

## THRESHOLD OF THE NEVER-NEVER 43

as far west as the head of the MacArthur River, where, judging by letters from Port Darwin, it was certain her friends must be. Roughly speaking, we would have to cover several hundred miles of new country. To an Old Country person such a trip must seem almost as great an undertaking as going to the North Pole, but to an Australian bush-bred girl, practical, self-reliant and resourceful in a way it is necessarily difficult to realise at home, the journey was nothing out of the common. From the MacArthur we would strike south-west into the unexplored country, and after having found the elusive Smith we could pick Madge up on our return journey. There would be a married woman with the party, a Mrs Bailey, whose husband would be in charge of the teamsters, and who would be company for Madge. Sir Donald at first had raised objections in regard to his niece accompanying us, but seeing she was only going as far as the MacArthur River, he at last gave in.

We returned to Burketown, and within a week had made all necessary arrangements, effected our equipment, and were ready to start. The cool season—it was April—had hardly commenced, so that travelling would be comparatively pleasant. We formed quite a respectable cavalcade with two large waggons, each drawn by twelve horses, with a driver and off-sider to each team, and a hooded, light spring-cart which was given over to Madge and Bailey's wife. The latter was a cheerful, active and resourceful woman. Madge had her own horse, and always rode in preference to travelling in the spring-cart.