THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF QUEENSLAND.

(By S. E. PEARSON).

(Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Queensland, August 27, 1937).

On a clear day, looking westward across the channels of the Mulligan River from the gravelly tableland behind Annandale Homestead, in south-western Queensland, one may discern a long low line of drift-top sandhills. Round more than half the skyline the rim of earth may be likened to the ocean. There is no break in any part of the horizon; not a landmark, not a tree. Should anyone chance to stand on those gravelly rises when the sun was peeping above the eastern skyline they would witness a scene that would carry the mind at once to the far-flung horizons of the Sahara. In the sunrise that western region is overhung by rose-tinted haze, and in the valleys lie the purple shadows that are peculiar to the waste places of the earth. Those naked, drift-top sanddunes beyond the Mulligan mark the limit of human occupation. Washed crimson by the rising sun they are set like gleaming fangs in the desert's jaws.

The Explorers.

The first white men to penetrate that line of sand-dunes, in south-western Queensland, were Captain Charles Sturt and his party, in September, 1845. They had crossed the stony country that lies between the Cooper and the Diamantina—afterwards known as Sturt's Stony Desert; and afterwards, by the way, occupied in 1880, as fair cattle-grazing country, by the Broad brothers of Sydney (Andrew and James) under the run name of Goyder's Lagoon—and the explorers actually crossed the latter watercourse without knowing it to be a river, for in that vicinity Sturt describes it as "a great earthy plain." For forty miles one meets with black, sundried soil and dismal wilted polygonum bushes in a dry season, and forty miles of hock-deep mud, water, and flowering swamp-plants in a wet one.

Sturt met with that region in a dry time. He next crossed the Lower Mulligan, which he named "Eyre's Creek," also without recognising it to be one of our great inland watercourses. The line of sand-

dunes west of Alton Downs old homestead then deflected him to the northward, and he entered what is now Queensland within sight of the Mulligan channels, though somewhat higher up. The Mulligan, on the Queensland side of the border is rather better defined; and Sturt followed it up for four days, through what was afterwards Annandale Station, to a point in the vicinity afterwards occupied by Kaliduwarry Homestead.

Confusion of River Beds.

Now the Mulligan channels thereabouts are a bit tricky. It is at that point that the Georgina channels join them; but in a dry time it is impossible to say which is the Georgina and which the Mulligan. Theoretically the two rivers join above Moncoonie Lake, but that is not all. If the Mulligan River (and not the Georgina) happens to run it does not get into Moncoonie Lake at all, but adheres to the claypan country further to the westward. If the Georgina River (and not the Mulligan) happens to be in flood then it fills Moncoonie Lake, the waters of which are thrown back for many miles, and it is this backwater from Moncoonie that joins the Mulligan.

Being a "new arrival" thereabouts Sturt could not be expected to unravel the mysteries of Nature at that spot, and moreover both rivers and lake were dry in September, 1845. Sturt failed to trace the Mulligan above that point, and lost it in the midst of great canegrass claypans. He likewise failed to recognise the vast expanse of shimmering white salt (Moncoonie Lake) as being part of the Georgina River. So he struck off to the north-west with the object of penetrating to the centre of the continent, and promptly met with that formidable belt of sand-dunes that marks the edge of the western desert.

Over these interminable, drift-top sandhills Sturt and his party toiled for two days, reaching a spot near the Queensland-Northern Territory border, in approximately Long. 138° 15′ E., Lat. 24° 30′ S.—a point that will be found marked on old charts of Australia, as "Sturt's Farthest, 1845."

Sturt's Enforced Retreat.

But there was no known border in those days and no water to be found amongst the sandhills. There was neither sign nor clue afforded Sturt of

any relief ahead. His men were sick with scurvy. He himself was reduced to semi-blindness by ophthalmia, and his animals were sorely in need of water. There seemed to be nothing for it but to beat a retreat out of that terrible region—to pull out by the way they had come. Baffled and exhausted, Sturt fell back, over a long and toilsome journey through a drought-stricken district, to his depot at Fort Grey.

Other Explorers Follow.

The south-west corner was not re-visited till 1861, when Burke and Wills passed through it to the Gulf of Carpentaria and returned. John McKinlay and his party were the next to penetrate that region in the following year, and then no one visited it until W. O. Hodgkinson arrived in 1876. These expeditions skirted the sandhill country that had baffled Sturt, giving it a wide berth. After Hodgkinson's visit "The Corner" became quite civilised. Late in 1876, and early in the following year, was witnessed the first influx of early run-seekers—men of great heart, in quest of pastoral holdings on the outer fringe of settlement.

Run-Seekers and Settlers.

The first of these early run-seekers (on the Queensland side) was Patrick Drinan. He took up Annandale Station on the Mulligan River, in July, 1876. This holding he disposed of to R. M. and W. Collins in the following year, from whom it passed, in 1881, to Edward Wienholt, a well-known squatter, who at various times held Katandra, Warenda, and Saltern Creek, and other properties in Queensland.

Drinan was a native of Gladstone, Port Curtis, Queensland, in which district his family held an estate named "Annandale." The Mulligan River leasehold took its name from the Gladstone estate. It was John Costello, afterwards of Lake Nash, who purchased the Gladstone Annandale from the Drinans, and Robert Lyons, afterwards M.L.A. for Mount Morgan, acquired the property from Costello in 1884.

Kaliduwarry Station, also on the Mulligan, was taken up by John Duke Graham, in December, 1876. He subsequently sold to Urquhart Bros., and Angus Fraser in 1878 and they were still in possession in 1899.

Glengyle Station was also taken up in 1876 by Duncan Macgregor, who held that property for over twenty years. The adjoining holding, "Sandringham," was acquired from the Crown in the following year (September, 1877) by Sylvester Browne, brother of "Rolf Boldrewood," the celebrated Australian novelist. Browne and his partner, Edward Joseph Coman (formerly of Mooraberrie Station, on Farrar's Creek) disposed of Sandringham to James Blackwood and F. H. Moore, in 1879, and they, in turn, to William George Field in 1884. Cacory Station (known to the blacks as "Kakuri") was also taken up in 1877 by Hector and Norman Wilson, of Melbourne, who were the original lessees also of Coongie Station, on the Cooper. The Wilsons sold to Duncan Campbell and W. Richardson in 1881, and after some changes the run came into the hands of Duncan Macgregor (Glengyle) and R. B. Ronald, who held it until 1899, when it was acquired by Sackville Kidman and his brother (now Sir Sidney).

Principal Cattle Holdings.

With the exception of Dubbo Downs, on Eyre's Creek before it reaches the Mulligan, taken up by John Frost in 1878, those were the principal cattle holdings in The Corner. Frost sold early to Robert Hunter, and in 1889 Dubbo Downs came into the hands of the Union Bank of Australasia.

All these runs (which are now held by Kidman Estates Ltd.) were taken up during a period of exceptionally good seasons. The flood-plains of the Lower Mulligan and Georgina rivers were rich in herbage beyond the dreams of men. Marsh mallows and other water-loving plants grew taller than the bullocks' backs, and the desolate sanddunes that had baffled Sturt were rich in parakelia and other indigenes of that region. It was the advent of the rabbit pest in the 'nineties, and the prolonged drought that marked the closing of the century, that turned that region back into the comparative desert that it had seemed to Sturt in 1845.

The Surveyors.

After the explorers (as we have seen) came the squatters, and after the squatters the surveyors. The survey of the Queensland border was a man-size job,

and much of the history of the south-western corner is associated with it.

The datum point for the Queensland Border Survey was the Fort Grey Corner in north-western New South Wales, near which Sturt had formed his depot in 1844. The calculated location of the 141st meridian had been fixed by scientists at Discovery Bay, at a point not far from the mouth of the Glenelg River (in Victoria). A survey of this which was to be the dividing line between three colonies—Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia—had been carried north as far as the Fort Grey Corner during the 'seventies, where it rested, at the 29th parallel, for some years.

Marking the Border.

Early in 1880 Surveyor W. M. Barron was instructed to carry on the survey line that was to mark the border between Queensland and South Australia. Barron ran the border traverse along the 141st meridian from the Fort Grey Corner to the Cooper, where he was relieved, that year, by Surveyor Augustus Poeppel, who carried the survey up through the Arrabury country to what is known as the Haddon Corner on the 26th parallel of latitude. The 141st meridian was not run beyond its calculated intersection with the 26th parallel. There Poeppel turned westward (under direction) and ran the 26th parallel to its calculated intersection with the 138th meridian at the Corner that has been named after him.

A No-Man's Land.

It may be of interest to mention that the border line between the Northern Territory and South Australia was never surveyed west of the spot where Poeppel fixed the Queensland corner. His report of that survey is dated May 19th, 1881, and records a desperate time whilst fighting his way and carrying his survey into the desert that had baffled Sturt. It is a No-Man's Land, and as a consequence to this day one may leave the settled districts on the Cooper, and, travelling northward through the Lake Eyre country, and keeping to the westward of Poeppel's survey, meet with no sign of human habitation in 500 miles. A former manager of Annandale Station, on the Mulligan River, has stated that in his experience of that district extending over many years he

had never seen the smoke of natives, or any sign of human life, arise from those desolate sand-wastes that lie beyond the Queensland border.

At the Poeppel Corner the surveyor turned northward, along the 138th meridian, and carried the border traverse up to a point about due west of Sandringham homestead, where he was forced to desist owing to the severe drought of 1881. The traverse was afterwards taken up, in 1884, by Surveyor John Carruthers, who had Mr. L. A. Wells, since noted as a leader of exploring expeditions, as his second-in-command. The last leg of the survey was 664 miles in length. Carruthers and Wells carried the Border Line through to the Gulf, completing the survey in 1886.

Disputes About Meridian.

Up to the year 1862 the western boundary of Queensland was taken as being the 141st meridian, or rather its calculated location. In earlier times there had been bitter quarrels between Victoria and South Australia as to where the exact location of that meridian might lie. Some scientists, however, had settled that debated question, and a straight line was intended to have been surveyed from Discovery Bay, near the mouth of the Glenelg River, in Victoria, through the Fort Grey and Haddon Corners, to a point on the shore of the Gulf of Carpentaria, cutting the Gulf coast line at a point a little to the northward of the spot where the seaport of Normanton was established later. But no sooner had Queensland been proclaimed a separate colony, on December 10th, 1859, than an agitation was set afoot to annex a strip of what is now the Northern Territory, and a petition was signed for presentation to the Colonial Office in London. The grounds of this petition were that, by adhering to the old 141st meridian arrangement, Queensland would be cut off from the only known deep-water seaport in the Gulf of Carpentaria —that of Investigator Road, embracing Point Parker and lying under the shelter of Bentinck and Mornington Islands. The fact that Point Parker, as a roadstead for shipping, was afterwards found to be utterly unsuitable, is quite beside the point.

Western Boundary Set Back.

The Duke of Newcastle, who was Secretary of

State for Colonies in Lord Palmerston's administration, was the recipient of this request, and in April of that year (1862) he advised the Governor of Queensland (Sir George Ferguson Bowen) that the prayer of the Government of that Colony had been acceded to, and that the western boundary of the colony was to be set back, northward of the 26th parallel of south latitude, over three degrees—that is to say, from the 141st to the 138th meridian of east longitude; thereby annexing to Queensland some 120,000 square miles of territory, embracing such districts as those which Birdsville, Boulia, Cloncurry, Camooweal, and Burketown were afterwards the centres. So that is the explanation of that "step" in the Queensland border.

Naming of Rivers.

Theoretically the border was set back, with a ruler, to the 138th meridian in the year 1862, and Queensland was granted administration of the Leichhardt and Gregory districts, which embraced the much-desired Plains of Promise, on the Gulf fall, as well as almost the entire basin of the Georgina (or Herbert) River on the inland fall. The inland districts had not then been fully explored, and no one was certain what they might contain. William Landsborough, the explorer, had penetrated inland from the Gulf of Carpentaria in December 1861, and had reached a point in the approximate vicinity that was afterwards occupied by Lake Nash Station. He discovered the headwaters of that river which we now call the Georgina, but which he had named the Herbert—presumably in honour of R. G. W. Herbert, the then Premier of Queensland, although Landsborough does not definitely say so. How this name came to be altered, and why a mystery still attaches to the name "Georgina," we shall presently see.

Up till the year 1880 the western boundary of Queensland had not been surveyed. Those cartographers who sat in their offices in London and subdivided the continent with a ruler had much the better job. They had ordered a survey, but had no idea in the world what conditions ruled in those unexplored regions, or what difficulties a surveyor might meet with in carrying out their instructions. As a matter of fact it was found that camels had to be requisitioned for carrying out the Border Survey, and

water, much of it green and evil-smelling when it was not salt, had to be carried by pack over burning red sand-hummocks for hundreds of miles.

Origin of Birdsville.

So Poeppel, when he reached the Haddon Corner, turned westward and proceeded to run the second leg of his survey for 190 miles, traversing a treeless, sun-smitten region of vast stony plains, salt lakes and bald, wind-swept sand-dunes. He crossed the shallow, anastomosing channels of the Diamantina River about five miles south of where the little township of Birdsville was afterwards established.

Of course there was no settlement at Birdsville at that time. This outlying adjunct of the British Empire appeared later—a collection of low, rubble-stone huts, perched on a gravelly ridge, fronted by the coolibah channels of the Diamantina and flanked by a region of drifting sand. The locality was first known, in 1881, as "the Diamantina Crossing," and it did not receive its present name until after Surveyor F. A. Hartnell had laid out the little township in 1885. The name given it was a compliment to the wonderful avian life of that district, and the originator of name is thought to have been Robert Frew, of Pandie Pandie Station. Birdsville, in the present year of grace, is a forlorn little place, even though substantially built, and for many years it was the farthest outpost in Australia, enjoying no modern conveniences—not even a telegraph line—and lying 300 miles from the nearest civilisation.

It was originally established as a police centre for a large pastoral district, and Customs station.

Days of Tariff Walls.

In the old days of tariff walls as between Australian colonies, the Queensland Government was afraid that the whisky and cigars might creep in, per camel, by the back door. Seems incredible, but that was so! Birdsville, in 1886, boasted three general stores, three hotels, and several other establishments, including an important police station, a school, two blacksmith's shops, and a number of private residences, all represented by squat, stone buildings, for there was no timber in that region.

The father of the Birdsville district, as well as

of the little township itself, was Robert Frew. In 1876 he had taken up Pandie Pandie Station, on the Lower Diamantina, embracing the spot where Burke's Victorian Expedition first met with that river, as likewise the spot where McKinlay afterwards found Burke's dead horse. Frew also became the first holder of Haddon Downs, which he took up in the following year (1877) and on which holding Surveyor Poeppel "fixed" the Haddon Corner in 1880. Later, with G. B. Armstrong, of Melbourne, Frew held Cadelgo Downs, a western extension of the Haddon Run, on the South Australian side, and was the first to establish a general store on the site that Birdsville afterwards occupied. This was founded for the purpose of serving drovers with travelling cattle, for the main stock routes from the Diamantina, Georgina, Burke, Hamilton, and Mulligan rivers passed close by. Frew is said to have been out with J. McDonall Stuart in 1862, and there is a waterhole on the Overland Telegraph Line, north of Newcastle Waters, known as "Frew's Ironstone Ponds." It was near those ponds that the north and south ends of the transcontinental telegraph were joined up, connecting Adelaide with London, on August 22nd, 1872. So Frew was a pioneer of the inland region, truly!

Teeming with Bird Life.

In good seasons, after the Georgina and Diamantina rivers have run, there is probably no region in the world more prolific in bird life than the Birdsville district. The great blue-bush plains and lakes become the home of teeming millions of feathered fowl, mainly of the wading varieties—cranes, spoonbills, ibis, plovers, waterhens, sandpipers, and the like. Ducks, shags and darters of every kind abound; with pelican, brolga, and that largest and rarest of Australian cranes, the jabira. There, too, numberless seagulls are to be seen frequenting the salt lakes—a bird of the ocean, 1000 miles inland. To these may be added the countless millions of pigeons—bronzewing, flock, topknot, spinifex, and other varieties; whilst the vast congregations of corellas, galahs, quarrions, and others of the parrot tribe, simply leave one amazed.

That desert region must be rich in food. The pigeon tribes alone almost darken the sun in their

flights to and from water and their feeding grounds; whilst the din created around the gum-fringed water-holes by the jabbering correllas is deafening. With the exception of the harmless bromli-kite, which is mainly interested in locusts and lizards, there are very few of the larger birds or animals—other than Man—that prey upon the feathered hosts.

"Most Inhospitable Region."

Poeppel crossed the Diamantina channels five miles below the site of Birdsville, but his real troubles did not begin until some 50 miles west of that locality, where he crossed the dry flood-plain of the combined Mulligan and Georgina rivers, and entered upon the rolling sand-dunes of the desert proper. The Colonial Office in London had directed that the border of Queensland was to be set back over three degrees of longitude, and it had to be done.

Camels toiled out into the desert laden with water, food and surveying equipment, and the line was carried to its conclusion through one of the most inhospitable regions on the earth. High, drift-top sandridges, their fiery summits bald and wind-blown, were raised like miniature mountain chains across the survey-line; and sand valleys, encrusted with salt, lay between. Spinifex plains, with never a tree, stretched to the horizon, north and south; salt lake and sandhill alternated until the Corner was reached.

Immense Expanse of Salt.

The Colonial Office heads in London had no idea, of course, that the 138th meridian intersected the 26th parallel in the midst of a dry lake—a glistening sheet of white salt some two miles wide by forty miles long, lying between sand-hummocks which trend, roughly N.N.W. by S.S.E. Poeppel discovered that, and he had humour enough to give that remote and hitherto uncharted lake his own name. He set up the cornerpost that was to mark the intersection of the border lines of three great principalities, in the midst of the lake, and a fiery red sandhill on its western shore, somewhat taller than its fellows, he named Mount Henry, after one of his men.

That solitary post, far out in the desert, was originally the trunk of a coolibah tree, some 7 feet

long by 10 inches in diameter, that the surveyors had dragged from the Mulligan River channels, across some 60 miles of salt-lake and sand-hummock, for the purpose of marking that angle in their work. The post, above the ground-level in the midst of the lake, was strutted and trenched, and adzed into three facets. On the facet that looks out to the north-east the word "Queensland" is chiselled deep in the wood; the side that is presented to the north-west has "Northern Territory" carved upon it, whilst the southern facet is marked "South Australia." Long. 138 deg., Lat. 26 deg., Var. 3.32 deg. E.

Lakes and Sandhills.

A feature of the lake and sandhill country is that the hummocks on the western sides of the lakes are generally much higher and more abrupt than those on the eastern sides. In nearly all cases throughout that region you will find that this rule is observed by Nature. The solution of this phenomenon is a matter for the scientists. Maybe the prevailing winds have something to do with it, but it is a mystery why those dry lake beds do not become engulfed by the seas of loose, wind-blown sand that surround them. Possibly the wind-currents, sweeping across the shimmering, unprotected wastes, have the effect of keeping back the sand, and of piling it highest on the western shores.

When the time came to erect the border fence the intention was to follow the Border Survey, but in some localities this was found to be impracticable, and a number of deviations were made. The most important of these is at the Poeppel Corner, where the fence-builders found it impossible to follow the surveyors' line.

Camels with Afghan Drivers.

Camels were again requisitioned to carry water, fencing posts, wire, tools, netting and food along the line; but the country west of the Mulligan was the despair of the Afghan drivers. The sandhills became so formidable, and the country so waterless and inhospitable, that after penetrating westward for some distance along the surveyors' line, the builders realised the futility of attempting to reach Poeppel's Corner. The South Australian border is fenced past Birdsville and for 12 miles westward of the Mulligan

channels. At that point permission was obtained to break off the Border Survey and turn northward along a trough in the sand-dunes. For 260 miles this netting fence, which is the official border of Queensland runs northward through the desert and returns to the original border survey at a point about due west of Glenormiston homestead, on Lake Idemea.

"Forlorn, Hopeless Area."

As a result of that procedure a considerable area of the State of Queensland is fenced out into the Northern Territory, but that area is a forlorn and hopeless one. The frontages of the Mulligan River afford fair grazing country for cattle in normal seasons and the sandhills to the west of them are often covered with good herbage after rain. But there is no surface water west of the Mulligan. The fence serves its purpose as a barrier for stock, set back as it is some 12 to 15 miles from the Mulligan channels, which distance is about the limit of a beast's grazing radius from water.

Poeppel was forced to relinquish the Border Survey as a result of the severe drought of 1881, and he died at Adelaide a few years later. All the surveyors who were engaged on the border traverse were South Australian men.

Nomenclature of Rivers.

The nomenclature of the rivers in that part of Queensland present some puzzling features. Sturt (as has been shown) had met with the combined channels of the Mulligan and Georgina rivers in 1845, and named them Eyre's Creek, after his great personal friend and co-explorer, Edward John Eyre. Unhappily Eyre's name has not stuck to the lower reaches of the great watercourse, except on official maps and the river is known locally as the "Mulligan." This name applies also on the South Australian side, although James Venture Mulligan, the famous prospector of the Palmer Goldfield, after whom W. O. Hodgkinson named the river in 1876 was entirely a Queensland identity.

In heavy wet seasons the waters of the Mulligan find their way down into the arid South Australian territory, and eventually its muddy, claypan waters join with the white, copai waters of the Diamantina,

on what is now Cowarie Station. The ultimate end of those combined rivers, known as the Warbarton (or Kally Cooper) is in Lake Eyre. As a matter of fact this great watercourse (when it runs) is the chief contributor to Lake Eyre. It reaches the Lake at least three times to the Cooper's once.

Immense Territory Drained.

Now, with the exception of the Cooper, the Georgina is much the larger river of those mentioned. It drains an immense territory, yet theoretically and geographically it is said to end in Moncoonie Lake. That, however, is not the case. In abnormal wet seasons Moncoonie Lake fills, its waters are backed up for many miles, and eventually they find their way to the westward, through a belt of sandhills, and join the claypan waters of the Mulligan. After rain, maybe, the Mulligan will flow first; but the Georgina will flow last and longest. Therefore it is the mother stream. Yet the lower reaches of this immense inland watercourse are known as the Mulligan (de facto) and not as the Georgina or Eyre's Creek (de jure). Actually the Georgina should be known as such, right through to Lake Eyre.

There are a number of very extensive waterholes along the course of the Lower Mulligan. The Kaliduwarry waterhole is 8 miles long when full, but when the water becomes low, during a dry spell, it turns absolutely into brine. Sturt discovered that in 1845, and his finding still holds good. Water in its natural state and taken directly from some of those holes, has been used for pickling beef. In the great drought of 1902 the bodies of bogged cattle became pickled in toto.

Landsborough Names Diamantina.

Landsborough, as has been mentioned, discovered the headwaters of the Georgina in 1861, and named the river "The Herbert." A few years later (1866) in company with the late George Phillips C.E. he was again in Western Queensland, and met with and named the Diamantina River at a point where the Western River joins it. On their outward journey from the Cooper's Creek depot in the closing days of 1860, Burke and Wills had also met with the Diamantina River, but Burke omitted to name the water-

course, believing it to be Eyre's Creek, already named by Sturt in 1845, which, of course, it was not.

In 1862, whilst on his way across the continent from Adelaide to the Gulf of Carpentaria, John McKinlay also fell in with the Diamantina, at almost the exact spot where Burke and Wills had struck it, and McKinlay, being an experienced bushman knew at once that it was not Eyre's Creek.

Under date, February 18, 1862, McKinlay writes as follows:—

> "This cannot possibly be Eyre's Creek, as it is much larger in the first place and seems to bear away too much from the east ever to be a continuation of Sturt's River. Traces of Burke's camels and horses are to be seen here. I fancy on his return from the Gulf."

The general direction of the watercourse had awakened McKinlay's doubts, and his observations led him to believe, rightly, that Eyre's Creek (the Mulligan de facto) was some distance farther to the westward. He was then, of course, in possession of knowledge concerning the fate of the Burke and Wills party, and decided to push on up the Diamantina on his northward course, naming the river ("Burke's Creek") in honour of the ill-starred leader of the Victorian Expedition.

Burke's Creek, or the Lower Diamantina, is the Tooma-thoo-ganie of the blackfellows. Unhappily each native tribe along a given river-course has its own particular name for each section of the stream that passes through its territory. As a consequence no one native name can be justly applied to any stream. Among the blacks the Murray River was known by at least a dozen different names between its source and the sea. The Barcoo River, in Western Queensland, is among a number of important watercourses in Australia to which a native name has been attached: yet, as an instance of our own misunderstanding, what we now call "Cooper's Creek" was also known to the blacks as Barcoo, as far down, maybe, as its confluence with the Wilson. It was Charles Sturt, in 1845, who named the lower reaches of the Barcoo "Cooper's Creek" in honour of Judge Cooper, of South Australia.

Burke and Wills' Party.

By the way, it is not generally realised to what desperate straits the Burke and Wills party must have been reduced during their return to Fort Wills, on the Cooper, from the Gulf of Carpentaria. By the time the party had reached the Lower Diamantina, on its return journey the orderly retreat southward had developed into a rout. Burke had begun to throw away his equipment. McKinlay discovered some of the wreckage of the expedition, including Burke's favourite horse, dead, with its saddle on. This horse had crossed the continent with the explorers—the first horse on record to do so—and on the return journey had fallen, leg-weary and exhausted, in the Diamantina channels. Burke had used the animal to run up his camels each morning (and doubtless the poor beast was worked to death) and to leave it there, to its pitiful end, with its saddle on, was hardly the action of a gentleman. Only a few days later Burke was obliged to kill and cut up one of his camels for food. Why not his horse? All things being equal, a starving bushman will always give horse-meat preference over camel-meat.

"Succour Not Far Away."

In respect to the catastrophe that awaited Burke, it appears that human succour was not so far away as might have been supposed. Whilst actually on his way to the Gulf, in February, 1861, the outward tracks of the Victorian Expedition were cut on the Diamantina River by Messrs. E. B. Cornish and Nat. Buchanan, who had gone out from Bowen Downs to examine the pastoral possibilities of Western Queensland. The tracks of Burke's camels and horses were still quite fresh, and according to the evidence of Buchanan's blackboy, the signs to be read in camel-dung and other traces indicated that the expedition had not long passed. Had Burke only known it, there were white men in his vicinity at the time, and he was at no great distance from the outskirts of pastoral settlement in North Queensland. From Camp 119, on the seaboard of the Gulf, Burke might have made his way to either Bowen Downs, or Natal Downs, in about 400 miles, along a perfectly well-watered and almost direct route up the Flinders River; all of which goes to show how little Burke's

Melbourne Committee had acquainted itself with the conditions then obtaining in North Queensland. As it was, the ill-fated explorer, believing himself to be remote from succour, pressed desperately along the southern route, back to Fort Wills, on the Cooper, which is at least 800 miles from the Gulf. When Burke found Fort Wills deserted he was still 160 miles from the nearest settlement—that of Blanchwater, the Baker Bros.' station, in the Mount Hopeless district, N.E. of South Australia. Both Howitt and McKinlay, who led expeditions to the relief of Burke, declare that the season was good in the Lower Cooper region that year, and that the route down the Stryelichi was open to the explorers had they persevered in that direction. But the fatal decision was made to return to Fort Wills. The end was then in sight. Burke and his men were spent, in spirit and in body, and the wilderness closed upon them.

Farrar's Creek Named.

Passing into what is now Queensland, McKinlay was driven off the course of the Diamantina by phenomenal floods, both in that river and in Farrar's Creek. This latter watercourse was traced and named in 1868 by John Costello, afterwards of Lake Nash, in honour of Jack Farrar, who was then head stockman on Kyabra Station, Cooper's Creek. The brothers Farrar, Robert and John, were natives of Bradford (England) and they afterwards took up and held Currawilla Station, on Farrar's Creek. In the early 'eighties Jack Farrar went on to the management of Lake Nash Station for John Costello, and finished up on a cattle property in the Port Darwin district.

Lake Nash Station, through which the Queensland Border Survey afterwards passed, was taken up, in 1880, by the well-known Queensland surveyor, Frank Scarr, who sold it unstocked and unimproved to John Costello. The country originally secured by Scarr embraced Austral Downs, which, before stocking, Costello sold to T. L. Richardson and J. S. Little, who formed that separate holding at the junction of the Ranken River.

[NOTE.—Ranken River; after J. L. Ranken, not Rankin or Rankine, as generally spelt.]

Lake Nash was first stocked with cattle brought from Carwarral Station, in the Rockhampton district, and additions to the herd were made from Millungera and Taldora Stations, on the lower Flinders. Tom Holmes was the first manager of Lake Nash, Jack Farrar followed him in 1882. Holmes is noted as being the first drover to take cattle from the Georgina River to Adelaide, via Birdsville.

Diamantina Re-named.

To return to McKinlay; he pursued his way northerly for several hundred miles before he finally crossed the Diamantina at the junction of Kell Creek, at a spot where Cork Station homestead was afterwards established. There, not realising that it was the same river that he had met with nearly 400 miles lower down, and which he had named "Burke's Creek," McKinlay re-named the Diamantina the "Mueller," after Baron Ferdinand Von Mueller, the celebrated botanist.

Here was a pretty set of complications! Landsborough got us out of them by re-naming the watercourse the "Diamantina," that being the Christian name of the wife of Sir George Bowen, the then Governor of Queensland. The surprising thing about it is that Landsborough had no idea at the time that the watercourse was the same that McKinlay had named the "Mueller" and "Burke's Creek" lower down. Landsborough had met with the Diamantina nearly 100 miles north of the point where McKinlay had crossed it at Kell Creek.

The Georgina River (as we have seen) is the mother of all far western streams. It drains at least twice the area of the Diamantina, and probably ten times that of the Mulligan, which has usurped its name in the lower levels. On the other hand the Diamantina, over its main course, is much the better defined river. It does not begin to spread out and lose its riverine features until it reaches a point below Pandie Pandie old homestead, on the South Australian side, where it enters upon that wide stretch of inundated country that Sturt described as "an earthy plain." This plain is 40 miles wide without a break, where the Birdsville-Hergott track crosses it.

River Skirts the Desert.

But there is this to be remembered about the Georgina: It skirts the desert. A fine, bold channel in many places, there are others where the desert has encroached upon it, smothering it with drifting sand, and, in some cases, deflecting its course. This is most noticeable after the great watercourse has cleared the eastern end of the Toco Ranges, a series of low tablelands that are found westward of the river on Glenormiston Station. The mother stream is then joined by the Burke and Hamilton Rivers, which are the largest of its lower tributaries, with the exception of the Mulligan, if we delete the Diamantina. It is below the confluence of the Hamilton that the old river begins to suffer. The sand-dune country appears on Breadalbene Station, and from then on, for a distance of nearly 200 miles along its course, the river is subjected to continual battle with drifting sand. So much so, that below Bedourie it, too, begins to lose its riverine features, and enters upon vast inundated areas of blue-bush flats—more "earthy plains" of Sturt. In this region, too, the local rainfall is at its worst, and to add to its harassments there are several extensive lakes to be filled. In most cases these lakes are formed by the blockage of the river channels with drifting sand, all of which account for an immense amount of evaporation.

Landsborough named the Georgina the "Herbert" near its head and for a number of years the entire river was known as the Herbert. A good deal of mystery attaches to the change of name. In all the old charts of Queensland the river is shown as the Herbert, but not a great deal was known about its lower course until W. O. Hodgkinson went out to survey it in 1875. He returned in 1876, and a year or two later a map compiled by Surveyor G. K. Jopp, one of the Departmental draughtsmen at Brisbane, shows the name "Herbert" struck through, and "Georgina" substituted—by whom, why or when the Survey Department of Queensland does not know.

An Interesting Theory.

But I have my theory, and I believe the change of name can be traced to W. O. Hodgkinson. There is a complicated idea behind it. We have seen that Landsborough succeeded in having his name, "Dia-

mantina" attached to that river in honour of Lady Bowen, and Hodgkinson may have attempted to twist the name of the Herbert River to suit her husband, Sir George. The step from George to "Georgina" is entirely reminiscent of Hodgkinson, it being just the kind of thing he would have revelled in. It is to be remembered that the Diamantina was already named when Hodgkinson went out. It was he who discovered that the Herbert (Georgina) was really the mother stream; that its drainage area was at least twice that of the Diamantina; and that the latter river was distinctly a tributary of the former. What more natural of Hodgkinson than to wish that the greater watercourse be named after Sir George Bowen when its chief tributary was already named after his wife? The idea is even more appropriate when one realises that the waters of the two great river systems finally combine just before they reach Lake Eyre. So there you have it. The two great western watercourses are named after husband and wife.

Charles Winnecke.

Charles Winnecke was another of those noted South Australian surveyors who played an important part in the south-west corner of Queensland. He came up from Beltana Station, in the Flinders Range district, with camels on loan from Sir Thomas Elder, and reached Cowarie Station, north-west of Lake Eyre, in July, 1883. His period was in the interim between Poeppel being held up in the Border Survey by drought, and Carruthers and Wells again taking up the work in 1884. With only two companions, Warman (his camel-driver) and a white man named Fowler, Winnecke set his face to the northward through a desolate region of salt lakes and sand-dunes, with the object of connecting his survey with Poeppel's work. He took with him from Cowarie a Warbarton River native named Moses, who was to show them some watering places on the desert. Moses, however, failed dismally to sustain the reputation of his illustrious namesake. He "vamoosed" from Winnecke's camp one morning when the desert proper hove in sight, and made his way back to Cowarie on foot.

Winnecke passed northward through the Lake Dobbie district, which dry, salt-incrusted lake he named after Thomas Dobbie, of Adelaide. He found

it a region composed of loose, drift-top sandhills, with cane-grass in the valleys, but utterly devoid of timber. He crossed Lake Florence—another of those dry salt-pans—and under date of Friday, August 24th, 1883, he writes:—"At thirteen and a half miles we ascended a very high and prominent sandhill, for which I have been steering all day." (This proved to be Poeppel's Mount Henry) "A large and intensely white salt lake" (Lake Thomas) "is visible to the south-west. A very extended view is obtained from this sandhill, which would also make an important trigonometrical station. Barren sandhills are visible and extend to the distant horizon in all directions. On plotting my track roughly in my field book, I obtained a bearing of 34° 30′′ to the point of intersection of Queensland and other boundaries. Started on this bearing, and at one and a half miles I hit exactly on the corner post, which is almost in the middle of a long narrow salt lake."

"A Superb Bushman."

To come up with his camels from the south, as Winnecke did, over many leagues of territory that provided no landmarks, nor afforded any points for taking bearings, and to pick up that solitary post, far out on the desert, was no mean feat. But Winnecke was not only a skilled surveyor. He was also a superb bushman. His custom was to take stellar observations at night for latitude and longitude, which, when travelling in those featureless wastes of drifting sand, is a requirement that is forced upon one.

Two years before (in 1881) Winnecke had led an expedition north-easterly of Alice Springs, and had succeeded in mapping much country in the Arltunga district, and in penetrating as far east as the Lower Marshall River. In this, his 1883 expedition, his object was to join up his Marshall River Survey with some fixed point on the Queensland side. The point fixed was Sandringham Station homestead (known to the blacks as Bindiacka), the property of Messrs. Blackwood and Moore, and managed by W. G. Field, who afterwards owned it. A series of observations taken by Winnecke proved that the homestead of Sandringham was shown nine miles out of position on the Queensland Government plans.

Howbeit, Winnecke "fixed" the Sandringham homestead, and using it as a datum point in his survey, struck off into the desert on his journey to the west. He discovered and named the Field River, after William George Field, of Sandringham, and later proved it to be a tributary of the Mulligan. He also discovered and named the Hay River, after a friend of his, the late Adam Hay, of Palparam Station.

"Blucher" was Camel-sick.

From Sandringham Winnecke had taken with him a desert-bred blackfellow named "Blucher." Blucher turned out to be almost as useless as Moses. The unaccustomed motion of camelback almost shook the poor fellow limb from limb, and disturbed his inner mechanism. As a consequence he was ill during most of the journey. He understood the Arunta language, however, and was able to interpret for Winnecke the statements of certain natives that they met in the Territory.

The first of these wild creatures with whom the explorers fell in was a lubra. They cut her footprints far out in the sand-dunes, and Winnecke turned his camels along her trail. After some hours tracking they came up with her—a typical woman of the desert, naked, timid and half-starved, yet withal possessing a bright intelligence, as is sometimes the case with those nomads of the desert. She led them to where her husband was located, and they found him perched up in a tree, for he was afraid of the camels.

Line of Scrubby Ranges.

Shortly after falling in with the blacks Winnecke described a line of dark, scrubby ranges along the northern skyline, and made his way towards them. This line of ranges across the head of the Field River, flattopped and rugged, he named the Adam Range, also after Adam Hay, of Palperera. This range is not in the accepted sense a range at all, but a very abrupt ascent from the level of one desert to another. It does not descend on the northern side but spreads away in the form of a vast tableland. Granite, and many of the older rocks, are found in that vicinity, and it is probable that that jump-up

represents the eastern extension of a large fault, or pressure-zone, in the earth's crust, embracing the McDonnell Ranges in Central Australia, and traceable for over 600 miles.

Winnecke succeeded in joining up his exploratory work with certain points in the Arltunga district, notably Mount Hawker, and was thus the first to give Queensland a definite connection across the desert with the Northern Territory. He describes all the Lower Hay and Field River country as being a sandy waste, utterly forlorn and hopeless, composed mainly of red, drift-top sand-dunes, waterless and devoid of timber, but covered in the valleys by dense spinifex, that prickly scourge of the desert.

Fresh Water Found.

At Yarracurracoo, on the Lower Hay, Winnecke discovered a good supply of fresh water in the sand of the river bed. At a few miles below that point the Hay, as a definite channel, begins to break up, and becomes almost untraceable among the sand-dunes. Winnecke believed that the Hay becomes totally lost in the desert, but in periods of abnormal rainfall it doubtless finds its way down the chain of lakes, of which Lake Poeppel, at the Corner, is one.

From a point below the native well on the Lower Hay which he had named Yarracurracoo, Winnecke made easterly across the spinifex desert, and on the night of September 29th, 1883, he must have camped at no great distance from that indefinite spot shown on the charts of Australia as "Sturt's Farthest, 1845."

Sandridges and Spinifex.

"A region of steep red sandridges" writes Winnecke, "covered with the usual spinifex, from which our camels suffer very much; a continual stream of blood trickling down their hind legs." No wonder that Sturt with his sick men and famishing horses was dismayed!

In due course Winnecke returned south-easterly to Sandringham Station, on the Queensland side, where he spelled his men and camels for a few days. He then set out, still on a south-easterly course, to link up with his survey, some of the station home-

steads in that part of Queensland. He "fixed" Cluny, Monkira, Palparara, Currawilla, and Haddon Downs. At the Haddon Corner he again checked his survey with Poeppel's work, and passed southward to Junamincka Station, on the Cooper. From thence he travelled down the Strzelecki, and reached Beltana Station on December 2nd, 1883, after having been five and a half months on his exploratory work in the south-west corner.