in Australian schools. The wild youth are very apt in the geographical sciences. They learn it eagerly. On the other hand, they are perfectly averse to the science of arithmetic.

Toliné could not understand this sudden outburst of affection on the part of the Frenchman. Lady Helena had to explain that Paganel was a famous geographer and, when required, a distinguished teacher.

“A geography teacher!” said Toliné. “Oh, sir. Please test me!”

“Test you, my boy?” said Paganel. “I’d like nothing better. Indeed, I was going to do it without your leave. I should very much like to see how they teach geography in the *Melbourne Normal School.*”

“And suppose Toliné shows you up, Paganel?” asked MacNabbs.

“The idea!” scoffed the geographer. “Show up the Secretary of the *Geographical Society of France?*”

Paganel settled his spectacles firmly on his nose, straightened himself up to his full height, and put on a solemn voice becoming to a professor. He began his interrogation.

“Pupil Toliné, stand up!”

As Toliné was already standing, he could not get any higher, but he waited patiently for the geographer’s questions.

“Pupil Toliné, what are the five divisions of the globe?”

“Oceania, Asia, Africa, America, and Europe.”

“Correct. Now we’ll take Oceania first, since we are there right now. What are the principal divisions?”

“It is divided into Polynesia, Malaysia, Micronesia and Megalesia. Its main islands are Australia, which belongs to the English; New Zealand, which belongs to the English; Tasmania, which belongs to the English; the Chatham Islands, Auckland, Macquarie, Kermadec, Makin, and Maraki, which belong to the English.”

“Very good,” said Paganel. “But what of New Caledonia, the Sandwich Islands, Mendana, and Pomotou?”

“These are islands placed under the Protectorate of Great Britain.”

“What?” cried Paganel, “‘Under the Protectorate of Great Britain!’ On the contrary! I rather think that France—”

“France?” said the astonished child.

“Is that what they teach you in the *Melbourne Normal School*?”

“Yes, Professor. Isn’t it right?”

“Oh yes, yes, perfectly right. All Oceania belongs to the English. That’s an understood thing. Let’s continue.”

Paganel’s face showed a mixture of surprise and annoyance, to the great delight of the Major.

The interrogation continued.

“Let us go on to Asia,” said the geographer.

“Asia,” said Toliné, “is an immense country. Capital: Calcutta. Main cities: Bombay, Madras, Calicut, Aden, Malacca, Singapore, Pegou, and Colombo. The Laccadive Islands, the Maldives Islands, the Chagos Islands, etc., etc. Belongs to the English.”

“Very good, pupil Toliné. And now for Africa.”



“Pupil Toliné, stand up!”

“Africa comprises two chief colonies — the Cape in the south, capital: Cape Town; and on the west the English settlements, principal city: Sierra Leone.”

“Well done!” said Paganel, beginning to enter into the spirit of this perfectly taught, but whimsically Anglo-fantastic geography. “As to Algeria, Morocco, Egypt — they are all struck out of the Britannic atlases. Let us pass on, pray, to America.”

“It is divided,” said Toliné, promptly, “into North and South America. The former belongs to the English in Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and the United States, under the administration of Governor Johnson.”

“Governor Johnson,” said Paganel, “the successor of the great and good Lincoln, assassinated by a fanatical proponent of slavery! *Perfect!* Nothing could be better. And as to South America, with its Guyana, its Malouines, its Shetland archipelago, its Georgia, Jamaica, Trinidad, etc., etc., that belongs to the English too! I will not argue about it. But, Toliné, I should like to know your opinion of Europe, or rather your professors’.”

“Europe?” asked Toliné not at all understanding Paganel’s agitation.

“Yes, Europe! Who owns Europe?”

“Europe belongs to the English,” said Toliné, with conviction.

“I suspected it,” said Paganel. “But how? That’s what I want to know.”

“England, Ireland, Scotland, Malta, Jersey and Guernsey, the Ionian Islands, the Hebrides, the Shetlands, and the Orkneys—”

“Yes, yes, Toliné; but there are other states you forgot to mention.”

“What are they?” asked the child, not the least disconcerted.

“Spain, Russia, Austria, Prussia, France...” said Paganel.

“Those are provinces, not states,” said Toliné.

“For example?” exclaimed Paganel, tearing off his spectacles.

“Without a doubt, Spain, capital: Gibraltar.”

“Admirable! *Perfect! Sublime!* And France, for I am French, and I should like to know to whom I belong.”

“France,” said Toliné, quietly, “is an English province with the chief town of Calais.”

“Calais!” cried Paganel. “How? Do you think Calais still belongs to the English?”

“Without a doubt.”

“And that it is the capital of France.”

“Yes, sir; and that is where the Governor, Lord Napoleon, resides.”

At these last words Paganel collapsed in laughter. Toliné did not know what to think. He had been questioned, he had answered as best he could. But the singularity of his answers could not be attributed to him. He never imagined anything singular about them. But he did not seem disconcerted, and gravely waited the end of Paganel's incomprehensible antics.

Major MacNabbs was laughing at Paganel. "You see. I was right. The pupil could enlighten you after all."

"Most assuredly, Major," said the geographer. "So that's the way they teach geography in Melbourne! They do it well, these professors in the *Normal School*! Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Oceania, the whole world belongs to the English. *Parbleu*, with such an ingenious education it is no wonder the natives submit. Ah, well, Toliné, my boy, does the moon belong to England too?"

"It will, some day," replied the young savage, gravely.

With that, Paganel got up. He could not sit still. He had to laugh at his ease, and he went to regain his equilibrium a quarter of a mile away from the camp.

Meanwhile, Glenarvan got out a geography text they had brought among their books. It was Samuel Richardson's *Geographical Précis*, an esteemed work in England, and more knowledgeable of the science than the Melbourne teachers.

"Here, my child," he said to Toliné. "Take this book and keep it. You have some misconceptions in geography that it is good to reform. I give it to you in memory of our meeting."

Toliné took the book silently; but, after examining it attentively, he shook his head in disbelief, without deciding to put it in his pocket.

Night had closed in by this time. It was ten o'clock in the evening, and time to think of rest if they were to start early in the morning. Robert offered his friend Toliné half his bunk, and the little fellow accepted it.

Lady Helena and Mary Grant withdrew to the wagon, and the others lay down in the tent, while Paganel's laughter mingling with the low song of the magpies.

But at six o'clock in the morning, when the sunshine wakened the sleepers, they looked in vain for the little Australian. Toliné had disappeared. Did he want to reach the Lachlan district without delay? Was he hurt by Paganel's laughter? No one could say.

But when Lady Helena awoke she discovered a fresh bouquet of simple green branches lying across her, and Paganel found a book in his jacket pocket: *Geographical Précis* by Samuel Richardson.

leaf gatherings — which are then trimmed and bound into a book, about $\frac{2}{3}$ the size of a mass market paperback: $3\frac{1}{2} \times 5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, or 9×14 centimetres. — DAS

Chapter XIV

The Mines at Mount Alexander

IN 1814, SIR RODERICK IMPEY MURCHISON, NOW PRESIDENT OF THE *ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL Society of London*, while studying the structures of the Ural Mountains, and the chain which runs from north to south near the southern coast of Australia, found many remarkable similarities between them.

Now the Urals being a gold bearing range, it struck the learned geologist that the precious metal might very likely be found in the Australian cordillera as well. He was not mistaken.

Two years later, samples of gold were sent to him from New South Wales, and he sent a large number of miners from Cornwall to the auriferous regions of New Holland.

The first nuggets were discovered in South Australia by Mr. Francis Dutton, and in New South Wales by Messrs. Forbes and Smyth.

From this first impetus, miners flocked to Australia from all parts of the globe — English, American, Italian, French, German, Chinese — but it was not till April 3rd, 1851, that Mr. Hargrave discovered very rich gold deposits, and offered to reveal their location to the Governor of Sydney, Sir Charles FitzRoy, for the modest sum of five hundred pounds.

His offer was not accepted, but the rumour of the discovery had spread, and gold-seekers directed their steps to Summerhill and Leni's Pond. The town of Ophir was founded, and the richness of the mines soon made it worthy of its biblical name.

Up to this time there had been no mention of gold discoveries in Victoria, but it was about to take first prize for the richness of its deposits.

It was a few months later, in August, 1851, that the first nuggets of gold were dug up in that province, and soon there were large mining operations going on in four different districts: Ballarat, the Ovens, Bendigo, and Mount Alexander. They all had rich deposits; but at the Ovens, the abundance of water made mining difficult; at Ballarat, the gold was so unequally distributed that labour was often fruitless; and at Bendigo, the soil was very unfavourable for digging mines. It was only at Mount Alexander that every condition for success was found, and the precious ore mined there was worth as much as 1,441 francs a pound.^{[fn1](#)} The highest rate in all the markets of the world.

It was to precisely this place, so fertile in fatal ruins and in unexpected

fortunes, that the 37th parallel led the searchers for Captain Harry Grant.

On December 31st, after traversing over very rough ground for a whole day — which tired both horses and oxen — they saw the rounded peaks of Mount Alexander. They encamped for the night in a narrow gorge of this little chain, and the hobbled animals were set loose to graze among the quartz blocks that strewed the ground. They had not yet entered the gold fields. It was not until next day, the first day of the new year, 1866, that the wagon dug ruts in the roads of this opulent country.

James Paganel and his companions were delighted to see this famous mount, called Geboor in the Australian language. It was here that a horde of adventurers, thieves and honest men — those who hang, and who are hanged — had flocked in droves. At the first rumours of the great discovery, in the golden year of 1851, towns, fields, and ships were abandoned by settlers, squatters, and sailors. The gold fever became an epidemic, as contagious as the plague. How many died of it who thought fortune was already in their grasp? Prodigal nature, it was said, had sown millions in treasure over more than twenty-five degrees of latitude in this wonderful Australia. It was harvest time, and the reapers rushed to the ingathering.

The job of the “digger” took precedence over all the others, and, if it is true that many succumbed to the task, broken by fatigue, others enriched themselves with a single stroke of the pick. The failures were ignored; the successes shouted abroad. Those strokes of fortune were echoed to the five parts of the globe. Soon waves of the ambitious of all castes washed up on the shores of Australia. During the last four months of 1852, in Melbourne alone, there was an influx of 54,000 immigrants: an army, but an army without a leader, or discipline. An army on the day after a battle which has not yet been won; in short, 54,000 pillagers of the worst kind.

During those first years of mad intoxication it was an indescribable mess. However, the English — with their accustomed energy — soon made themselves masters of the situation. The policemen and the local constabulary took the part of the honest people over the party of robbers, and turned matters around. Glenarvan found nothing like the violent scenes of 1852. Thirteen years had elapsed since that time, and now gold mining operations were carried out in the most methodical manner, under strict management.

Besides, the placers [fn2](#) were already running out. Some had been completely

mined out. And little wonder that these treasures of nature had been drained, when the soil of Victoria alone had yielded £63,107,478^{fn3} sterling in gold between 1852 and 1858! The immigrants had decreased in proportion, and had gone off to countries which were still virgin. The newly discovered gold fields in Otago and Marlborough in New Zealand attracted thousands of two footed termites.^{fn4}

They arrived at the centre of the digging at about eleven o'clock. The travellers found themselves in a regular town, with workshops, bank, church, barracks, cottages, newspaper offices, hotels, farms, and villas. Nothing was wanting. There was even a theatre which was selling out at ten shillings a seat. They were playing a piece called *Francis Obadiah, or the Lucky Digger*. The hero, in the closing act, makes one last despairing stroke with his pick, and turns up a nugget of the most improbable weight.

Glenarvan, who was curious to visit the vast operation of Mount Alexander, sent the wagon on under the direction of Ayrton and Mulrady, intending to rejoin them a few hours later. Paganel was delighted with this arrangement, and, as usual, made himself the guide and cicerone of the little party.

Following his advice, they first made their way toward the bank. The streets were wide, macadamized, and carefully watered. Gigantic advertisements of the "*Golden Company (Limited)*," "*The Digger's General Office*," and "*The Nugget's Union*," drew their gaze. The association of labour and capital had replaced the independent operations of the miner. Machines crushing quartz and washing sand could be heard everywhere.

Beyond the buildings were the placers — large tracts of land being worked by the diggers — highly paid workers in the employ of the mining company. It was impossible to count the holes in the ground. The iron of their picks and spades shone in the sunlight, and flashed like lightning as stroke after stroke fell. There were men from all nations among the workers. They did not quarrel, and



Paganel, as usual, made himself the guide of the party

performed their tasks silently, as salaried people.

"You must not think, however," said Paganel, "that there are no longer any of those feverish seekers who come to make their fortune in the game of mines on Australian soil. I know most of the diggers are hired by the companies, and they must be, as the gold fields are either sold or leased by the government. But there is one chance of getting rich still left, even if a man can neither rent nor buy."

"What is that?" asked Lady Helena.

"The chance of 'jumping,'" replied Paganel; "so you see we who have not the least claim here, may, perhaps, by a great deal of good luck, make our fortunes."

"But how?" asked the Major.

"By 'jumping' as I have just had the honour of telling you."

"What is 'jumping?'" inquired MacNabbs again.

"It is a convention accepted between the miners, which often brings violence and disorder, but which the authorities could never abolish."

"Go on, Paganel," said MacNabbs, "you are making our mouths water."

"Well, it is agreed that any claim which has not been worked for twenty-four hours, except on great festivals, falls into the public domain. Anyone who seizes it can dig it, and get rich, if Heaven comes to his aid. So Robert, my boy, you had best look about for one of these deserted holes, and take possession of it."

"Monsieur Paganel," said Mary, "don't put such ideas into my brother's head."

"I am only joking, my dear Miss Mary," said Paganel, "and Robert knows that well enough. Him a miner? *Never!* To dig the earth, plough it, and cultivate it, and sow seed and expect a plentiful harvest in return, is a good life; but to burrow below like moles, and about as blind, for the sake of a handful of gold, is a pitiful calling, and one must be forsaken of God and man to follow it!"

After visiting the main mine site and walking through a shipping ground, consisting largely of quartz, shale, and sand from the disintegration of rocks, the travellers arrived at the bank.

It was large building, with the Union Flag at the peak of its roof. Lord Glenarvan was received by the inspector-general, who did the honours of his establishment.

This is where the mining companies deposit gold torn from the bowels of the earth in exchange for a receipt. In the early days, the miners were exploited by the merchants of the colony. They would pay fifty-three shillings an ounce for the gold at the placer, and sell it in Melbourne for sixty-five. True, the merchants had all the risk of transporting the gold, and as highway speculators multiplied, the gold and

its escort did not always arrive at its destination.

Curious specimens of gold were shown to the visitors, and the inspector told them interesting details about the different methods of extracting the ore.

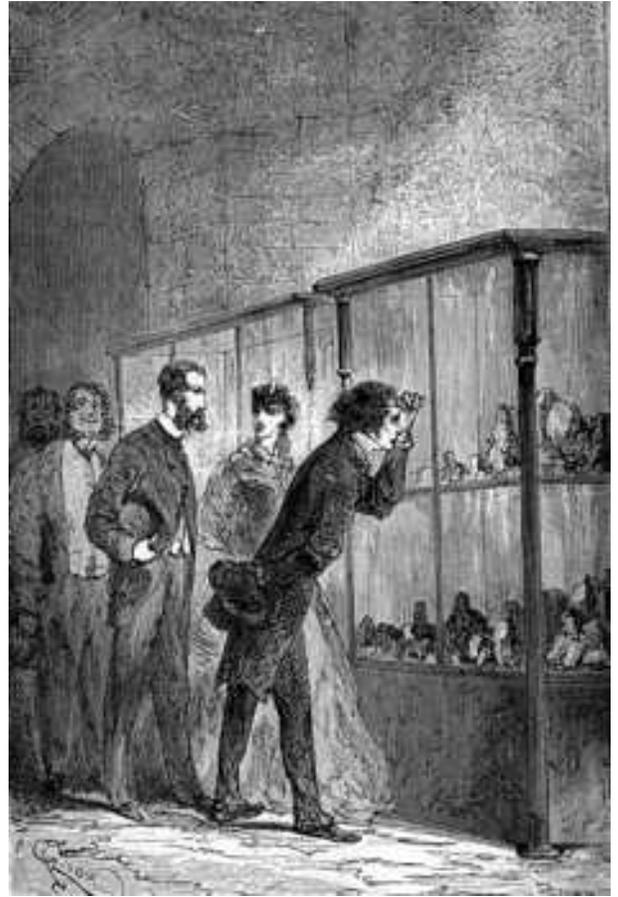
The precious metal is generally found in two forms: as nuggets, or finely divided residual gold. It is found as ore mixed with alluvial soil, or enclosed in its gangue of quartz. To extract it one proceeds — according to the nature of the ground — by surface, or deep excavation.

Gold nuggets are found in river beds, valleys, and ravines, sorted according to size: first the grains, then the flakes, and finally the glitter.

On the other hand, the residual gold, whose gangue has been decomposed by the action of the wind, is concentrated in patches, lying in little piles that miners call pockets. Some of these pockets contain a fortune.

At Mount Alexander, the gold collects especially in the layers of clay and in the interstices of the slate rock. There are nests of nuggets where a lucky miner can lay his hands on a jackpot.

After the different specimens of ore had been inspected by the visitors, they went through the Mineralogical Museum of the bank. There they saw, classified and labelled, all the substances which compose the Australian soil. Gold is not its only treasure, for, in sober truth, the country may be called an immense treasure chest of nature in which she has stored all her jewels. Precious and semi-precious stones sparkled in glass cases: white topaz, rivalling Brazilian topaz; almandine garnets; epidote, a beautiful green silicate crystal; rubies, represented by scarlet spinels and by a rose-coloured variety of the greatest beauty; light and dark blue sapphires, a type of corundum, and as highly esteemed as those of Malabar and Tibet; brilliant rutiles; and finally, a small diamond crystal, which was found on the banks of the Turon. Nothing was missing from this resplendent collection of gemstones, and gold for the settings was close at hand. One could hardly wish for



Curious specimens of gold were exhibited

more, unless to have found them already mounted.

Glenarvan took leave of the bank inspector with many thanks for his courtesy, which he had used extensively. The tour of the placers was resumed.

Paganel, as detached as he was from the goods of this world, could not take a step without examining the soil. His curiosity was getting the better of him, and his companions joked with him about it. Every minute he stooped down to pick up a pebble, a piece of gangue, or fragment of quartz, which he examined carefully, and then threw away in disdain. He went on this way during the whole walk.

“Ah, Paganel?” asked the Major. “Have you lost something?”

“No doubt,” said Paganel. “We have always lost what we have not found in this country of gold and precious stones. I can’t say why, but I should like to pick up a nugget weighing a few ounces, or even twenty pounds or more.”

“What would you do with it, my good friend?” asked Glenarvan.

“Oh, I shouldn’t be troubled,” said Paganel. “I would pay tribute to my country. I would deposit it in the *Banque de France*.”

“Would they accept it?”

“Most certainly, in the form of railway bonds!”

They congratulated Paganel on how he intended to present his nugget to his country. Lady Helena heartily wished he might pick up the largest nugget in the world. They continued to joke with one another as they moved through the diggings. Everywhere the work was being done regularly, mechanically, and without excitement.

After a two hour walk, Paganel pointed out a decent looking inn, and proposed they should stop there and rest until it was time to rejoin the wagon. Lady Helena consented, and as it didn’t do to sit in an inn without taking refreshments, Paganel asked the innkeeper to serve them some Australian beverage.



Every minute he picked up a pebble...which he examined carefully

A "nobbler" was brought for each person. The nobbler is more or less a grog, but made in reverse. Instead of a small glass of brandy being put into a large glass of water, a small glass of water was put into a large glass of brandy, with sugar. This was rather too Australian, and, to the great astonishment of the innkeeper, the nobbler was transformed into a true British grog, by the addition of a large caraffe of water.

They talked of the miners and mining. Paganel, very satisfied with what he had just seen, admitted, however, that it would have been more interesting in the first years of operation at Mount Alexander.

"The ground then," he said, "was riddled with holes, completely overrun with legions of hard working ants. And what ants! All the immigrants were eager enough, but some had little foresight. The gold drove them to mad excesses. They drank it, they gambled it, and this inn, where we are now, was a 'hell,' in the digger's slang. Throws of the dice led to thrusts of knives. The police were powerless, and often the governor of the colony had to call out the regular troops to put down revolts among the miners. He managed to impose order, eventually, and made each digger pay a licence, though he had some difficulty in enforcing this; yet on the whole the disorders here were smaller than in California."

"Can anyone become a miner?" asked Lady Helena.

"Yes, Madame, you do not need a bachelor's degree for that. Two good arms are enough. Most of the adventurers, driven from their home lands by misery, came without a penny in their pockets. The rich might have a pickaxe, or the poor, a knife. And they all brought a madness to this labour which no honest calling could have inspired.

"These gold fields presented a strange spectacle. The ground was covered with tents, tarpaulins, huts, and barracks of mud, planks, and branches. In the centre was the Marquee of the Government, with the British flag waving over it, the blue canvas tents of its agents, and the offices of the money changers, gold-buyers, and traders, who speculated on this combination of wealth and poverty. They enriched themselves, for sure.

"You should have seen the diggers, with their long beards and red woollen shirts, living in water and mud. The air was filled with the continuous noise of the pickaxes, and foul smells rising from the carcasses of animals left to rot on the ground. A stifling cloud of dust covered the whole scene. The mortality rate among these unfortunate people was frightfully high, and in a less healthy climate the population would have been decimated by typhus. It would have been bad

enough if all the adventurers had succeeded, but so many had no compensation for their misery. It has been estimated that for every miner who became rich, a hundred, two hundred, perhaps even a thousand, died in poverty and despair."

"Could you tell us, Paganel, how was the gold mined?" asked Glenarvan.

"Nothing was easier," replied Paganel. "The first miners practiced their trade as it is still done in parts of the Cevennes in France. Today the companies proceed differently. They go back to the source, itself, to the vein which produces the glitter, flakes, and nuggets. But the first miners contented themselves with washing the gold sands, that was all. They scooped out the earth, and collected that which seemed to promise gold, and used water to separate the precious particles. The washing was done by means of a machine called a 'cradle,' an American invention. It is a box five or six feet long, divided into two compartments. The first contains a coarse sieve laid over finer sieves. The second contained a sluice. They put the sand into the upper sieve, and pour water on it, moving it about by hand, rocking the instrument. The larger stones remained in the first sieve, the ore and the light sand in the others, according to their fineness. The earth ran off with the water through the sluice, over a series of baffles and riffles in which the gold particles collected."

"But you still had to have one," said John Mangles.

"It could be bought from diggers who had made their fortunes or been ruined, as the case may be. Or they could manage without it, in a pinch."

"How?" asked Mary Grant.

"They used a pan instead, a plain iron pan, my dear Mary, and winnowed the earth like corn, only instead of grains of wheat, they sometimes found grains of gold. The first year, many a miner became rich in this simple way. Those were good times, my friends, though you'd pay 150 francs for a pair of boots, and you paid ten shillings for a glass of lemonade. The first comers always get the first pick of things. Gold was everywhere, in abundance, just lying about on the ground. Streams ran over beds of the precious metal; it was even found in the Melbourne streets: there was gold dust in the macadam. Between January 26th and February 24th, of 1852, the amount of the precious metal conveyed from Mount Alexander to Melbourne by the Government escort rose to 8,238,750 francs. That makes an average of 164,725 francs a day. [fn5](#)

"About as much as the civil list of the Emperor of Russia," said Glenarvan.

"Poor man!" said the Major.

"Were there any sudden strokes of fortune?" asked Lady Helena.

“Some, Madame.”

“And you know them?” asked Glenarvan.

“*Parbleu!*” said Paganel. “In 1852, in the district of Ballarat, a nugget was found weighing 573 ounces; another, in Gippsland, that weighed 782 ounces; and in 1861, a ingot of 834 ounces was found. At Ballarat, again, a miner discovered a nugget that weighed 65 kilograms, which, at 1,722 francs a pound made 246,000 francs. [fn6](#) A stroke of the pick which brings in 11,000 francs a year, is a good stroke indeed.”

“How much has the production of gold increased since the discovery of the mines?” asked John Mangles.

“Enormously, my dear John. At the beginning of the century there was only forty-seven million, annually, and now, including the product of the mines of Europe, Asia, and America, it is estimated at nine hundred million. Call it a billion.”

“So, Monsieur Paganel,” said young Robert. “Where we are now, under our feet, perhaps, there is a lot of gold.”

“Yes, my boy, millions! We walk on it. We look down on it. I suppose you could say we despise it.”

“This Australia is quite a privileged country, isn’t it?”

“No, Robert,” replied the geographer; “The countries with gold are by no means privileged. They breed only sluggish populations, never strong and laborious. Look at Brazil, Mexico, California, and this Australia. Where are they in this nineteenth century? The country *par excellence*, my boy, is not the land of gold. It is the land of iron!” [fn7](#)

[fn1.](#) 1,441 francs = \$288 = £57 12s. — DAS

[fn2.](#) Deposits of sand or gravel in the bed of a river or lake, containing particles of valuable minerals. — DAS

[fn3.](#) 1,577,686,950 francs. A billion and a half. (\$315,537,390. — DAS)

[fn4.](#) However, it is possible that the emigrants were mistaken. The gold deposits are not exhausted. According to the latest news from Australia, it is estimated that the placers of Victoria and New South Wales occupy five million hectares; the approximate weight of quartz containing gold veins would be 20,550,000 kilograms, and, with the present means of exploitation, it would take the work of a hundred thousand men three centuries to deplete these placers. In sum, the gold wealth of Australia is estimated at 664,250,000,000 francs. (= \$133,000,000,000 = £26,600,000,000. — DAS)

[fn5.](#) 8,238,750 francs = \$1,647,750 = £329,550.
164,725 francs = \$32,945 = £6,589. — DAS

[fn6.](#) 65kg = 143lb.
246,000 francs = \$49,200 = £9,840. — DAS

[fn7.](#) So, I guess Australia is a privileged country, after all. It is currently one of the world’s leading producers of iron ore. (Its iron ore production is currently worth about five times as much as its

Chapter XV

The Australian and New Zealand Gazette

ON JANUARY 2ND, AT SUNRISE, THE TRAVELLERS LEFT THE GOLD REGIONS, AND TALBOT County, behind them. The hooves of their horses trod the dusty trails of Dalhousie County. A few hours later they forded the Colban and the Caupaspe rivers at 144° 35' and 144° 45' of longitude. Half of their journey was now done. In another fortnight, if all continued to go well, the little troop would reach the shores of Twofold Bay.

They were all in good health. Paganel's promises of the hygienic qualities of the climate were realized. There was little or no humidity, and the heat was quite bearable. Neither horses nor oxen could complain of it. Nor could the people.

The order of the march had been changed in one respect since Camden Bridge. The criminal catastrophe at the railway made Ayrton take some precautions which had previously been thought unnecessary. The hunters never lost sight of the wagon, and whenever they camped, someone was always placed on watch. Morning and evening the firearms were primed afresh. It was known that a band of criminals was prowling about the country, and though there was no cause for immediate fear, it was good to be ready for whatever might happen.

Needless to say, these precautions were taken without the knowledge of Lady Helena and Mary Grant, as Lord Glenarvan did not wish to alarm them.

These were sensible precautions. Imprudence or even negligence could be costly. Glenarvan was also not alone in worrying about the state of affairs. The inhabitants and the squatters in isolated villages and stations prepared carefully against any attack or surprise. Houses were closed at nightfall. Dogs, let loose inside the fences, barked at the slightest approach. Shepherds on horseback, gathering their numerous flocks together at nightfall, did so with rifles slung from their saddles. The news of the crime committed at Camden Bridge motivated this excess of precaution, and many a colonist — who until then had been sleeping with open doors and windows — locked himself in with care at dusk.

The administration of the province displayed zeal and caution. Detachments of local police were sent to the countryside. The movement of the mail was especially assured. Previously, the mail coaches ran the highways without escort. On this day, as Glenarvan and his troop were crossing the road from Kilmore to Heathcoate, the mail dashed by, the speed of its horses, raising a whirlwind of dust. But despite the rapidity of its transit, Glenarvan caught sight of the rifles of

the policemen gleaming at its doors. One might have fancied themselves back in those lawless times when the discovery of the first gold fields deluged the Australian continent with the scum of Europe.

One mile after crossing the Kilmore road, the wagon sank under a mass of giant trees, and for the first time since Cape Bernouilli, the travellers entered one of those forests which cover vast swathes of Australia.

A cry of admiration escaped the travellers at the sight of two hundred foot tall eucalyptus trees, whose fungous bark was up to five inches thick. The trunks, twenty feet in circumference, and furrowed by the dribble of an odorous resin, rose one hundred and fifty feet above the ground. Not a branch, not a twig, not a stray shoot, not even a knot, altered their profile. They could not have come out smoother had they been turned on a lathe. There were hundreds of exactly matched columns. They bloomed at an enormous height in capitals of forking branches, garnished at their extremities with alternating leaves. At the axils of these leaves hung solitary flowers whose calyx was an inverted urn.

The air circulated freely under this evergreen ceiling. Incessant ventilation drank the moisture from the soil. Horses, oxen, and wagon could easily pass between these widely spaced trees, arranged like the pickets of a managed coppice. This was neither like a densely-packed wood choked up with brambles, nor a virgin forest barricaded with the trunks of fallen trees, and overgrown with inextricable tangles of creepers, where only iron and fire could open up a track for the pioneers. A grassy carpet at the foot of the trees, and a sheet of greenery at their summit, bounded long perspectives of bold pillars. There was little shade; a peculiar light — as if the rays came through a thin veil, dappled the ground with sharply reflected lights and darks — created a peculiar spectacle rich in novel effects. The forests of the Oceanic continent do not in the least resemble the forests of the New World, and the eucalyptus, the



Horses, oxen, and wagon could easily pass between these widely spaced and arranged trees

the eucalyptus, the

Tara of the aborigines, belonging to the family of *Myrtaceae*, the different varieties of which can hardly be enumerated, is the tree *par excellence* of Australian flora.

That the shade is not deep, nor the darkness profound, under these green domes was the result of a curious anomaly in the arrangement of the trees' leaves. They do not offer their broad faces to the sunlight, only their sharp edges. The eye only sees profiles in this singular foliage. So the sun's rays slant through them to the ground, as if through the open slats of a shutter.

Everyone was surprised at this circumstance, and wondered what could be the cause of it. The question was naturally put to Paganel, who was never at a loss for an answer.

"What astonishes me here is not the oddness of nature," he said. "Nature knows what she is about, but botanists don't always know what she is saying. Nature made no mistake in giving this peculiar foliage to the trees, but men have erred in calling them 'eucalyptus.'"

"What does the word mean?" asked Mary Grant.

"It comes from εὐ καλύπτω meaning 'I cover well.' We took care to commit the mistake in Greek, that it might not be so self-evident, for anyone can see that the eucalyptus covers badly." [fn1](#)

"Granted, my dear Paganel," said Glenarvan. "But now tell us *why* the leaves are growing like this?"

"For a purely physical reason, my friends," said Paganel, "and one that you will easily understand. In this land, where the air is dry, the rains are rare, and the ground is parched, the trees lack neither wind nor sun. Moisture is lacking, so sap is lacking too. Hence these narrow leaves, which seek to defend themselves against the light, and to preserve themselves from too much evaporation. This is why they present their profile and not their face to the sun's rays. There is nothing more intelligent than a leaf."

"And nothing more selfish," said the Major. "They think only of themselves, and not at all of travellers."

Everyone was inclined agree with MacNabbs, except Paganel, who, while wiping his brow, congratulated himself on walking under shadeless trees. This disposition of foliage was regrettable, however. The journey through these forests was often long and difficult, since nothing protected the traveller against the heat of the day.

The wagon continued to roll along through interminable rows of eucalyptus all day. They met neither quadruped nor native. A few cockatoos lived in the tops of

the trees, but at such a height they could scarcely be distinguished, and their babble was reduced to an imperceptible murmur. Sometimes a flock of parakeets flew along a distant alley, and animated it for an instant with bright colours, but otherwise, solemn silence reigned in this vast green temple. The footsteps of the horses, a few words exchanged with each other by the riders, the squeaking of the wheels, and from time to time a cry from Ayrton to stir up his lazy team, were the only sounds which disturbed this immense solitude.

When night came they camped at the foot of some eucalyptus which bore the marks of a fairly recent fire. They looked like tall factory chimneys, for the flame had completely hollowed out their central cores. With the thick bark still covering them, they looked none the worse. However, this bad habit of squatters or natives will eventually destroy these magnificent trees, and they will disappear like the cedars of Lebanon. Four century old trees, that were burned for the sake of a camp fire.

Olbinett, acting on Paganel's advice, lit his fire to prepare supper in one of these tubular trunks. He immediately obtained a considerable draft, and the smoke was lost in the dark foliage above. The requisite precautions were taken for the night, with Ayrton, Mulrady, Wilson, and John Mangles keeping watch in turns, until sunrise.



They camped at the foot of some eucalyptus

The endless forest multiplied its long symmetrical avenues throughout the day of January 3rd. It seemed as if it was never going to end. But the ranks of trees began to thin toward evening, and a few miles away, in a small plain, a group of regular houses appeared.

"Seymour!" said Paganel. "This is the last town we come to in the province of Victoria."

"Is it important?" asked Lady Helena.

"Madame, it is a simple parish," said Paganel. "It is on its way to becoming a

municipality.”

“Will we find a suitable hotel?” asked Glenarvan.

“I hope so,” said Paganel.

“Well, let’s go into town, for our valiant ladies will not be sorry, I fancy, to have a good night’s rest.”

“My dear Edward, Mary and I agree, but only on the condition that it will not cause any inconvenience or delay.”

“Not at all,” replied Lord Glenarvan. “Our oxen are tired. Besides, we will start tomorrow at daybreak.”

It was nine o’clock; the moon was setting, and its oblique rays were drowned in the mist. It was gradually growing dark when the whole troop entered the wide streets of Seymour under the guidance of Paganel, who always seemed to know what he had never seen. But his instinct guided him well, and he walked straight to *Campbell’s North British Hotel*.

Horses and oxen were taken to the stable, the wagon parked, and the passengers conducted to comfortable rooms. At ten o’clock the guests were seated at a table, on which Olbinett threw the glance of a master. Paganel came in from rambling about the town with Robert, and recounted his nocturnal impression in a very laconic manner. He had not seen anything.

And yet a less distracted man would have noticed a strange stir in the streets of Seymour. Groups were forming here and there, which constantly grew larger. People were standing about the doors of their houses talking something over with grave, anxious faces. Newspapers were being read aloud, commented upon, and discussed. These symptoms could not have escaped the least attentive observer; but Paganel noticed nothing.

The Major, without going so far as even leaving the hotel, was soon aware of the fears which preoccupied the little town. Ten minutes of conversation with Dickson, the loquacious landlord, made him completely acquainted with the actual state of affairs.

But he did not say a word. Only when supper was over, and Lady Glenarvan, Mary, and Robert Grant had retired to their rooms, did the Major detain his companions a little, and said “The perpetrators of the crime on the Sandhurst Railway are known.”

“And are they arrested?” asked Ayrton quickly.

“No,” replied MacNabbs, without apparently noticing the eagerness of the quartermaster — a very justified eagerness, under the circumstances.

“Too bad,” said Ayrton.

“Well,” said Glenarvan. “Who are the authors of the crime?”

“Read.” The Major offered Glenarvan a copy of the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette*, “And you will see that the police inspector was not mistaken.”

Glenarvan read aloud the following passage:

Sydney, January 2, 1866.

It will be remembered that, on the night of the 29th of last December, there was an accident at Camden Bridge, five miles beyond the station at Castlemaine, on the railway from Melbourne to Sandhurst. The 11:45 night express, running along at full speed, was precipitated into the Loddon River.

Camden Bridge had been left open.

The numerous robberies committed after the accident, and the corpse of the guard found half a mile from Camden Bridge, proved that this catastrophe was the result of a crime.

The conclusion of the coroner’s inquest is that this crime must be attributed to the band of convicts which escaped six months ago from the Penitentiary at Perth, Western Australia, just as they were about to be transferred to Norfolk Island. [fn2](#)

These convicts number twenty-nine; they are commanded by a certain Ben Joyce, a criminal of the most dangerous class, who has been in Australia for a few months, we do not know by what ship, and who has hitherto succeeded in evading the hands of justice.

The inhabitants of towns, colonists, and squatters at stations, are hereby cautioned to be on their guard, and to communicate to the Surveyor General any information that may aid his search.

J. P. Mitchell, S.G.

When Glenarvan had finished reading this article, MacNabbs turned to the geographer, and said “You see, Paganel, there may be convicts in Australia.”

“Escapees, that is evident,” said Paganel. “But not regularly transported criminals. These people do not have the right to be here.”

“Well, they are here, at any rate,” said Glenarvan. “But I do not suppose that their presence can change our plans and stop our journey. What do you think, John?”

John Mangles did not reply immediately; he hesitated between the pain it would cause the two children to abandon the search, and the fear of compromising the expedition.

"If Lady Glenarvan and Miss Grant were not with us," he said, "I would care very little about these wretches."

Glenarvan understood this, and added "It goes without saying that it is not a question of giving up our task; but perhaps it would be prudent, for the sake of our companions, to rejoin the *Duncan* at Melbourne, and proceed with our search for traces of Harry Grant on the eastern coast. What do you think, MacNabbs?"

"Before giving my opinion," said the Major, "I should like to know Ayrton's."

At this direct appeal, the quartermaster turned to Glenarvan. "I think we are a hundred miles^{fn3} from Melbourne, and that the danger, if it exists, is as great on the southern road as on the eastern road. Both are little frequented, whichever one we take. Besides, I do not think that thirty criminals can frighten eight well-armed, and resolute men. So barring better advice, I would go forward."

"Well spoken, Ayrton," said Paganel. "By continuing we may also come across the traces of Captain Grant. In turning south, we turn our backs to them. So I think as you do, and these escapees from Perth are of no account to men of good heart!"

With this, the proposal to change nothing in the program of the trip was put to the vote and passed unanimously.

"Just one thing, my Lord," said Ayrton, when they were about to separate.

"Yes, Ayrton."

"Wouldn't it be advisable to send orders to the *Duncan* to meet us at the coast?"

"What's the point?" said John Mangles. "There will be time enough to send for her when we reach Twofold Bay. If any unexpected event should oblige us to go to Melbourne, we might be sorry not to find the *Duncan* there. Besides, she cannot be repaired yet. Therefore, I think it would be better to wait."

"All right," said Ayrton, and didn't press the issue.

Next day the little troop, armed and ready for whatever might happen, left Seymour. Half an hour later, they returned to the eucalyptus forest which reappeared to the east. Glenarvan would have preferred travelling in open country. A plain is less conducive for ambushes and snares than a thick wood. But they had no choice, and the wagon wended its way through the big monotonous trees all day long. In the evening, after having crossed the northern frontier of Anglesey County, they crossed the 146th meridian, and camped on the borders of

the Murray district.

[fn1.](#) The eucalyptus' Greek name describes its operculum, or cap, that covers its flowers, not the shade of its leaves. — DAS

[fn2.](#) Norfolk Island is an island east of Australia, where the government holds recidivist and incorrigible convicts. They are subject to special supervision.

Norfolk Island ceased being used as a penal colony in 1856, 10 years before the events of this story. — DAS

[fn3.](#) Verne has Ayrton say that they are two hundred miles from Melbourne. The actual straight line distance is about sixty miles. Even taking a very round about route, such as backtracking to Castlemaine, and then taking the railway to Melbourne, wouldn't add up to much more than one hundred miles, and most of that could be done sitting on a train. — DAS

Chapter XVI

Where the Major Says That They Are Monkeys

Translator's Note:

This chapter started out pretty well, describing the genocide of the Australian Aborigines (and other indigenous peoples in other parts of the British Empire) in pretty stark language.

And then we meet some actual Aborigines, and things go rapidly down hill. I am sorely tempted to give this chapter a major rewrite, but for now, this is what it is.

I am going to be heavily annotating this chapter, and most of my annotations are not going to be relegated to the footnotes.

— DAS

THE NEXT DAY, JANUARY 5TH, THE TRAVELLERS SET FOOT IN THE VAST TERRITORY OF THE Murray. This vague, uninhabited district extends as far as the lofty barriers of the Australian Alps. Civilization has not yet cut it into separate counties. It is a little known and little frequented portion of the province. Its forests will one day fall under the bushman's axe; its prairies will be given over to the squatter's sheep; but thus far it is virgin soil, deserted as it was the day it rose from the Indian Ocean.

These lands bear a significant name on the English maps, "Reserve for the blacks." It is here that the natives have been brutally driven by the colonists. In the inaccessible bush of these distant plains there are marked out fixed places where the aboriginal race will gradually be extinguished. Any white man — colonist, immigrant, squatter, or bushman — may cross the limits of these reserves with impunity. The unescorted black man must never leave them.

Paganel descanted on the grave concerns of indigenous races, as he rode along. There was only one opinion in this respect, namely, that the British system led to the annihilation of conquered peoples, and their erasure from the regions in which their ancestors had lived. This fatal tendency is manifest everywhere, and in Australia more strikingly than elsewhere.

In the early days of the colony the deportees and the settlers considered the blacks to be wild animals. They hunted and shot them with rifles; they massacred them, and sought legal opinion to prove that the Australian black was outside of

natural law: that the murder of these wretches was not a crime. The Sydney newspapers even proposed an expeditious way of getting rid of the Hunter Lake tribes: poison them *en masse*.

The English, at the beginning of their conquest, employed murder as an aid to colonization. Their cruel atrocities were numerous. They behaved in Australia as they had in India, where five million Indians have disappeared, and as they did in the Cape, where a population of one million Hottentots fell to a hundred thousand. The aboriginal population, decimated by mistreatment and drunkenness, is gradually disappearing from the continent before a homicidal civilization. Some governors, it is true, have issued decrees against the bloodthirsty bushmen. A few white men who cut off a black man's nose and ears, or his little finger "to make a pipe cleaner," were punished with a few lashes. This was a vain threat. Murder was organized on a vast scale, and whole tribes disappeared. In Tasmania alone, which had fifteen thousand^{fn1} natives at the beginning of the century, the native population was reduced to seven by 1863; and recently the *Mercury* announced the arrival of the last of the Tasmanians at Hobart.

Neither Glenarvan, the Major, nor John Mangles contradicted Paganel. Even if they had been English, they would not have defended their compatriots. The facts were self evident and indisputable.

"Fifty years ago," said Paganel, "we would have already met many tribes of natives on our road, and up till now not a single native has come in sight. In a century this continent will be entirely depopulated of its black race."

In fact, the reserve appeared absolutely deserted — not a trace of camps or huts. Plains and woods succeeded one another, and gradually the country became wilder. It really seemed as if not a living thing, man or beast, frequented these distant regions, when Robert stopped suddenly before a clump of eucalyptus trees.

"*A monkey! There's a monkey!*" He pointed to a big black body slipping from branch to branch with surprising agility, and passing from one tree to another as if some wings supported it in the air. In this strange country did monkeys fly like the foxes to which nature has given bats' wings?

The wagon had stopped, and everybody's gaze was fixed on this animal, which was gradually lost in the foliage at the top of the eucalyptus trees. Soon they saw him come down again with the rapidity of lightning, run along the ground with a thousand contortions and leaps, and then catch hold of the smooth trunk of an enormous gum tree with his long arms. They could not understand how he could get up the upright, smooth tree, when there was nothing to catch hold of; but the

monkey, striking the trunk alternately with a sort of hatchet, made little notches, and by these supports at regular intervals reached the fork of the gum tree. In a few seconds he disappeared in the thick foliage.

“Well, I never!” cried the Major. “Whatever sort of monkey is that?”

“That monkey,” said Paganel, “is an Australian purebred.”

The geographer’s companions had not yet had time to shrug their shoulders, when peculiar cries were heard at a little distance, something like “Coo-eeh! Coo-eeh!” Ayrton goaded his oxen on, and about a hundred paces further along the travellers came suddenly on a camp of natives.

What a sad spectacle! About ten tents were pitched on the bare ground. These “gunyos,” made with strips of bark staggered like tiles, only protect their wretched occupants on one side. These poor creatures were so degraded by misery as to be repulsive. There were about thirty men, women, and children dressed in kangaroo skins, shredded like rags. Their first impulse at the approach of the wagon was to flee, but a few words spoken in an unintelligible patois by Ayrton, appeared to reassure them. They came back with a mixture of confidence and fearfulness, like animals attracted by some tempting bait.



They were about thirty in number

These natives were from five feet four to five feet seven in height, with dusky skins, not black, but the colour of old soot; woolly hair, long arms, distended abdomen, and hairy bodies, seamed by tattoo scars or incisions made in funeral ceremonies. Nothing was more horrible than their hideous faces, with enormous mouths, broad noses quite flat against the cheeks and projecting lower jaw, armed with white teeth. Never did human beings so closely approach the animal type.

“Robert was not mistaken,” said the Major, “they are monkeys; purebreds, if you like, but still monkeys.”

[Only in the sense that all men are apes, and all apes are monkeys. — DAS]

“MacNabbs,” said Lady Helena, gently, “would you side with those people, then, who hunt them down like wild beasts? The poor beings are men.”

“Men!” exclaimed MacNabbs. “At best they are but intermediate beings between man and the orangutan. If I were to measure their facial angle, I should find it exactly like a monkey’s.”

In this particular MacNabbs was right. The facial angle of an Australian Aborigine is very sharp, about sixty or sixty-two degrees, equal to that of an orangutan. It was not without reason that M. de Rienzi’s proposed to class these poor wretches as a race apart, and to call them “pithecomorphs,” that is, men in the form of monkeys.

[Nineteenth century ideas about what the shape of a person’s head said about that person were complete nonsense.

[I’d like to see what MacNabbs would look like, after living in the Australian Outback for year or two. It only took a few months to kill Burke, travelling through areas which supported many bands of Aborigines. If he’d accepted the help the various bands of Aborigines he encountered offered him, he likely would have survived. — DAS]

But Lady Helena was even more right than MacNabbs, in affirming that these soul-endowed beings were human, even if of the lowest sort. Between the brute and the Australian there is an impassable chasm which separates genera. Pascal has justly said that man is not a beast. It is also true that he adds, with not less wisdom, “neither is he an angel.”

[The whole idea of “higher” and “lower” evolutionary forms is nonsense, and the Australians are just as closely related to the other great apes as all other humans. — DAS]

This latter clause of the great thinker’s proposition was certainly not true in the case of Lady Helena and Mary Grant. These two charitable women got out of the wagon, and held out their hands kindly to the poor creatures, offering them food, which the savages devoured with the most disgusting gluttony. They might very naturally have taken Lady Helena for a deity, as according to their belief, the white people were formerly black, and became white after death.

But it was the women especially who excited the pity of the fair travellers. Nothing is comparable to their condition in Australia. Nature has been a cruel stepmother to them, refusing them the slightest charm. An Australian woman is a

slave, carried off by brutal violence, her only nuptial present being blows of the “waddie,” a sort of club which is never out of her master’s hand. From that moment she is struck with premature and sudden old age, she and her children are burdened with heavy labour incidental to a wandering life, carrying fishing and hunting gear, and a supply of *phormium tenax* from which she makes nets, wrapped in a bundle of reeds. She must find the food for her family; she hunts lizards, opossums, and snakes from the tops of the trees. She cuts the wood for the hearth, and strips off bark for the tent; a poor beast of burden, never knowing any rest, and only feeding on such revolting scraps as her master could not eat.

[My research into traditional Aboriginal life gives no indication that women were particularly poorly treated, when compared with women of Paris or London of the time, for example. The patriarchal European influence actually diminished the traditional prominence of women in Aboriginal society.]

[“Waddies” are a multi-purpose tool: a hunting and war club, pestles for grinding food, for making fires, etc. They are made, and carried, by both men and women. — DAS]

Some of these unfortunate women — almost starving for food, perhaps — were trying to entice the birds with seeds.

They were seen lying on the scorching ground, motionless as if dead, waiting long hours for some unsuspecting bird to come within their reach. Their trapping technique was no more than this, and certainly only Australian birds would allow themselves to be caught in such a manner.

[Aboriginal culture had divisions of labour, with the men responsible for hunting larger game, while the women forage for small game, and vegetables. The women’s hunting efforts generally have a higher success rate than the men’s, and they supply most of the band’s food. Food preparation is not an exclusively female, or male reserve, though the preparation of certain types of foods is divided between the men and women. — DAS]

The friendly advances of the travellers had tamed these savages so much that they all came around the wagon, and it had to be guarded against the native’s marauding instincts. They spoke in a whistling language, made of rhythmic beats, and made sounds resembling the cries of animals; yet their voices sometimes also had soft inflections. One word, “noki, noki,” was repeated constantly, and the gestures which accompanied it made it intelligible enough. It was, “Give me! Give

me!" and referred to the most trivial articles belonging to the travellers. Mr. Olbinett had great trouble in defending his own compartment, and especially his stores of provisions. The poor famished wretches looked threateningly at the wagon, and showed their sharp teeth, which might have been exercised on human flesh. Most of the Australian tribes are not cannibals, in peacetime, but there are few savages who would hesitate to devour the flesh of a vanquished enemy.

At Lady Helena's request, Glenarvan gave orders that some food should be distributed among them. They understood his intention quickly, and gave way to such demonstrations as would have moved the most unsympathizing heart. They roared like wild beasts, when their keeper brings their daily meal. Without conceding that the Major was right, it is impossible to deny that these Aborigines border closely on animals.

Mr. Olbinett, like a gallant man, thought it only proper to serve the women first; but these poor creatures did not dare to eat before their formidable masters, who threw themselves on the biscuits and dried meat as on prey.

Mary Grant's eyes filled with tears at the idea of her father being in the hands of such coarse wretches as these. She imagined what his sufferings must be as a slave to these wandering tribes, prey to misery, hunger, and cruel treatment. John Mangles, who was watching her with great uneasiness, divined the thoughts which filled her heart, and interpreting her wishes, questioned the quartermaster of the *Britannia*.

"Ayrton, was it from savages like these that you made your escape?"

"Yes, Captain," said Ayrton. "All the tribes of the interior resemble each other. But what you see here is a mere handful of the poor devils. They are more numerous on the Darling River, and commanded by chiefs with formidable authority."

"But what can a European do among them?" asked John Mangles.

"What I did myself," replied Ayrton. "He goes hunting and fishing with them; he takes part in their combats. As I have told you already, he is treated according to the service he can render; and if he is at all a brave, intelligent man, he takes a position of considerable importance in the tribe."

"But he is a prisoner," said Mary Grant.

"And watched," said Ayrton. "He cannot take an unobserved step, day or night."

"Yet you managed to escape, Ayrton," said the Major, joining in the conversation.

“Yes, Mr. MacNabbs, because of a fight between my tribe and a neighbouring people. I escaped, and I don’t regret it. But if I had to do it over again, I think I should prefer an eternal slavery to the tortures I experienced in crossing the wilderness of the interior. God keep Captain Grant from attempting such a chance of salvation!”

“Yes, certainly,” said John Mangles. “We must desire, Miss Mary, that your father is still detained by an indigenous tribe. It will be easier for us to trace him than if he were wandering over the forests of the continent.”

“You still hope, then,” said the young girl.

“I always hope, Miss Mary, to see you happy one day, with God’s help.”

Mary could only thank the young Captain with her tearful eyes.

While this conversation was going on, a sudden commotion began among the savages. They uttered resounding cries; they ran about in different directions; they seized their weapons and seemed to be seized with a ferocious anger.

Glenarvan was wondering what it could all mean, when the Major asked Ayrton “You lived for a long time among the Australians. Do you understand what these fellows are saying?”

“Not quite,” said the quartermaster. “Each tribe has its own dialect. However, it seems to me that, by way of gratitude, the savages are going to show your Lordship a mock battle.”

He was correct. Without any further preamble, the savages began attacking each other with a perfectly simulated fury, so perfect, in fact, that had they not been warned, the audience would have taken this little war seriously. But explorers tell us that the Australians are excellent mimics, and on this occasion they displayed remarkable talent.

Their weapons of attack and defence consisted of a skull-cracker, a sort of wooden club, that could smash the thickest heads; and a type of tomahawk with a sharpened stone axe head fixed between two sticks by an adhesive gum, with a ten foot handle. It is a formidable instrument in war and a useful one in peace; equally serviceable in cleaving branches and heads, in cutting bodies or trees, as the case may be.

All these weapons were wielded by frenzied hands, amidst vehement shouting. The combatants threw themselves on each other. Some would fall to the ground as if dead, and his opponent would give a yell of triumph over the conquered foe. The women, the old ones principally, possessed by the demon of war, inspired by the battle, flung themselves on the apparent corpses, and seemingly mutilated

them with a ferocity which wouldn't have been more horrible, if it been real. Lady Helena feared that the game would degenerate into a real battle. The children, too, participated with enthusiasm. Little boys, and girls especially, administered superb blows with ferocious delight.

This mock fight went on for ten minutes, when suddenly the combatants stopped. Their weapons dropped from their hands. A profound silence succeeded the noisy tumult. The natives remained fixed in their last positions, like actors in *tableaux vivants*. They looked petrified.

What had caused this change, and what was the secret of this sudden marble-like immobility? It was soon apparent.

A flock of cockatoos was flying over the tops of the gum trees. They filled the air with their chatter, and resembled, with the brilliant tints of their plumage, a flying rainbow. It was the appearance of this dazzling flock of birds which had interrupted the combat. The mock battle had stopped to allow for a more useful hunt.

One of the savages seized a peculiar, red painted instrument, left his still motionless companions, and went between the trees and bushes toward the flock of cockatoos. He crept along noiselessly, without even rustling a leaf or displacing a pebble; he seemed like a gliding shadow.

When he got within range, he threw his weapon horizontally, about two feet above the ground. It flew in a straight line for about forty feet, and then suddenly, without touching the ground, rose upward at a right angle to the height of a hundred feet, mortally wounding a dozen birds in its flight, and, after describing a parabola, fell again at the hunter's feet. Glenarvan and his companions were stupefied; they could not believe their eyes.

"It's a boomerang," said Ayrton.

"A boomerang!" cried Paganel. "An Australian boomerang!" [fn2](#)

And he was off like a child to pick up the wonderful instrument, and see what



All these weapons were wielded by frenzied hands

was inside.

Certainly anyone would have thought that some interior mechanism, a spring suddenly released, had altered its course; but there was nothing of the kind.

The boomerang was simply a piece of smooth, hard, curved wood, thirty or forty inches long. Its breadth in the middle was about three inches, and the two ends were sharply pointed. Its concave side bent back about sixty degrees, and its convex side had the edges finely bevelled. It was as simple as it was incomprehensible.

“So this is the famous boomerang!” said Paganel, after a careful examination of the strange instrument. “A piece of wood, and nothing more. Why is it, that at a certain moment in its horizontal flight, it suddenly rises in the air, and returns to the hand that threw it? Scholars and explorers have never been able to explain this phenomenon.”

“Is it not from the same cause that makes a hoop thrown in a certain fashion come back to the point of departure?” asked John Mangles.

“Or is it a backspin effect,” asked Glenarvan, “like that of a billiard-ball struck at a certain point?”

“Not at all,” said Paganel. “In both those cases there is a point of support which determines the reaction. There is the ground for the hoop, and the baize for the billiard-ball; but here the fulcrum is missing, the instrument does not touch the ground, and yet it rises to a considerable height.”

“Then how do you explain it, Monsieur Paganel?” asked Lady Helena.

“I have no explanation, Madame, as I have already said. The effect is evidently owing to the method in which the boomerang is thrown, and its peculiar shape, but how to throw it is still a secret known only to the natives of Australia.”

“In any case, it is very ingenious ... for monkeys,” added Lady Helena, looking at the Major, who shook his head with the air of a man still unconvinced.

Time was passing on, and Glenarvan felt that they ought not delay any longer. He was about to ask the ladies to resume their places in the wagon when one of the natives came running, and pronounced some words with great excitement.

“Ah,” said Ayrton, “they have caught sight of cassowaries.”

“They’re going to have a hunt?” asked Glenarvan.

“We must see that,” said Paganel. “It will be interesting. Perhaps the boomerang will be used again.”

“What do you say, Ayrton?”

“It won’t take long, my Lord,” said the quartermaster.

The natives hadn't lost a moment. It is a stroke of good fortune for them to kill a cassowary. It secures food for the tribe for several days, so the hunters employ all their skill in trying to seize such a prize. But how, without guns, do they manage to kill, and without dogs, do they catch such an agile animal? No wonder Paganel wished to see such a novel hunt.

The emu, or uncrested-cassowary, is called *mourenk* by the Aborigines, and is becoming rare on the Australian plains. This large bird, two and a half feet tall, has white flesh, very much like the turkey. Its eyes are light brown, and it has a downward curving black beak; the feet have three toes, armed with powerful claws; the wings, only stumps, are of no use for flight. Its plumage, resembling fur, is darker on the neck and chest. But though it cannot fly, it can run faster than the swiftest horse. They can only be caught by trickery, and and the most singular cunning.

This was why, at the call of the native, about a dozen Australians deployed like a line of skirmishers across a magnificent plain, where indigo grew naturally, and blued the ground with its flowers. The travellers stopped on the edge of a mimosa wood.

At the approach of the natives, half-a-dozen emus rose up and fled, stopping about a mile off. After observing their position, the hunter made a sign to the others to stop. They stretched themselves flat on the ground, while he drew two emus' skins, very skilfully sewn together, out of his net and put them on. He held his right arm over his head, and his movements were an exact imitation of an emu looking for food.

He made his way gradually toward the birds, occasionally stopping, and pretending to pick up a few seeds, and sometimes kicking up a cloud of dust around him. All his manoeuvres were perfectly executed. Nothing could be a more faithful reproduction of the motions of the emu. Every now and then he gave a deep croak, which deceived the birds themselves. The savage was soon in the midst of his unsuspecting prey. Suddenly he lifted his club, and killed five or six of the emus on the spot.

The hunter had succeeded, and the stalk was over.

Glenarvan and his party took leave of the natives at once, and started onward. The savages displayed no regret at parting. Perhaps the result of the cassowary hunt had made them forget their satisfied hunger. They did not even show the gratitude of the stomach, more lasting than that of the heart, in the uncultivated natures of savages.

Be that as it may, one could not but admire their intelligence and their skill.

“Now, my dear MacNabbs,” said Lady Helena, “you are surely willing to admit that the Australians are not monkeys.”

“Because they faithfully imitate the behaviour of an animal?” said the Major. “On the contrary, that would justify my doctrine!”

“Jesting is no answer,” returned Lady Helena. “I mean to make you give up your opinion, Major.”

“All right. Well, yes, my cousin, or rather, no. The Australians are not monkeys; it is the monkeys that are Australians.”

“What do you mean?”

“Do you know what the negroes say about that interesting race, the orangutans?”

“What do they claim?”

“They declare,” replied the Major, “that the monkeys are blacks like themselves, but more clever. ‘He no speak because he no want to work,’ said a negro of a tame orangutan that his master kept as a pet.” [fn3](#)

[fn1.](#) Verne puts the pre-European indigenous population of Tasmania at 500,000, which is about two orders of magnitude too high. The entire pre-European indigenous population of Australia is estimated to be between 315,000 and 750,000 people. Tasmania’s population is estimated to have been between 2,000 and 15,000. They were pretty much extinct by 1866. — DAS

[fn2.](#) Boomerangs used for hunting are made to fly straight. Boomerangs that curve in flight are made as toys for recreation. (And now, to sell to tourists.) The sort of trajectory described here is not really possible with any sort of boomerang. — DAS

[fn3.](#) Verne liked this joke so much he used it again in *The Mysterious Island*. — DAS

Chapter XVII

Millionaire Breeders

ON JANUARY 6TH, AT SEVEN O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING, AFTER A TRANQUIL NIGHT PASSED at longitude 146° 15', the searchers continued their journey across the vast district. They walked steadily toward the rising sun, and their tracks marked a straight path across the plain. Twice they came upon the traces of squatters going north, and their different footprints would have become confused if not for the double clover Black Point mark Glenarvan's horse left in the dust.

The plain was sometimes crisscrossed by capricious creeks, surrounded by boxwood, and whose waters only flowed intermittently. They originated on the slopes of the Buffalo Ranges, a chain of mountains of moderate height whose picturesque line undulated on the horizon.

It was decided to press on to the mountains before camping that evening. Ayrton goaded on his team, and after a journey of thirty-five miles the somewhat fatigued oxen arrived at the foothills. The tent was pitched beneath tall trees, and supper quickly served as night closed in. There was less thought of eating than of sleeping after such a march.

Paganel, who had the first watch, did not lie down, but shouldered his rifle and walked up and down before the camp to keep himself from going to sleep.

In spite of the absence of the moon, the night was almost luminous under the glare of the southern constellations. The scholar amused himself by reading the great book of the firmament, a book which is always open and full of interest to those who can understand it. The profound silence of sleeping nature was only interrupted by the clanking of the fetters on the horses' feet.

Paganel allowed himself to be drawn into his astronomical meditations, and was more occupied with the things of Heaven than with things of the Earth, when a distant sound drew him from his reverie.

He listened attentively, and to his great astonishment he thought he heard the sounds of a piano. A few chords in arpeggiated movements came to his ears. He could not be wrong.

"A piano in the wilderness!" thought Paganel. "I don't believe it!"

It was very surprising, indeed, and Paganel preferred to believe that some strange Australian bird was imitating the sounds of a Pleyel or Erard, as others imitate the sounds of a clock or mill.

But at this moment, a pure, ringing voice rose on the air. The pianist was

accompanied by a singer. Still Paganel was unwilling to be convinced. But after a few moments he was forced to concede that he was listening to the sublime strains of Mozart's "*Il mio tesoro tanto*" from *Don Juan*.

"*Parbleu!*" thought the geographer. "As strange as the Australian birds are, and even granting that parrots are the most musical birds in the world, they can't sing Mozart!"

He listened to the end of this sublime inspiration of the master. The effect of this sweet melody on the still clear night was indescribable. Paganel remained spell-bound for a time; then the voice went quiet, and everything returned to silence.

When Wilson came to relieve Paganel on watch, he found the geographer plunged into a deep reverie. Paganel said nothing to the sailor, but reserved his information for Glenarvan in the morning, and went to snuggle into his bed in the tent.



Paganel had the first watch

Next day, the whole troop was awakened by unexpected barking. Glenarvan got up immediately. Two magnificent pointers, standing tall, admirable specimens of the English breed, were frolicking on the edge of a little wood. At the approach of the travellers, they retreated into the trees, redoubling their clamour.

"There is a station in this wilderness," said Glenarvan, "and hunters, since these are hunting dogs."

Paganel was already opening his mouth to recount his nocturnal experience when two young men appeared, mounted on two beautiful purebred horses: true "hunters."

The two gentlemen, dressed in elegant hunting costume, stopped at the sight of the little troop camped in such bohemian manner. They seemed to be wondering what the presence of armed men in this place meant when they saw the ladies get out of the wagon. They dismounted instantly, and went toward them, hat in hand.

Lord Glenarvan came to meet them, and as a stranger, announced his name

and rank. The gentlemen bowed.

“My Lord,” said the elder, “will not these ladies, your companions, and yourself, honour us by resting a little beneath our roof?”

“Gentlemen...?” said Glenarvan.

“Michael and Sandy Patterson, proprietors of **Hotham** Station^{fn1}. You are already on our land, and our house is scarcely a quarter of a mile distant.”

“Gentlemen,” said Glenarvan, “I should not like to abuse such graciously offered hospitality.”

“My Lord,” said Michael Patterson, “by accepting it, you will confer a favour on poor exiles, who will be only too happy to do the honours of the station.”

Glenarvan bowed in token of acquiescence.

“Sir,” said Paganel, addressing Michael Patterson, “would I be indiscreet in asking if it was you who sang an air from the divine Mozart last night?”

“It was, sir,” replied the stranger, “and my cousin Sandy accompanied me.”

“Well, sir.” Paganel held out his hand to the young man. “Receive the sincere compliments of a Frenchman, who is a passionate admirer of this music.”

Michael grasped his hand cordially, and then indicated the road to follow. The horses were left in the care of Ayrton and the sailors. The two young men guided the party on foot, chatting and admiring, to Hotham Station.

It was truly a magnificent establishment, kept as scrupulously in order as an English park. Immense meadows, enclosed in grey fences, stretched away out of sight. Thousands of oxen and millions of sheep grazed there, tended by numerous shepherds, and still more numerous dogs. The crack of the stockwhip mingled continually with the barking of the dogs and the bellowing and bleating of the cattle and sheep.

Toward the east there was a boundary of myalls and gum trees, behind which rose the majestic peak Mount Hotham, **6,100** feet high.^{fn2} Long avenues of evergreen trees radiated in all directions. Here and there massed thickets of “grass trees,” ten foot tall shrubs, similar to the dwarf palm, crowned with tufts of long narrow leaves. The air was perfumed with the scent of laurel-mints, whose white blossoms, now in full bloom, gave off the finest aromatic scents.

To these charming groups of native trees were added transplants from European climates. There were peach, pear, and apple trees. The travellers were delighted by figs, oranges, and even oaks, and greeted them with loud “hurrahs!” But astonished as the travellers were to find themselves walking beneath the shadow of the trees of their own country, they were still more so at the sight of the

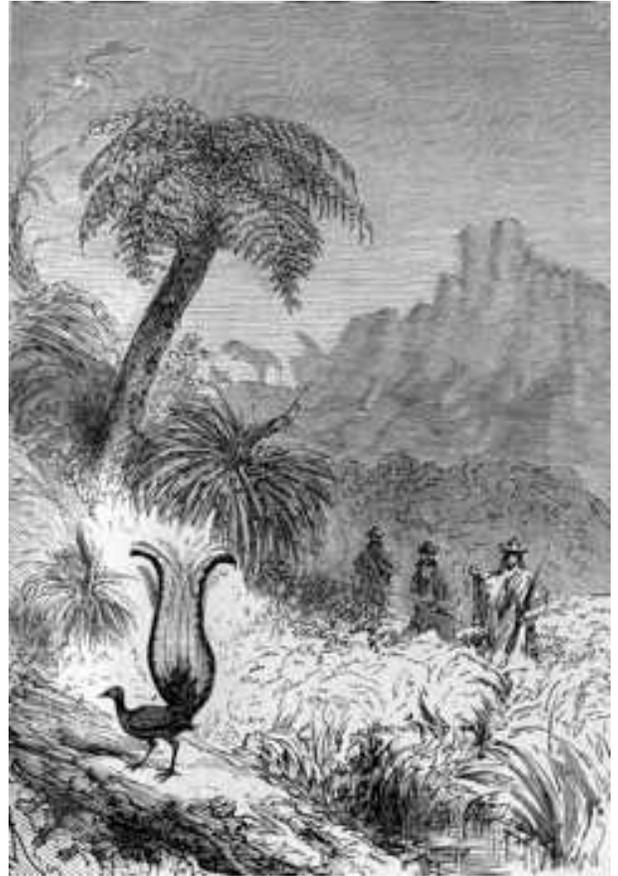
birds that flew about in the branches. The satin bird, with its silky plumage, and the *sericulus* with their gold and black velvet plumage.

For the first time, too, they saw here the “menure,” or lyre bird, the tail of which resembles in form the graceful instrument of Orpheus. It flew about among the tree ferns, and when its tail struck the branches they were almost surprised not to hear the harmonious strains that inspired Amphion to rebuild the walls of Thebes. Paganel had a great desire to play on it.

Lord Glenarvan was not satisfied with admiring the fairy-like wonders of this oasis improvised in the Australian wilderness. He was listening to the history of the young gentlemen. In England, in the midst of civilized campaigns, the newcomer acquaints his host whence he comes and whither he is going; but here, by a nuance of delicacy, Michael and Sandy Patterson thought it best to make themselves known to the travellers to whom they had offered hospitality. They told their story.

It was that of two young Englishmen, intelligent and industrious, who did not believe that being born wealthy dispensed with the need to work. Michael and Sandy Patterson were the sons of London bankers. At twenty, the head of their family said “Here are some millions, young men. Go to a distant colony, and start some useful settlement there. Learn to know life by labour. If you succeed, so much the better. If you fail, it won’t matter much. We shall not regret the millions that have served to make you men.” The two young men obeyed. They chose the colony of Victoria in Australia as the field for sowing the paternal bank-notes, and had no reason to repent the selection. At the end of three years the station was flourishing.

There are more than three thousand stations in Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia. Some run by squatters who rear cattle, and others by settlers who cultivate the soil. Until the arrival of the two Pattersons, the largest station of this sort was that of Mr. Jamieson, which covered a hundred square kilometres, and



The “menure,” or lyre bird

ran for twenty-five kilometres^{fn3} along the Peroo River, one of the tributaries of the Darling.

Hotham Station was now larger, and more prosperous. The young men were both squatters and settlers. They managed their immense property with rare ability and uncommon energy.

The station was far from the principal towns in the midst of the uncrowded wilds of the Murray. It occupied the area between 146° 48' and 147°, a long wide space five leagues in extent, lying between the Buffalo Ranges and Mount Hotham. At the two northern angles of this vast quadrilateral stood Mount Aberdeen^{fn4} on the left, and the peaks of High Barven on the right. It was well watered by beautiful winding streams, thanks to the creeks and tributaries of the Owen's River which flows north into the Murray. They were equally successful in the breeding of cattle, and the cultivation of the land. Ten thousand acres of ground, excellently tilled and planted, mingled native crops with exotic produce while millions of animals fattened in the fertile pastures. The products of Hotham Station fetched a high price in the markets of Castlemaine and Melbourne.

Michael and Sandy Patterson had just concluded these details of their busy life, when their home came in sight at the end of an avenue of casuarinas.

It was a charming house, built of wood and brick, hidden in a eucalyptus grove. It was in the elegant form of a chalet, surrounded by a verandah, with Chinese lamps hanging around the walls. Multi-coloured awnings unfolded over the windows like flowers in bloom. Nothing could be more charming or exquisite, and at the same time nothing more comfortable. On the lawns, and in the clumps of trees round about, were bronze candelabras which supported elegant lanterns. At nightfall the whole of the park was lighted with white gas lights, supplied from a small gasometer hidden under the cradles of myalls and tree-ferns.

There was nothing that indicated a working station. No sheds, stables, or bunkhouses. All these out-buildings — a veritable village of more than twenty huts and houses — were about a quarter of a mile off at the bottom of a small valley. Electric telegraph wires connected the village and the masters' house, which, far removed from all noise, seemed lost in a forest of exotic trees.

They passed along the casuarinas avenue. A small, extremely elegant, iron bridge across a murmuring creek formed the entrance to the private grounds. This was quickly crossed. A steward of high mien came out to meet the travellers; the doors of the house opened, and the hosts of Hotham Station conducted their guests into the sumptuous apartments contained within this envelope of brick and

flowers.

All the luxury of artistic and fashionable life was offered to them. The antechamber, decorated with trophies of the turf and the hunt, opened into a large salon with five windows. There was a piano covered with classical and modern music, easels carrying rough canvases, pedestals adorned with marble statues, pictures by Flemish masters on the walls, rich carpets as soft on the feet as thick grass, tapestries brightened with graceful mythological scenes, an antique chandelier suspended from the ceiling, precious porcelain, and priceless knick-knacks of perfect taste; a thousand dear and delicate things which were astonishing to see in an Australian house made a perfect picture of artistic comfort. Everything that could charm the troubles of a voluntary exile, all that could bring back the remembrance of European habits, furnished this fairy salon. One might have thought himself in some castle in France or England.

The five windows let in daylight, softened by the shade of the veranda, and the thin fabric of the awnings. Lady Helena was quite amazed as she went toward them. The view from this side of the house extended over a wide valley to the feet of the eastern mountains. The succession of meadows and woods, vast clearings, and the graceful outlines of the hills made a spectacle beyond all description. No other country in the world could compare with it, not even the famous Paradise Valley, in Norway's Telemark. This vast panorama, with its great patches of light and shade, changed every hour with the caprices of the sun. Imagination could dream of nothing finer, and this enchanting view satisfied all the appetites of the eye.

On an order from Sandy Patterson, the butler of the station improvised a lunch. In less than a quarter of an hour the travellers sat at a sumptuously served table. The quality of the food and wine was indisputable, but what pleased the guests most of all amidst these refinements of opulence was the joy of the young



It was a charming house, built of wood and brick

squatters, happy to offer this splendid hospitality under their roof.

It was not long before they were told the history of the expedition, and took a keen interest in Glenarvan's search. They also gave hope to the Captain's children.

"Harry Grant," said Michel, "has obviously fallen into the hands of the natives, since he has not reappeared at any of the settlements on the coast. He knows his position exactly, as the document proves, and the reason he did not reach some English colony is that he must have been taken prisoner by the savages the moment he landed."

"That is precisely what befell his quartermaster, Ayrton," said John Mangles.

"But you, gentlemen," asked Lady Helena, "have you never heard of the *Britannia* disaster?"

"Never, Madame," said Michael.

"And what treatment, in your opinion, has Captain Grant met with among the natives?"

"The Australians are not cruel, Madame," replied the young squatter, "and Miss Grant may be reassured on that score. There are frequent examples of the gentleness of their nature, and some Europeans have lived a long time amongst them without having the least cause to complain of their brutality."

"King, amongst others, the sole survivor of the Burke expedition," said Paganel.

"And not only that brave explorer," said Sandy, "but also an English prisoner named Buckley. He escaped in 1803, on the coast of Port Philip, was collected by the natives, and lived for thirty-three years among them."

"And more recently," added Michael, "one of the latest issues of *Australasian* informs us that a man named Morrill has just been restored to his countrymen after sixteen years of captivity. His story is very similar to the Captain's, for it was at the time of his shipwreck in the *Peruvian*, in 1846, that he was made prisoner by the natives, and dragged away into the interior of the continent. So, I think you have to keep all hope."

The young squatter's words caused great joy to his listeners. They corroborated the opinions already given by Paganel and Ayrton.

The conversation turned to the convicts, after the ladies had left the table. The squatters had heard of the disaster at Camden Bridge, but felt no concern about the escaped gang. The criminals would not dare attack a station of more than a hundred men. Besides, they would never go into the wilderness of the Murray, where they could find no booty, nor near the colonies of New South Wales, where

the roads were too well watched. Ayrton had expressed similar views.

Glenarvan could not refuse the request of his amiable hosts to spend the whole day at Hotham Station. It was twelve hours' delay, but also twelve hours' rest, and both horses and oxen would recuperate well in the comfortable stables they would find there.

This was agreed upon, and the two young men submitted to their guests a programme of the day, which was eagerly adopted.

At noon, seven vigorous hunters were pawing at the gates. An elegant brake was ready for the ladies in which a coachman could exhibit his skill in driving four-in-hand. The riders, preceded by outriders armed with excellent shotguns, were in their saddles, and galloped out the gates followed by a pack of pointers barking joyously as they bounded through the bushes.

For four hours the cavalcade traversed the paths and avenues of the park, which was as large as a small German state. The Reuiss-Schleitz, or Saxe-Coburg Gotha, would have fit inside it comfortably. They met few people, but sheep abounded. As for game, an army of beaters could not have thrown more before the rifles of the hunters. The noisy reports of guns were soon heard on all sides. Young Robert did wonders next to Major MacNabbs. The daring boy, in spite of his sister's injunctions, was always in front, and the first to fire. But John Mangles promised to watch over him, and Mary felt less concerned.

During this hunt they killed certain animals peculiar to the country, which Paganel had previously only known by name: amongst others the "wombat" and the "bandicoot."

The wombat is an herbivorous animal, which burrows in the ground like a badger. It is as large as a sheep, and the flesh is excellent.

The bandicoot is a species of marsupial which could outwit the European fox, and give him lessons in pillaging poultry yards. It was a repulsive looking animal, a foot and a half long, but as Paganel chanced to kill it, of course he thought it charming. "An adorable creature," he called it.

Robert, in addition to game, skilfully killed a *Dasyurus maculatus*, or "tiger quoll," a sort of small fox whose black fur, spotted with white, is as valuable as the marten's; and a couple of opossums, who were hiding among the thick foliage of the large trees.

But the most interesting event of the day by far was the kangaroo hunt. About four o'clock, the dogs roused a band of these curious marsupials. The little ones retreated back into their maternal pouches, and the whole mob escaped in file.

Nothing is more astonishing than the enormous bounds of the kangaroo. The hind legs of the animal are twice as long as the front ones, and unbend like a spring.

At the head of the flying mob was a male five feet high, a magnificent specimen of the *Macropus giganteus*. An "old man," as the bushmen say.

The chase was vigorously pursued for four or five miles. The kangaroos showed no signs of weariness, and the dogs — who had reason enough to fear their strong paws armed with a sharp claw — did not care to approach them. But at last — worn out with the race — the troop stopped, and the "old man" leaned against the trunk of a tree ready to defend himself. One of the pointers, carried away by excitement, went up to him. A moment later the unfortunate

dog leapt into the air, and fell back, disemboweled. The whole pack would not have got the better of these powerful marsupials. They had to finish the fellow with rifle shots. Nothing but bullets could bring down the gigantic animal.

Robert almost fell victim of his own imprudence. To make sure of his aim, he had approached too near the kangaroo, and the animal leaped upon him immediately. Robert fell; a cry was heard. Mary Grant saw it all from the brake, and in an agony of terror, speechless, and almost unable even to see, stretched out her arms toward her little brother. No one dared to fire, for fear of wounding the child.

John Mangles pulled out his hunting knife, and at the risk of being disemboweled, rushed at the animal, and plunged his knife into its heart. The beast dropped, and Robert rose, unhurt. A moment later he was in his sister's arms.

"Thank you, Mr. John! Thank you!" she said, holding out her hand to the young Captain.

"I had pledged myself to his safety," was all John said, taking her trembling fingers in his own.



The dogs roused a band of kangaroos

This incident ended the hunt. The mob of marsupials had disappeared after the death of their leader, whose remains were brought back to the house. It was then six o'clock. A magnificent dinner was waiting for them. Among other dishes, a kangaroo tail soup, prepared in the native fashion, was the great success of the meal.

After the ice cream and sorbets of the dessert, the guests passed into the living room. The evening was devoted to music. Lady Helena, who was a very good pianist, put her talents at the disposal of the squatters. Michael and Sandy Patterson sang with perfect pitch passages borrowed from the latest scores of Gounod, Victor Massé, Félicien David, and even of that misunderstood genius, Richard Wagner.

Tea was served at eleven o'clock. It was made with that English perfection that no other people can match. Paganel, having asked to taste Australian tea, was brought a black, inky liquor: a liter of water in which half a pound of tea had boiled for four hours. Paganel, in spite of his grimaces, declared this drink excellent.

At midnight the guests were conducted to cool, comfortable rooms, where they prolonged in their dreams the pleasures of the day.

Next morning, at dawn, they took leave of the two young squatters with hearty thanks and a promise from them of a visit to Malcolm Castle when they should return to Europe. Then the wagon began to move away around the foot of Mount Hotham, and soon the hospitable dwelling disappeared from the sight of the travellers like some brief vision which had come and gone.

For five miles further the horses were still treading the station lands. It was not until nine o'clock that they had passed the last fence, and entered the almost unknown districts of the province of Victoria.

[fn1.](#) Verne has "Hottam" Station, but as it's named after a real place, Mount Hotham, I changed it. I also reduced Mount Hotham's stated height to match reality. — DAS

[fn2.](#) 1,860 metres. — DAS

[fn3.](#) An area of thirty-seven square miles, with a sixteen mile border on the Peroo. — DAS

[fn4.](#) Now named Mount Buffalo. — DAS

Chapter XVIII

The Australian Alps

AN IMMENSE BARRIER LAY ACROSS THEIR ROUTE TO THE SOUTHEAST. IT WAS THE Australian Alps, a vast fortification whose capricious ramparts extended fifteen hundred miles, and pierced the clouds at the height of four thousand feet.

A subdued heat reached the ground through the veil of cloud in the overcast sky. The temperature was moderate, but the rough road made travel difficult. The undulations of the plain became more and more pronounced. Several hills covered with young, green, gum trees appeared here and there. Further on these sharply rising foothills formed the first echelons of the great Alps. Their course became a continual ascent, which put a greater strain on the oxen dragging along the cumbersome wagon. Their yokes creaked, they blew loudly, and the muscles of their hocks were stretched nearly to breaking. The planks of the vehicle groaned at the unexpected jolts that Ayrton, with all his skill, could not prevent. The ladies bore these difficulties cheerfully.

John Mangles and his two sailors acted as scouts, and went about a hundred paces ahead. They chose practicable paths, not to say passes, for these hills had many pitfalls which the wagon had to steer carefully between. It required careful navigation to find a safe way through this rugged terrain.

It was a difficult and often perilous task. Wilson's axe was needed many times to open a passage through thick tangles of shrubs. The damp clay soil gave way under their feet. A thousand detours around insurmountable obstacles — huge blocks of granite, deep ravines, or suspicious lakes — extended their journey. When night came they found they had only made half a degree's progress. They camped at the foot of the Alps, on the banks of Cobungra Creek, on the edge of a small plain covered with four foot shrubs whose bright red leaves gladdened their eyes.

"It will be hard work getting over those," said Glenarvan, looking at the silhouettes of the mountains, fading away in the deepening darkness. "*Alps!* The name has sobering connotations."

"It is not quite as bad as it sounds, my dear Glenarvan," said Paganel. "You do not have an entire Switzerland to cross. In Australia, there are the Grampians, Pyrenees, Alps, and Blue Mountains, just as in Europe and America, but in miniature. This simply demonstrates that the imagination of geographers is not infinite, or that their vocabulary of proper names is very poor."

“So, these Australian Alps?” asked Lady Helena.

“Mere pocket mountains,” said Paganel; “we shall cross them without noticing.”

“Speak for yourself,” said the Major. “I only know of one man who is so distracted that he could cross over a chain of mountains and not know it.”

“*Distracted!*” said Paganel. “But I am not distracted, anymore. I appeal to the ladies. Since I set foot on Australia, have I not kept my promise? Have I been distracted even once? Can you name a single blunder?”

“Not one, Monsieur Paganel,” said Mary Grant. “You are now the most perfect of men.”

“Too perfect,” laughed Lady Helena. “Your distractions suited you admirably.”

“Didn’t they, Madame? If I have no faults now, I shall soon be like everyone else. I hope that before long I will commit some good blunder which will give you a good laugh. It seems to me that I fail in my vocation, if I’m not making mistakes.”

Next day, January 9th, the little troop ascended the alpine pass with great difficulty, despite the assurances of the confident geographer. It was necessary to hunt for a clear path, and to enter the depths of narrow gorges that could terminate in dead ends.

Ayrton would have been very much embarrassed, if — after an hour’s march — an inn, a miserable “tap,” hadn’t unexpectedly presented itself on one of the mountain paths.

“*Parbleu!*” cried Paganel. “The landlord of this tavern won’t make his fortune in a place like this. What is the use of it here?”

“To give us the information we need,” said Glenarvan. “Let us go in.”

Glenarvan, followed by Ayrton, crossed the threshold of the inn. The landlord of the *Bush Inn*, as it’s sign proclaimed, was a coarse man with an ill-tempered face, who must have considered himself his principal customer for the gin, brandy, and whiskey he had to sell. He seldom saw anyone but squatters and drovers.

He answered all the questions put to him in a surly tone, but his replies sufficed to make the route clear to Ayrton. Glenarvan rewarded him with a handful of crowns for his trouble, and was about to leave the tavern, when a placard against the wall arrested his attention.

It was a notice from the colonial police. It announced the escape of the convicts from Perth, and offered a reward of £100 for the capture of Ben Joyce.

“He’s certainly a fellow that’s worth hanging,” said Glenarvan to the quartermaster.

“And worth capturing still more,” said Ayrton. “One hundred pounds! What a sum! He’s not worth it!”

“As to the innkeeper,” said Glenarvan, “he does not reassure me, notwithstanding his sign.”

“Me neither,” said Ayrton.

They went back to the wagon. They made their way to the end of the Lucknow road: a narrow path that snaked its way up the pass in a series of switchbacks. They started the climb.

It was a painful ascent. More than once both the ladies and gentlemen had to get down and walk. It was necessary to help move the heavy wagon by pushing on its wheels, and to support it on dangerous gradients; to unharness the oxen when the wagon’s steering gear couldn’t handle the sharp turns, and chock the wheels when the wagon threatened to roll back. More than once Ayrton had to reinforce his oxen by harnessing the horses, already tired with dragging themselves along.

Whether it was this prolonged fatigue, or from some other cause, one of the horses suddenly died, without the slightest warning or symptom of illness. It was Mulrady’s horse that fell, and when he tried to rouse it, he was surprised to find it deceased.

Ayrton came to examine the animal lying on the ground, but was at a loss to explain this sudden death.

“The beast must have broken some blood-vessel,” said Glenarvan.

“Evidently,” said Ayrton.

“Take my horse, Mulrady,” said Glenarvan. “I will join Lady Helena in the wagon.”

Mulrady obeyed, and the little party continued their exhausting ascent, leaving the carcass of the dead animal to the ravens.

The Australian Alps range is shallow, and the base is not more than eight miles wide. If the pass chosen by Ayrton came out on the eastern side, they might hope to get over the high barrier within another forty-eight hours. This was the last barrier, and once surmounted, it would be an easy road to the sea.

They reached the highest point of the pass, about two thousand feet, on January 10th. They came out on an open plateau, with nothing to block the view.

Toward the north the quiet waters of of Lake Omeo glittered in the sunlight, dotted with waterfowl, and beyond lay the vast plains of the Murray. To the south stretched the green plains of Gippsland, with its rich gold fields and tall forests. It was still a wild country, where nature was still mistress of her resources, and the courses of her rivers. The great trees had not yet felt the woodman's axe, and the rare squatters had not yet overcome her. It seemed as if this chain of Alps separated two different countries, one of which had retained its primitive wildness.

The sun was setting, and a few rays piercing the reddened clouds highlighted the hues of the Murray district. On the other side of the mountains, Gippsland fell into deep shadow, as if night had suddenly fallen on the whole region. The contrast between these two countries was sharply felt by the spectators as they contemplated the almost unknown district that they were about to cross to the Victorian frontier.

They camped on the plateau that night, and began the descent the next day. They made good progress until an extremely violent hail storm assailed the travellers, and forced them to seek a shelter among the rocks. It was not hail stones, but irregular lumps of ice, as large as one's hand, which fell from the stormy clouds. A sling could not have thrown them with more force, and some good bruises taught Paganel and Robert that they had to stay under shelter. The wagon was riddled in several places, and few roofs could have held out against those sharp icicles: some of which had impaled themselves into the trunks of the trees. It was impossible to go on until this tremendous shower was over unless the travellers wished to be stoned. It lasted about an hour, and then the march began again over slanting rocks still slippery after the hail.



A hail-storm of extreme violence assailed the travellers

Toward evening the wagon — very much shaken and disjointed in several

places, but still standing firm on its wooden wheels — came down the last slopes of the Alps between large isolated pines. The pass ended in the plains of Gippsland. The chain of the Alps was safely passed, and the usual arrangements were made for the nightly encampment.

The journey was resumed at daybreak on the 12th with an ardour which never relaxed. Everyone was eager to reach their goal — that is to say, the Pacific Ocean — at the place where the wreck of the *Britannia* had occurred. Only there could the search really begin for the traces of the shipwrecked sailors, and not in these deserted regions of Gippsland. Ayrton again urged Lord Glenarvan to send orders for the *Duncan* to proceed to the coast in order to have at hand all possible resources for the search. He thought it would be advisable to take advantage of the Lucknow road to Melbourne. If they waited it would be difficult to find any way of direct communication with the capital.

The quartermaster's recommendation seemed sound, and Paganel concurred. He also thought that the presence of the yacht would be very useful, and he added that it would no longer be possible to communicate with Melbourne, once they left the Lucknow road.

Glenarvan was undecided about what to do, and perhaps he would have yielded to Ayrton's arguments if the Major had not vigorously disagreed. He maintained that the presence of Ayrton was necessary to the expedition, that he would know the country about the coast, and that if any chance should put them on the track of Harry Grant, the quartermaster would be better able to follow it up than anyone else, and, finally, that he alone could point out the exact spot where the *Britannia* had been lost.

MacNabbs urged for the continuation of the journey without making any change in their programme. He found an ally in John Mangles, who agreed with him. The young Captain even remarked that orders could reach the *Duncan* more easily from Twofold Bay, than for a messenger sent two hundred miles through wild country. MacNabbs arguments prevailed. It was decided that they would wait until they came to Twofold Bay. The Major watched Ayrton closely, and noticed his disappointed look. But he said nothing, keeping his observations, as usual, to himself.

The plains which lay at the foot of the Australian Alps were level, but gently sloping toward the east. Large clumps of mimosas, eucalyptus, and numerous

varieties of gum trees broke the uniform monotony. *Gastrolobium grandiflorum* covered the ground, with its bushes covered with gay flowers. Several unimportant creeks, mere streams full of little rushes, and overgrown with orchids, often interrupted the route. They were forded. Flocks of bustards and emus fled at the approach of the travellers. Kangaroos leapt and sprang over the shrubs like elastic puppets. But the hunters of the party scarcely thought of hunting, and the horses didn't need the extra work.

A sultry heat weighed on the country. The atmosphere was saturated with electricity, and its influence was felt by men and beasts. They dragged themselves along, and cared for nothing else. The silence was only interrupted by the cries of Ayrton urging on his burdened team.

From noon to two o'clock they went through a curious forest of ferns which would have excited the admiration of less weary travellers. These plants in full bloom were up to thirty feet high. Horses and riders passed easily beneath their drooping leaves, and sometimes the wheel of a spur resounded on striking their woody stems. Beneath these still parasols there was a refreshing coolness which everyone appreciated. Jacques Paganel, always demonstrative, gave such deep sighs of satisfaction that the parakeets and cockatoos flew out in alarm, making a deafening chorus of noisy chatter.

The geographer was going on with his sighs and jubinations, when his companions saw him suddenly tottering on his horse, and falling down in a lump. Was it some dizzy spell, or even a stroke, caused by the high temperature? They ran to him.

"Paganel! Paganel! what's the matter?" asked Glenarvan.

Paganel disengaged himself from the stirrups. "My friend, I am well. My horse is not!"

"What! Your horse?"

"Dead, like Mulrady's, as if a thunderbolt had struck him!"

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Wilson examined the animal, and found Paganel was right. His horse had been suddenly struck dead.

"This is strange," said John.

"Very strange, indeed," muttered the Major.

Glenarvan could not help being concerned by this new accident. They could not go back in this wilderness, and if an epidemic was going to seize their steeds, it would be very difficult to proceed.

Before the close of the day it seemed as if the word "epidemic" was justified. A

third horse, Wilson's, fell dead, and what was perhaps more serious, two of the oxen as well. The means of traction and transport were now reduced to four oxen^{fn1} and four horses.

The situation had become serious. The dismounted horsemen could, of course, continue on foot. Many squatters had already done so through these deserted regions. But if it became necessary to abandon the wagon, what would the ladies do? Could they cross the one hundred and twenty miles that still separated them from Twofold Bay?

John Mangles and Lord Glenarvan examined the surviving horses with great uneasiness, but there was not the slightest symptom of illness or even feebleness in them. The animals were in perfect health, and bravely bearing the exertions of the trip. This somewhat reassured Glenarvan, and made him hope that the malady would strike no more victims.

Ayrton agreed with him, but he confessed to have no understanding of what had caused these sudden deaths.

They went on again with the pedestrians taking turns resting in the wagon. In the evening, after a march of only ten miles, the signal to halt was given, and they pitched the tent. The night passed without difficulty beneath a vast mass of tree ferns, between which enormous bats — properly called flying foxes — were flapping about.

The next day, January 13th, was good. There were no new calamities. The health of the expedition remained satisfactory; horses and oxen did their task cheerily. Lady Helena's drawing room was very lively, thanks to the number of visitors. Mr. Olbinett busied himself in passing around refreshments that thirty degrees^{fn2} of heat made necessary. They went through half a barrel of scotch ale. Barclay and Co. were declared to be the greatest men in Great Britain, even above Wellington who could never have manufactured such good



The night passed ... beneath a vast mass of tree ferns

beer. This was their opinion as Scots. Jacques Paganel drank deeply, and discoursed still more *de omni re scibili*.^{fn3}

A day so well commenced seemed as if it could only end well; they had gone a good fifteen miles, and deftly passed a rather hilly country with reddish soil. There was every reason to hope they might camp that night on the banks of the Snowy River, an important river which flows south through Victoria into the Pacific. Soon the wheels of the wagon were making deep ruts on wide plains of blackish alluvium. It passed on between tufts of luxuriant grass and fresh fields of *Gastrolobium*. As evening came on, a white mist on the horizon marked the course of the Snowy. The strength of the team pulled them on a few more miles, and a forest of tall trees came in sight at a bend of the road, beyond a gentle slope. Ayrton led his overworked team through the great trunks, lost in shadows, and he was already past the edge of the wood, half a mile from the river, when the wagon suddenly sank up to the wheel hubs.

“Stop!” he called out to the horsemen following him.

“What is it?” asked Glenarvan.

“We’re bogged down,” said Ayrton.

He tried to stimulate the oxen to a fresh effort by voice and with the goad, but the animals were buried halfway up their legs, and could not stir.

“Let’s camp here,” said John Mangles.

“That’s the best thing to do,” said Ayrton. “Tomorrow, by daylight, we’ll see how to get it out.”

Glenarvan called for a halt.

Night came on rapidly after a brief twilight, but the heat wasn’t reduced by the end of day. Stifling vapours filled the air, and occasionally bright flashes of lightning, the reflections of a distant storm, illuminated the horizon. They prepared for the night. They did the best they could with the sunken wagon, and the tent was pitched beneath a dark dome of tall trees. If the rain held off, they had not much to complain about.

Ayrton succeeded, with some difficulty, in extricating the oxen from the mud. These courageous beasts had been engulfed up to the flanks. The quartermaster turned them out with the horses, and allowed no one but himself to see to their fodder. He had always executed this task well, and this evening Glenarvan noticed he redoubled his care, for which he took occasion to thank him. The preservation of the team was of supreme importance.

During this time, the travellers took part in a rather summary supper.

Exhaustion and heat had destroyed appetites, and they wanted sleep more than food. Lady Helena and Miss Grant bade the company good night, and retired to their berths in the wagon. The men soon stretched themselves under the tent, or outside on the thick grass under the trees, which is no great hardship in this wholesome climate.

Gradually they all fell into a heavy sleep. A thick curtain of clouds over the sky deepened the darkness. There was not a breath of wind in the air. The silence of night was only interrupted by the hooting of the “morepork” which sang the minor third with a surprising accuracy, like the sad cuckoo of Europe.

About eleven o’clock, after a poor, heavy, un-refreshing sleep, the Major awoke. His half-closed eyes were struck with a faint light running under the tall trees. It looked like a white sheet, shimmering like the waters of a lake. At first MacNabbs thought that it was the first glimmers of a fire spreading over the ground.

He got up, and went toward the wood. He was greatly surprised to discover a purely natural phenomenon! Under his eyes lay an immense bed of mushrooms, which emitted a phosphorescent light. The luminous spores of the cryptogams shone intensely in the darkness. [fn4](#)

The Major, who was not selfish, was about to waken Paganel so that he might see this phenomenon with his own eyes when an incident stopped him.

This phosphorescent glow illumined the wood for half a mile, and MacNabbs thought he saw a shadow pass across the edge of it. Were his eyes deceiving him? Was it some hallucination?

MacNabbs lay down on the ground, and, after a close scrutiny, he could distinctly see several men bending down and rising, in turn, as if they were looking at the ground for recent marks.

The Major resolved to find out what these fellows were about, and without the



Bright flashes of lightning ... illuminated the horizon

least hesitation or so much as arousing his companions, crept along lying flat on the ground like a savage on the prairies, completely hidden among the long grass.

fn1. Verne has one ox die, reducing them to three at this point, seeming having forgotten that they started out with six. I might have gone back and changed the initial number, but several of the Riou illustrations show six oxen as well. So I'm going to be killing off a couple more than Verne did. — DAS

fn2. 86° Fahrenheit. — DAS

fn3. Latin: "about every knowable thing." — DAS

fn4. This fact had already been mentioned by Drummond, who had noticed it in Australia in field mushrooms belonging to the family of the *Omphalotus olearius*.



MacNabbs lay down on the ground

Chapter XIX

The Coup de Théâtre^{fn1}

IT BECAME A TERRIBLE NIGHT. AT TWO O’CLOCK IN THE MORNING A TORRENTIAL RAIN began to fall from the stormy clouds, and continued until dawn. The tent was insufficient shelter so Glenarvan and his companions took refuge in the wagon. They didn’t sleep, but talked of one thing or another. The Major, whose brief absence had not been noticed, contented himself with being a silent listener. The downpour continued through the night. There was reason to fear that if the storm lasted much longer the Snowy River would overflow its banks, which would be a very bad thing for the wagon, stuck in the soft ground. Mulrady, Ayrton, and Mangles went to check the rising water level several times, and came back dripping from head to toe.

Finally, dawn came. The rain ceased, but the sunlight couldn’t break through the thick clouds. Large puddles of yellowish water — muddy, dirty ponds — covered the ground. A warm mist rose from the soaked earth, and saturated the atmosphere with unhealthy humidity.

Glenarvan’s first concern was the wagon. This was the most important thing in his eyes. They examined the heavy vehicle, and found it sunk in the ground in a deep hollow in the stiff clay. The front wheelset had disappeared almost entirely, and the rear was buried nearly up to the axle. It would be difficult to remove the heavy conveyance, and it would need the united strength of men, oxen, and horses.

“At any rate, we must hurry,” said John Mangles. “If the clay dries, it will make our task still more difficult.”

“Let us be quick, then,” said Ayrton.

Glenarvan, his two sailors, John Mangles, and Ayrton entered the woods where the animals had passed the night.

It was a tall forest of sinister looking gum trees, all dead. The widely spaced trees had been barked for ages, or rather skinned like the cork-oak at harvest time. A miserable network of bare branches could be seen two hundred feet overhead. Not a bird built its nest in these aerial skeletons; not a leaf trembled on the dry branches which rattled like a jumble of bones. No one knows what causes these cataclysms, so frequent in Australia, in which entire forests are struck dead in some epidemic. Not even the oldest natives, nor their ancestors who have long lain buried in the groves of the dead, have ever seen them green.

As he walked, Glenarvan kept his eye on the grey sky, against which the smallest branch of the gum trees was sharply defined. Ayrton was astonished to not find the horses and oxen where he had left them the night before, but they could not have wandered far with the hobbles on their legs.

They looked through the wood, but found no signs of them. Ayrton returned to the beautiful, mimosa lined banks of the Snowy River. He gave a cry, well known to his team, but there was no reply. The quartermaster seemed uneasy, and his companions looked at each other with disappointed faces.

They searched in vain for an hour, and Glenarvan was about to go back to the wagon, when he heard the neighing of a horse, followed by a bellow.

"There they are!" cried John Mangles, slipping between tall clumps of *Gastrolobium* which grew high enough to hide a whole herd.

Glenarvan, Mulrady, and Ayrton darted after him, and soon shared his stupefaction at the spectacle which met their gaze.

Three bullocks and three horses lay stretched on the ground, struck down like the others. Their bodies were already cold, and a flock of skinny crows croaking among the mimosas were watching the unexpected feast. Glenarvan and his party gazed at each other, and Wilson could not keep back the curse that rose to his lips.

"Enough of that, Wilson," said Glenarvan, barely containing himself. "We can't do anything about it. Ayrton, bring away the ox and the horse we have left. They will have to serve us now."

"If the wagon were not bogged down," said John Mangles, "these two animals could be enough to take us to the coast, if we go in small stages. But we must at all costs free the damn wagon."

"We will try, John," said Glenarvan. "Let's go back to the camp. They must be getting worried about our long absence."

Ayrton removed the hobbles from the ox and Mulrady from the horse, and they returned along the winding bank of the river.

In half an hour they rejoined Paganel, MacNabbs, and the ladies, and told them of this fresh disaster.

"Upon my honour, Ayrton," the Major could not help saying, "it is a pity that you didn't see to the shoeing of all our horses when we forded the Wimmera."

"Why, sir?" asked Ayrton.

"Because out of all our horses, only the one your blacksmith had in his hands has escaped the common fate."

"That's true," said John Mangles. "It's a strange coincidence."

"A mere chance, and nothing more," said the quartermaster. He stared at the Major for a moment, before walking toward the wagon.

Major MacNabbs squeezed his lips as if to keep back something he was about to say. Glenarvan, Mangles, and Lady Helena seemed to be waiting for him to complete his thought, but the Major fell silent, and walked to the wagon which Ayrton was examining.

"What did he want to say?" Glenarvan asked John Mangles.

"I don't know," replied the young Captain. "But the Major is not at all a man to speak without reason."

"No, John," said Lady Helena. "MacNabbs must have some suspicions about Ayrton."

"Suspicions?" asked Paganel, shrugging his shoulders.

"What can they be?" asked Glenarvan. "Does he suppose he could have killed our horses and oxen? For what purpose? Aren't Ayrton's interests the same as ours?"

"You are right, dear Edward," said Lady Helena. "And what is more, the quartermaster has given us incontestable proofs of his devotion ever since the commencement of the journey."

"No doubt," said Mangles. "But what could the Major mean? I wish he would speak his mind plainly. I'd like to have a clear heart on this matter."

"Does he suppose him to be acting in concert with the convicts?" asked Paganel, imprudently.

"What convicts?" asked Miss Grant.

"Monsieur Paganel is making a mistake," said John Mangles quickly. "He knows very well there are no convicts in the province of Victoria."

"Ah, *parbleu vrai!*" said Paganel, who would have liked to withdraw his words. "*Où diable* was my head? Who has ever heard of convicts being in Australia? Besides, they would scarcely have disembarked before they would turn into good, honest men. The climate, you know, Miss Mary, the moralistic climate..."

The poor scientist, wishing to repair his mistake, was — like the wagon — bogging himself deeper down. Lady Helena's look at him took whatever was left of his composure, but not wanting to embarrass him further, she took Mary away to the side of the tent, where Mr. Olbinett was busy setting the lunch according to all the rules of his art.

"I deserve to be transported," said Paganel, woefully.

"I agree," said Glenarvan, and after this reply, made with a gravity which

completely overwhelmed the worthy geographer, Glenarvan and John Mangles went toward the wagon.

They found Ayrton and the two sailors working to get it out of the deep rut. The ox and horse, harnessed side by side, were straining with every muscle. The traces were stretched to breaking; their collars threatened to break with the effort. Wilson and Mulrady were pushing the wheels, and the quartermaster was urging the team on with voice and goad. The heavy vehicle did not move. The clay, already dry, held it as firmly as if sealed by some hydraulic cement.

John Mangles watered the clay to loosen it, but it was of no use. The wagon remained motionless. After repeated efforts, men and animals stopped. Unless the vehicle was taken to pieces, it would be impossible to extricate it from the mud. But they didn't have the necessary tools to undertake such a task.

Ayrton, who wanted to overcome this obstacle at all costs, was was going to try again when Glenarvan stopped him.

"Enough, Ayrton, enough," he said. "We must spare the horse and ox we have left. If we are obliged to continue our journey on foot, one can carry the ladies and the other the provisions. They may thus still be of use to us."

"Very well, my Lord," said the quartermaster, unyoking the exhausted animals.

"Now, friends," added Glenarvan, "let's return to the camp. Let us deliberate on our options, evaluate their *pro et contra*, and determine our course of action."

A few moments later the party was recovering from their bad night with a good breakfast, and the discussion was opened. Everyone was asked to give his opinion.

The first question was to determine their exact position, and this was naturally put to Paganel, who informed them, with his accustomed rigorous accuracy, that the expedition had been stopped on the 37th parallel, at longitude 148° 26', on the



The heavy vehicle did not move

banks of the Snowy River.

“What is the exact longitude of Twofold Bay?” asked Glenarvan.

“150°,” said Paganel.

“And how far is that 1° 34’”

“Eighty-five miles.” [fn2](#)

“And Melbourne is...?”

“Two hundred miles, at least.”

“Very good,” said Glenarvan. “Our position being settled, what should be done?”

The response was unanimous: get to the coast without delay. Lady Helena and Mary Grant pledged to travel five miles a day. The brave women were not afraid to walk the whole distance between the Snowy River and Twofold Bay, if necessary.

“You are a valiant travelling companion, dear Helena,” said Lord Glenarvan. “But are we sure of finding the resources we need at the bay when we get there?”

“Without a doubt,” said Paganel. “Eden is a well established town that is many years old, and its port must have frequent communication with Melbourne. I suppose that even at Delegate, on the Victoria frontier, thirty-five miles from here, we might resupply our expedition, and find fresh means of transport.”

“And the *Duncan*?” asked Ayrton. “Don’t you think it advisable to send for her to come to the bay?”

“What do you think, John?” said Glenarvan.

The young Captain thought for a moment before speaking. “I don’t think Your Honour should be in any hurry about it. There will be time enough to give orders to Tom Austin, and summon him to the coast.”

“That’s quite certain,” added Paganel.

“You see,” said John, “it should only take four or five days to reach Eden.”

“Four or five days!” said Ayrton, shaking his head. “Say more like fifteen or twenty, Captain, if you don’t want to regret your mistake later.”

“Fifteen or twenty days to go eighty-five miles?” cried Glenarvan.

“At least, my Lord. You are going to cross the most difficult portion of Victoria, a desert where the squatters say everything is lacking. Plains covered with scrub where there are no cleared tracks, and no one has been able to found a station. You will have to walk with the axe or torch in hand, and believe me, that’s not a fast way to travel.”

Ayrton had spoken firmly, and Paganel, at whom all the others looked

inquiringly, nodded his head in token of his agreement in opinion with the quartermaster.

“Well, admitting these difficulties,” said John Mangles, “in fifteen days at most your Lordship can send orders to the *Duncan*.”

“I have to add,” said Ayrton, “that the principal obstacle will not come from the lack of a road, but the Snowy itself has to be crossed, and most likely we must wait until the water goes down.”

“What?” cried John. “Is there no ford?”

“I don’t think so,” said Ayrton. “I looked this morning for some practicable crossing, but could not find any. It is unusual to meet with such a torrential river at this time of the year, but it is a chance against which I am powerless.”

“Is this Snowy very wide?” asked Lady Helena.

“Wide and deep enough, Madame,” replied Ayrton. “Three hundred feet^{fn3}, but with a dangerous current. A good swimmer could not cross it safely.”

“Let’s build a boat then,” said Robert, who believed he could do anything. “We have only to cut down a tree and hollow it out, get in it, and be off.”

“Bright lad, this boy of Captain Grant’s!” said Paganel.

“And he’s right,” said John Mangles. “We may be forced to come to that. I think it is useless to waste our time in idle discussions.”

“What do you think, Ayrton?” asked Glenarvan.

“I think, my Lord, that a month hence, unless some help arrives, we shall find ourselves still on the banks of the Snowy.”

“Well, then, do you have a better plan?” asked a somewhat exasperated John Mangles.

“Yes, that the *Duncan* should leave Melbourne, and go to the east coast.”

“Oh, always the *Duncan*! And how could her presence at the bay make it easier for us to get there?”

Ayrton waited an instant before answering, and then said, rather evasively “I have no wish to impose my opinions. What I do is in the interest of all, and I am ready to leave the moment His Honour gives the signal.” And he crossed his arms and was silent.

“That is not an answer, Ayrton,” said Glenarvan. “Tell us your plan, and we will discuss it. What do you propose?”

Ayrton replied in a calm assured voice. “I propose that we should not venture beyond the Snowy in our present condition. It is here we must wait for help, and this help can only come from the *Duncan*. Let us camp here, where we have

provisions, and let one of us take your orders to Tom Austin to go to Twofold Bay."

This unexpected proposition was greeted with astonishment, and John Mangles did not conceal his antipathy to the idea.

"Meanwhile," said Ayrton, "either the river will lower and allow us to ford it, or we shall have time to make a canoe. This is the plan I submit for your Lordship's approval."

"Well, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Your idea deserves to be taken seriously. Its greatest fault is to cause a delay, but it would save us great fatigue, and perhaps danger. What do you think of it, friends?"

"What do you say, MacNabbs?" asked Lady Helena, "Since the beginning of the discussion you have been content to listen, and have been very stingy with your words."

"Since you ask my advice," said the Major, "I will give it you very frankly. It seems to me that Ayrton has spoken as a wise and prudent man, and I agree with his proposal."

This was an unexpected response, as the Major had been strongly opposed to Ayrton's proposal, before now. Ayrton himself was surprised, and gave a hasty glance at the Major. Once MacNabbs had endorsed the plan, Paganel, Lady Helena, and the sailors were very quick to agree, as well.

Glenarvan declared that the quartermaster's plan should be adopted in principle.

"And now, John," he added, "don't you think it would be prudent to camp here, on the banks of the river, while waiting for the means of transport?"

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "if our messenger can get across the Snowy when we cannot."

All eyes were turned on the quartermaster, who answered with a smile. "The messenger will not cross the river."

"Ah!" said John Mangles.

"He will simply go back to the Lucknow road, which leads straight to Melbourne."

"Two hundred and fifty miles *on foot!*" cried the young Captain.

"On horseback," said Ayrton. "We still have a healthy horse. It should only take four days to reach Melbourne. Allow the *Duncan* two days reach Twofold Bay and two to four days^{fn4} to get back to the camp, and in little more than a week the messenger can be back with the ship's crew."

The Major nodded approvingly as Ayrton spoke, to the profound astonishment

of John Mangles. But as everyone was in favour of the quartermaster's plan, all there was to do was to carry it out as quickly as possible.

"Now then, friends," said Glenarvan. "It remains to choose our messenger. I do not wish to hide that it will be a difficult and perilous mission. Who will devote himself to his companions, and carry our instructions to Melbourne?"

Wilson, Mulrady, Paganel, John Mangles, and even Robert, instantly offered their services. John particularly insisted that he should be entrusted with the mission.

Ayrton, who had been silent until now said "With Your Honour's permission, I will go myself. I am accustomed to this country. I have traversed more difficult areas many times. I can get through, where another would be stopped. I ask then, for the good of all, that I may be sent to Melbourne. A word from you will accredit me to your second, and in six days I will be sure to bring the *Duncan* to Twofold Bay."

"Well spoken," said Glenarvan. "You are an intelligent and brave man, Ayrton, and I am sure you will succeed."

The quartermaster was obviously better able than anyone else to fulfill this difficult task. Everyone understood, and withdrew.

John Mangles made one last objection, saying that Ayrton was needed to discover traces of the *Britannia* or Harry Grant. But the Major remarked that the expedition would remain on the banks of the Snowy until Ayrton returned, that they had no intention of resuming their search without him, and that consequently his absence would not in the least prejudice the Captain's interests.

"Go well, Ayrton," said Glenarvan. "Be as quick as you can, and come back via Eden to our Snowy camp."

A flash of satisfaction shot across the quartermaster's face. He turned his head away, but not before John Mangles had caught the look, and instinctively felt his old distrust of Ayrton revive.



"With Your Honour's permission, I will go myself."

The quartermaster made immediate preparations for departure, assisted by the two sailors, one of whom saw to the horse and the other to the provisions. Glenarvan, meantime, wrote his letter for Tom Austin.

He ordered the *Duncan's* second to go to Twofold Bay without delay. He recommended the quartermaster to him as a man he could trust. On arriving at the coast, Tom was to dispatch a detachment of sailors from the yacht under Ayrton's orders...

Glenarvan was just at this passage of his letter, when MacNabbs, who was following him with his eyes, asked him in a strange tone how he wrote Ayrton's name.

"Why, as it is pronounced, of course," replied Glenarvan.

"That's a mistake," said the Major quietly. "He pronounces it 'Ayrton,' but he writes it 'Ben Joyce!'"

[fn1.](#) A French expression meaning a spectacular turn of events; the twist in the plot. — DAS

[fn2.](#) 35 leagues (140 kilometres. — DAS)

The *Hetzel* text has the distance given to Twofold Bay with three incompatible numbers. A longitude of 147° 53', a distance of 75 miles, and the footnote which gives that as 37 leagues. Of these three, it's the footnote version which most closely corresponds with the actual location of the Snowy River. I have adjusted all three to match reality. — DAS

[fn3.](#) Verne has the Snowy River being a mile wide here, which is about twenty times broader than it actually is, so I'm just going with the flood and the current being enough of a barrier to them attempting a crossing. — DAS

[fn4.](#) Verne has the trip from Twofold Bay to the Snowy as taking twenty-four hours, which given the difficulties of the trip already described is ridiculously optimistic. — DAS

Chapter XX

E-land! Zealand!

THE REVELATION OF BEN JOYCE'S NAME struck like a thunderbolt. Ayrton lunged to his feet, a revolver in his hand. A shot rang out and Glenarvan fell, wounded. Gunshots resounded outside.

John Mangles and the sailors, after this first surprise, tried to throw themselves on Ben Joyce, but the audacious convict had already disappeared, and rejoined his gang scattered among the gum trees.

The tent was no shelter against bullets. They had to retreat. Glenarvan's wound was slight, and he could stand.

"To the wagon! To the wagon!" cried John Mangles, dragging Lady Helena and Mary Grant along. They were soon safe behind the thick planks. John, the Major, Paganel, and the sailors seized their rifles and stood ready to repulse the convicts. Glenarvan and Robert went in with the ladies, while Olbinett rushed to join the defence.

It all took place in an instant, like a lighting flash. John Mangles watched the edge of the wood carefully. The gunshots had ceased as soon as Ben Joyce reached the trees. A deep silence had succeeded the noisy fusillade. A few wisps of white smoke were still curling through the branches of the gum trees. The tall tufts of *Gastrolobium* were motionless. All signs of attack had disappeared.

The Major and John Mangles made a reconnaissance to the tall trees. The area was abandoned. They found many footprints, and the smouldering remains of expended primers on the ground. The Major, a prudent man, extinguished these carefully, for a spark would be enough to kindle a firestorm in this forest of dry trees.

"The convicts have disappeared!" said John Mangles.

"Yes," replied the Major, "and this disappearance disturbs me. I prefer seeing them face to face. Better to meet a tiger on the plain than a snake in the grass. Let's



A shot rang out

beat the bushes around the wagon.”

The Major and John searched the surrounding countryside. From the edge of the wood to the banks of the Snowy, there was not a convict to be seen. Ben Joyce and his gang seemed to have flown away like a flock of marauding birds. It was too strange a disappearance to let the travellers feel safe. They decided to keep a sharp lookout. The wagon, a veritable moored fortress, was made the centre of the camp, with two men mounted guard who were relieved hour by hour.

The first care of Lady Helena and Mary was to dress Glenarvan’s wound. Lady Helena had rushed toward him in terror, as he fell down struck by Ben Joyce’s ball. Controlling her anguish, the courageous woman helped her husband into the wagon. His shoulder was bared, and the Major found, on examination, that the ball had only gone into the flesh, and there was no internal lesion. Neither bone nor muscle appeared to be injured. The wound bled profusely, but Glenarvan, wagging his forearm, reassured his friends that the injury was not serious. As soon as his shoulder was dressed he would not allow any more fuss to be made about him. He wanted an explanation of what had just happened.

Everyone except Mulrady and Wilson, who were on guard, were crowded into the wagon, and the Major was invited to speak.

He started by telling Lady Helena the things that had been withheld from her: about the escape of the convicts from Perth, and their appearance in Victoria and their complicity in the railway catastrophe. He handed her the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette* he had bought in Seymour, and added that a reward had been offered by the police for the apprehension of Ben Joyce, a formidable bandit, whose crimes during the last eighteen months had made him a notorious celebrity.

But how had MacNabbs learned that Ayrton was Ben Joyce? This was a mystery that everyone wanted an explanation for, and the Major soon supplied it.

Ever since their first meeting, MacNabbs had felt an instinctive wariness of the quartermaster. Two or three insignificant facts, a glance exchanged between him and the blacksmith at the Wimmera River, his hesitation at entering towns and villages, his persistence about getting the *Duncan* summoned to the coast, the strange death of the animals entrusted to his care, and, lastly, a lack of frankness in all his behaviour. Little by little, all these details had combined to awaken the Major’s suspicions.

However, he could not have made any direct accusation until the events of the previous night.

MacNabbs, slipping between the tall shrubs, came near the suspicious shadows he had noticed about half a mile away from the camp. The phosphorescent mushrooms threw pale gleams in the darkness.

Three men were examining fresh footprints on the ground, and MacNabbs recognized one of them as the blacksmith from Black Point. "It's them!" said one of the men. "Yes," said another, "there's the clover mark of the horseshoe." — "It has been like that since the Wimmera." — "All the other horses are dead." — "The poison is all around us." — "There is enough here to kill a regiment of cavalry." — "A useful plant, this *Gastrolobium!*"

The men fell silent and started to move off, but the Major needed to know more, so he followed them. Soon the conversation began again. "He is a clever fellow, this Ben Joyce," said the blacksmith. "A capital quartermaster, with his invention of a shipwreck." — "If his project succeeds, it will be a stroke of fortune." — "He's the very devil, this Ayrton." — "Call him Ben Joyce, for he has earned his name!" The scoundrels left the forest, and the Major had learned all he needed so he returned to the camp, convinced that — despite Paganel's beliefs — Australia did not reform criminals.

His companions sat silently when the Major was done recounting the story, thinking it over.

"Then Ayrton has dragged us here," said Glenarvan, pale with anger, "to rob and murder us."

"Yes," said the Major.

"And ever since the Wimmera his gang has been following in our footsteps, and watching for a favourable opportunity."

"Yes."

"Then the wretch was never one of the sailors on the *Britannia*. Did he steal the name of Ayrton and the shipping papers?"

They all looked at MacNabbs, for he must have asked himself that question already.

"Here," he answered in his still calm voice, "are the facts that can be drawn from this obscure situation. In my opinion the man is actually named Ayrton. Ben Joyce is his *nom de guerre*. It is undeniable that he knew Harry Grant, and also that he was quartermaster on the *Britannia*. These facts were already proved by the precise details given us by Ayrton, and are corroborated by the conversation between the convicts, which I repeated to you. Let us not be diverted into idle

speculation, but take it for granted that Ben Joyce is Ayrton, and that Ayrton is Ben Joyce. That is to say, one of the crew of the *Britannia* has become the leader of a convict gang."

MacNabbs' explanation was accepted without discussion.

"Now," said Glenarvan, "will you tell us how and why Harry Grant's quartermaster is in Australia?"

"How, I don't know," said MacNabbs. "And the police say that they don't know, either. Why? It is impossible to say. That is a mystery which the future may explain."

"The police are not even aware that Ayrton is Ben Joyce," said John Mangles.

"You are right, John," said the Major, "and this information would throw light on their search."

"Then I suppose," said Lady Helena, "the despicable man had some criminal intent for getting work on Paddy O'Moore's farm?"

"No doubt," said MacNabbs. "He was planning some evil design against the Irishman when a better opportunity presented itself. Chance led us to him. He heard Glenarvan's story, the story of the shipwreck, and the audacious fellow quickly decided to take advantage of it. The expedition was decided on. At the Wimmera he found the means to contact one of his gang, the blacksmith from Black Point, and left recognizable traces of our passage. The gang followed us. A poisonous plant enabled him to kill our oxen and horses little by little. When the time came, he bogged us down in the marshes of the Snowy, and gave us into the hands of his gang."

There was nothing more to say about Ben Joyce. His past had been reconstructed by the Major, and the wretch appeared as he was, a daring and formidable criminal. His intentions, clearly demonstrated, required extreme vigilance from Glenarvan. Fortunately, there was less to fear from the unmasked bandit than from the traitor.

But from this clarified situation emerged a serious consequence. No one had thought of it yet, except Mary Grant. Putting aside all the discussion of the past, she thought of the future. John Mangles was the first to notice her pale, despairing face; he understood what was passing through her mind at a glance.

"Miss Mary! Miss Mary! You're crying!"

"Why are you crying, my child?" asked Lady Helena.

"My father, Madame. *My father!*" said the poor girl.

She could not continue, but the truth flashed in every mind. They all knew the

cause of Mary's grief, and why tears fell from her eyes, and why her father's name rose from her heart to her lips.

The discovery of Ayrton's treachery had destroyed all hope. The convict had invented the shipwreck to entrap Glenarvan. In the conversation overheard by MacNabbs, the convicts had plainly said that the *Britannia* had never been wrecked on the rocks in Twofold Bay. Harry Grant had never set foot on the Australian continent!

For the second time an erroneous interpretation of the document had thrown the searchers for the *Britannia* on a wrong track.

A gloomy silence fell over the whole party at the sight of the children's sorrow in the face of this situation. No one could find a hopeful word to say. Robert was crying in his sister's arms.

"Oh, wretched document!" Paganel muttered pitifully to himself. "You can boast of having scrambled the wits of a dozen brave people!"

And the worthy geographer was in such a rage with himself, that he struck his forehead as if he would smash it.

Glenarvan went out to Mulrady and Wilson, who were keeping watch. Profound silence reigned over the plain between the woods and the river. The big, motionless clouds were pressing down on the roof of the sky. The atmosphere was numbed with a deep torpor, the least noise was transmitted clearly, and nothing was heard. Ben Joyce and his band must have retreated to a considerable distance. It was evident from the flocks of birds frolicking on the lower branches of the trees, the kangaroos feeding quietly on the young shoots, and a couple of emus whose confident heads passed between the great clumps of bushes, that those peaceful solitudes were untroubled by the presence of human beings.

"Have you either seen or heard anything in the last hour?" Glenarvan asked the two



A couple of emus ... passed between the shrubs

sailors.

"Nothing whatever, Your Honour," said Wilson. "The convicts must be several miles from here."

"They must not have been strong enough to attack us," said Mulrady. "This Ben Joyce must have wanted to recruit more bandits of his kind among the bushrangers roaming about the foot of the Alps."

"Possibly, Mulrady," said Glenarvan. "These rascals are cowards. They know we are well armed. Perhaps they are waiting for nightfall to commence their attack. We must redouble our watch at sunset. Oh, if we could only get out of this bog, and down to the coast; but this swollen river bars our way. I would pay its weight in gold for a raft which would carry us over to the other side."

"Why is Your Honour not giving us the orders to build a raft? We have plenty of wood."

"No, Wilson," said Glenarvan. "This Snowy is not a river, it is an impassable torrent."

John Mangles, the Major, and Paganel were just returning from looking at the Snowy. They reported that the waters, swollen from the rain, were still a foot above their normal level. It formed a torrent like the rapids of America. It was impossible to venture over the foaming current of that rushing flood, broken into a thousand eddies and hollows and gulfs.

John Mangles declared the passage impossible. "But we must not stay here, without attempting anything," he said. "What we were going to do before Ayrton's treachery is now even more necessary."

"What do you mean, John?" asked Glenarvan.

"I mean that we must get relief, and that since we cannot go to Twofold Bay, we must go to Melbourne. We still have one horse. Give it to me, my Lord, and I will go to Melbourne."

"That will be a dangerous undertaking, John," said Glenarvan. "Ben Joyce and his accomplices will be guarding the roads, not to mention the perils of a journey of two hundred miles over an unknown country."

"I know that, my Lord, but I also know that things can't stay long as they are. Ayrton was only asking for eight days to bring back the *Duncan's* men. I want to be back on the banks of the Snowy in six. Well, what is Your Honour's order?"

"Before Glenarvan decides," said Paganel, "I must make an observation. That someone must go to Melbourne is evident, but it cannot be John Mangles who exposes himself to the risk. He is the Captain of the *Duncan*, and must be careful of

his life. I will go instead.”

“Well spoken,” said the Major. “But why should it be you, Paganel?”

“Aren’t we here?” said Mulrady and Wilson.

“And do you think,” said MacNabbs, “that I’m afraid of a ride of two hundred miles on horseback?”

“My friends,” said Glenarvan, “if any of us should go to Melbourne, let fate designate him. Paganel, write our names—”

“Not yours, my Lord,” said John Mangles.

“And why not?”

“Separate you from Lady Helena, when your wound is not even closed!”

“Glenarvan,” said Paganel, “you cannot leave the expedition.”

“Your place is here, Edward,” said the Major. “You must not leave.”

“There are dangers to run,” said Glenarvan, “and I will not leave them to others. Write the names, Paganel, and put mine among them, and I hope the lot may fall on me.”

They bowed before his will. Glenarvan’s name was added to the others. The draw was made, and the fate fell upon Mulrady. The brave sailor crowed with satisfaction.

“My Lord, I am ready to start,” he said.

Glenarvan squeezed Mulrady’s hand. He returned to the wagon, leaving John Mangles and the Major on watch.

Lady Helena was informed of the decision to send a message to Melbourne, that they had drawn lots who should go, and Mulrady had been chosen. She said a few kind words to the valiant sailor which went straight to his heart. Fate could hardly have chosen a better man for he was not only brave and intelligent, but strong and tireless.

Mulrady’s departure was set for eight o’clock, after the short evening twilight. Wilson took charge of preparing the horse. He had the idea of changing the horse’s revealing left shoe for one off a horse that had died in the night. This would prevent the convicts from tracking Mulrady, or following him, as they were not mounted.

While Wilson was arranging this, Glenarvan prepared the letter for Tom Austin, but his injured arm troubled him, and he asked Paganel to write it for him. The scientist, was so absorbed in some *idée fixe* that he seemed hardly aware of what was happening around him. It must be said in all this succession of unfortunate adventures that Paganel thought only of the falsely interpreted

document. He turned the words over in his mind, attempting to extract a new meaning from them, and remained immersed in the abysses of interpretation.

So, he did not hear Glenarvan's request, and he was forced to repeat it.

"Ah, very well," said Paganel. "I'm ready."

While talking, Paganel mechanically prepared his notebook. He tore a blank page off and, pencil in hand, he prepared to write. Glenarvan began to dictate his instructions.

"Order Tom Austin to get to sea without delay, and bring the Duncan to..."

Paganel was just finishing the last word, when his eye chanced to fall on the *Australian and New Zealand Gazette* lying on the ground. The folded newspaper was showing only part of its title. Paganel's pencil stopped, and he seemed to completely forget Glenarvan, his letter, his dictation...

"Come, Paganel!"

"Ah!" started the geographer.

"What is the matter?" asked the Major

"Nothing, nothing," said Paganel. Then he muttered to himself, "E-land, e-land, e-land!"

He had risen. He had seized the newspaper. He shook it, in his efforts to keep back the words that tried to escape from his lips. Lady Helena, Mary, Robert, and Glenarvan looked at him without understanding anything about this inexplicable agitation.

Paganel looked like a man suddenly struck by madness. But this state of nervous excitement did not last. He calmed himself, little by little. The gleam of joy that shone in his eyes died away. He sat down again, and said quietly "When you please, my Lord, I am at your service."

Glenarvan resumed his dictation of his letter, which was definitely worded as follows:

Order to Tom Austin to put to sea without delay and to sail the Duncan to the 37° of latitude on the eastern coast of Australia ...

"Of Australia?" said Paganel. "Ah yes! Of Australia."

Then he finished the letter, and presented it for signature. Glenarvan, still troubled by his wound, carried out this formality with difficulty. Paganel closed and sealed the letter, and with a hand still trembling from emotion addressed the envelope.

Tom Austin,

*Mate aboard the yacht Duncan,
Melbourne*

Then he left the wagon, gesticulating and repeating the incomprehensible words: "E-land, e-land, *Zealand!*"

Chapter XXI

Four Days of Anguish

THE REST OF THE DAY PASSED WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT. ALL THE PREPARATIONS FOR Mulrady's departure were completed, and the brave sailor was happy to give His Honour this mark of his devotion.

Paganel had regained his composure and his accustomed manner. His gaze still showed his pre-occupation, but he seemed determined to keep it secret. No doubt he had strong reasons for doing so, for the Major heard him muttering "No, no! They would not believe me. And, besides, what's the point? It's too late!" like a man struggling with himself.

Having taken this resolution, he busied himself with giving Mulrady the necessary directions for getting to Melbourne, and showed him his way on the map. All the paths from their location on the Snowy led to the Lucknow road. This road, after running directly south to the coast, took a sudden bend toward Melbourne. This was the route that must be followed, for it would not do to attempt a short cut across almost unknown country. So nothing could be simpler. Mulrady could not lose his way.

As to dangers, there were none after he had gone a few miles beyond the camp, where Ben Joyce and his gang might be waiting in ambush. Once past them, Mulrady was certain of being able to outdistance the convicts, and complete his mission.

At six o'clock they all dined together. The rain was falling in torrents. The tent was not protection enough, and the whole party had to take refuge in the wagon. It was, moreover, a safe retreat. The clay kept it firmly embedded in the ground, like a fortress resting on firm foundations. Their arsenal was composed of seven rifles and seven revolvers, and they could stand a pretty long siege, for they had plenty of ammunition and provisions. But before six days were over, the *Duncan* would anchor in Twofold Bay, and a few days later her crew would reach the other shore of the Snowy; and should the passage still remain impracticable, the convicts at any rate would be forced to retire before the superior force. But it all depended on Mulrady's success in his perilous enterprise.

At eight o'clock the night became very dark. It was time to start. The horse prepared for Mulrady was brought out. His hooves were wrapped with cloths as a precaution, to muffle the sound of them on the ground. The animal seemed tired, and yet the safety of all depended on his strength and sure footedness. The Major

advised Mulrady to let him go gently as soon as he had got past the convicts. Better a half day delay than not to arrive at all.

John Mangles gave his sailor a revolver he had loaded with great care. This is a formidable weapon in the hand of a man who does not hesitate to use it, for six shots fired in a few seconds would easily clear an obstruction of criminals from a path.

Mulrady seated himself in the saddle, ready to start.

“Here is the letter you are to give to Tom Austin,” said Glenarvan. “Don’t let him lose an hour. He is to sail for Twofold Bay at once, and if he does not find us there, if we have not managed to cross the Snowy, let him come on to us without delay, Now go, my brave sailor, and God be with you.”

Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Mary Grant and the rest all shook hands with Mulrady. The departure on such a dark, raining night, on a road strewn with danger, through the unknown immensities of a wilderness would have daunted a heart less firm than that of the sailor.

“Farewell, my Lord,” he said in a calm voice, and he soon disappeared by a path that ran along the edge of the woods.

The gusts of wind redoubled their violence. The high branches of the eucalyptus rattled dully in the dark. They could hear the sound of broken branches striking the sodden soil. More than one giant tree with no living sap, but still standing until then, fell during this tempestuous squall. The wind howled through the crackling wood, and mingled its ominous moans with the roaring of the Snowy. The heavy clouds, driving along toward the east, hung on the ground like rags of steam. A gloomy darkness intensified the horrors of the night.

The rest of the party, after Mulrady’s departure, went back into the wagon. Lady Helena, Mary Grant, Glenarvan, and Paganel occupied the first compartment, which had been hermetically closed. The



The gusts of wind redoubled their violence

second was occupied by Olbinett, Wilson, and Robert. The Major and John Mangles were on watch outside. This precaution was necessary for an attack by the convicts would be easy enough, and therefore probable enough.

The two faithful guardians kept close watch, philosophically bearing the rain and wind that beat on their faces. They tried to peer through the darkness, so perfect for ambushes, for nothing could be heard in the midst of the sounds of the storm: the howling of the wind, the rattling branches, falling trees, and roaring of the unchained waters.

At times the wind would cease for a few moments, as if to take breath. Nothing was audible but the moan of the Snowy as it flowed between the motionless reeds, and the dark curtain of gum trees. The silence seemed deeper in these momentary lulls, and the Major and John Mangles listened attentively.

During one of these calms a sharp whistle reached them.

John Mangles quickly went up to the Major.

"You heard that?" he asked.

"Yes," said MacNabbs. "Is it man or beast?"

"A man," replied John Mangles.

They both listened. The mysterious whistle was repeated, and answered by a kind of detonation, but almost indistinguishable, for the storm was raging with renewed violence. MacNabbs and John Mangles could not hear themselves speak. They went under the shelter of the wagon.

The leather curtains were raised, and Glenarvan joined his two companions. He too had heard that sinister whistle, and the report which echoed under the tarpaulin.

"Which way was it?" he asked.

"There," said John, pointing to the dark track in the direction taken by Mulrady.

"How far?"

"The wind brought it," said John Mangles. "It must be at least three miles."

"Come on!" said Glenarvan, putting his gun on his shoulder.

"No!" said the Major. "It's a decoy to get us away from the wagon."

"But if Mulrady has fallen to the blows of these miscreants!" said Glenarvan, seizing MacNabbs by the hand.

"We shall know by tomorrow," said the Major, coolly, determined to prevent Glenarvan from taking a rash and futile action.

"You cannot leave the camp, my Lord," said John. "I will go alone."

“You will do nothing of the kind!” said MacNabbs, firmly. “Do you want us to be killed in detail, to diminish our strength, to put ourselves at the mercy of these criminals? If Mulrady has fallen victim to them, it is a misfortune that must not be repeated. Mulrady was sent, chosen by chance. If the lot had fallen to me, I would have gone as he did. I would not have asked for, nor expected, any help.”

In restraining Glenarvan and John Mangles, the Major was right in every respect. To try to reach the sailor, to run into the darkness of night among the convicts in their leafy ambush was foolish, and more than that: it was useless. Glenarvan’s party was not so numerous that it could afford to sacrifice another member of it.

Still, Glenarvan seemed as if he would not yield to reason. He kept his rifle gripped firmly in his hands. He wandered around the wagon. He listened to the faintest sound. He tried to pierce the sinister darkness. The thought that one of his party was, perhaps, mortally wounded, abandoned without help, calling in vain to those for whom he had devoted himself, was a torture to him. MacNabbs was not sure that he could succeed in holding him back, or if Glenarvan, carried away by his feelings, would not run into the arms of Ben Joyce.

“Edward, calm down,” he said. “Listen to a friend. Think of Lady Helena, of Mary Grant, of all who are left. And, besides, where would you go? Where would you find Mulrady? He must have been attacked two miles off. In what direction? Which path would you follow?”

At that moment, as if to answer the Major, a cry of distress was heard.

“Listen!” said Glenarvan.

This cry came from the same direction as the report, but less than a quarter of a mile off. Glenarvan, pushing past MacNabbs, was already on the path when he heard the call again, originating hundred paces away from the wagon.

“Help! Help!”

It was a plaintive and desperate voice. John Mangles and the Major sprang toward the spot.

A few seconds later they saw a human form dragging himself on the ground along the tree line, and uttering grim groans.

It was Mulrady, wounded, dying, and when his companions lifted him, they felt their hands bathed in blood.

The rain came down with redoubled violence, and the wind raged among the branches of the dead trees. Glenarvan, the Major, and John Mangles carried Mulrady back to the wagon through the pelting storm.

Everyone got up when they arrived. Paganel, Robert, Wilson, and Olbinett left the wagon, and Lady Helena gave up her berth to poor Mulrady. The Major removed the sailor's jacket which, was dripping with blood and rain. He soon found the wound; the unfortunate man had been stabbed in the right side.

MacNabbs skilfully dressed the wound. He could not tell whether the weapon had reached any vital organ. An intermittent jet of scarlet blood flowed from it. The patient's paleness and weakness showed that he was seriously injured. The Major washed the wound first with fresh water and then closed the opening. He covered the wound with a thick pad of tinder, and then folds of linen held in place with a bandage. He managed to stop the bleeding. Mulrady was laid on his side, with his head and chest raised, and Lady Helena gave him a few sips of water.

After about a quarter of an hour, the wounded man, who until then had lain motionless, stirred. His eyes opened; his lips muttered incoherent words; the Major, bending close to him, heard him repeating "My Lord ... the letter ... Ben Joyce."

The Major repeated these words, and looked at his companions. What did Mulrady mean? Ben Joyce had attacked the sailor, but why? Wasn't it just to stop him, to prevent him reaching the *Duncan*? The letter...

Glenarvan searched Mulrady's pockets. The letter addressed to Tom Austin was gone!

The night passed in anxiety and worry. They feared that Mulrady could die at any moment. A burning fever consumed him. Lady Helena and Mary Grant, two sisters of charity, never left him. Never was a patient so well cared for, nor by such compassionate hands.

Dawn approached. The rain had stopped. Large clouds still rolled across the



They carried Mulrady back to the wagon

sky. The ground was strewn with broken branches. The clay, soaked by the torrents of rain, had softened again. The approaches to the wagon became difficult, but it could not sink any deeper.

At daybreak, John Mangles, Paganel, and Glenarvan went to reconnoitre around the camp. They went up the path which was still stained with blood. They saw no vestige of Ben Joyce, or his band. They went as far as to where the attack had taken place. Here, two corpses lay on the ground, hit by Mulrady's bullets. One was the Black Point blacksmith. His face, decomposing in death, was a horror.

Glenarvan did not go farther. Prudence forbade him from wandering far from the camp. He returned to the wagon, deeply absorbed by the gravity of the situation.

"We must not think of sending another messenger to Melbourne," he said.

"But we must," said John Mangles. "I will try to go where my sailor could not succeed."

"No, John! You do not even have a horse to carry you those two hundred miles!"

This was true, for Mulrady's horse, the only one that remained, had not returned. Had he fallen during the attack on his rider, or was he straying in the bush, or had the convicts seized him?

"Whatever happens, we will not separate," said Glenarvan. "Let's wait a week, a fortnight if need be, for the Snowy to return to its normal level. We can then reach Twofold Bay by short stages, and from there we can send orders to the *Duncan* by a safer route, along the coast."

"That seems the only option," said Paganel.

"So, my friends, no more separation," said Glenarvan. "It is too great a risk for one man to venture alone into this bandit infested wilderness. And now, may God save our poor sailor, and protect the rest of us!"

Glenarvan was right on both points: first in prohibiting any solo attempts, and second, in deciding to wait until the crossing of the Snowy River was possible. He was scarcely thirty-five miles from Delegate, the first frontier village of New South Wales, where he would find transportation to Twofold Bay, and from there he could telegraph to Melbourne his orders to the *Duncan*.

These measures were wise, but they were taken late. If Glenarvan had not sent Mulrady on the road to Lucknow what misfortunes might have been averted? To say nothing of the assassination of the sailor!

When Glenarvan returned to the camp, he found his companions in better

spirits. They seemed more hopeful than before.

"*He's getting better! He's getting better!*" cried Robert, running out to meet Lord Glenarvan.

"Mulrady?"

"Yes, Edward," said Lady Helena. "His fever has broken. The Major is more confident. Our sailor will live."

"Where is MacNabbs?" asked Glenarvan.

"With him. Mulrady wanted to speak to him. Don't disturb them."

The wounded man had awakened about an hour ago, and his fever had abated. The first thing Mulrady did on recovering his wits and speech, was to ask for Lord Glenarvan, or failing him, the Major. MacNabbs seeing him so weak, would have forbidden any conversation, but Mulrady insisted with such energy that the Major had to give in.

The conversation had already lasted some minutes when Glenarvan returned. The only thing to do now was wait for MacNabbs' report.

Presently, the leather curtains of the wagon opened, and the Major appeared. He rejoined his friends at the foot of a gum tree where the tent was erected. His face, usually so stolid, showed that something disturbed him. When his eyes fell on Lady Helena and the young girl, his glance was full of sorrow.

Glenarvan questioned him, and this is essentially what the major had just learned.

When he left the camp Mulrady followed one of the paths indicated by Paganel. He made as good speed as the darkness of the night would allow. He reckoned that he had gone about two miles when several men — five he thought — threw themselves at his horse's head. The animal reared; Mulrady seized his revolver and fired. He thought he saw two of his assailants fall. He recognized Ben Joyce in the muzzle flash, but that was all. He hadn't had time to fire all the chambers. He felt a violent blow to his right side and was thrown to the ground.

However, he had not lost consciousness. The assailants thought he was dead. He felt them search his pockets, and then he heard them speak. "I have the letter," said one of the convicts. "Give it to me," said Ben Joyce, "and now the *Duncan* is ours."

At this point in MacNabbs' story, Glenarvan could not suppress a cry.

"Now you fellows," said Ben Joyce, "catch the horse. In two days I shall be on board the *Duncan*, and in six I shall reach Twofold Bay. That is the rendezvous. The

Lord and his party will be still mired in the marshes of the Snowy. Cross the river at Kemple Pier bridge, proceed to the coast, and wait for me. I will find a way to get you on board. Once at sea in a ship like the *Duncan*, we shall be masters of the Indian Ocean." "Hurrah for Ben Joyce!" cried the convicts. Mulrady's horse was brought, and Ben Joyce galloped away on the Lucknow road, while the band took the road south-east to the Snowy River. Mulrady, though severely wounded, had the strength to drag himself to within three hundred paces from the camp where they found him almost dead.

"And that," said MacNabbs, "is Mulrady's story. And now you can understand why the brave fellow was so determined to speak."

This revelation terrified Glenarvan and the rest of the party.

"Pirates! Pirates!" cried Glenarvan. "My crew massacred! My *Duncan* in the hands of these bandits!"

"Yes, for Ben Joyce will surprise the ship," said the Major, "and then..."

"Well, we must get to the coast before them," said Paganel.

"But how are we to cross the Snowy?" said Wilson.

"As they will," replied Glenarvan. "They are to cross at Kemple Pier Bridge, and so will we."

"But what about Mulrady?" asked Lady Helena. "What will become of him?"

"We will carry him; we will take turns. Can I leave my crew to the mercy of Ben Joyce and his gang?"

It might be possible to cross the Snowy at Kemple Pier bridge, but dangerous. The convicts might entrench themselves at that point, and defend it. They were at least thirty against seven! But there are times when you don't count the odds: when you have no choice but to go on.

"My Lord," said John Mangles, "before risking our last chance, before



Five men threw themselves at the horse's head

venturing to this bridge, we ought to reconnoitre, and I will undertake it."

"I will go with you, John," said Paganel. This proposal was agreed to, and John Mangles and Paganel prepared to leave at once. They had to go down the Snowy, follow its banks until they reached the place indicated by Ben Joyce, and especially avoid the sight of any convicts who might be beating the banks.

So, well provisioned and armed, the two brave comrades set off and soon disappeared, sneaking through the tall reeds by the river.

The rest anxiously waited all day for their return. Evening came, and the scouts had not come back. They began to be seriously worried.

Finally, around eleven o'clock, Wilson signalled their return. Paganel and John Mangles were exhausted with the exertions of a ten mile walk.

Glenarvan sprang to meet them. "The bridge! Did you find it?"

"Yes, a creeper bridge," said John Mangles. "The convicts passed over it, but..."

"But what?" asked Glenarvan, sensing some new misfortune.

"They burned it after they passed!" said Paganel.

Chapter XXII

Eden

IT WAS NOT A TIME FOR DESPAIR, BUT ACTION. THE BRIDGE AT KEMPLE PIER WAS destroyed, but the Snowy had to be crossed, and they must reach Twofold Bay before Ben Joyce and his gang, whatever the cost. Instead of wasting time in empty words John Mangles and Glenarvan went down to examine the river the next day, January 16th, in order to plan the crossing.

The tumultuous waters, swollen by the rains, had not gone down. They swirled with indescribable fury. It would be suicide to confront them. Glenarvan stood motionless, gazing with folded arms and downcast face.

“Do you want me to swim to the other shore?” asked John Mangles.

“No, John!” said Glenarvan, holding back the bold young man. “Wait!”

They both returned to the camp. The day passed in the most intense anxiety. Ten times Lord Glenarvan went to look at the river, trying to invent some bold way to cross it, but in vain. Had a torrent of lava rushed between the shores, it could not have been more impassable.

During these long wasted hours, Lady Helena, with advice from the Major, was nursing Mulrady with the utmost skill. The sailor felt his strength slowly returning. MacNabbs ventured to affirm that no vital organ was injured. The loss of blood was enough to account for the patient’s weakness. With the wound closed and the hemorrhage stopped, time and rest would be all that was needed to complete his cure. Lady Helena had insisted on giving up the first compartment of the wagon to him. Mulrady felt ashamed; his greatest concern was the delay that his condition might cause Glenarvan, and he made him promise that they would leave him in the camp under Wilson’s care should the passage of the river become possible.

Unfortunately, no passage was practicable, either that day or the next, January 17th. Glenarvan despaired to see himself so blocked. Lady Helena and the Major vainly tried to calm him, and urged him to be patient. *Patient*, when perhaps at that very moment Ben Joyce was boarding the yacht! When the *Duncan* might be casting off her moorings, raising steam to reach the fatal coast, and each hour was bringing her nearer!

John Mangles felt all that Glenarvan was suffering in his own heart. He was determined to overcome the obstacle at any price, and constructed an Australian style canoe with large sheets of gum tree bark. These sheets were held together in a

frame of wooden strips, and formed a very fragile boat.

The Captain and Wilson tried this frail boat during the day of the 18th. All that skill, strength, tact, and courage could do, they did. But they were scarcely in the current before they capsized, and nearly paid with their lives for the dangerous experiment. The boat disappeared, dragged down by an eddy. John Mangles and Wilson had not gone five fathoms, and the river was fifty across, swollen by the heavy rains and melted snows.

The 19th and 20th of January passed in the same fashion. The Major and Glenarvan went five miles up the river without finding a ford. Everywhere they found the same roaring, rushing, impetuous torrent. The whole southern slope of the Australian Alps poured its liquid masses into this single bed.

It was necessary to give up any hope of saving the *Duncan*. Five days had elapsed since the departure of Ben Joyce. The yacht must at this moment be at the coast, and in the hands of the convicts!

It was impossible that this state of affairs could last. The very violence of the flood meant that it would soon be exhausted. On the morning of the 21st, Paganel went to the river, and found that the water was lower. He reported his observation to Glenarvan.

“What does it matter *now*?” said Glenarvan. “It is too late!”

“That’s no reason to prolonging our stay here,” said the Major.

“Indeed,” said John Mangles. “Perhaps tomorrow the river may be crossable.”

“And will that save my poor crew?” cried Glenarvan.

“Your Honour will listen to me,” said John Mangles. “I know Tom Austin. He would execute your orders, and set out as soon as departure was possible. But who knows whether the *Duncan* was ready, and her damage repaired when Ben Joyce arrived in Melbourne? And suppose the yacht could not go to sea. Suppose there was a delay of a day, or two days.”

“You are right, John!” said Glenarvan. “We must get to Twofold Bay. We are only thirty-five miles from Delegate.”

“Yes,” said Paganel, “and we will find some rapid means of transportation in that town. Who knows if we will not arrive in time to prevent a calamity?”

“Let’s get to it!” said Glenarvan.

John Mangles and Wilson immediately set to work to construct a large raft. Experience had shown that pieces of bark could not resist the violence of the torrent. John cut down some gum trees, and made a rough but solid raft with their trunks. It was a long task, and the day passed without it being finished. It was not

completed until the next morning.

By this time the waters of the Snowy had significantly lowered. The torrent had once more become a river, though still a very rapid one. John hoped to be able to scull, and row the raft to the opposite bank.

At half-past twelve, they packed two days of provisions into whatever they could carry. The remainder was abandoned with the wagon and the tent. Mulrady's convalescence was progressing well enough that he could be moved.

At one o'clock, they all took their places on the raft still moored to the shore. John Mangles positioned Wilson on the starboard side with a roughly fashioned oar to steady the raft against the current, and reduce its drift. He stood at the back, with a large scull, to propel them along. Lady Helena and Mary Grant occupied the centre of the raft, near Mulrady. Glenarvan, the Major, Paganel, and Robert surrounded them, ready to help if needed.

"Are we ready, Wilson?" John Mangles asked his sailor.

"Yes, Captain," said Wilson, seizing his oar with a sturdy hand.

"Watch out, and support us against the current."

John Mangles untied the raft, and with a push he threw it into the waters of the Snowy. Everything went well for fifteen fathoms. Wilson's oar kept them from drifting too far downstream. But soon the raft was caught in an eddy, and spun around more rapidly than their rowing or sculling could control. despite their best efforts, Wilson and John Mangles soon found themselves turned completely around, which made the action of the oars ineffective.

There was no help for it. They could do nothing to stop the gyrations of the raft. It spun around with dizzying rapidity, and drifted out of its course. John Mangles stood with pale face and set teeth, gazing at the whirling current.

The raft had reached the middle of the river, about half a mile downstream from their starting point. Here, the current was extremely strong, and this broke the whirling eddies, and gave the raft some stability.

John and Wilson seized their oars again, and managed to push the raft diagonally across the current. This brought them nearer the left shore. They were only ten fathoms from it when Wilson's oar broke, and the raft, no longer supported against the current, was dragged downstream. John tried to resist at the risk of breaking his scull too, and Wilson — with bleeding hands — joined his efforts.

At last they succeeded and the raft, after a crossing that had taken more than half an hour, struck against the steep bank of the opposite shore. The shock was so

violent that the cords holding the logs together broke, and the raft came apart. The travellers barely had time to catch hold of the brush overhanging the steep bank. They dragged Mulrady and the two dripping ladies to shore. Everyone was safe, but most of their provisions and weapons, except for the Major's rifle, drifted away with the remains of the raft.

The river was crossed. The little company found themselves almost without resources, thirty-five miles from Delegate, in the midst of the unknown wilds of the Victoria frontier. Neither settlers nor squatters were to be met with, here. It was entirely uninhabited, unless by ferocious, bushranger bandits.

They resolved to set off at once. Mulrady saw that he would be a burden to them, and he asked to stay, alone, until assistance could be sent from Delegate.

Glenarvan refused. It would take at least three days to reach Delegate, and five days to reach the coast. He couldn't hope to get there before January 26th. If the *Duncan* had left Melbourne on the 16th what difference would a few days' delay make?

"No, my friend," he said. "I will not leave anyone behind. We will make a litter and take turns carrying you."

The litter was made of boughs of eucalyptus covered with branches. Willingly or not, Mulrady was obliged to take his place on it. Glenarvan would be the first to carry his sailor. He took hold of the stretcher at one end and Wilson took the other, and they set off.

What a sad spectacle. It ended so badly, this expedition which had started so well. They were no longer looking for Harry Grant. This continent, where he was not, and never had been, threatened to prove fatal to those who sought him. And when his daring compatriots reached the Australian coast, they wouldn't even find the *Duncan* waiting to take them home again.

The first day passed silently and painfully. Every ten minutes the litter changed



The raft had reached the middle of the river

bearers. All the sailor's comrades took their share in this task without complaining of fatigue, which was increased by a great deal of heat.

In the evening, after a journey of only five miles, they camped under a thicket of gum trees. The small store of provisions saved from the raft composed the evening meal. All they had to depend upon now was the Major's rifle.

It was a dark, rainy night, and morning seemed as if it would never dawn. They set off again, but the Major could not find a chance of firing a shot. This fatal region was more than a desert. Animals themselves didn't frequent it.

Fortunately, Robert discovered a bustard's nest with a dozen large eggs in it, which Olbinett cooked under hot ashes. These, with a few roots of purslane which were growing at the bottom of a ravine, were all the breakfast of the 23rd.

The path became extremely difficult. The sandy plains were bristling with *spinifex*, a prickly plant which is called the "porcupine" in Melbourne. It tears clothing to rags, and makes the legs bleed. The courageous ladies never complained, but went on valiantly; setting an example, and encouraging each other with a word and a look.

They stopped in the evening at the foot of Bulla Bulla, on the banks of the Jungalla Creek. The supper would have been very scant, if MacNabbs had not killed a large rat, the *Leporillus conditor*, which has an excellent reputation, from the point of view of food. Olbinett roasted it, and it would have been pronounced even superior to its reputation had it equalled a sheep in size. They were obliged to be content with it, however, and it was devoured to the bones.

On the 24th the weary but still energetic travellers started off again. After circling around the foot of the mountain, they crossed long prairies where the grass seemed made of whalebone. It was a tangle of darts, a medley of sharp bayonets, and a path had to be cut through it: sometimes with an axe, and sometimes by fire.

There was not even a question of breakfast that morning. Nothing could be more barren than this region strewn with quartz debris. Not only hunger, but thirst, was cruelly felt. The burning atmosphere intensified its assault. Glenarvan and his friends could only go half a mile an hour. Should this lack of food and water continue until evening, they would all sink on the road, never to rise again.

But when everything fails a man, and he finds himself without resources, at the very moment when he feels he must give up, then Providence steps in.

Water presented itself in the *cephalotes* plants, a species with cup-shaped flowers, filled with refreshing liquid, which hung from the branches of coralliform

shrubs. They all quenched their thirst with these, and felt revived.

The only food they could find was the same as the natives were forced to subsist upon, when they could find neither game, nor snakes, nor insects. Paganel discovered a plant in the dry bed of a creek whose excellent properties had been frequently described by one of his colleagues in the *Geographical Society*.

It was nardoo, a cryptogamous plant of the family *Marsileaceae*, and the same which had prolonged the lives of Burke, Wills, and King in the deserts of the interior. Under its leaves, which resembled those of the clover, there were dried sporules as large as a lentil, and these sporules — when crushed between two stones — made a sort of flour. This was converted into coarse bread which stilled the pangs of hunger, at least. There was a great abundance of this plant growing in this place, and Olbinett gathered a large supply so that they were sure of food for several days.

The next day, the 25th, Mulrady was able to walk part of the way. His wound was entirely closed. The town of Delegate was not more than ten miles off, and that evening they camped at longitude 149°, on the very frontier of New South Wales.

A fine, penetrating rain had been falling for a few hours. There would have been no shelter from this, but John Mangles chanced upon a deserted and dilapidated sawyer's hut. It was necessary to be satisfied with this miserable hut of branches and stubble. Wilson wanted to kindle a fire to prepare the nardoo bread, and he went out to pick up the dead wood scattered all over the ground. But he found it would not light. The great quantity of aluminous material which it contained prevented all combustion. This was the incombustible wood Paganel had mentioned in his list of strange Australian products.

They had to dispense with fire and bread,^{[fn1](#)} and sleep in their damp clothes while the laughing birds hidden in the high branches seemed to scoff at these unfortunate travellers.

Glenarvan was nearly at the end of his sufferings, however. It was time for them to come to their end. The two young ladies were making heroic efforts, but their strength was hourly decreasing. They dragged themselves along, almost unable to walk.

Next morning they started at daybreak. At eleven o'clock, Delegate came in sight in Wellesley County, fifty miles from Twofold Bay.

Transportation was quickly arranged there. Feeling so close to the coast, hope returned to Glenarvan's heart. Perhaps there might have been some slight delay,

and they might get there before the arrival of the *Duncan*, after all. In twenty-four hours they would reach the bay.

At noon, after a comfortable meal, the travellers all settled in a mail coach drawn by five strong horses. It left Delegate at a gallop.

The postilions, stimulated by the promise of a princely reward, drove rapidly along a well-kept road. They did not lose two minutes at the relays where they changed horses, which took place every ten miles. It seemed as if they were infected with Glenarvan's zeal.

They ran at six miles an hour all day long, and through the night.

The next day, at sunrise, a low murmur announced their approach to the **Pacific Ocean**.^{fn2} It was necessary to go around the bay to reach the shore at the 37th parallel, the exact point where Tom Austin was to await their arrival.

When the sea appeared, all eyes anxiously gazed at the horizon. Was the *Duncan*, by a miracle of Providence, running close to the shore as she had been a month ago when they reached Cape Corrientes, and they had found her on the Argentine coast?

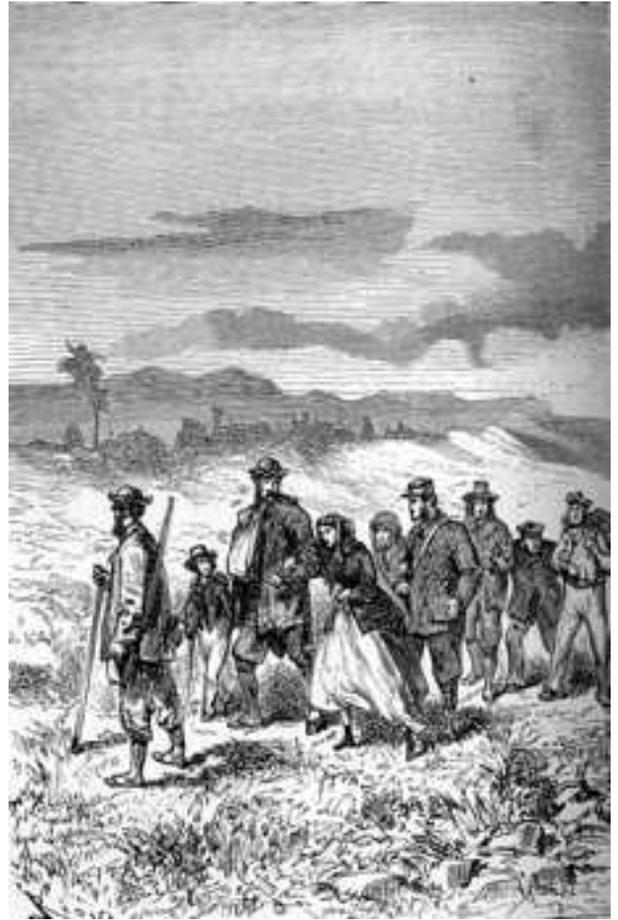
They saw nothing. Sea and sky mingled in the same horizon. Not a sail enlivened the vast stretch of ocean.

One hope still remained. Perhaps Tom Austin had thought it necessary to cast anchor in Twofold Bay, for the sea was heavy, and a ship would not dare to venture near the shore.

"To Eden!" said Glenarvan.

Immediately the mail coach resumed the route around the bay toward the small town of Eden, five miles away.

The postilions stopped not far from the lighthouse which marks the entrance of the port. Some ships were anchored in the harbour, but none of them bore the Malcolm flag at its masthead.



The young women dragged themselves along, almost unable to walk

Glenarvan, John Mangles, and Paganel got out of the coach and rushed to the customs house, to inquire about the arrival of vessels within the last few days. No ship had arrived in the bay for a week.

“Perhaps the yacht has not left Melbourne, yet,” said Glenarvan, who did not wish to return to despair. “Perhaps we have arrived before her!”

John Mangles shook his head. He knew Tom Austin. His first mate would never have delayed the execution of an order for ten days.

“I must know how things stand, in any event,” said Glenarvan. “Better certainty than doubt.”

A quarter of an hour later, a telegram was sent to the trustee of the shipbrokers in Melbourne. Then the party was driven to the *Victoria Hotel*.

At two o’clock a telegram was delivered to Lord Glenarvan.

*LORD GLENARVAN, EDEN,
TWO FOLD BAY.*

DUNCAN LEFT ON 18 TIDE. DESTINATION UNKNOWN.

J ANDREW SB

The telegram dropped from Glenarvan’s hands.

There was no doubt now. The honest Scottish yacht was now a pirate ship in the hands of Ben Joyce!

So ended this journey across Australia, which had commenced under such auspicious circumstances. All trace of Captain Grant and the castaways seemed to be irrevocably lost. This failure had cost the lives of a whole crew. Lord Glenarvan had been vanquished, and this courageous searcher, whom the unfriendly elements of the Pampas had been unable to stop, had been conquered on the Australian shore by the perversity of men.

END OF BOOK TWO

[fn1.](#) Possibly just as well. Improperly prepared [nardoo](#) is mildly toxic, and may have hastened the demises of Burke and Wills. — DAS

[fn2.](#) The *Hetzel* edition has “Indian” here, but this is definitely the Pacific coast of Australia. — DAS



The searcher's route across Australia at the 37th parallel