AUSTRALIA TWICE TRAVERSED.

BOOK II.—continued.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM 12TH MARCH TO 19TH APRIL, 1874.

The Rebecca—The Petermann range—Extraordinary place—The Docker—Livingstone’s Pass—A park—Wall-like hills—The Ruined Rampart—Pink, green, and blue water—Park-like scenery—The Hull—A high cone—Sugar-loaf Peak—Pretty hills and grassy valleys—Name several features—A wild Parthenius—Surprise a tribe of natives—An attack—Mount Olga in view—Overtaken by the enemy—Appearance of Mount Olga—Breakfast interrupted—Escape by flight—The depot—Small circles of stone—Springs—Mark a tree—Slaughter Terrible Billy—A smoke signal—Trouble in collecting the horses—A friendly conference—Leave Sladen Water—Fort McKellar—Revisit the Circus—The west end of the range—Name two springs.

The country towards the other ranges eastwards appeared poor and scrubby. We went first to a hill a good deal south of east, and crossed the dry bed of a broad, sandy, and stony creek running north. I called it the Rebecca. From it we went to a low saddle between two hills, all the while having a continuous range to the north; this was the extension beyond the pinnacle of the wall-like...
crescent. A conspicuous mount in this northern line I called Mount Sargood.* From this saddle we saw a range of hills which ran up from the south-west, and, extending now eastwards, formed a valley nearly in front of us. I called this new feature the Petermann Range. In it, a peculiar notch existed, to which we went. This new range was exceedingly wall-like and very steep, having a serrated ridge all along; I found the notch to be only a rough gully, and not a pass. We continued along the range, and at four miles farther we came to a pass where two high hills stood apart, and allowed an extremely large creek—that is to say, an extremely wide one—whose trend was northerly, to come through. Climbing one of the hills, I saw that the creek came from the south-west, and was here joined by another from the south-east. There was an exceedingly fine and pretty piece of park-like scenery, enclosed almost entirely by hills, the Petermann Range forming a kind of huge outside wall, which enclosed a mass of lower hills to the south, from which these two creeks find their sources. This was a very extraordinary place; I searched in vain in the pass for water, and could not help wondering where such a watercourse could go to. The creek I called the Docker.* The pass and park just within it I called Livingstone Pass and Learmouth* Park. Just outside the pass, northerly, was a high hill I called Mount Skene.*

Finding no water in the pass, we went to the more easterly of the two creeks; it was very small compared with the Docker. It was now dusk, and we had to camp without water. The day was hot. This range is most singular in construction; it rises on either side almost perpendicularly, and does not
appear to have very much water about it; the hills indeed seem to be mere walls, like the photographs of some of the circular ranges of mountains in the

moon. There was very fine grass, and our horses stayed well. We had thunder and lightning, and the air became a little cooled. The creek we were on appeared to rise in some low hills to the south; though it meandered about so much, it was only by travelling, we found that it came from a peculiar ridge, upon whose top was a fanciful-looking, broken wall or rampart, with a little pinnacle on one side. When nearly abreast, south, of this pinnacle, we found some water in the creek-bed, which was now very stony. The water was impregnated with ammonia from the excreta of emus, dogs, birds, beasts, and fishes, but the horses drank it with avidity. Above this we got some sweet water in rocks and sand. I called the queer-looking wall the Ruined Rampart. There was a quantity of
different kinds of water, some tasting of ammonia, some saltish, and some putrid. A few ducks flew up from these strange ponds. There was an overhanging ledge and cave, which gave us a good shade while we remained here, the morning being very hot. I called these MacBain's* Springs.

Following the creek, we found in a few miles that it took its rise in a mass of broken table-lands to the south. We still had the high walls of the Petermann to the north, and very close to us. In five miles we left this water-shed, and descended the rough bed of another creek running eastwards; it also had some very queer water in it—there were pink, green, and blue holes. Ducks were also here; but as we had no gun, we could not get any. Some sweet water was procured by scratching in the sand. This creek traversed a fine piece of open grassy country—a very park-like piece of scenery; the creek joined another, which we reached in two or three miles. The new creek was of enormous width; it came from the low hills to the south and ran north, where the Petermann parted to admit of its passage. The natives were burning the country through the pass. Where on earth can it go? No doubt water exists in plenty at its head, and very likely where the natives are also; but there was none where we struck it. I called this the Hull.*

The main range now ran on in more disconnected portions than formerly; their general direction was 25° south of east. We still had a mass of low hills to the south. We continued to travel under the lea of the main walls, and had to encamp without water, having travelled twenty-five miles from the Ruined Rampart. A high cone in the range I called Mount Curdie.* The next morning I as-
ON THE PETERMANN RANGE.

... cended the eastern end of Mount Curdie. A long way off, over the tops of other hills, I could see a peak bearing 27° south of east; this I supposed was, as it ought to be, the Sugar-loaf Hill, south-westward from Mount Olga, and mentioned previously. To the north there was a long wall-like line stretching across the horizon, ending about north-east; this appeared to be a disconnected range, apparently of the same kind as this, and having gaps or passes to allow watercourses to run through; I called it Blood’s Range. I could trace the Hull for many miles, winding away a trifle west of north. It is evident that there must exist some gigantic basin into which the Rebecca, the Docker, and the Hull, and very likely several more further east, must flow. I feel morally sure that the Lake Amadeus of my former journey must be the receptacle into which these creeks descend, and if there are creeks running into the lake from the south, may there not also be others running in, from the north and west? The line of the southern hills, connected with the Petermann wall, runs across the bearing of the Sugar-loaf, so that I shall have to pass over or through them to reach it. The outer walls still run on in disconnected groups, in nearly the same direction as the southern hills, forming a kind of back wall all the way.

Starting away from our dry encampment, in seven miles we came to where the first hills of the southern mass approached our line of march. They were mostly disconnected, having small grassy valleys lying between them, and they were festooned with cypress pines, and some pretty shrubs, presenting also many huge bare rocks, and being
very similar country to that described at Ayres's Range, through which I passed in August. Here, however, the rocks were not so rounded and did not present so great a resemblance to turtles. At two miles we reached a small creek with gum-timber, and obtained water by digging. The fluid was rather brackish, but our horses were very glad of it, and we gave them a couple of hours' rest. I called this Louisa's Creek. A hill nearly east of Mount Curdie I called Mount Fagan; another still eastward of that I called Mount Miller. At five miles from Louisa's Creek we struck another and much larger one, running to the north; and upon our right hand, close to the spot at which we struck it, was a rocky gorge, through and over which the waters must tumble with a deafening roar in times of flood. Just now the water was not running, but a quantity was lodged among the sand under the huge boulders that fill up the channel. I called this the Chirnside.* A hill in the main range eastward of Mount Miller I called Mount Bowley. At ten miles from Louisa's Creek we camped at another and larger watercourse than the Chirnside, which I called the Shaw. All these watercourses ran up north, the small joining the larger ones—some independently, but all going to the north. Crossing two more creeks, we were now in the midst of a broken, pine-clad, hilly country, very well grassed and very pretty; the hills just named were on the north, and low hills on the south. Ever since we entered the Livingstone Pass, we have traversed country which is remarkably free from the odious triodia. Travelling along in the cool of the next morning through this "wild Parthenius, tossing
in waves of pine," we came at six miles along our course towards the Sugar-loaf, to a place where we surprised some natives hunting. Their wonderfully acute perceptions of sight, sound, and scent almost instantly apprised them of our presence, and as is usual with these persons, the most frantic yells rent the air. Signal fires were immediately lighted in all directions, in order to collect the scattered tribe, and before we had gone a mile we were pursued by a multitude of howling demons. A great number came running after us, making the most unearthly noises, screeching, rattling their spears and other weapons, with the evident intention of not letting us depart out of their coasts. They drew around so closely and so thick, that they prevented our horses from going on, and we were compelled to get out our revolvers for immediate use; we had no rifles with us. A number from behind threw a lot of spears; we were obliged to let the pack-horse go—one spear struck him and made him rush and jump about. This drew their attention from us for a moment; then, just as another flight of spears was let fly at us, we plunged forward on our horses, and fired our revolvers. I was horrified to find that mine would not go off, something was wrong with the cartridges, and, though I snapped it four times, not a single discharge took place. Fortunately Mr. Tietkens's went off all right, and what with that, and the pack-horse rushing wildly about, trying to get up to us, we drove the wretches off, for a time at least. They seemed far more alarmed at the horses than at us, of whom they did not seem to have any fear whatever. We induced them to retire for a bit,
and we went on, after catching the pack-horse and breaking about forty of their spears. I believe a wild Australian native would almost as soon be killed as have his spears destroyed. The country was now much rougher, the little grassy valleys having ceased, and we had to take to the hills.

While travelling along here we saw, having previously heard its rustle, one of those very large iguanas which exist in this part of the country. We had heard tales of their size and ferocity from the natives near the Peake (Telegraph Station); I believe they call them Parenties. The specimen we saw to-day was nearly black, and from head to tail over five feet long. I should very much have liked to catch him; he would make two or three good meals for both of us. Occasionally we got a glimpse of the Sugar-loaf. At nine miles from where we had encountered the enemy, we came to a bold, bare, rounded hill, and on ascending it, we saw immediately below us, that this hilly country ceased immediately to the east, but that it ran on south-easterly. Two or three small creeks were visible below, then a thick scrubby region set in, bounded exactly to the east by Mount Olga itself, which was sixty miles away. There was a large area of bare rock all about this hill, and in a crevice we got a little water and turned our horses out. While we were eating our dinner, Mr. Tietkens gave the alarm that the enemy was upon us again, and instantly we heard their discordant cries. The horses began to gallop off in hobbles. These wretches now seemed determined to destroy us, for, having considerably augmented their numbers, they swarmed around us on all sides.
HOSTILITY OF THE NATIVES.

Two of our new assailants were of commanding stature, each being nearly tall enough to make two of Tietkens if not of me. These giants were not, however, the most forward in the onslaught. The horses galloped off a good way, with Tietkens running after them: in some trepidation lest my revolver should again play me false, though of course I had cleaned and re-loaded it, I prepared to defend the camp. The assailants immediately swarmed round me, those behind running up, howling, until the whole body were within thirty yards of me; then they came on more slowly. I could now see that aggression on my part was the only thing for it; I must try to carry the situation with a coup. I walked up to them very fast and pointed my revolver at them. Some, thinking I was only pointing my finger, pointed their fingers at me. They all had their spears ready and quivering in their wommerals, and I am sure I should in another instant have been transfixed with a score or two of spears, had not Mr. Tietkens, having tied up the horses, come running up, which caused a moment’s diversion, and both our revolvers going off properly this time, we made our foes retreat at a better pace than they had advanced. Some of their spears were smashed in their hands; most of them dropped everything they carried, and went scudding away over the rocks as fast as fear and astonishment would permit. We broke all the spears we could lay our hands on, nearly a hundred, and then finished our dinner.

I would here remark that the natives of Australia have two kinds of spears—namely, the
game- and the war-spear. The game-spear is a thick, heavy implement, barbed with two or three teeth, entirely made of wood, and thrown by the hand. These are used in stalking large game, such as emus, kangaroos, &c., when the hunter sneaks on the quarry, and, at a distance of forty to fifty yards, transfixes it, though he may not just at the moment kill the animal, it completely retards its progress, and the hunter can then run it to earth. The war-spears are different and lighter, the hinder third of them being reed, the other two-thirds mulga wood; they are barbed, and thrown with a wommerah, to a distance up to 150 yards, and are sometimes ten feet long.

After our meal we found a better supply of water in a creek about two miles southward, where there was both a rock reservoir and sand water. We had now come about 130 miles from Sladen Water, and had found waters all the way; Mount Olga was again in sight. The question was, is the water there permanent? Digging would be of no avail there, it is all solid rock; either the water is procured on the surface or there is none. I made this trip to the east, not with any present intention of retreat, but to discover whether there was a line of waters to retreat upon, and to become acquainted with as much country as possible.

The sight of Mount Olga, and the thoughts of retreating to the east, acted like a spur to drive me farther to the west; we therefore turned our backs upon Mount Olga and the distant east. I named this gorge, where we found a good supply of water, Glen Robertson,* and the creek that