

and bring up the next case. (Turns and smokes up the chimney once more.)

This was the sort of justice meted out at the time I speak of.

Then the newspaper Press, little by little, and bit by bit, suffering much and suffering long, released itself from Government and official thrall, and made its voice heard, when all these violations against right and justice and personal liberty were rolled back, as dense clouds of smoke recede before a strong wind.

I may here in all propriety draw attention to a practice common at the time among some of the squatters. Between their sheep-stations and town they would establish a public-house, into which they would place some married man and woman to manage. When a man's time of service was up, an order, signed by the squatter, was given upon the landlord of the public-house. Upon the order being presented for payment, the landlord would admit that it was all right, but would say that he had no money in the house. He would be going to town in a couple of days, when he should get the money from his agents. The probability was that the landlady would come forward and ask the man to have something to drink, informing him that he should have comfortable quarters until her husband returned. The result of all this was that the man, who had not had any drink in him for twelve months, was within three or four hours in a state of senseless intoxication. He would remain in the place a week, treating every loafer that came along the road. Then, one morning, the landlord would present his victim with a bill, showing that he had spent more than the amount of his order. A bottle of rum, by way of consolation, was given him to carry off. He would perhaps be told that he could choose a pair of boots out of the store, and pay when he earned more wages, but he would have to leave that day. And so from week to week in like miserable plight, would many men arrive and depart in the same way,—some to return to their late employer under a new engagement, and some to die of delirium tremens in the fastness of a dense bush country, where their carcasses would be found, the flesh eaten off the bones by wild dogs, and an empty rum bottle alongside of the skeleton.

BY SNYDER.

No. XX.

LOST IN THE BUSH.

The terror which clings to these words can only be known to those who have experienced the feeling. It is one which is utterly indescribable.

A man towards sunset has reached some out-station in a rough, hilly, and heavily-forested country. He is on his way to some homestead where he has engaged to serve. It is some fifty or sixty miles distant, and he is travelling on foot with his rug strapped at his back. He is hospitably received. The "billy" is swung over the fire, and he is refreshed with tea and baked mutton and damper. The pipe and the talk follow. Then unfolding his blanket he throws himself down upon some dried sheepskins, and rolling himself in his rug, tired with his day's march, he is soon in the land of dreams. He is awakened at break of day by the bird known as the shepherd's clock. It is the laughing jackass, common to Australia. Then he rises, folds his blankets, washes in the creek or water-hole at hand, and having breakfasted he asks to be directed to the next station on the line of his travel, where he will be able to obtain quarters for the night. The shepherd, or the hut-keeper, or stock-rider, just as it may happen, points to a track—for there are no roads—when he is told to keep along it until it branches off into two tracks, of which he has to take the right-hand one, always bearing in mind that he cannot go wrong so long as he keeps the sun at his back. I am relating what happened to myself at a time now nearly thirty years gone by, when I was a young man in full health, slim, and lithe of limb, well

stocked with animal spirits. I have lit my pipe, and have bidden good-day to the out-station hands; have carried away some cold meat and a large slice of damper. I am safe on the track, and the rising mid-summer sun is already striking its scorching rays on my back. I am walking along at a steady pace, thinking of many things—thinking of home, and father and

mother, by whom it was not so many months ago I was folded in an embrace never again to be renewed. I am thinking of the girl who had promised to be my wife; who would patiently wait, and be faithful to her promise until I was able to send for or return across seas to fetch her. I am walking on, building castles in the air, making it come to pass that remote possibilities were near probabilities, and probabilities, certainties. I am in a pleasant reverie. Presently I stop to fill and light my pipe, when, suddenly, I discover to my instant and overwhelming dread, that the sun instead of being at my back, is in full glare at my right. I am off my track! I am, in fact, lost in the bush! A dizziness seizes me. I stagger forward to a huge piece of dead timber, and seat myself, where I try to collect my scattered thoughts. I am thinking how long ago it was that I got off the track, but my memory fails to serve me. I know that I must have travelled at least ten or twelve miles, but whether it was three or six miles back that I had got astray I could not tell. My throat is parched with thirst and there is no sign of water near at hand. I break off a piece of damper and try to masticate, but the bush bread is as dry as ashes in my mouth. I cannot swallow so much as a crumb of it.

Then I rouse myself, and thinking that by once more keeping my back to the sun I may again strike the track, I make the resolve and push my way on for two hours, by which time the sun is nearly overhead. Then, as it descends in the direction of its setting, I know that I ought to have the sun to my face; still not quite to my face, but a little to the right or left of it. And here, not being a bushman, I am uncertain which it should be. The agony I suffer from thirst is so intense that the feeling and the terror I am beset with causes me to feel that I am on the brink of losing my senses. I have read and heard of the awful sufferings of men lost in the bush, and these horrors press up so that I fall into a cold shiver, while large drops of sweat roll down from my forehead on to my face, falling upon my shirt. Now it is that I feel my feet blistering and my body becoming exhausted. Every five or ten minutes I seek rest on a piece of dead timber, of which there is much lying in every direction; for the part of the country I am in has evidently at some time previous been subjected to a bush fire. The ground is bare of all grass, and so dry and parched that it crackles under my feet. Victorians who have travelled across the Western plains till they have reached the Wardy Talloch country will be able to understand what that district was like, before it became settled upon as it is at this present day. My thirst is more than I can bear, when a sudden thought flashes across me. Taking a fig of twist tobacco from my pocket, I cut a piece, and thrusting it into my mouth I commence to chew it. The effect for a time causes a great relief. It produces saliva, and for another hour I continued on comparatively refreshed. It is, I suppose, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when, to my unutterable joy, I come upon a track, very narrow, but still so well marked that it cannot well be missed. Now again trouble and anxiety beset me, for I do not know whether I should follow it to the right or to the left, for I have come across it at a dead right angle. There is nothing to guide me in making a choice, so I take the left, and hasten along as fast as my weary limbs and scorched, blistered, and now bleeding feet will let me. The track is a very devious one, which I cannot account for, because that made by bushmen generally runs on in a straight line, unless some obstruction, such as a hill or a swamp comes in the way. Nothing will tempt me to leave the track, even to look around me for the indications of a hut or a creek, or a flock of sheep in charge of a shepherd. I keep my course laboriously, painfully dragging one foot after the other, until the sun has sunk so that I can just see between the trees in the distance that in half an hour more it will have set. Now then another terror seizes upon me; a terror of a new kind; for my hopes have been raised that so long as I keep on the track it will lead to where I shall find either man or habitation, or it may happily be both. The sun has done its work, and twilight begins to fade into the darker shades of evening, when, more misery, I come upon the exact spot where I had first discovered the track. I have been making an irregular circle. I have mistaken a cattle track, which leads to nowhere, for a bush track leading to some homestead.

My thirst has now returned upon me more agonizing than ever; the tobacco, which gave relief for a short time, only now aggravates my sufferings. My tongue is dry and rough; my lips are glued together; and my skin coated with sweat congealed with dirt. I try to cooey, in the hope that some stock-rider out hunting up cattle, or some splitters and fencers, or bullock-driver camped out will hear me, but my tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth and gives forth no sound. I force my clammy lips apart, and speak to myself, and find I am only speaking in a hoarse whisper. I sink down as night sets in, and pray fervently that Heaven, in its infinite goodness and

mercy, will send me relief. I folded my rug under and over me, and sink into a profound sleep. When I awake it is broad daylight. The herbage and ground are saturated with a heavy dew, which has fallen during the night, my rug is almost as wet as if it had been dipped in a water-hole. I am refreshed and my great thirst has left me. But I am still in the wilderness, without guide, or compass, or experience to direct me. I sit up, and make an effort to give consistency to my thoughts. I know that if I had been on a cattle track I am not likely to be very far from the station of a stock-owner. I can see at a distance, through the timber, a hill some three or four hundred feet high. I make for this, and commence an ascent, when I am gladdened beyond all measure of expression to see a pair of bullocks yoked together, feeding at a short distance to the left of the rise. Then I feel a relief that only those placed like myself can feel. I cooey at the top of my voice, and the cooey is answered. I turn in the direction, and find a bullock-driver camping under his dray. I am safe, and only three miles from the out-station I had left the morning before. Now, it will be seen that I know something of the sufferings and terror experienced in being lost in the bush, only for no longer a time than 24 hours. Ten years ago I was lost in the bush between the Pelorus Sound and Picton, during the time of the rush to the Wakamarina goldfields, in the province of Marlborough, but I was in company with four others, two of them experienced bushmen; and although I suffered the loss of my blankets and my clothes, which were torn in shreds, and my boots, which were cut to pieces, I did not experience any of that terror which affected me on the occasion I have told of.

In those days many men perished miserably by losing themselves in the bush. Some were never heard of or seen again. Sometimes the body would be found with clothes torn in shreds, and the flesh eaten away by the dingo or the wild cat. Some had written short but intelligible accounts how they had become lost; how all hope had left them, or how they had laid down for the last time to die. One body so found had, before life had fled, cut on the bark of a white gum tree these words, "Oh, God! have mercy upon me." Who shall pronounce the depth and agony of that dying man's feelings when, with his clasp knife he was carving that short prayer upon the tree, near the foot of which he fell prostrate and died.

The power among white men to find their way through unknown bush country, amounts in some instances to a positive instinct. There are others again who have lived many years in the bush who would never find their way out from one station to another without there is a track to guide or a creek to follow up. I have seen this instinct strong in lads not more than ten or twelve years of age.

You wish to get to some squatter's homestead. You know it lies in a certain direction, and that by keeping steadily on north or north-east, or whatever direction of the compass it may be in, that you cannot well miss your way. You know this, and you venture on by yourself; but before you have gone two or three miles you find that on descending and ascending one rough gully, and going round a hill or clearing yourself of a piece of swamp, that you are all astray, and that your compass is worse than useless. It would have served you well enough had you merely to cross an open plain, but to one who has had no experience in the use of such an instrument in the wild bush, it merely misleads and confuses. So, seeing that you are likely to lose your way, you turn back to where you started. It may be a bush public-house or a home station. You have explained your difficulty. There is a cry for Dick, or Joe, or young Bill, when a boy comes running up. He is

ragged and sun-burnt. He wears an old cabbage-tree hat, from out of which his hair protrudes in bristles. His moleskin trousers are tied at the ankles with a strip of bullock hide. When he speaks to his betters he don't say "sir," and when he asks for a thing he don't say "please." Dick or Joe, as the case may be, is asked whether he can show you to the Yallingong Station, or again, whatever station it may be by name. Dick says he was never there, and asks: "Doesn't it lay over towards sunrise, round the gap, and to the left of the lagoon?" He is told it does. Then that boy, for a small reward, says he'll hit on it. And you go with him, and he does hit on it. He appears to look at nothing as he goes along. He turns to the right for no apparent reason. He goes clean through the swamp, sending the water up in spray, which he says is not anywhere more than two feet deep at that time of the year. He does not go round the hill, but right up it. When he gets at the top he takes a look round for a few seconds, and then goes down the other side in a somewhat slanting direction. In three hours he has guided you over ten miles of rough bush country. He has done his work and you have paid him—I hope something over what you bargained for. You ask, is he going back then, and he answers "Not today." He walks into the men's hut; asks for a pannikin of tea and something to eat. He readily and at once gets what he asks for. Then he says he is going to shake himself down till next morning. He coils away in a corner and sleeps—O, my gentle valetudinarian, don't you wish you could sleep like him?

This boy, when he comes to be a man, is picked as one for a hazardous exploring expedition or to find new country for a sheep or cattle run. He will go for water five miles in a direct line in a country he has never been over before, while another man, without his experience and instinct, would perish of thirst within two hundred yards of a creek.

I have known of many children, some little beyond infancy, lost in the bush. And this is what has struck me as passing strange, both as to what has come under my own observation, and what I have read in newspaper reports. Children straying in the bush will live without food, and will hold life in them more days than men strong of body and robust of constitution. The reason, I take it to be, is this; children are not struck with the same terror, when they find themselves lost, as men are. They, in their happy ignorance, are not conscious of their danger. It is the horror which seizes upon a man that prostrates him, deprives him of his reason, and renders him unfit to think his way out of his danger. Another noticeable fact with children lost in the bush:—In almost every instance, whether dead or alive, they have succeeded in reaching water. Men found dead in wildernesses, or wandering deprived of their reason, are always far away from that element which would have preserved so much longer their lives and assuaged their sufferings. I have asked this question many a time, and never got a satisfactory answer. Is it instinct, or what is it? But certain it is that a lost child in the bush is always, or nearly always, found where water is within reach of it.

No. XXII.

[BY "SNYDER."] NATIVE BUSH TRACKERS.

I HAVE given my own experiences of the terrible feelings experienced when lost for only one twenty-four hours in the Australian bush. But these are nothing as compared with the inexpressible sufferings of those who have been lost many days and nights either in the vast Australian plains or in the fastnesses of forest ranges, where there is nothing to guide the lost man, nothing to sustain life, and where all hope failing, leaves him a prey to despair and such mental agony as no words can paint. With all his superior intelligence, the Maori is no match for the Australian aboriginal in finding his way either in a direct or devious course through an unexplored country. These aboriginals are possessed with a wondrous gift for following up a trail, quite undistinguishable to a white man, however naturally shrewd and observant he may be. The Victorian savage when traversing an unknown country will always find his way to water, and will know by such slight indications as will escape the observation of the white man where an opossum may be found, or the wallaby, or the native rat is to be unearthed. These serve him for food;—raw, where the wood for obtaining fire by a peculiar mode of friction is not to be ob-