

is broken by pines, on whose boughs the bright grass parrot with long tail, and the smaller black and gold species, are settling.

Then for miles and miles there is no change from the never-ending plain, excepting occasionally a sheet of water called a lake, or a peep of the river.

Most of these lakes are now dried up. One, in which there used to be from eighteen to twenty feet of water, we can walk across. This has not happened for fifty years, but there are tidings of a great body of water coming down the Murray which will cause all the tributaries to rise. Floods are earnestly hoped for, before the burning heat of summer, to cover the lands so long dry, and to fertilise the river timber.

So much for the bush. Now for the township, a little place of some 700 souls, busy because of the traffic caused by coaches and steamers. The houses are low one-storied buildings of wood or brick, with corrugated iron roofs painted white; this diminishes the heat by ten degrees. We have a church, a Roman Catholic chapel, a State school, stores, a court-house, an hospital, a cemetery, a post and telegraph office, and a bridge, hotels, and a bank.

The town consists of one central street, lighted by a few oil lamps. There is no water laid on; people drink the rain-water preserved in underground tanks; and though the river runs by their doors, they do not go to the expense of bringing it to their houses and gardens.

So the summer sun turns everything brown, and the parched earth is as brass. When the hot winds blow, sandstorms sweep up volumes of light, penetrating dust, and send it in showers through the roof of the church, and into every nook and crevice of the houses, till it can be taken off the beds and furniture by spoonfuls.

So much for the river, and atmosphere, and township.

Now for the people and the life, without which no description is worth anything. They are a simple, quiet people, docile, well disposed, with no excitement or hurry about them, and the children are happy and healthy. There is little gossip—no news

comes from beyond their own township, excepting the *résumé* of Sydney or Melbourne papers.

They are a friendly, hospitable people.

'Ah! you are recently from home; I knew it by your voice,' says a born Australian.

'Yes, from England,' says the Englishman, hardly realising the brotherhood implied by this mention of the common home of their ancestors. 'Would you like to go to England?'

'Yes, I've heard a lot about it, but I couldn't live there. I should pine for the sun, and the air, and the clear skies.'

Yesterday there rode through the one street of the town a party of men on small horses, with here and there a pack-horse. On each horse was fastened a blanket and a billy (or tin can for boiling tea), the whole baggage—or 'swag,' as the phrase goes here—of this company. They were shearers, just dismissed at the end of shearing season from Glen Gum.

They tethered their horses to the lamp-post before the bank, and went in to deposit the savings of their recent harvest. A wonderful harvest indeed, for millions of sheep are yearly shorn in September and October throughout the Riverina plains, and a man is paid 18s. for 80, and can shear from 100 to 130 and even 180 in a day! They were quiet, steady men from Victoria, New Zealand, and South Australia.

They crossed the bridge and parted, shaking hands with old comrades, perhaps never to meet again, or perhaps to meet again at the same wool-shed next season, for good masters are remembered and good hands are valued, and the men like to return to old haunts year by year. There is often a gathering of some sixty to eighty at these sheds. The wool-shed is a long low building with an iron roof. A platform runs along each side, with little doors and pens outside, into which shorn sheep are pushed; in the centre are pens, into which sheep to be shorn are brought.

The shears hang on the walls, and the tar cans for dabbing the sheep when cut; this too often happens, owing to the speed at which the clipping goes on, and the fact