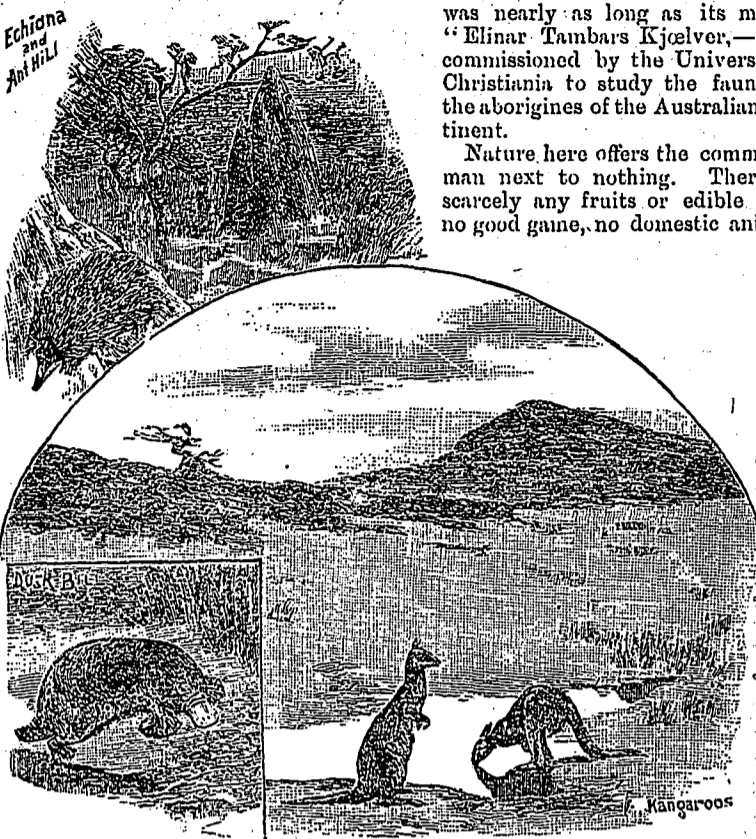


Echidna
and
Ant Hill

ADVENTURES IN WILD AUSTRALIA.

Although at the time I started for Australia I was twenty-nine years old, and was, therefore, scarcely entitled to be termed a youth, I caught at the opportunity of going to this strangest of all strange lands with all the eagerness of a youthful mind.

Strange countries and strange peoples, curious customs and thrilling adventures—these are what take the fancy of youth.

If you consult your world's history you will find that, although the Portuguese had probably touched upon the western coast of Australia as early as 1601, and Luis de Torres had in 1606 discovered the straits which bear his name, it is to the patient efforts of the Dutch navigators that the discovery of the fifth continent is due, more than a century after Christopher Columbus landed at San Salvador.

You will also find that the first English settlement—a penal colony of one thousand convicts—was established in New South Wales as late as 1788, one year before George Washington was inaugurated as first President of the United States of America.

These dates show how far behind America Australia was in her start toward civilization, yet she covers an area nearly as great as that of the United States, exclusive of Alaska, and the southern portion of the continent is highly civilized. Here we find large cities, immense wealth, vast resources, and a thriving and ambitious population, whose annual exports to the mother country, Great Britain, amount to two hundred million dollars.

The first house in Melbourne was built in 1825, but when I was there, in 1880, I found a city of three hundred thousand inhabitants, with many handsome public edifices, and a magnificent parliament house in course of erection; for the facade of which, I was told, it had been contemplated to import marble from Carrara, Italy.

Sydney, the capital of New South Wales, is nearly as large as Melbourne, and a city of immense wealth. Victoria and Adelaide—near which gold mines were discovered in 1851—are also centres of well-rewarded activity.

In 1839 England yielded to the vigorous protest of the free settlers and ceased deporting its criminals to Australia. Up to that date sixty thousand convicts had been sent out.

In the civilized parts of the country existence is made easy and pleasant. Anything one wishes may be obtained for money. Ladies frequently send to Paris or London for their dresses. In fact, all that civilization affords in the way of luxury can easily be procured.

But it was not for the purpose of studying civilization that I went to Australia. When, on May 23, 1880, I stepped aboard a sailing-vessel whose Norwegian name

was nearly as long as its mast,—“Elinar Tambars Kjoelver,—I was commissioned by the University of Christiania to study the fauna and the aborigines of the Australian Continent.

Nature here offers the commercial man next to nothing. There are scarcely any fruits or edible roots, no good game, no domestic animals,

hardly any drinkable water; and the fish taste of mud. Everything had to be introduced from Europe, from potatoes to grapes, from horses to rabbits; but once introduced, they thrive wonderfully—especially the rabbits, for the extermination of which there is a standing offer of one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. The famous French savant, Pasteur, has tried to solve the problem presented by the rabbit plague, but has failed.

Yet, poor as it is in original resources, this is verily the wonderland of the naturalist. It is evident that Australia is the region which has undergone the least change in later geologic times. It is in the main now what it was during the early part of the tertiary period.

This “Land of the Dawning” reveals to us a primitive and peculiar form of animal life. The majority of its mammals belong to the curious order of Marsupials, or animals which have a pouch in which they carry their young. They are the most ancient of all known mammals. The fossil remains of animals of this order are found in the secondary and tertiary deposits of Europe and America.

These singular relics of a past age have now no other living representatives, with the exception of one family—the *Didelphidae*—found in America. But in Australia they flourish in the most varied forms, and assume in nature the place filled in other portions of the world by the most different groups.

Some are carnivorous, others herbivorous. Some live on the earth, others in trees. Some approach in form the wolf, others marmots, weasels, squirrels, dormice, etc. Yet they all possess common structural and other peculiarities, which show them to be members of one stock, presenting only an outward resemblance to the old-world types, with which they have no real affinity.

The natives often described to me a large carnivorous marsupial called by them “yarri,” which approaches in form the larger members of the feline tribe, and therefore may properly be called a marsupial tiger.

Unfortunately, notwithstanding repeated attempts, involving many dangers and privations, I was unable to secure the specimen I was so anxious to possess of this interesting antipodean animal.

The largest and best known of the marsupials, the kangaroo, sometimes attains a height of seven or eight feet. Yet the now-born offspring of this huge beast is no larger than a human baby's little finger, and not unlike it in shape. This helpless, naked, blind little being the mother picks up with her mouth by a seeming miracle of dexterity, and places in her pouch, where it is nourished for several weeks, and gradually assumes the form of its parents.

Pouch and little one grow simultaneously, and the young kangaroo is soon able to take excursions from its place of refuge. These become more frequent and more extensive, the strength of the infant kangaroo increasing until finally it no longer needs maternal care.

Here also are to be found the most peculiar mammals on earth—the *Monotremata*. This singular order is divided by naturalists into two genera: The duck-bill platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) and the echidna or spiny ant-eater.

The duck-bill somewhat resembles a water-mole, but is provided with a duck's bill and webbed feet; and the spiny ant-eater is not unlike our porcupine. It has quills, and when alarmed rolls itself up in a ball. It is a good swimmer, although its feet are not webbed, and it shows its strength by rapidly disappearing in the sand or loose earth when pursued.

Both of these interesting mammals possess marsupial bones, but no pouch. They lay eggs like birds and hatch them, and then suckle their young!

Among birds, Australia possesses some remarkable species, such as the megapodius, or jungle-hen, and the talegalla, or brush-turkey. These do not themselves hatch their eggs but, like reptiles, bury them in large mounds of earth and decayed vegetable matter. The fermentation of this produces heat, by means of which the eggs are hatched.

These mounds, which are built by several females associated for the purpose, are so large that at first they were mistaken for the burial places of the natives.

There is a saying that in Australia the women have no beauty and the flowers no fragrance; while the birds do not sing, and the dogs do not bark. Without venturing a scientific opinion upon the first point, I can testify to the truth of the rest.

Europe has white swans—Australia possesses black ones. It has black cockatoos, wagtails that wag their tails sidewise instead of up and down, and bees that do not sting. In Europe, trees are the pride of the land-owners, and give grateful shade to man and beast; but the leaves of many Australian trees are set on edge, so that scarcely any shade is cast by them, and many other kinds of trees are leafless.

In Australia there are trees that shed their bark instead of their leaves, cherries whose stones grow outside the berry instead of inside, pears whose thick end grows nearest to the stalk, and many other abnormalities.

The cherries and pears are not, however, as remarkable as they may at first appear. The Australian cherry is in reality but an enlarged berry-like stalk, while the fruit proper is an unsavory, hard nut, growing at the extreme end of the stalk; and the Australian pear is really not a pear, but an entirely different, uneatable fruit, as hard as wood.—Carl Lumholtz, in *Youth's Companion*.

“I HAVE GOT MY LESSONS.”

BY REV. GEORGE A. GATES,
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A few days ago a young lady asked permission to spend the evening away from home. Upon the suggestion's being made that the time might better be put on her books, she replied, “why, I have got my lessons.”

Let me elucidate that text, “I have got my lessons,” by an illustration. Not long ago I was looking over one of the great saw-mills on the Mississippi River in company with the superintendent of the mill. As we came to one room he said, “I want you to notice the boys in this room, and I will tell you about them afterward.” There were some half-dozen boys at work on saws, with various machines, some broadening the points of the teeth, some sharpening them, some cutting the slots deeper. There was one lad standing leaning against a bench, apparently trying to do nothing and succeeding. After we had passed out of the room the superintendent said to me: “That room is my sieve. The fine boys go through that sieve to higher uses and higher pay. The coarse boys remain in the sieve, and are thrown out as refuse, so far as this mill is concerned.” Then he explained what he meant. “I pick up a boy who wants to work in the mill, and give him the job of keeping the men in all parts of the mill and

yard supplied with drinking-water. That is the lowest position, and draws the least pay, for the reason, of course, that there is the least head-work required. Then I say to that boy: ‘When you have nothing else to do, go into this room, and then I shall know where to find you when I want you.’ But there is a much more important reason why I send him there. In a business like this, hands are constantly changing. A good deal of the work, as you will see by watching the machines and those that manipulate them, requires a high degree of attention, energy, and good judgment. In the close competition of modern business life, whether this great mill runs at a margin of profit or loss, will sometimes depend upon the one man who runs the gang-saw. Consequently, I must be looking out for the best men to put into these responsible positions which draw the largest pay. Now I put the water-boy into this room where there are several kinds of work being done. There are pieces of broken saws lying about and some of the tools that are used on them. I watch that boy. If he goes to handling those broken saws, looking them over, trying them, practising on them with the tools there, busies himself watching the other boys at their machines, asks questions about how the work is done, and is constantly occupied in some way or another in his leisure moments, why that is the kind of boy that is very soon promoted to work on the machines, and is pushed ahead just as rapidly as opportunity offers. He soon goes to a better position and better pay, and I get a new water-boy. He has gone through the sieve. But there is another kind of boy. When he has time off duty, he occupies himself in that room doing nothing. He stares listlessly about, leans up against the benches, crosses one leg over the other, puts in a good deal of time whistling, stares about out of the window, evidently wishing he were out there, watches the clock to see how soon he can quit work. If he talks with the boys who are at work, it is not to ask questions, but to bother them with some nonsense or other. I often do all I can to help such a boy. I push the tools around under his nose. I ask him questions about them. I talk with him about his future prospects. I do all that I can to crowd him into some sort of decent physical or intellectual energy. If the boy has any wake-up in him, well and good. If he has not, he is simply refuse matter. I don't want such a boy in this mill, even as a water-boy.”

The college is that room for the young men and women that come to it. The mill is the universe. You are put in the midst of opportunities. More eyes than you think are watching to see what you do with them. You are thrown into a live, intellectual atmosphere. It is a “little world” of books, of discovery, of knowledge in many departments. All faculty and students, are learning and growing. When a new student comes, the question at once up for decision is, Is it going to be possible for him to catch the spirit that is in the air all about him, or is he going forever to remain in a position of “getting lessons” and nothing more?—*Golden Rule*.

CLOCKS THAT KEEP TIME.

There are some clocks that tell time, and some that only tell the right time twice every day. These are the dummy clocks which jewellers often have for signs in front of their stores. Have you ever seen them? and if so, have you noticed that almost all of them point to the same time—seventeen minutes after eight? Perhaps if you have thought of them at all you supposed as I did, that they were made to point to any hour that the workman who made them might fancy; but that is not so. A gentleman standing near one the other day said: “I never see one of those clock-faces that I don't think of Abraham Lincoln.”

“Why so?” said his friend.
“Because those clocks mark the hour and moment when he was shot. The Jewellers' Association after his death decided that all such clock-faces should be set at 8.17, and this has been done so generally since that you scarcely ever see one which is not in this way a sad reminder of the tragic death of a great man.”—*Christian Advocate*.