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ANTIPODEAN REMINISCENCES.

BY "GRAPH."

NO. 3

On the Road to Mount Alexander.

The morning of Wednesday, the 7th of Sep'r. 185—dawned dark and wet, the rain pouring down with that steady relentlessness that gives but little promise of an early clearing up. On rising and looking out of the window—my last look out, by the way, through such a medium for many months to come—I was ready to despair at the prospect before me. The streets of Melbourne were simply a mass of floating mud, and such being the case in the city, we wondered what would be the state of the paths in the interior where there had as yet been no attempt at road making.

We were nevertheless, on this miserably wet morning, obliged to start on the long and weary tramp of seventy miles or more, through mud and rain, with encumbrances bound on our backs, almost sufficiently heavy to break the vertebrae of any ordinary donkey. This was not a case in which our journey could be deferred until more favourable weather, for all our lodging bills had been paid, and our luxurious couches were already secured by arrivals still more recent than ourselves, so that start we must.

I made an attempt to eat a good breakfast before taking to the road, but the prospect before me was not of sufficiently cheering a character to sharpen my appetite, and I had not *then* learnt even the first principles of Mark Tapley's matchless philosophy of "being jolly under difficulties." Had that remarkably cheerful young man been in our company, his peculiar manner of meeting the troubles of life would have received a greater test than ever it was put to in Eden or the marshes of the Mississippi. Breakfast over, I shouldered my double-pack or "swag" and set off for the common starting-point, a sort of lodging house or saloon at the head of Swansbow St. from whence we were all to make our final start. As it was still raining heavily we decided to

wait until afternoon, hoping that by that time the weather would clear up somewhat, and in the meantime we would procure enough bread and cold meat, cheese, etc., to carry us over the first twenty-four hours of the road: that time being required to reach the nearest wooded part of the country, where facilities for making the fires needed for cooking could be obtained. About twelve o'clock the rain moderated to a slight drizzle, and after eating a hearty cold luncheon, we shouldered our individual burdens and mustered together in front of the house, to see if our numbers were quite complete.

The lapse of time since we thus met, is of course too great to admit of my being able to introduce the reader to each member of our company; many of whom have long been blotted from the record of a moderately good memory; but I will endeavour to give a slight general introduction of the whole party as we stood in the street on that Wednesday morning, waiting for the word to start. With the exception of the man engaged in Melbourne to act as our guide to the diggings, we had all sailed in the same ship from New-York, and were of course intimately acquainted with each other, by that most familiarizing process of a three months' voyage. There were men from several States of the neighbouring republic as well as from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario—the last being more strongly represented than the others, and standing in a compact body on the street we attracted universal attention, as well from the unique and uniform style of our dress and weapons of defence, as from the general *physique* of the majority of our number. We had tall men and short men, stout and thin, old and young, every phase of youth and manhood except decrepid old age being comprised in the party, and stranger still, lovely woman furnished a noble representative in the person of Madame B. the wife of a stout little Frenchman, who beyond his great skill at *ecarte* and billiards was not possessed of a single recommendation, and who in his own person proved simply a drag on the party.

This lady merits more than a passing notice for the kindly influence she exer-