

ridge, and would soon be able to look out upon the country on the other side of the mountains. But instead, he found himself suddenly confronted by a wall of rock which defied all his efforts to climb over, and in which he was unable to find either break or opening. His efforts, fruitless though they were in enabling him to claim the honour of having been the first man over, were undoubtedly of very considerable assistance to those who ultimately succeeded where others had failed.

At the end of the first decade of the century the little colony had its first experience of a prolonged drought. The rainfall, never very excessive, became lighter and lighter; the streams shrank in volume, and the soil, becoming parched in the absence of rain and the persistent scorching of the sun, gradually lost its natural vegetation. Cultivation was at a standstill, for the seed sown did not germinate, and the cattle, already sufficiently increased in numbers to tax the pasturage available even in good seasons, began to die off for want of food and water. Ruin was staring the settlers in the face; starvation was threatening every one not dependent upon the Government for their daily food. In such a climax many a man looked out towards the blue line which lay along the horizon, chafing at the continued existence of the barrier, which might not only shut them in upon a narrow drought-stricken area, but shut