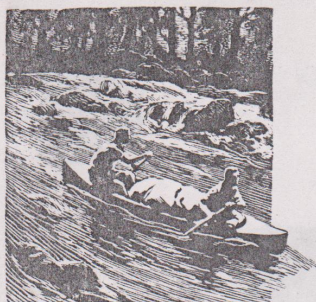


From "SPLASHES" of 1938, River Canoe Club of N.S.W.



DOWN THE SNOWY

"THERE ARE PLACES DOWN THERE
THE BLACKS HAVE NEVER SEEN."

BY ARTHUR LEE HUNT

ON January 23, 1838, Angus McMillan landed in Sydney, and shortly afterwards found employment in the Goulburn district with Lachlan McAlister. The hunt for new country suitable for grazing was at the time occupying the minds of the settlers, and with this object in view McMillan set out on the first expedition down the Snowy River on May 23, 1839.

He was forced back before reaching the Buchan River, and it was not until 1840 that he eventually reached the coast of Victoria. He had then traversed the river from Currawong Creek, a distance of approximately 150 miles.

THEN came Strzelecki, who also saw stretches of the river while exploring what are now the Snowy Ranges. Surveyor F. McCabe in 1842-43 surveyed upstream from Bobundra Creek and saw the upper reaches. The survey was continued in 1846-47 by Surveyor T. S. Townsend (afterwards Surveyor-General), who traversed the river from its junction with the Deddick River upstream to Mount Talbingo.

Here he was forced to return, and on his original map, the following note appears: "It is impossible to proceed along the banks of the river at this point, and appears to continue so for miles."

Eventually the survey was completed by various surveyors, who came on to the river, worked on their respective sections, named the tributaries, and then returned to the comparative security of three meals a day and the comfortable platitudes of Sir George Gipps.

Except for the fact that a number of the tributaries are well out of position on the present-day maps, they made quite a good job of it.

FROM those early days of the colony until the present time nearly a century has passed. Near Jindabyne and Dalgety, on the upper reaches, cattle and sheep now graze; and on the lower reaches, around Orbost, farmhouses cluster along the banks, and the rich, fertile flats are used to produce maize and beans.

But in between lie nearly 200 miles of some of the roughest country in Australia, "Where the river runs those giant hills between." This stretch has practically warded off the attacks of both the old and present-day pioneers, and the only scars it bears are occasional tracks and bridle-paths which wander into it, gradually to dwindle and disappear.

Drovers using the old cattle-track between Buchan and Ingebyra have travelled a few miles along the river. Fossickers can describe portion of it.

Perhaps some of the many men who have gone into this country and have not returned could tell more about it, but very few have traversed any great length of its boulder-strewn course.

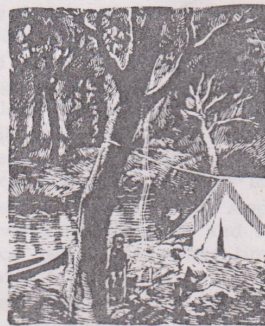
THE similarity between Angus McMillan's expedition and one which left Jindabyne in February of this year ends when it is stated that both expeditions started originally from Goulburn. Angus McMillan did his trip because it was a job of work. He went out into absolutely unexplored country, not knowing how long he would be away or where he would finish up.

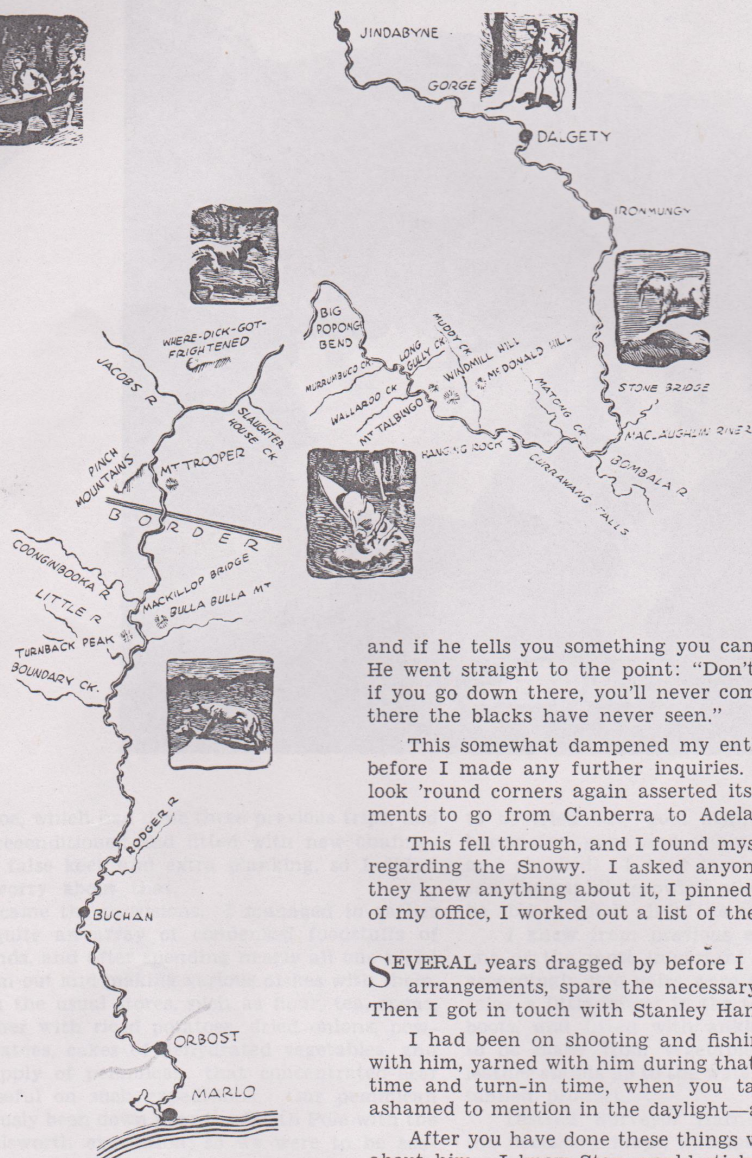
He had hostile blacks to contend with and his responsibilities as leader of the expedition must have weighed heavily on his shoulders. But he was a Scot, a determined and courageous one, and he got through.

The other expedition referred to consisted of Stanley Hanson and myself. We did not have horses or men to worry about, or any hostile blacks. We knew where we were starting from and where we hoped to finish, and approximately how long we would be on the trip.

We had our 11ft 6in pine canoe, 300-odd articles in our kit, the desire to see what lies around the corner, and the optimism to think that we would get through to the sea in spite of the fact that many other similar attempts had failed. This optimistic outlook was to be very severely shaken before we had gone far.

SEVEN or eight years ago, when I first thought of doing a canoe trip down the Snowy, I mentioned it to Mick O'Malley. Mick was born and bred on the Monaro. He's 6ft 4in, weighs between 16 and 17 stone,





SEE "NAIL" ART

and if he tells you something you can take it as being fairly correct. He went straight to the point: "Don't be an adjectival fool, Arthur; if you go down there, you'll never come back. Why, there are places there the blacks have never seen."

This somewhat dampened my enthusiasm, and it was some time before I made any further inquiries. Then the fascinating urge to look 'round corners again asserted itself. I made tentative arrangements to go from Canberra to Adelaide by canoe.

This fell through, and I found myself again gathering information regarding the Snowy. I asked anyone who had ever heard of it if they knew anything about it, I pinned a map of the river on the wall of my office, I worked out a list of the gear necessary for the trip.

SEVERAL years dragged by before I was able to make the necessary arrangements, spare the necessary time, or find a suitable mate. Then I got in touch with Stanley Hanson, of Nowra.

I had been on shooting and fishing trips with him, had camped with him, yarned with him during that intimate hour between supper-time and turn-in time, when you talk about things you would be ashamed to mention in the daylight—and I had drunk beer with him.

After you have done these things with a man you know something about him. I knew Stan would stick.

He was a good bushman, knew boats, and had a useful knowledge of prospecting. I knew enough of his faults and he knew enough of mine to make me think that we would have a reasonable chance of getting along together.

He was tough and wiry, in spite of the fact that some years ago he was shot in the back at 18 yards with a 12-bore gun. The chap was using No. 2 shot, and after the doctors examined him he was roughly stitched together and left to die.

He disappointed them, but now has to wear a footwide belt to stop himself from falling to pieces. Since then he has fallen over a 200-foot cliff and escaped with a few broken ribs, has been nearly drowned twice, been bitten three times by various species of snakes, and won a boxing tournament.

So the shot did not affect him to any great extent.

I also had to wear a plaster strapping as a result of an injury, so that put us more or less on equal terms.

SEE "HALL"
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THE canoe, which had done three previous trips, had been reconditioned and fitted with new chafing-battens, a false keel, and extra planking, so I didn't have to worry about that.

Then came the provisions. I managed to gather together quite an array of condensed foodstuffs of various kinds, and after spending nearly all one night trying them out and making various dishes with them, decided on the usual stores, such as flour, tea, sugar, etc., together with riced potatoes, dried onions, powdered tomatoes, cakes of dehydrated vegetables, and a good supply of pemmican, that concentrated-beef food so useful on such expeditions. Our pemmican had previously been down near the South Pole with the Lincoln Ellsworth expedition, so we were to be sustained with the food of the Great.

These supplies together with what our guns and lines would provide, I hoped would see us through. I very much dislike tinned meats and never carry them unless it is absolutely necessary. The only tinned stuff included was butter and jam.

The first-aid kit was prepared with the assistance of a doctor, a trained nurse, and a chemist. Various gear in the way of sleeping-bags, kit-bags, and small water-proofed bags of all shapes and sizes, silk tent, and a big, bath-like, heavy canvas bag to pack all our gear in, was ordered.

THEN there were dozens of odds and ends to be bought and borrowed, special films for the camera

to be tried out, gold dish, pick, compass, aneroid barometer, guns and fishing tackle to be looked at and checked. I used to wonder sometimes, when I saw the rapidly growing pile of dunnage, if we would be able to get it all in the canoe.

I knew from previous experience that boots are one of the most important items on these trips, so accordingly two pairs were ordered with extra heavy soles, a little longer in the tops than the usual heavy boots, and fitted with ankle-protectors. They were to be made from vegetable-tanned leather, as this leather stands up to the water better than the mineral-tanned product.

District Surveyor Harnett very kindly procured the necessary maps, and marked them with his own observations and others taken from Surveyor Townsend's original map. These maps were a big help, and with the exception of a few camps after we crossed the border we knew, within a mile or two, where we finished each night.

I also managed to get some very useful information from the head office of the Lands Department, but although I spent some time at the Mitchell Library I did not meet with very much success.

HAVING taken delivery of some thick knitted socks, and having had an extra seat sewn in my shorts, I felt arrangements were finally completed.

I made an appointment to pick up Stan at Moss Vale, and in due course arrived there, to find

him standing in the main street guarding a large kit-bag, a hundred yards of practically new hauling line, which he had taken off one of his nets, and a very lively copperhead snake. The snake, I might mention, did not accompany us down the river. Handling and playing with snakes is one of Stan's favourite pastimes, but I like playing with them with a gun.

The next day was spent in checking and packing our gear, listening to all sorts of advice, and undergoing the ordeal known as "giving them a send-off." The early hours of the following morning found us travelling by train slowly and somewhat uncomfortably towards Cooma. Arrangements had been made for the service car to take us to Jindabyne, and about midday we had our first glimpse of the Snowy. It was flowing quite peacefully below the bridge at slightly less than average summer level.

Everything had been packed in small labelled waterproofed bags, these in turn were packed in waterproofed kit-bags (four in all), then the whole lot lashed in the heavy canvas bag previously referred to, the tent thrown over the load, and the whole strapped down with four straps. The only way gear could be

damaged was by the canoe being smashed to pieces. Camera, films, etc., were carried in a specially made water-tight drum. The four bags were called Personal (sleeping bags, clothes, etc.), Ironmongery (billies guns, strips for repairing canoe, etc.), Tucker, and Bread bags. Two lengths of about 60 feet of line were made fast to the canoe to be used as bow and stern lines.

BY this time we were beginning to feel the effects of travelling most of the night, and decided to get our sleeping-bags out and have an hour or two's sleep beneath the bridge before we started.

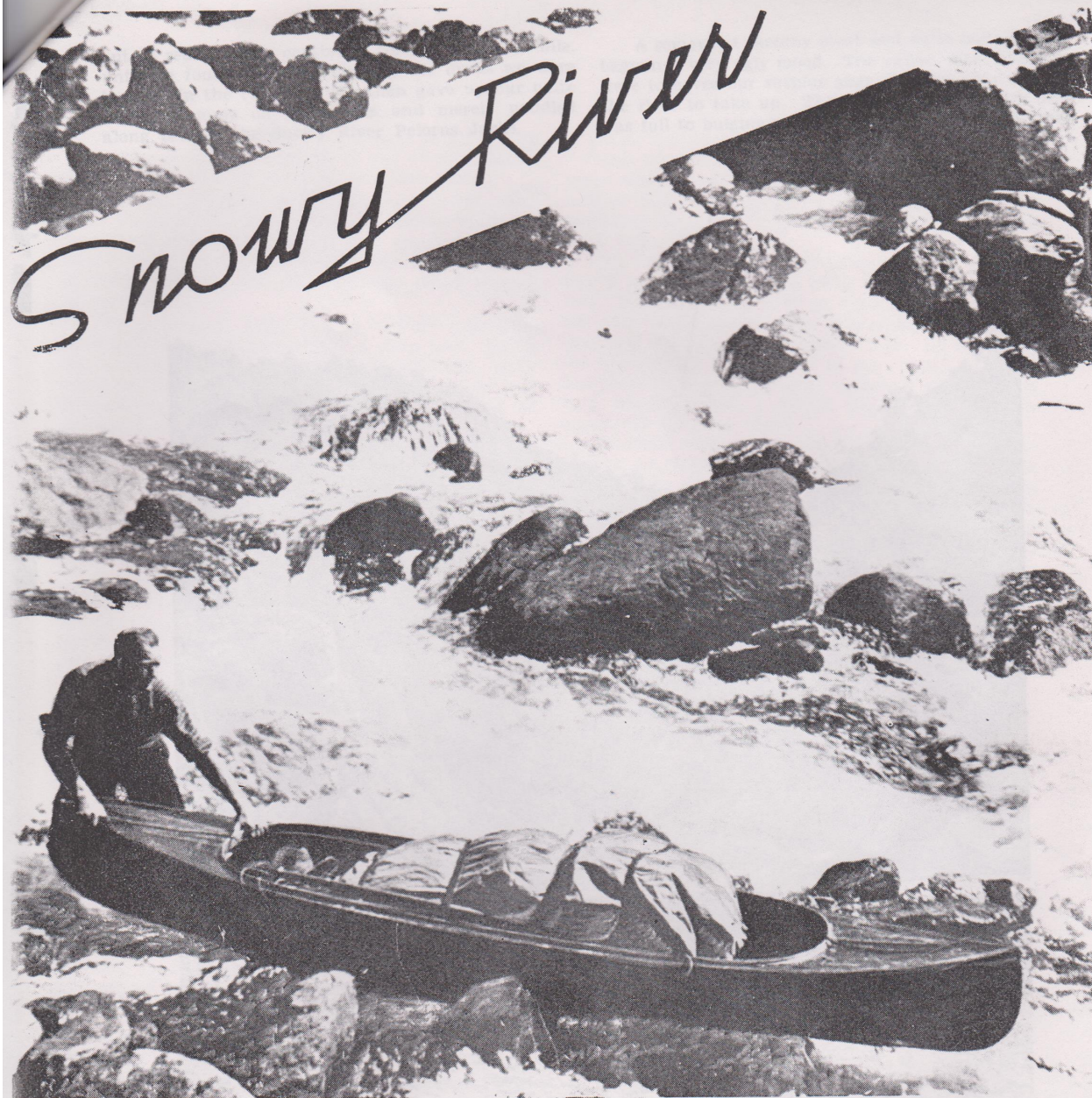
This we did, but we were rudely awakened shortly afterwards by a crowd of small children, who were lining the bridge above us and pelting us with stones.

Muttering things under our breath, we hurriedly threw the rest of our gear aboard the canoe, and we were off—in the manner of St. Stephen—stoned from the village. Light rain was falling, and we were both tired and cold.

I suppose a hundred people had been asked for their opinion of our chance of getting through.

(Continued on Page 30)





(Continued from Page 7)

One of them had given us much encouragement. The most popular expressions were "Impossible!" "Suicide!" "Madness!"

So the children, the weather, and the pessimists sent us away from Jindabyne with some very nasty thoughts running through our minds.

UNTIL we got the "feel" of the canoe our progress after leaving Jindabyne was slow, but exciting. It was Stan's first experience of canoeing, and I had not been in one for some years. The canoe, not being flat-bottomed, and badly overloaded (we had about

2½ inches freeboard), was just about as cranky as we felt.

The channel took as many twists and turns as a rock lizard, and we would have experienced some difficulty in making any progress were it not for the assistance of two black ducks. These two ducks swam out from under a bush about ten yards in front of us and proceeded to swim leisurely downstream. Having visions of duck stewing in one of our new billies, we lurched along in pursuit.

Several times we were almost within striking distance of them (we were rather close to Jindabyne to use the gun), but they always managed to keep just

out of reach. This continued for about half a mile, until we found that by following the ducks we were keeping in the channel. We then gave up our quite futile attempts on their lives and merely paddled along behind our Snowy River Pelorus Jacks.

A somewhat sketchy meal sent us to our sleeping-bags in a very ugly mood. The canoe, with which we were to cover our surplus gear at night, was sunk in the river to take up. This meant that our tiny tent was full to bulging point. Then came the wind; then



THE rain was still falling, we were both tired, so after doing about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles we decided to camp. The most likely-looking spot somewhat resembled the milking yard of a South Coast dairy, but at least it was level. There was some sand mixed with the mud, and here, after pitching camp in the rain, we camped.

the tent began to leak; then I'll pass to the next morning. It pains me to think of the bad language we used that night.

THE next morning we were up before the somewhat murky daylight, to find that the river had risen over a foot. We cooked a good breakfast and got away

to an early start; this time sent off by a family of pigs, who grunted their disapproval of the whole proceedings—we had camped on their favourite wallow.

An easy day took us well down the river, away from the mud and bad-mannered children of Jindabyne, and at last we began to feel creeping over us that strange but very real sense of peacefulness which is the reward of those who seek the lonely corners of Australia.

We discovered, when I gave a most impressive imitation of a man drowning in a deep pool, that it was a very difficult matter to swim with our heavy boots on. The weather had improved, and as we had thought out the quickest and easiest method of portaging we were happy.

BLACK and wood duck were plentiful, and as quiet, I think, as I have seen them anywhere. The river was teeming with trout, and although they were on the small side—I think the largest one caught on the trip would not be above two pounds—they had plenty of fight in them and would bite at anything.

The banks were rather flat and uninteresting, but by the way the river foamed and muttered as it raced downwards to the sea over some of the rapids I realised that when we struck the rough country—well, we'd know we'd struck it.

Then the hard work started. The banks became steeper, huge granite boulders filled the river, and that day we did the hardest day's work we had done for a long time. The river had shown its fangs, and the snowy white saliva running from its jaws boded ill for the ribs and timbers of our canoe.

We had quite a few portages, but that night we camped by a pool 300 yards long by 100 yards in width, with a high, rocky wall on one side, a flat, sandy bank well above the river on the other—an excellent camp. The hole was the haunt of platypus. The little swirls of water and the narrow ridge of fur, which shows for a few seconds, dotted the water—as many as fifteen and twenty at a time.

AS each rapid or fall had to be treated on its merits, we used the following scheme of attack: We would paddle until the roar of the rapid or fall told us that investigation was necessary.

We would land just above where the current gathered force and walk ahead to the end of the bad stretch. Sometimes we would decide to shoot it, at others we roped the canoe through; quite often a portage was necessary.

On these occasions we would take off our boots, shorts, and shirts, leave them where we could put the canoe into the water again, walk back to the canoe, unload, pull the canoe out of the water to drain, make two trips with the gear, and then carry, slide, skid, and generally manhandle the canoe through.

I think one of the fascinations of canoeing lies in the fact that each difficulty encountered has to be studied and overcome by different means. No two rapids are quite the same, and although the method employed may be similar the execution of it always varies.

ONCE, shortly after entering the gorge, we nearly met with disaster. The gorge proper is about 2½ miles long. After working our way through half a mile of fast-running water by means of roping and portaging, we found it necessary to cross the river and work from the other side.

We were just above a small rapid which emptied into a narrow pool at the head of a big drop of 18 feet. This rapid swirled on to some big boulders, and the roar made conversation impossible. Stan went upstream with a rope and crossed over. He threw me the rope, which I made fast to the canoe. After he had gone back some distance upstream and taken a turn around a rock, I crossed the canoe. Thus we negotiated the first rapid.

However, at the head of the big rapid we discovered we would have to cross again. This time I tied the rope around my chest, and, with Stan holding the other end and firmly wedged in a crack in the rocks, I was swept across to the other side. Then came the canoe, with Stan hanging on to the stern. The length of rope which I held was so long that, unless I could shorten it, Stan and the canoe would go over the rapid.

The current gripped the canoe, I heaved desperately, and, with Stan's feet hanging over the head of the rapid, the canoe grounded on my side. A little less heaving or a little more current would have smashed both Stan and the canoe to bits.

We both sat on the bank and laughed for some minutes, as if it had been the most amusing incident of the trip—it is only after these trips are over that you realise how serious some of these "amusing incidents" could have turned out.

The canoe was by this time leaking rather badly, and it was obvious that we would have to do quite a lot of repair work at Dalgety as well as fit extra

chafing-battens.

WE found a good camp not far below the rapid above which we had our little bit of excitement, and following our usual custom Stan went ahead with a gun to shoot something for supper, and also to inspect the river.

I unloaded, pitched the camp, got the fire going, changed, and wrote up the journal. I had almost completed the daily entry when I saw Stan scrambling down the side of the 800-foot ridge above the camp, clutching two rabbits in one hand and hanging on with the other.

He landed almost on top of the tent amidst a shower of stones and a fitting flow of profanity, threw the rabbits down, made a cigarette, and then told me that he had been about two miles down the river and that the lower end of the gorge was impassable.

Sheer walls on both sides for nearly half a mile left only a narrow channel for the river, down which it roared over a series of bad rapids and small falls. Beyond lay the promised flats around Dalgety.

He thought that as the river took a big swing round behind the camp the only thing to do would be



to drag our gear and canoe to the top of the ridge, make a skid, and skid all the gear in one load to the river below the gorge.

AS I had had some experience of cross-country marathons of a similar nature, I listened to his proposal without much enthusiasm. We then decided that in the morning we would carry a light load of gear to the top of the ridge, dump it, and cut into the top of the gorge for another and more thorough inspection. This we did.

At first sight Stan's opinion seemed correct, but we then saw that it was possible to work the canoe through with several portages.

Two of them would entail hauling canoe and gear about 100 feet above the river, and lowering both canoe and ourselves down the other side of the two rocky points on ropes.

Back to the camp and, as the morning was well advanced, a hurried start. There was absolutely no place to camp in that portion of the gorge, so we had to be through before dark.

We worked hard that afternoon. The roar of the water was deafening, and a slip would have meant the end of the trip. However, we got through, and shot out of the end of the gorge into the comparatively calm water just at dusk.

WE had been too busy to eat all day—we were hungry, dead tired, wet through, and cold. As usual, I was sitting in the stern of the canoe, and just as we were making in towards a likely-looking camp we hit a rock and I was thrown overboard—my first experience. I don't know the depth of the hole, as I went down about ten feet, but it must have been deep.

This adventure cheered Stan up, so, after landing, he went up to get the gear which we had left on top of the hill that morning, while I stripped off, built a fire, and tried to stop shivering.

Presently I heard a shot. As it was then practically dark I wondered what he could have been shooting at, and, after due deliberation, decided that the trip had got him down and that he had committed suicide. However, he returned to tell me that he had swung the kit-bag containing the guns over his shoulder, picked up the rest of the stuff, and started back for the camp.

After walking some distance he felt a movement in the bag on his back, freed one hand, and discovered a four-foot black snake. While Stan is very fond of snakes, he does like to know when they are in such close proximity.

Feeling quite annoyed, he emptied out the snake and the guns, put one of the guns together, struck a match, and shot the snake.

THE gorge through which we had just passed was, some years ago, to have been the jumping-off point of a giant hydro-electric scheme.

The idea was to divert portion of the waters of the

river and run them through a tunnel some twenty miles in length to the Big Popong bend.

However, some oversea engineers pointed out that it would be much more practicable and far less expensive to tunnel through from a point one mile below Jindabyne. When circumstances warrant it, this scheme will be adopted. There will be a fall of approximately 1800 feet in the tunnel, which will be slightly less than twenty miles in length.

An artificial lake will be constructed near the lower end of the tunnel to provide water for the turbo-generators during a dry spell. To ensure a more constant supply near Jindabyne, it is likely that a dam will be constructed, which would mean that the present township of Jindabyne would slowly recede beneath the waters. We had to traverse nearly 130 miles of river from Jindabyne to reach a point where the water disgorged from the turbines would eventually find its way back into its natural course.

A DAY'S trip, more or less devoid of excitement, from the lower end of the gorge brought us to Dalgety. There were bad slate bars for a mile or two, but the river runs lazily over them, and they meant only the loss of a little more paint-work and a little more skin from our legs.

It was dull work, and the skies wept in sympathy. What rapids there are can be shot mostly without difficulty. The country is flat and uninteresting and, in the main, bare, windswept, and desolate.

It was on this stretch that we first met the crows. They followed us along in dozens, cawing, shrieking, and arguing, pausing only to rest on the skeletons of dead trees which line the banks. They speculated amongst themselves as to how far we would go before we provided a meal for them—they agreed with the

rest of the inhabitants of Monaro that we would not get through. They picked out the juiciest portions, and their evil black eyes glittered with anticipation.

We had the crows with us, and we always imagined they were the same crows; right through the trip. When we pulled our canoe out of the water for the last time, it was in the darkness of a wild, rough night, and the scream of the wind sounded like their disappointed curses.

Many times during the two months we were on the trip one of us would pause, shake his fist at the crows, and say: "You haven't got us yet, you black brutes!"

The Snowy River is a strange, lonely, and wonderful river, and breeds strange thoughts.

STAN, however, livened up the proceedings a little by finding a brown snake—one of several we had seen that morning. He teased and tormented it, hitting it across the head with his hat when it struck at him.

He got a forked stick, jammed the snake's head hard on the ground, picked it up and played with it. When he put it down, I put an end to his childish fun with a large rock. I think Stan was annoyed because I killed that snake.



EVERYONE was very kind to us at Dalgety, and we had a taste of the hospitality which was showered on us wherever we were fortunate enough to meet anyone.

The whole of the district seemed ready and willing to do everything they possibly could for us. The only fault we could find with them was that they would not give us any chance of getting through. We would meet someone for the first time and be introduced as one of the coves who were going down the river. He would say: "You got this far, did you? How did you get on coming through the gorge?" We would tell him in as few words as possible.

Then would follow that long-drawn "Ummmm!" which shows that an Australian is getting into gear to say something, and the little play would conclude: "Yes, it's a bit rough up in there; but you wait till you get further down. You'll never get through. You'd better come and have a drink."

WE had now dropped 400 of the 2824 feet of rapids and falls which lay between us and the sea. A trip such as we were on is not measured in miles, but in the number of feet one drops each day. The drop, not the distance, makes the going hard. A 300-mile canoe journey of flat and easy going would be a very simple and uninteresting business.

We spent the next day in Dalgety, listening to all kinds of well-meant advice and making arrangements to pick up supplies further down the river. We enlisted the aid of Arnold Williams, who was to be of very great assistance to us. He lived only a few miles from the river at a point five miles below the Currowang Falls. His would be the last place we would strike to pick up tucker for our long run through into Victoria.

The canoe was badly in need of attention, as she was leaking from several cracks and some of the timbers had pulled away from the planks. To repair the canoe, the next day we shifted camp to a gold dredge which was working four miles down the river. We had met the manager, Fred Ness, and he had promised us every assistance.

Fred was rather an interesting personality and a thoroughly good cove. He had come out from Norway only a few years ago, and in that time had completely mastered the language, won numerous trophies for gymnastics, wrestling, and all kinds of field sports, held the discus-throwing championship of Australia, and built the dredge which he was then working.

One of his favourite pastimes was to walk across the highest girder of the bridge at Dalgety on his hands. The drop is considerable and the girder narrow.

WE spent three days with Fred repairing the canoe and waiting for the weather to improve. The river rose nearly two feet and became very discoloured.

This we knew would make the going more difficult as there are hundreds of rocks which lie in wait for you just below the level of the water. The river is full of eddies and swirls, and with the water at all discoloured you don't know the rocks are there until you hit them.

In spite of bad weather we greatly enjoyed our few days at the dredge. In between showers we worked on the canoe, and while it was raining we played euchre. Stan, being of Norwegian descent, played with Fred Ness, and I was partner to Tom Muggridge. It was therefore an international contest—Norway versus Australia. After some dozens of games I regret very much to state that Australia was defeated.

Had my partner been able to see better in the semi-darkness of the hut I think we would have beaten them. However, the glorious traditions of the game were fully maintained throughout and we went down with colours flying. At night Fred entertained us with his mouth-organ; one night we walked across to Dalgety. When we returned, many a lusty Norwegian "skaal" startled the platypus and echoed across the river. Fred taught me Norwegian songs and I taught him songs in English. Altogether we had a good night.

An easy day and a half's travelling brought us to Ironmungy. There was only one section which was tricky, and that was just below the junction of Bobundra Creek.

Here the river narrows in and a lot of roping and one portage were necessary.

When we had to rope the canoe along I would take the bow line and Stan the stern. We would then walk and climb along the bank, holding the canoe with these two lines. On one occasion my line was not quite long enough, and I had to throw it into the water and go downstream and wait for Stan to lower the canoe down to me. Unfortunately my rope fouled a rock in the bottom of the river, and there was the canoe well anchored in midstream.

The river was running fast and we could not reach the canoe from the bank, so Stan lowered me down on the end of his rope with a knife firmly gripped in the approved fashion between my teeth. I managed to cut the rope close to the rock it was caught under, and we got out of that trouble only losing a few feet of rope.

The camp between the dredge and Ironmungy was the only one, I think, on the trip where we didn't pitch the tent—and it was the only night we had a heavy frost. The next morning we were practically wet through and as cold as the centre of an iceberg.

Stan also had the misfortune to burst the top of his thumb. He was sneaking up on some duck, and while cocking the gun the hammer slipped and the gun exploded, driving the point of the hammer into his thumb. He returned to the camp, however, with the biggest black duck I have ever seen. The two of us could not eat it all for breakfast the following morning.

JUST before we reached Ironmungy we came to a small rapid through which we considered it would be as well to walk the canoe. I slipped out over the stern, but the water was too deep and running too fast for me to hold the canoe while Stan got out, so away we went.

We shot that rapid with me trailing out behind and Stan making frantic efforts to keep her straight. More by good luck than any efforts we made, we got out of it without damaging the canoe.

The river as it runs through Ironmungy is lined on both sides with willows. The garden of the homestead runs practically to the water's edge, and here in these picturesque surroundings we stayed for two and a half days as the guests of Mr. and Mrs. David Watson. Both Mr. and Mrs. Watson were extremely kind to us and saw to it that we both enjoyed ourselves thoroughly.

It rained practically the whole of the time we were there, so we did not go out much, although Stan had a little excitement on a horse and also caught a few trout. The rest of the time was spent in reading, playing penny poker, and eating lolly bananas. Mr. Watson is particularly fond of these delicacies, and we reduced his stock by nearly two gross before we left—a very creditable performance.

However, we had a big trip in front of us, and after receiving our supplies from Cooma we regretfully departed. Ironmungy was the last place on the river which we were to see for over 200 miles.

Stan had rather a nasty-looking back which had become infected from the dye in his shirt, but I was dressing it for him night and morning and we hoped to clean up the trouble before long.

WE went fairly well the first day and covered nearly ten miles. Though we struck some bad stretches of granite and basalt boulders, which the rain made very slippery, we were quite satisfied with both the conditions and the progress. We even optimistically looked forward to reaching the MacLaughlin River in another two days. It took us nine.

The next day's start was delayed by a heavy fog, which did not start to lift until after 8 o'clock. Although we made fairly good progress several portages were necessary, and once, when we decided to shoot the canoe through a bad stretch on the end of the long rope, she crashed nose-on into a big rock which was sticking up out of the water.

She was travelling very fast at the time and had all the gear aboard. I think we both expected her to crumple up, but beyond knocking the stem-band off she escaped injury.

The banks began to rise more sharply from the river, whose song took on a different note. We realised that we were dropping down into the "bad lands." Wallabies began to make their appearance and we were out of the rabbit country. Trout were less plentiful, and we would see only an occasional mob of duck. We also saw the river disappearing for the first time to run beneath a mass of rock. The rocks formed a bridge over which it was possible to cross the river.



THE next day we were into the rough country with a vengeance. Portage after portage, including one which dropped us 30-35 feet. We were pretty tired that afternoon and camped early at the end of a long pool. After pitching camp we both walked up the hill at the back of the camp for a look at the first section we would strike in the morning.

The sight that greeted our eyes was very much worse than the gorge above Dalgety. We saw a deep, narrow chasm through which the river boiled and foamed between a tumbled mass of boulders. There were no pools of any description; all we could see were rocks and broken water, and the sullen roar made us wonder just how long the trip would take.

We sat and looked at it for a long time. It didn't seem possible that we could work our way through, and we decided that if we couldn't go on in the canoe we would go on without it. Even if we had to walk we would get to the sea somehow. It was the roughest stretch I'd seen on any river.

That night we considered the possibilities of transporting the gear and the canoe over the hill, which we had just climbed for our glimpse of the river, and putting the canoe in the water again below the bad stretch.

However, we decided against this, as the portage would have taken us practically two days to complete and would have meant a terrific lot of hard work. We decided to take the risk rather than the work.

WE could not resist the temptation of prospecting the hill at the back of the camp the next morning, as the gravelly wash with which it was covered looked most promising. We carried prospects and washed dishes for some hours without finding a colour.

We eventually abandoned our ideas of finding an Eldorado, and taking a light load of gear, including the guns and camera, walked across-country to the end of the bad stretch.

It was during this walk that we saw the first of the hundreds of goats which were to provide us with meat and quite a lot of fun lower down the river. Mr. and Mrs. Goat were reclining in the shade of a rock on the opposite side of the river and approximately 1000 feet below us.

We had finished our fresh meat and, preferring goat to pemmican, loaded the rifle. We fired at least a dozen shots at these goats before they wended their way out of sight. They could not hear the report of the rifle for the roar of the river, and the little puffs of rock-dust as the bullets spattered about them did not seem to worry them in the least. I think they only moved because the sun was moving round and eating up their shade.

WHEN we at length clambered down into the bed of the river we could see that several portages were necessary, one being some half-a-mile in length. The long portage would be a rough one, and only possible on one side of the river.

The lower end of this gorge was completely blocked with huge boulders for a distance of seventy yards, and we could catch only occasional glimpses of the water as it forced its way beneath that tangled barrier. We stripped off and, with only our boots on, walked back upstream on the side of the river opposite to the camp, threw our boots across, and after a short but strenuous swim reached the stretch of sand on which our tent was pitched.

Then the fun started. Just before we commenced the first of the portages I was standing on a sloping rock some six feet above the centre of a rapid. I gave a haul on my line, my feet slipped from under me, and in I went.

I roared to Stan to "hold her." Fortunately he "held her," and with the aid of the line, which I was still firmly grasping, I somehow reached the shore. Two of my fingers were nearly pulled loose from my hand, and were sore for days afterwards.

Stan as usual thought it was a huge joke and screamed with laughter. He said that the expression on my face when it disappeared in that smother of foam was worth going miles to see.

WE considered that we had done some hard work before we started on that stretch. Late that evening, when we reached the spot where lay the gear which we had taken over in the morning, we realised that until then we did not know the meaning of hard work.

The next time we were in Dalgety we made inquiries from someone who was supposed to know quite a lot about the river as to what this stretch was called, and we were told: "That's-somewhere-out-the-back-of-Kelly's." If there happens to be a Mr. Kelly, I can assure him that somewhere at the back of his place is a very rough gorge.

For the next four days we averaged less than a mile a day. We worked from daylight until it was too dark to see, very often going without our midday meal. It was a canoeist's nightmare. We were well behind time, and we began to have doubts that our flour and tobacco would last out until we reached Williams.

We slipped and fell, dragged, hauled and sweated.

We pulled our sleeping-bags on each night and were asleep before we had time to finish our after-supper smoke. We almost forgot what it felt like to be in the canoe; it was just portage, portage, portage, through the roughest country it was possible to imagine.

There were no pools—only small falls, bad rapids, rocks, foam, and the dull roar of the river. We were reluctant to do any shooting as we were afraid of rain, which would have meant abandoning the canoe, as a few more feet of water in those gorges would have left us no room even to climb along the banks.

The banks were masses of boulders, with the sides of the gorge rising sheer in some places for hundreds of feet. Our hands cracked and bled. Stan's back was getting worse, the canoe was leaking again—altogether we had a pretty rough time.

WE found that in one place the river completely disappears and runs underground for fifty yards. Very few people in Monaro know of this, and many were inclined to doubt the authenticity of the tale.

The truth of it was brought home to us when we camped near the Stone Bridge, as it is called, and had to walk 100 yards upstream before we could climb down to the water's edge to fill our billys. The blacks used this natural crossing when they were travelling backwards and forwards from what is now Victoria.

Fish were very scarce, and by making a special stop we found time to shoot our first goat. By this time we had seen hundreds of them, but it was only after a very patient stalk that we shot Billy. At least, Stan did the shooting and I only did the complaining because he didn't pick on something younger.

Billy was with us, in gradually diminishing form, for nearly a week. He became more tender as time went on, but strong as our stomachs were we were forced to pour the last of him regretfully into the river. We managed portion of the last stew he made, but the billy, which was not washed out, was by morning a delicate shade of green.

We had rolled the canoe completely over in one rapid, but due to our system of packing no gear was lost. We lost only our small billy, which we had been using for a bailer. Then Stan lit a fire, and it got away from him. We were all one afternoon getting it under control. We thought it might have spread to the settled country up out of the gullies and caused some damage. It was hot work.

AT length we were halted about 14 miles above the junction of the MacLaughlin River. Stan was rather knocked about as the result of a heavy fall and it was raining steadily.

The going, as far ahead as we had investigated on foot, was still rough, but the banks of the river would make portaging a relatively simple matter. The ridges, however, were still rearing their heads, and as a result the sun rose later and set earlier.

We passed the junction of the MacLaughlin River after a long portage of nearly a mile. This tributary was only a trickle, although we had had heavy rain. Here we saw our first mob of kangaroos and also numbers of deer tracks.

The fish would not bite, and Billy, together with some pemmican and dried vegetables, was the extent of our menu. We had used up the last of our flour, our tobacco was rationed, so we were in a hurry to get to Arnold Williams.

We pushed on past the MacLaughlin, and one mile above the junction of the Bombala River we saw the first signs of civilisation since leaving Ironmungy. Jack Langhorn had been forced to move his camp down to the river only the day before we arrived.

He had been doing some scrubbing, and shortage of water on the tops had made a move necessary. We pitched our camp just below his, and that night ate his honey, his bread, his meat; in fact, we ate everything of his on which we could lay our hands.

Then down came the river. It rose six feet in a few minutes, and it was obvious that it would be impossible to travel the following day.



THEREFORE, we decided to strike across country to Arnold Williams's camp and pick up a light load of tucker, sufficient to carry us through to where he had erected a flag, marking the point where the river ran closest to his place.

When one considers that the Snowy River has a catchment area of 4200 square miles, it is not surprising that it rises with such extraordinary rapidity. Its average flood velocity at the Mackillop Bridge in Victoria is 17.004 miles per hour.

Higher up the river, where we were, it naturally flows much faster, and it would be no exaggeration to say that it rushes along at 35-40 miles per hour in some of the narrow gorges. Approaching the head or bad rapids or falls it would be faster still.

It is a mighty force, and one not to be trifled with. Always there is that sullen roar, and on the few occasions when we paused to think about it, it held both a threat and a challenge.

The day after St. Patrick's Day we were up before it was light, to find that the river had dropped slightly, but was still discoloured, and negotiating it would have been practically impossible.

We obtained directions as to how to find Arnold Williams's camp from Jack Langhorn. He told us to climb up out of the river and to strike north-west until we hit a fence. We were to run the fence along about two miles and we would find a camp. The men at the camp would give us further directions.

THE night before, I had been bitten simultaneously by three bull-ants and Stan had drunk half a pannikin of pot. permang. solution (which I had been using to bathe his back) in mistake for cold tea.

But that morning the sun was shining, our stomachs were full, and we were off to get something with which to fill them again. We were without a care in the world.

We found the camp without difficulty, but there was no one there. We knew that if we kept on in a north-westerly direction we would cut the track which led from Dalgety to Williams's, so away we went again. We pushed our way through thick scrub, crossed creeks and gullies until we eventually came on to clear country.

Finally we found a house, which proved to be the home of John Wroe. He was branding sheep when he first noticed us. He greeted us with one word: "Lost?" The men from Snowy River don't say much until you get to know them.

"No," we said. We were not lost—merely looking for Arnold Williams's camp.

"You the fellers in the boat?" he asked.

We told him we were. After he had taken us inside, fed us, and told us to stay as long as we liked, we sat round the fire smoking. We asked him what made him think we might have been the "fellers in the boat." (He had heard a few days before that we were on the trip.)

"Well," he said, "I've lived in this house for 47 years, and you're the first two coves I've ever seen walk in from the direction of the river whom I haven't known."

AFTER completing a ten-mile walk we found Arnold Williams's camp without further difficulty. There was quite a crowd of men there, as he was building a house. Arnie himself had been worried at our non-appearance, and had left for a search of the river only that morning.

He turned up just before dark, however, and told us that he had gone down into the river at a point midway between the Currowang Falls and Matong Creek. Here he found fresh tracks and some wreckage of a canoe.

Thinking we had struck trouble, he followed the tracks upstream until he saw two men on the other side of the river. Naturally he thought he had found us, and it was some minutes before he discovered his mistake.

These two men had started off in a canoe at the Burnt Hut, with the intention of going through to Mackillop Bridge, in Victoria. On their third night out, the fresh which had caused us to walk across for tucker had come down and washed their canoe away.

They had found it badly damaged and jammed under a big rock in the centre of the river. It was bad luck for them. Evidently it did not disturb them very much, because Arnie told us that he carried on a shouted conversation with them above the roar of the river.

IN spite of the fact that it was nearly thirty miles over a rough track to Dalgety, Arnie insisted on driving us in that night to get our supplies. Coming home we decided to stop with his people, who lived about ten miles

from the camp. We tried to use their 'phone next morning, and when we found it was out of order Arnie drove us all the way back to Dalgety again.

The same afternoon we started off for the canoe with what we thought was enough tucker to get us around to the point where the flag had been placed in position. Although it was fairly late, we decided to go down into the river below where we had left our canoe and have a look at the other one which had been smashed up.

Unfortunately we struck the river above the spot where the wreckage lay, and although we found tracks everywhere we didn't find the canoe. It was getting late, and despite our hurry to get back to our camp it was dark before we got to the junction of the Bombala River.

We pushed on for a while, but it was rough walking and I fell, slightly straining and cutting my ankle. So, without blankets, we spent a particularly cold night under a tree. We built two long fires and tried to sleep between them, but wood was scarce and we thought longingly of our two empty sleeping-bags.

When we got back to our camp next morning we found the following note, weighted with one of my boots, on the bottom of the canoe:—

"Thursday.

"Called to see you, but couldn't wait. If you are in need of tucker, come up to the hut in the morning."

The message was from the two men whom we had missed while looking for Arnold Williams's camp. They had signed their names, but I think they might be annoyed if I used them. They'd say I was making a lot of fuss about nothing.

ONE of them, however, is 82 years of age; he works his own place, and still rides the river gullies looking for strays. I will also add something else. The people we met on our trip down the river are the most kindly natured and open-hearted people I have met in my life.

We decided on a "make and mend" that day. This pastime consisted of sleeping for some hours and washing and mending for some minutes. We were justified in doing this, as we had a lot of sleep to make up and very few clothes to worry about.

We bestirred ourselves in the afternoon, however, and transported Jack Langhorn and his son to the other side of the river in the canoe. Then we dragged their horses across on the end of our long rope. One horse was rather fractious, but with three of us on the other end of the rope, and with me behind him using a paddle his mind was made up for him.

Jack and his son were riding out for more tucker and would not be back until the following day. We were sorry to see them go, but that night we slept in their bunks. We had intended robbing a bees' nest near the camp the following morning, but we decided that as we had the Currowang Falls to negotiate we would get away to an early start.

We thought two days would take us to Muddy Creek, at the junction of which the flag was erected. We were too optimistic once more, the journey occupying five days.

THE Quedong or Bombala River added its voice to the Snowy's song without any appreciable change in tempo. Although the river was still somewhat high and wearing a very jaundiced expression, we made good progress.

Stan's back was very painful and my ankle was suppurating slightly. However, we knew how to find our way to obtain help if we required it, so we did not worry.

It was Westward Ho! now until we reached the big Popong Bend, where the river swung south for its journey down into Victoria.

The tracks of the two men who had lost their canoe were everywhere, and we found their last camp without difficulty. There was no sign of them, and evidently they had made out a day or two before we arrived. A little lower down the river we saw the nose of their canoe just showing above the water. We stayed long enough to pull her half out and strip off some of the timber with which to repair our canoe.

A few portages brought us eventually to the Currowang Falls. A low thundering and a cloud of misty spray warned us of their presence. Fast-running rapids and two big drops make up the falls, which lowered us some 60-70 feet.

We found a good but longish portage around them by following the old bed of the river. Several snakes resented our intruding on their solitude and protested rather angrily, but Stan was quite pleased to see them and soon convinced them that he at least was friendly.



BY the people who know the vicinity these falls are aptly called the Warm Corner Falls. The temperature was approximately ten degrees higher in the gorge down which they tumbled than on the river either below or above them.

We found easy going from the foot of the falls past Currowang Creek and the Hanging Rock. The river had widened out and ran sluggishly over a sandy bottom. Here and there it would quicken its pace to glide softly down a long, shingly rapid, but its voice was now a whisper.

Soon we saw Arnie's flag waving in the breeze and we greeted it joyfully, as our last meal had been without salt. The flagpole was a long dead stick, and the flag a bunch of newspapers tied up with string. Beneath the flag was a tobacco tin containing a note from Arnie giving us directions to his camp.

He also told us to fire two shots. If it was a still day, he might possibly hear them and would then come down to meet us. Sound travels a long way in these still, quiet gullies which run down into the river.

We knew the lay of the country now, as we had been to the camp, so did not worry about firing the shots.

An hour and a half's climb took us to Arnie's. On the way to the camp we walked out to the ends of one or two spurs and obtained some magnificent views of the river. The country which lay to the west looked shockingly rough. There would be plenty of corners in there for us to look around.

Everyone seemed pleased to see us at the camp. Dogs and men came from all directions, and two pannikins were quickly filled with cool, creaming beer.

THE water in the river makes good tea, but for some reason drinking it straight only makes you thirsty. Of course, it quenches your thirst for a short time, but before very long another drink is necessary, and then another and another, until you seem to be drinking water all the time.

For that reason we always held off as long as possible before we had our first drink of the day. Everyone we met who had been on the river for any length of time shared our opinion of the water.

Stan had a very bad night with his back, and the following day was practically in a state of collapse. He refused to go in to the doctor at Cooma or the Bush Nurse at Dalgety, because he said they might want to put him in hospital and that would mean the end of the trip.

He wanted me to open it with a razor, but I pointed out that if I did he'd probably leave the camp feet first; I refused to do it. However, he managed to get round the contractor.

That night, to the intense delight of all the men in the camp, the contractor put him across the table in the hut and got to work. The air was electric when he produced some slightly soiled rag, a large knitting-needle, and a dish of water.

Despite a lot of hard work and numerous sympathetic grunts from the onlookers, Dr. Scarlett, as we christened him, failed to open his back up enough to remove what afterwards proved to be a carbuncle.

The next morning it was almost necessary to throw Stan into Colin Williams's truck, but we took him to Dalgety. There the Bush Nurse made an excellent job of him, and the following day he was very much better.

THE night we were in Dalgety there was a dance on, and a good time was had by all. Round midnight an argument ended in two men producing loaded automatics and expressing their intention of shooting another man up. Peace was finally restored, but not until a certain flavour of the "good old days" had crept into the proceedings.

The next day we spent in Arnie's camp, and the following day Stan and I were left in charge, all the others having gone away for the week-end.

IN the afternoon we walked to the top of McDonald's Hill, one of the highest points in the district, and gazed out across the black, forbidding mantle of the highest country in Australia. It looks like the embodiment of a mad canoeist's nightmare.

Surely the Creator of the Universe must have raked together all the spare, rough mountain ranges, gorges, and boulders into one vast heap, meaning to level them out when He had nothing more important on hand. We sat there for some time.

In the distance we could see Kosciusko; beneath our feet we could catch glimpses of the river down which we would be working our way, foot by foot, in the morning. We could see its track winding and disappearing into the

very centre of the roughest country we had ever seen. I think we both thought the same thing: If anything happens to us down there we'll want more than a Bush Nurse to fix us up.

We knew of Surveyor Townsend in 1846 turning back a few miles below the next falls we would reach and marking on his map that, owing to the rough nature of the country, it was impossible for him to proceed farther.

We had heard stories of men who had died lonely deaths; of some who had gone into this same country and had never been heard of again; of one who was found reading his Bible after all his food was eaten—he had even boiled and eaten the hide of a bullock. He was taken out just in time.

Stories, too, of the fabulous wealth that lies hidden in the gold reefs running through these rocky gorges; but we did not realise until we gazed out over it how very true all these stories must be, and how many tales lie buried there which will not be told until the end of time.

A thousand Southern Clouds could lie there until they were forgotten memories.

As we stood up to return to the camp, an eagle soared out above our heads and circled the gorge beneath us; a living emblem of something vast and mighty, of something that stirs an elemental chord in one and makes one eager to get right out into the centre of it and look for something that one doesn't really expect to find—to keep looking round the next corner to see what lies ahead.

ARNIE'S father had prospected along the river for a considerable distance. He was the only one who gave us any chance of passing the Little River Falls. Everyone else had told us it was impossible.

These falls were our next big difficulty; but after passing them we expected fairly easy going through to the Mackillop Bridge in Victoria.

It was extraordinary the variety of names by which people referred to the Mackillop Bridge. We had heard it called McKellar's Bridge, Deddick Bridge, Turn-back Bridge, Snowy River Bridge, the Big Bridge, the Iron Bridge, and the Steel Bridge.

Of the river beyond this bridge we had the most terrifying reports. It was a long way off, however, and when we walked down to the river the following morning our thoughts were only of the Little River Falls.

Assisted by Colin Williams we carried a big load of tucker to the river. Ahead of us was the longest tuckerless stretch of the trip. We were told before we left not to go short of fresh meat if we found any sheep.

"You've got a gun, haven't you," we were asked. "Well, bowl one over. Hang the skin up in a tree and we might find it some time."

It had been snowing on the tops only a few days before, and the wind bit into our wet hides like a razor. We had to travel in sweaters, which hampered us somewhat and considerably lengthened our drying operations at night.

OUR canoe was in fairly good trim, as we had spent some hours mending cracks and refixing the timbers which had strained and pulled away from the planks. Our boots had been well dressed and were standing up wonderfully to their gruelling work. On a trip such as this, good boots are your best friend.

The second night after leaving Muddy Creek the river rose three feet and made the going very tricky. The water was cold, and evidently the rise had been caused by snow water coming down.

The following day we camped in the shadow of Windmill Hill, one mile above the Little River Falls. The country adjacent to the river was very high and mountainous, and the steep ramps were mostly timbered with black pine and white box.

We saw a few sheep with three or four years' wool on them. They all had long tails, which showed that they had not been marked, and would probably die of old age on the river before anyone found them. We decided that, as we still had fresh meat, we would not worry about shooting one, but would wait until we found some more lower down.

Approaching the head of the falls we had to cross nearly half a mile of very bad slate bars. In some places they were only a few feet apart, forming deep, narrow gutters through which the water swirled and boiled.

Standing at the head of the falls in a cloud of mist and spray, we could see that a bad rapid and a straight, thundering fall of 30-35 feet made up the barrier.

Below the falls the river was running very fast through several rock-strewn narrow channels, and it looked as if a long portage would be necessary.



THE eastern bank of the river, on which was reflected a miniature rainbow, was the western fall of Windmill Hill.

It rose very sharply for some hundreds of feet, and a portage down that side was impossible. The other side looked more hopeful. It was a mass of jagged slate and boulders, but we had to keep going, so we set to work.

We did that three-quarter mile portage in four stages. Although we were in good condition, at the end of the day we were completely knocked up. It was back-breaking, grinding work. Every muscle in our bodies ached and protested fiercely. Even now the effort of writing causes occasional twinges of pain to run up my right arm.

We slept soundly that night, partly the sleep of exhaustion, but content in the knowledge that we had passed another "impassable" section. We were over the falls.

NOW that we had passed the Little River Falls the going became easier. One day was very much like another; long, deep pools; quietly murmuring rapids; still, shallow reaches and very occasional difficult stretches where any roping or portage was necessary.

Always the black, beetling, pine-clad ramps frowned down on us, but their frown was a tolerant one. The majesty of their bearing made us realise what very small atoms we were on that mighty landscape.

To the south lay hundreds of square miles of uninhabited country. Ahead of us were the river and the rugged vastness of Kosciusko and the Snowy Mountains. To the north was our track to civilisation should we strike trouble.

We passed Mount Talbingo, which marked the limit of Surveyor Townsend's attempt in 1846 to traverse the river upstream. We made steady progress past Wallaroo Creek; found that Long Gully Creek was well out of position on our maps; saw a trickle of water running in from Murrumbuco Creek, and eventually swung north into the Big Popong Bend.

We had left the few stray sheep behind us, but we found occasional rabbits; eels were easy to catch, and the sun smiled down on us.

BY this time we were in excellent condition, and although the water was very cold we forged ahead, dropping steadily towards the sea. We could not do enough work to make us tired.

We ate damper and what we could shoot or catch, dug our holes in the sand each night, and slept the dreamless sleep of our primeval ancestors.

Sometimes we would attempt to shoot a rapid a little more difficult than any we had until then negotiated. Once we hit a rock and I was thrown out. Another time we half-filled the canoe, but we enjoyed every second of it.

Then we rounded the Bend and turned south. A few Gang-Gangs made their appearance. The mobs of duck we saw would not take the slightest notice of us until we splashed the water with our paddles and shushed them into lazy flight. Snakes seemed to have disappeared altogether.

The river was widening out and we had great difficulty in finding a channel deep enough to float the canoe. Sometimes we would have to drag her through a hundred yards or more of water only an inch or two deep. It was fairly hard work.

A FEW miles above the junction of the Jacobs River we saw a bold timbered spur running out from the main range to end in a sheer drop of some hundreds of feet. This spur, we were afterwards told, is called by the few who know the country Where-Dick-Got-Frightened.

It appears that many years ago the flat country towards Ingebyra was taken up by one of the earliest settlers and used as a cattle run.

This man had in his employ a native stockman called Dick. Dick had the reputation of being absolutely fearless and was a splendid horseman. One day some cattle broke away from him and ran out on a spur. Dick rode hard trying to wheel them.

He was galloping fast when he saw that the timber ended abruptly, and he pulled his horse to a slithering stop at the very edge of a precipice.

It was the only time Dick ever admitted being frightened, and to this day the spur bears his name and a reference to the incident—Where-Dick-Got-Frightened.

WE had almost reached the junction when we saw two men on horseback coming around a bend. We were too surprised to speak for some seconds, and then a voice brought us back to consciousness. "Well, that's the first

canoe that's ever been on this part of the river." It proved to be District-Surveyor Harnett and Snowy Golby, of Ingebyra. Mr. Harnett had been particularly kind and helpful to us before we commenced the trip, and we were very pleased to see him.

We had begun to share his love of the river and had much to talk about. We swapped a cold cooked duck, which we were carrying for dinner, for a tin of steak and kidney pudding, and, over the remnants of the meal, yarned until late afternoon.

It was the first occasion he had been down on the river for some time, and we were lucky to strike him.

Not long after we left them Stan went ahead on foot to pick up a duck or two for supper. I was bringing the canoe along on my own. Presently I looked up to see him beckoning frantically, and, hastily dragging the canoe into the bank, I ran down to join him.

Together we crawled up to the top of a point of rocks, which ran down into the river, and on the other side, with nostrils quivering suspiciously, stood a mob of bumbles.

They knew everything was not as it should be, and looked inquiringly around to see from which direction the danger threatened.

The big black stallion, which led the bunch of six or seven mares and foals, finally disappeared into the scrub with his family close at his heels, back to the unchallenged freedom of his run.

WE had decided to camp at the junction of the Jacobs that night, and when we arrived there another surprise awaited us, fresh tracks of several men showing plainly in the sand.

This event, after meeting Mr. Harnett and Snowy Golby on the loneliest section of our trip, was indeed remarkable. We quickly pitched camp, put a stew on the

fire, and followed the tracks about half a mile up the Jacobs River.

Here we found a camp which proved to be that of a survey party in charge of Mr. Mayhew. We had tucker with them that night and read some week-old papers which had been packed down from Ingebyra only that day.

The next morning, before we left our camp, the four of them came down to see us off and brought with them gifts of tobacco, jam, bread—everything of which they thought we might be short. These men were blazing the trail for the new road which will eventually link Ingebyra with Victoria.

It will cross the Jacobs River in the vicinity of Jacobs Ladder and will run along the Snowy for some miles before winding up on to the Ingegoodbee Plateau.

The scenery will be a magnificent attraction for tourists, and the road will open up thousands of acres of hitherto inaccessible country.

We found that the water from the Jacobs was very much clearer and infinitely colder than that from the Snowy. This was explained by the recent falls of snow which had occurred higher up the river.

OPPOSITE the junction of the Jacobs are the Pinch Mountains. Many years ago an American of fanciful ancestry and curious habits decided to make into this country and do some prospecting. He was known as "Warrigal Bill."

Now Warrigal, even in those strenuous times, was looked upon as being a bit queer by reason of the fact that he was always having what he called "witchcrafts." These "witchcrafts" would tell him what to do and what not to do, and he always obeyed them.

One time he was carrying a bag of flour up the Pinch Mountain when he paused to put the bag down for a spell. A "witchcraft" told him to keep going, and he carried that bag of flour to the top of the mountain without one stop.

He had a mate on the prospecting venture, and, while looking for alluvial gold, they came across a rich reef.

Unfortunately a "witchcraft" intervened and told Warrigal that he must never allow this reef to be worked, and that he was to kill his mate if he ever breathed a word of its whereabouts. He warned his mate, who, knowing Warrigal, believed him.

They have both died since, and the location of the reef is just another mystery of the Snowy River.

WE pushed on, with both the river and the weather becoming unfriendly. Cold squally showers blew up, making it necessary to build fires every few miles to thaw out.



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SHORTLY after passing the junction of the Pinch River we came to the Boiling Downs. As the name suggests, the river here is very rough, and we had to do a portage of nearly three-quarters of a mile to get round.

The Boiling Downs consist of a drop of 12ft, and then a series of bad rapids. The river is confined to a narrow, straight-sided, rocky gutter about 30ft wide and half a mile in length. Naturally it rushes through here at a terrific pace.

Then a pool a mile long started us off towards the border. At the end of this pool we picked up the first emu tracks.

The high, broken ramps rising from the river were now clothed with a thick cloak of black and Conapaira pine. Most of these trees were only young, as a big fire some years ago had practically denuded the country of timber.

AT one time all the cattle were brought through from Victoria along this section of the river, but portion of the bank was washed away in a big flood and a new route had to be found. They now come in through Suggan Buggan and down on to the Pinch River.

After reaching the junction of the Snowy they follow that river as far as the Jacobs. From there they climb Jacobs Ladder, and so through Ingebyra to the markets of New South Wales.

To our left lay the Willis country. This was one of the earliest of the cattle runs. Thousands of head were mustered annually at the old Willis Depot under Mt. Trooper and at the Willis Stockyards a little farther down the river.

This country has long since been given back to the dingoes and wallabies. The Willis Stockyards were built nearly a century ago with Conapaira pine.

When we found the few remaining posts and rails they were in excellent condition. Most of them had been washed away in various floods and some had been burnt. Even the mortice holes had not broken away.

NEARING the border the weather became even worse, sleet and driving showers making the travelling conditions almost unbearable. Sitting in the stern, I could see Stan's back in constant motion.

Even with his sweaters on he shivered for days. Often we would get out of the canoe and drag her round the sides of some of the holes to restore our circulation.

A 9ft high cairn of stones had been erected on the bank of the river to mark the border line. We were unable to find it, although we knew its approximate position; possibly it was washed away in the last big flood.

We did not spend much time searching, however, as we were too keen to get on and make camp where we could dry out and have some hot tucker.

We had seen our first dingo near the junction of the Willis Biddi Creek, but as we were all in a hurry we just scowled at each other and kept going. He was a big brute.

IT was very cold at night, and Stan hit on a new idea for keeping himself warm. He would put two or three big stones on the fire and heat them thoroughly. Then he would grovel around in the tent until he had made holes in the sand big enough to bury them. His bunk was made on top of them.

Quite a good idea, but sometimes I noticed that the stones would work up through the sand. . . . I managed to keep fairly warm by sleeping in all my dry clothes—two pairs of socks, two scarves, and all the available newspapers.

On the New South Wales side of the border there are the remains of at least a dozen stockyards which were used when the old cattle track was opened. What stories they could tell of the black-bearded drovers of a bygone century!

We had been told not to stay too long with The Old Girl who keeps the Pub. on the Border, so we hurried on. This is a local and very facetious saying. There are no Old Girls or pubs. within fifty miles of the border.

THE weather became worse, but we made fair progress, camping the night, after crossing the border, just above the junction of the Toonginbooka River.

We often wondered during those days whether it was cold that made us work or the work that made us cold.

The next day the weather cleared a little. We made a fast run, shooting most of the rapids, and about midday swung round a corner to see in front of us the spidery structure of the Mackillop Bridge.

The road which crosses this bridge leads from the Gelantipy highlands on the western side through to Tubbitt and Bonang on the Orbost-Delegate road.

The bridge is very little used for motor traffic, only four cars crossing during the few days we were there. It was built mainly for stock traffic.

In 1889, years before the bridge was thought of, the only way one could cross the river was by means of an ancient ferry.

This service was maintained by a man named McKellar, who lived there in solitude until 1925. For ferrying a few sheep and a lonely traveller or two across the river he was paid £75 per annum.

EVENTUALLY it was decided a bridge should be built. It was barely completed when the big flood of January, 1934, came roaring down the gorges and smashed it to a mass of tangled steel work. Referring to the incident, an article in "The Commonwealth Engineer," says:—

"The destruction of the recently completed Mackillop Bridge trusses and the loss of one pier and two spans of the heavy railway-highway bridge at Orbost by the action of the flood-waters of the Snowy River indicate that the laws governing flood conditions from such streams are not well understood.

"Even the river gauge erected by the Victorian electricity commission was over-topped by 30ft. and carried away."

When the best engineering brains in Australia make an admission like that about a river—well, it's some river!

There are no houses near the bridge, but we were fortunate in striking a gang of men from the Vermin Destruction Board. We camped with them for two and a half days. They were engaged in killing out patches of stinkwort, of which we saw hundreds of acres along the river.

The day after arriving at the bridge we decided we would have to get somewhere for more tucker. We sat on the side of the road for some hours waiting for a car; but none came.

I then decided that I would start off and walk while Stan stayed behind to repair the canoe. I tied a bag on my back and headed for Delegate, fifty-three miles away. I had walked for about three or four miles when I saw a hut near the road. A man came out, and after the usual "good-days" he asked me where I was going. I told him.

"Well," he said, "I've got an old lizzie I bought in Melbourne the other day for a fiver. You could have her only I got pinched at Sale, when I was bringing her up, for not having her registered. The case has not come off yet, so I wouldn't like to be pinched again before it does."

"Would you like a loan of my bike?" I hadn't ridden a bike for years, but I accepted his offer, thanked him, and rode unsteadily away.

AFTER negotiating a somewhat perilous course for a few more miles I found a house. I leaned the bike thankfully against the fence and went through the gate. Before I had time to say a word a voice said: "You'd better come in and have a bit of dinner." I went in.

I discovered eventually that I was accepting the hospitality of Tom Warne and his wife. After I had explained who I was, and where I was going, I asked him if he knew if there was anyone going to town who would give me a lift.

"I've just finished work," said Tom, who is employed as a maintenance man by the Country Roads Board. "I had to shoe a few horses this afternoon, but that can wait till to-morrow. I'll take you in." Such a man was Tom!

He asked me if my mate wanted to go. I told him "no," but that there was a man in the camp at the bridge who was anxious to visit some relations at Delegate.

"You take the bus and go down and pick him up," he said, "I'll be ready when you get back."

Away I went and arrived back at the camp with the horn blowing loudly, and very pleased with myself in a new shiny utility truck, after having walked out only a few hours previously.

On the way down I met two men who had both offered to drive me in, should anything happen to the arrangements I had made. We have very pleasant memories of the people we met in Victoria.

During the drive to Delegate I discovered that Tom Warne went to school with Stan in Nowra. They had not seen each other for nearly thirty years. That, of course, meant that Stan was dragged out of the tent when we returned and the occasion fittingly celebrated.

The next day we spent working on the canoe and doing our washing. The following morning we said good-bye to civilisation again and soon left the lofty Turnback Peak and Bulla Bulla Mountain behind us.



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THE weather had cleared somewhat, and although to attempt the next stretch had been called "a complicated form of suicide" by one bushman, we were most optimistic about getting through. We knew it would have to be very bad indeed to be worse than that which we had gone through.

We had decided that if a big rise in the river caught us, we would build a raft, lash the canoe, gear, and ourselves on it, and let it go.

We were told, with some degree of correctness this time, that it would be impossible to walk out as the scrub was far too thick. It was estimated that two men cutting their way through with axes would only do a mile or two a day.

We soon passed the Little River and Boundary Creek, as the going was fairly easy. We could see, however, that another foot or two of water in the river would make things very nasty.

ON we went. By this time the pines had practically disappeared. The thick scrub and undergrowth were creeping closer to the river, and the ridges had lost some of their austere aloofness.

Then the weather changed again, and down came the rain. Cold, miserable, soaking rain that frayed our tempers and chilled us to the bone.

Late one afternoon we rounded a bend, and standing on a sandbank about 10ft above the river was a big dingo. We stopped paddling and allowed the current to carry us towards him.

He stared at us suspiciously, and kept running back to the edge of the scrub, but would return for another look at the strange object which was coming closer each second. I cautiously slid my hand into the pack and pulled out the gun and a cartridge.

Gently raising the gun to my shoulder, I fired. He was trotting away at the moment I pulled, and as I was using only 24in shells I merely wounded him.

We quickly beached the canoe, and picking up the trail of blood we followed him for nearly a mile. The trail led us up a narrow, rocky gully, and we found him near the head of it.

Scalps are not worth very much in that part of Victoria, and as it was raining steadily we finished him off and left him. That evening three more came trotting along the bank of the river, and nearly into the camp. They cleared before I could get a shot at them.

THE next day was one of the worst of the trip. We struck rough going, it rained all day, and we had quite a few portages. The river was singing its Swan Song, and evidently this was the section in which we were supposed to perish.

We disappointed the pessimists again, but, had the river risen a few feet, it might have been a different story. Certainly it was rough, but not as rough as it had been higher up. It was the rain that made it so unpleasant; the rain, the cold, and the slippery rocks.

However, we slipped, fell, and cursed our way along until we found a camp. It was only a narrow strip of sand nearly hidden amongst the rocks, and we had to climb some distance for wood—but it was a camp, and the first we had seen that day.

That night the tent leaked, and everything seemed either wet or damp.

We had to keep going in case the river came down, so the next morning found us slogging along again. Another portage or two took us out of the rough section, and we made good progress as we struck only easy rapids and long pools.

Unfortunately the maps we had of the Victorian end of the river were not very complete, and we had difficulty in determining our position.

Still, the rain held off for the next day or two, and as we had plenty of tucker we did not worry.

WE saw thousands and thousands of duck—more, I think, than I have ever seen in my life, although I have done quite a lot of duck shooting.

They would leave the water in mobs of three and four hundred, and the roar of their wings sounded like the surf breaking on the shore.

The hills began to drop away, and we ran through a strip of limestone country. Stalactites and stalagmites showed plainly on some of the faces, and this was evidently a continuation of the run of country in which the Buchan Caves are opened up. Water gums lined the banks, and there were ferns in profusion.

Stan had exported big quantities of fern to Germany, and he pointed out many members of the Adiantum family: Red Stalk, Fishbone, and a host of others. Bell-birds were very numerous, and their clamour in the late afternoons was deafening.

THE first sign that we were approaching civilisation again was in the shape of some cleared country. Then one morning we sighted two men. We pulled in and they introduced themselves as Charlie West and Ewan McCrae.

Charlie lived about ten miles farther down the river, and he insisted that we should make there that night, and camp with him. We tried to do it, but failed by 1½ miles.

We were there early the next morning, however, and Charlie showed us over his farm and practically sank the canoe with gifts of potatoes, squash, onions, parsnips, carrots, tomatoes, grapes, pears, and chillies; all grown on the place.

He wanted us to ride over to the Buchan Caves, but we pointed out that we were behind time and anxious to get through as soon as possible. We were also short of money, and would not be able to get any until we arrived at Orbost.

Charlie disappeared for a few minutes and came back with a handful of notes and silver. "That is all I've got," he said, "but you are welcome to it." He was a little hurt when we refused it.

It is rather difficult to find words to thank a man for an action like that. Jim Sabroni, from Cyprus, was share-farming on Charlie's place, and had it practically all under beans. With Jim we had a dinner of corned meat and black olives, and enjoyed it thoroughly.

We knew we were nearing the end of our journey, but as we were leaving we asked Jim how far it was to Orbost. "She's a hundred mile," he said, and chuckled.

TWO days later we pulled our canoe out of the water under the bridge at Orbost. We had found the going down past the Rodger and Buchan rivers full of interest, but devoid of excitement. We had seen hundreds of emus, we had trailed a spinner behind the canoe and caught numerous perch, and we had heard the pheasants calling to each other across the river.

We were shooting all the rapids we came to, but something was missing—I think it was the feeling of absolute serenity and peacefulness that is only found when one is in direct communion with Nature. The gradual insistence of conventions and man-made things was received with mixed feelings.

When we eventually shot out on to the Orbost Flats the trip was nearly over. When a man hailed us to borrow some cigarette papers we knew we were back to the humdrum existence of everyday life.

We stayed a night in Orbost, and the following night reached Marlo. In each case the people we met were wonderfully kind to us, but we wanted to be back up the river worrying about how we were to get through some bad stretch, and wondering where our next feed was coming from.

WE had covered nearly three hundred miles, and had dropped 2824 feet, and when we arrived at Marlo we were two months and one day out from Jindabyne.

The trip now lives only in our memories, but sometimes I seem to hear the song of the wind through the pines, the voice of a good mate, and the thundering roar of the river . . .

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