

# CHRISTIE PALMERSTON

## A North Queensland Pioneer Prospector and Explorer

by

F. P. Woolston and F. S. Colliver,\*

being part II of Palmerston's Diary of a Track-Cutting Expedition from the Johnstone River to Herberton, 1882.

[continued from last issue]

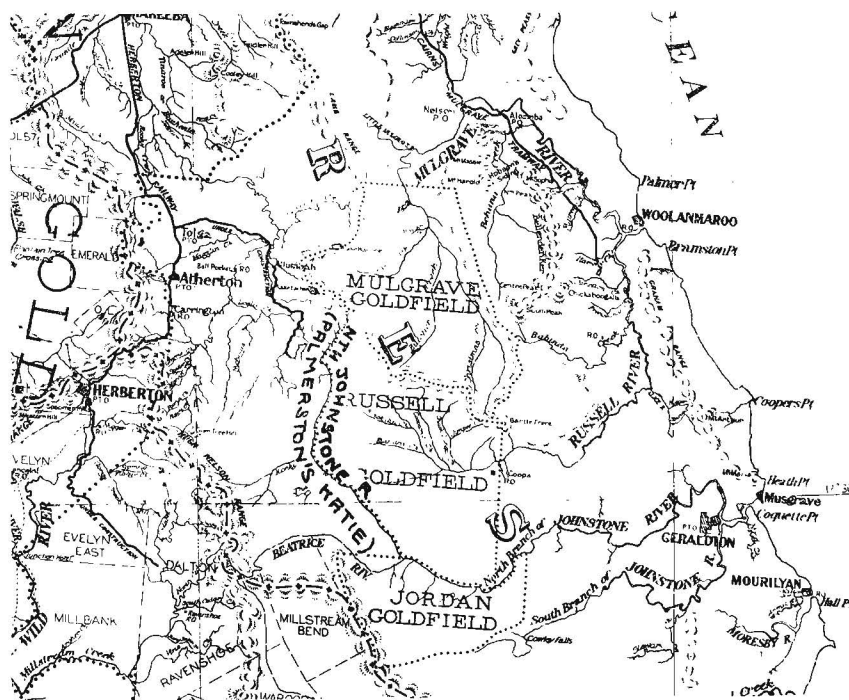
### November, 8 [1882]

Still raining. Started again through this dreary stretch of blackness in a north-westerly direction over a basalt tableland covered with dense jungle. In about three miles ran foul of another precipice, could hear the roar of impetuous waters hundreds of feet below me. Rain, rain, everywhere I try to look there is a black patch between me and the object I wish to look at. Turned southward again and had level travelling all the afternoon, gradually worked my way north-west again and in two miles struck a large river, the Beatrice, the bed of it being full of huge boulders, current broad and very strong. Camped here, raining fast and so piercingly cold that my companions' limbs are thoroughly numb. Mr. Kevin O'Doherty gave me two bottles of rum which I broached here. I never thought rum was such a delicious drink, seemed to instil new spirit into my boys. Blacks very numerous following us most of the day, one requires more than the usual share of patience to kindle the fire with wood as soft as a boiled turnip. I carry candles for the purpose; and in fact if it had not been for the candles we should never have got a fire but seldom. I have to handcuff the two Johnstone boys every night and all the scrub knives and tomahawks are stacked for me to sleep on, this precaution being needed because not one shred of reliance can be placed on my boys. I am acquainted with these aborigines' treacherous ways only too well and am inclined to look upon with suspicion their every action, trusting them just as far as I am obliged and no further, for at any moment they may attempt to steal a march on me and one feels unutterably lonely with such companions for they are actually worse than non entities.

### November, 9—

Raining very fast all night, and no appearance of ceasing this morning. The Beatrice River rising very quickly, and it was

half past eleven o'clock am. before the whole of our things were crossed over safely. I being last, came to grief, got washed over a rapid and carried three or four hundred yards before I recovered myself having a scrub knife in one hand and a rifle in the other. My watch kept the water out, but the compass was full; tried to dry it with a lighted candle but it was to no avail it would not work. It's not of much consequence as I can manage to find my way without its assistance. Climbed up a steep basalt mountain; travelling then very level, deep chocolate soil, undergrowth being light. Collected a large billy full of scrub turkey eggs. Charley let the billy fall and smashed the whole of them, he immediately sprawled out on his belly and commenced licking up the mixed mass of broken eggs and vegetable matter. Could



Part of Geological Map, Mourilyan Harbour to Herberton, North Queensland, to illustrate Christie Palmerston's track-cutting expedition, 1882. [Innisfail is marked on this map under its old name of Geraldton.]

\*Not all publications agree with the date which we have quoted in *Queensland Heritage* vol. 1 no. 7, Nov 1967, p. 30 for Palmerston's death. Our authority is the *North Queensland Register* of 24 Feb 1897: "By the "Changsha" (says the *Townsville Star*) news was brought from Singapore of the death of Mr. Christie Palmerston, well known North Queensland prospector. Under date Jan. 22nd 1897, Mr. E. B. Wilkinson, Chairman of directors of The Straits Development Co, wrote to Mrs. Palmerston as follows:—"Dear Madam . . . It is with the utmost regret that I have to inform you of the death of Mr. Christie Palmerston who died on the fifteenth inst. at a place called Kuala Pilah, in the Malay Peninsula . . ." Woolston & Colliver

hear rushing waters all afternoon, about west I think; must be Beatrice River. It was very nearly dark when I struck the river again and camped. The leeches are terrible this evening; our legs are one mass of blood. The irritation caused by these vermin combined with the scrub itch is far from being pleasant. Current of the river here is sluggish, rich land on both sides of the river. I soon rolled myself up into my wet blanket to pass another cold and dreary night, listening to the drip of the rain caught by these masses of leaves and large fronds, sliding from one to the other in large drops eventually helping to swell the many perennial streams that issue from these jungles.

#### **November, 10—**

Up very early, quite as tired as when I lay down. Tried to kindle a fire under a drizzling rain. From this place, I altered my course, to as near as I could guess, a little north of west. I awoke from a doze on several occasions last night by rude shocks and long crashing noises caused from monster trees falling down and dragging numbers of smaller ones with them, after their becoming entangled in the complicated masses of twisted and plaited vines which cling with such pertinacity to these large falling trunks. Got an early start walking as fast as circumstances would permit. Clambering and sliding over slippery logs and up to one's ankles in crackling nut shells; the rip and tear of one's clothes, or rather rags, the pertinacious lawyer, well named, clinging to one while there is a rag to one's back, also taking a little skin and flesh at times. It resembles wire in strength and is of various lengths and sizes tapering towards the extreme end with hundreds of fish hook points settling in each side of its entire length, these points reversed of course. One finds it a rather difficult customer to deal with. Once in its meshes it is not easily disposed of, yet it pays to be calm and extricate oneself leisurely. Sometimes when clearing oneself from them, one gets hooked by the nose and ear by juvenile lawyers of a very frail species. Many times this day that healthy tropical plant, the stinging bush, reminded me that my arms and legs were not quite as numb with cold rain as I thought they were.

Shortly after leaving the Beatrice River the country became ridgy; geological formation, granite; this continued until about dinner time. Crossed many running creeks, their course being about north-east, I think. Leeches frightfully numerous and troublesome. The country being changed to basalt tableland; undergrowth very thin in some places. Saw several cedar trees. Crossed a very large main black's track in the afternoon bearing about north and south I think. Charlie knocked up late in the evening. Made great progress today. The basalt land we are now camped on is as level as one could wish, and very fertile. Gathered about two dozen turkey eggs. Rolled myself up in my red blanket as it was too cold to sleep; awake for hours listening to dispiriting and appalling voices that issued from various night birds. The full sounding voice of the scrub turkey and scrub curlew's note strike one with a desolate, dismal, dreary feeling; the latter bird resembled the open country curlew that is a much smaller species. There is a small brown coloured bird whose voice echoes through the jungle like the distant and constant tapping of a mallet.

The dingo also traverses these jungles walking stealthily round ejaculating its hollow and piteous howl; and there are other numerous and diminutive intruders. Dozed off towards morning, but woke up in a short time almost suffocating, my nostrils being stuffed with clammy, crawling leeches. The boys had battered decomposed logs to pieces in search of grubs. These battered substances shed broad patches of phosphoric light which gave the damp scrub a wierd aspect.

#### **November, 11—**

This tropical surface of foliage has unusually large drops. Started away under still gathering rain which rolls down on us in this incessant drip drip, in search of Herberton. I would give anything for just one slight glimpse of the sun. Travelling over basalt tableland with odd sudden jumps; passed several cedar

trees, undergrowth very thin in places. Between nine and ten o'clock, discovered that Charlie had given the kanakas the slip, taking a swag with him, my boots and hat and a revolver. The cunning beggar had insisted in carrying a large billy full of bread and beef, in fact loaded himself up with many things the other boys had been carrying; this accounts for his goodness. I never felt Satan upon me much stronger than on this occasion, and if I had only got the slightest glimpse of that broad mouth[ed] hypocrite, I would have despatched a leaden missile that probably would have rid the earth of a hopeless wretch. Delayed here about an hour; then ordered the boys to lose no more time looking for him, told them that I thought we could reach the big town tonight, "Two or three week, I think", they replied in a whining tone. Started again over the same kind of basalt land, scrub light. Rain ceased about two o'clock p.m. and I got a slight glimpse of the sun, bearing a little to my left; I am going as straight as an arrow for Herberton. In about three more miles struck a large track; travelled along it very fast for about two miles, then it junctioned with another large cut track a couple of mile or perhaps more. I saw large pine and cedar logs cut for the sawmill and in short time I emerged into open country at the head of Nigger Creek. Could have gone into town easily, but we had such a number of turkey eggs that I thought it better to camp and eat them. Saw several cedar trees today. The boys manifested great joy next morning at being in open country, and I am free to confess that I, myself, felt very pleased at our success having fathomed the mystery as to the practicability of the route for a railway, for I am positive if these plateaux are properly traced, the Coast Range can be surmounted and the altitude scarcely noticed. Yet it is intensely delicious to me to get clear of the trackless jungle and be able to shake off those slimy vermin, vapors and chilliness that clung to one while hidden in its obscurity, and it was also very pleasing to the eye to see everything flooded in sunshine. I emerged from the jungle almost shirtless, quite bootless and hatless. Many readers might wish to ask me what distance I reckon it—60 miles from Mourilyan to Herberton, and 50 miles of jungle without break. Too much parasitic verdure for my taste.

---

#### **HERBERTON. December 21—**

Transcript of the Diary which was faithfully kept on my journey from Herberton to Mourilyan, will show that the precipices that Sub-Inspector Douglas had the misfortune to come in contact with can be avoided. I left the Johnstone aborigines at Herberton, and enlisted two of the Thornborough aborigines; this I had not much trouble in doing, being able to speak their language. I also had the two kanakas and my little black boy Sam, who accompanied me up. I only took half the quantity of rations that I carried when starting from the Johnstone. We bade farewell to open country this morning, and entered the scrub on a cedar getters track between Nigger Creek and Slatey Creek, and in a short distance struck Messrs. Joss and Little's track. My intentions to try and pick up Douglas' track, for I must admit that they seem somewhat obscure to me. After traversing this track for about three miles, it branched, one bearing eastward, and the other very much south. These tracks fairly puzzled me for a short time; the one bearing east, I struck on my upward route a short distance from here and took it for Douglas' track, but I find I am mistaken and I only saw Douglas' track once, on the sixth of October. I left my boys, and in a short time I had a slight trace of Douglas' track turning off Messrs. Joss and Little's, in a more southerly direction, subsequently, it was between the two tracks mentioned. Went back and brought my boys on, and in a short distance the track was well blazed and was wide enough to take a horse along, although the undergrowth was very thin. In about two miles, one of the Kanakas named Trousers became paralysed losing the use of his legs, so we had to camp on a small running creek. I rubbed the boy's limbs well with carbolic oil and it proved

efficacious. It was about 11 o'clock when we camped, and I was rambling about the remainder of the day looking for open country but had no luck;—undergrowth thin, soil rich, formation basalt.

#### **December, 22—**

Trousers a little better; able to travel by relieving him of his swag. Traversed Douglas' track, crossing running creeks and over very high ridges, one very remarkable ridge being partly clear, timbered with a few very tall gums, brush being cleared for several yards by Douglas' party, for taking observations I should imagine. I could see Bartle Frere very distinctly. Followed down this spur at the foot of which two creeks junctioned, one of Douglas' camps being here on a very steep siding, it being the second we passed this morning. Travelled about one o'clock over basalt formation, rich soil, tolerably level, sudden jumps in places, undergrowth not very dense. Camped in an old camp of Douglas', on the bank of a small running creek; land very level here and fertile. Left the boys in camp, and explored to the south for open country but without success. It was dark when I returned to camp.

#### **December, 23—**

Trousers much better; able to carry his swag. Passed over a basalt tableland and crossed a strong running creek with large granite boulders in its bed. Douglas crossed this on the morning of the seventh of May, and called it one of the main heads of the South Johnstone. I differ from him; I am positive it is a tributary of the North Johnstone. The travelling then became ridgy, granite boulders lying about in places until we struck a large river running South. Its banks being level and rich soil. Had dinner here. This is a large tributary of the North Johnstone—the river I named the Beatrice. After dinner, crossed the Beatrice River and surmounted a high ridge; in a short distance went down into the river again where Douglas camped and referred to bridging the river. There were two small poles laid on opposite rocks across a narrow stream, we walked over these poles with our swags on our heads. The Beatrice is very rough here, its bed being full of huge granite boulders, and the current is very strong. We climbed up a steep bank and now Douglas' track became very faint so that one had to be on the alert to keep on it, not much scrub cut because undergrowth thin. Passed along sidings and between huge granite boulders, stinging bush plentiful. Could hear the river roaring a short distance from us, in fact, we were only running the river down. Camped on a high ridge not far from the spot where Corporal Robert had been up a tall tree, the Beatrice being just below us.

#### **December, 24.—**

Started early and finished up a large nigger track that brought us to the Beatrice again at the junction of a nice running creek. Crossed this creek and followed up another large nigger track up a high spur, on top of which we got a lot of turkey eggs. Left this track and crossed some very steep ridges and a small running creek and then struck another nigger track just running in the opposite direction to the one we had left. While on this, I caught a glimpse of Bartle Frere bearing north-east by east, it was almost facing me and the track going in that direction. We then crossed several running creeks the beds of some of which were filled with granite boulders although the geological formation of the country passed over is basaltic; then struck another nigger track which passed through many old camps and over level country, very fertile, undergrowth not dense. Went down into a small creek, and there saw another of Douglas' camps. We travelled a few miles beyond this, over basaltic tablelands and ridges, and camped on a small basalt creek at one o'clock. Took one of the boys with me, and was exploring until dark for open country, but was not favoured in this line. Heard a great many native dogs here. Douglas' track, since I crossed the bridge, on the temporary ridge, is a succession of zig-zags.

#### **December, 25, (Christmas Day)—**

Surmounted a very high ridge where we struck a nigger track which led us down into a small running creek, rich and level

country on both sides. Douglas crossed this creek many times on the tenth of May. Followed the black's track after crossing it about the third time. Not finding sufficient attraction to lure me further, I struck out my own road, going to the southward of Douglas' track, over level country. In one mile camped on a small running creek about one o'clock. The two kanakas started in a south-west direction while I went south looking for open country. The kanakas always blaze the trees when by themselves; on this occasion, they had traversed the scrub a great distance as they thought, and they were in the act of turning around to follow their marked tree line to camp, when to their astonishment they heard me speaking to the boys in camp; they had cut a regular circle, striking camp almost where they started from; and I arrived back in camp a few minutes before them, unsuccessful. Wyloo threw the scrub knife down in disgust saying "Oh, me no good, me think me long way, by and by me see him in camp". I warn those who undertake the exploration of these jungles not to be too eager in following marked tree lines, for these boys do this trick repeatedly. It would be impossible to follow my tracks, for I only cut scrub where it is really necessary, and on no occasion have I blazed trees.

#### **December, 26—**

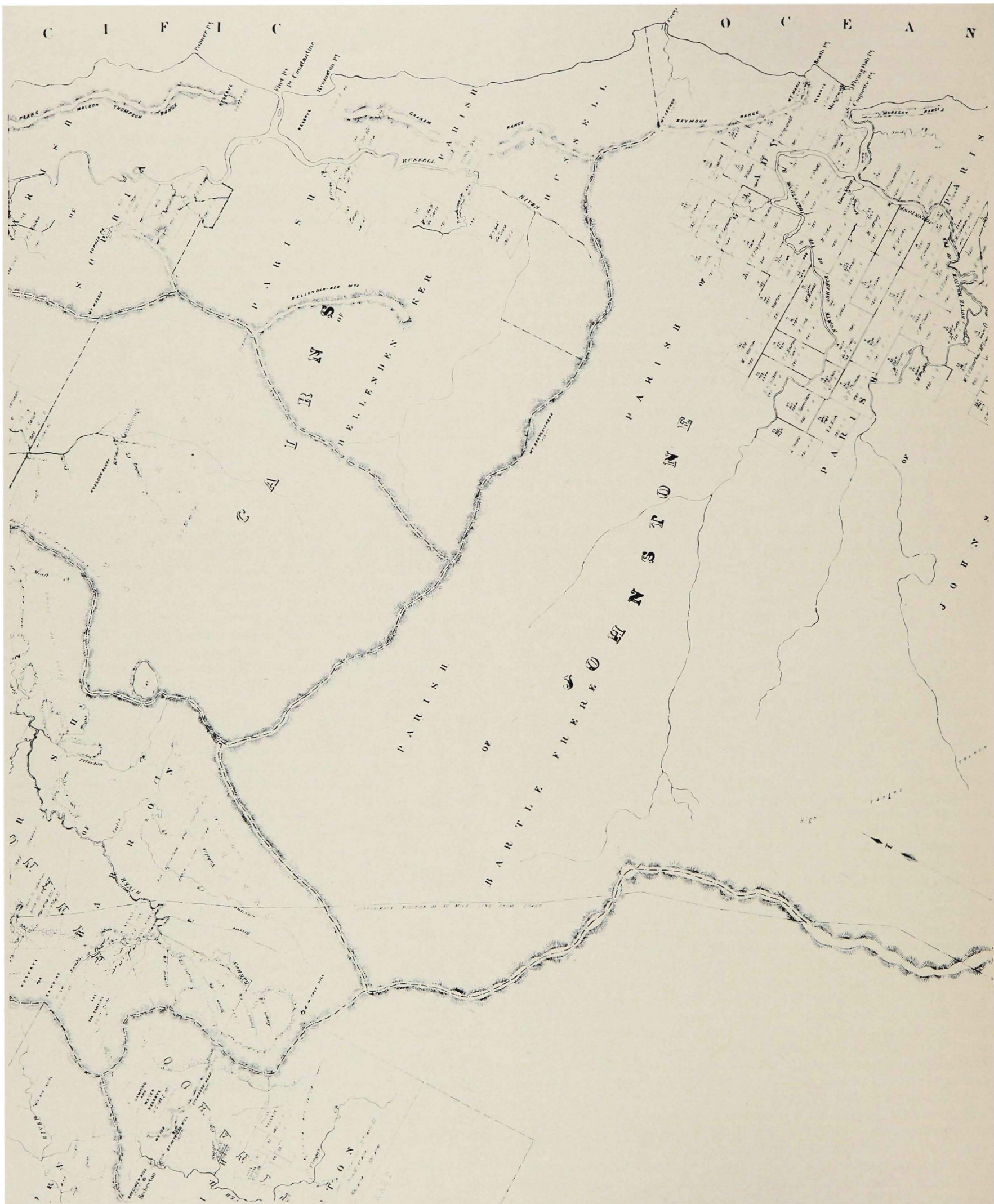
Started at eight a.m., my course being about south by east, for a short distance only. Crossed the points of two spurs, undergrowth being dense, and stinging bush very plentiful, the country then became very level, basalt tableland with rich chocolate soil. In one hour, I struck a large creek of which I forget the course; it had a broad shallow stream, its bed smooth basalt covered with green slime in places. I found this out to my sorrow falling a terrible burster on my back shortly after striking it. Traversed this creek only one mile seeing a great many native tracks, also a number of shields painted and laid along its banks to dry. I left the boys and swags and proceeded down the creek accompanied by one black boy only, for a distance of about two miles. We could hear the aborigines talking on both sides of the creek, and passed through several camps from which they had scampered away leaving everything on seeing us:— Native blankets in dozens, bushels of red berries cooked and uncooked; I believe there was a hundredweight of newly crushed meal heaped up on their greasy looking blankets, long ungainly swords and shields scattered about in all directions; scores of small fishing nets, fixed on small circular hoops, others, the shape of a heart. At the end of the last named distance, we came to a terrible precipice of basaltic formation over which the water rushed with great impetuosity, and on the verge of this, were about twenty male aborigines with very nearly as many little fires. They left the road clear running into the jungle on the south side of the creek. The sun shone intensely bright at this place, and its warmth was a very pleasant welcome after so much damp jungle. On the opposite side of this chasm were huge mountains with rugged irregular lines; in many places I could see streams gushing over basalt precipices in long narrow and dazzling currents into what appeared to be almost a bottomless gulf, and from which echoes rolled up of large rapids, being the North Johnstone River. Even such a rugged view as this gives one a genuine source of pleasure after emerging from a jungle in which one's eyes could not pierce much further than one's own length. I was just thinking about retracing my steps, when my sooty friend drew my attention to a big mob of aborigines coming down the creek towards us, armed with large swords and shields, "Thank goodness they have no spears" I muttered, for they looked a formidable lot. Their swords are made of very hard wood, from 3ft to 5ft in length, and 4ins to 6ins broad, with an extremely short hand-hold. Being heavy awkward weapons the shields are constructed of very light and soft wood, some of them very large covering the whole of their bodies when in a stooping position; the faces of these are painted in a variety of colours, the natives themselves being daubed over with white and red clay. They had rather a pleasing appearance only for the very peculiar circumstances, they could not have known the power of resistance the white man had or they would

never had advanced so openly. Their leader was a thin tall man, with the top of his head quite bald, it was wonderful to see with what elasticity this gaunt old fellow skipped about those basalt rocks working himself into the hideous fury so familiar to me among the aborigines. His companions followed him closely forming a half circle, I did not like to enter the jungle on either side, because there might be some hidden treachery lurking there. I spoke to them so did my companion, but the language we used appeared to be foreign to them. I raised my rifle several times, but they kept encroaching and danger was eminent, feigning to fire, and too much forbearance I saw would not avail us, so reasoning being a bit beyond these cute creatures, they had to be submitted to the usual ordeal. Their shields may answer very well for the purpose of their wars, but my rifle drilled them as if they were sheets of paper. Four of this old general's comrades ran to his assistance when they saw him wrestling with death. I ceased firing for they seemed so helpless at my mercy on seeing a seam of blood oozing from the ghastly wound, they became very excited, commencing a hideous and diabolic howl accompanied by apish antics, at times showing pearly white teeth, also drawing their whiskers tightly from their chins and holding them in large mouthfuls all the while shaking their heads towards me as if in defiance and then quickening their pace. I feigned with my rifle again, but they only dropped behind their shields, a movement which they executed in a very neat manner. My black companion did not understand the use of firearms, but carried a long scrub knife; he was an athletic fellow and fought like a demon, between us, we made terrible havoc before the enemy gave way. On my road back, I saw a little boy running away, I soon overtook him, laying the barrel of my rifle gently against his neck and shoved him over. He seemed struck with terror and amazement, biting me, spitting, and by the harshness of his voice, I fancy he was showering a volley of oaths. In my present garb, I should have been an object of terror to a child of my own race—only a shirt and cartridge belt on, my legs being bespattered with blood. He soon became reconciled, however, being very amused with my watch. When passing through a deserted camp he rolled up a native blanket and tramped along like a little man. I brought my boys down to this camp close by the dead blacks, on the brink of the precipice beforementioned. After dinner, the two kanakas went over the brink of the precipice for amusement, when they returned, I was taken by surprise by their informing me that there was an old camp below this precipice, and on the brink of another, and also marked tree line up a very narrow spur. Looking at the place from here, one would almost think that Douglas must have dropped down from the sky to get into such a shop, for almost undoubtedly these are his tracks again. I make a statement here, to which I bring attention; but it must be understood that I do not do so for the purpose of exposing Douglas's deficiency as an explorer, it would be an inglorious triumph, because there was famine and sickness in his camp when he was here. Nor do I wish to imply he had not the difficulties to surmount recorded by him in his diary, for I am pencilling these very lines on one of those precipices, but in common justice to this district, and those both interested at both extremities I think it only right to differ from him and show that there is not the slightest necessity for lowering oneself down the many precipices he appears to have done. I must take the reader back to where Douglas crossed a creek many times, also camped on it on the tenth of May, and he didn't arrive at this camp till the 13th of May—that being three days. But please remember they were camped one day through sickness. First day they were cutting their way out of deep gorges, clambering over precipices—twice having to lower themselves with vine; and the third day was very little better. Now I have left very near the same place, this morning that he left on the eleventh of May, I carried my swag on my head, cut the scrub, crossed the points of two high spurs; the remainder of the country would not have been more level than I had found it, and the time occupied was certainly not more than three hours. So that what took him three days with

tremendous difficulties. I have accomplished in three hours and in no difficulties what ever, nor had I the slightest punishment of trying this precipice.

#### **December, 27—**

Expected to start at 7 a.m., followed the creeks up for a few hundred yards, left at the south bank, kept a southerly direction over land as level as a billiard table; scrub dense. In one mile, struck a large nigger path, the largest I have seen as yet—could take horses along it easily, after traversing it for one mile, we came into a large niggers' camp, blacks clearing out and leaving everything; baskets loaded with red berries, also a great quantity of their rough meal. The boys continued along the main track, and I stopped to gratify my curiosity, there being a fleshy smell rising from an oven. I opened the latter, and there saw a female child half roasted. The skull had been stove in, the whole of the inside cleaned out and refilled with red hot stones. The hideous habit of murdering, and eating, the little girls is carried on far more in these jungles than in any other part of the colonies, which accounts for the female children being so scarce. One of the Mourilyan aborigines informed me that they catch the unsuspecting child by the legs and bash its head against a tree; also that a piccaninny makes quite a delicious meal—he had assisted in eating many. I continued my journey along this large path, making great progress; it hugged the precipice which still echoed the bustling and noisy waters of the North Johnstone River. Passed over beautiful chocolate soil, as level as one could wish and also through many native camps, saw many paths leading from, and junctioning with, this one. In two miles it lead me into a small pocket or open space of about an acre or less and in which I found my boys waiting. This corroboree ground presented a clean orderly appearance, the smallest shrub even having been plucked out by the roots, to all appearances the preceding day. Its shape was circular, with a few large trees in the centre, mi-mis built all around it, at the edge of the scrub, and equal distances apart, adorned inside with skulls, some painted. A tremendously long vine stretched across the centre of this pocket about two feet high from the ground and supported by small stakes, it looked like a miniature telegraph line. Large paths, similar to the one followed by me, branch from this pocket in all directions. There was a fine illustration in these camps of the abundance and variety of good food these jungles contain, flesh excepted, which I believe the natives here taste but seldom, and which partly accounts for their cannibalistic propensities. They had red berries heaped in hundredweights. This berry grows in bunches on a large creeper that adheres to trunks of large trees, the leaf being very remarkable resembling two leaves conjoined, it is very common in these northern jungles, and I never saw the fruit so plentiful as it is here. The aborigines carry a long stick with a barb on its end, for reaching those that run up a great height. The fruit goes through the process of cooking before being used for food. Many bushels of newly ground meal were piled up on their leather-like blankets. There are two kinds of meal manufactured from various kinds of nuts; one sort is fit for food immediately after being crushed, being kneaded into bread or small dampers—of course all nuts are roasted before being crushed. Another kind of meal has to be soaked in a running stream to rid it of its poisonous properties and to obviate the evil effects that would be incurred by eating it in its original state; after it has soaked for a considerable time, it is put into a round hole in dry sand to drain where it has much the appearance of preserved potatoes. It is eaten out of these holes, a good percentage of sand being eaten also. There is only one genuine nut that is a nut, that one can pick and eat in its raw state, it has the appearance and almost the shape of an almond, its shell being slightly perforated; there is a great deal of food around it—not eatable, though; its shell is very nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick so there is some trouble in cracking it. Gins grind the meal with two stones, one large one being firmly placed on their cloth; the smaller one which is worn very smooth from continued friction, is held in the hand and worked in sort of a half roll, and it is surprising the quantity of meal they crush in a short time. Their



Part of a map of the country between Mourilyan Harbour, Cairns and Herberton, 1884, showing the district traversed by Christie Palmerston. [The original map from which this was taken is drawn to a scale of two miles to the inch. In copying, this has been reduced to four miles to the inch. A pointer to indicate North is shown on the right-hand side, two thirds of the way down.]

blankets of which they have a great number, are manufactured out of bark and have the appearance of being tanned. They also use the round stone to thump and rub this coarse material into cloth. I left the boys and swags in the pocket while I examined these large paths, one of which I followed east, and in about half a mile or less brought me to the verge of a precipice from which I could still hear the falling waters of North Johnstone. I appeared to be a terrible height above the river, had a slight view to the south, and could trace this basalt precipice in that direction for a considerable distance; and then making a great curve and bearing east. The low regular outline of this plateau can be seen very distinctly on a clear day from the Pacific when on board a steamer; it is a little to the southward of the great heights of Bartle Frere. Returned to my boys branded a tree 'P' in this pocket, and then left, and after travelling in a southerly direction five miles over the same level fertile ground, undergrowth thin, struck a large running creek with a lot of basalt wash in its bed; crossed this creek several times, and camped just below the junction of another tributary. Magnificent land on both sides of this creek; scrub very dense. The Kanakas have become very depressed on account of not seeing any traces of our upwards tracks, they think I am lost, and that all sorts of dangers environ us, starvation especially. Kanakas may be remarkable for their industry about plantations, but for exploring purposes, if they are all like these, they are a remarkable failure—cowards in every sense of the word. Luckily my aborigines do not understand English or the Kanakas would entail misery on the whole camp with their whining ways. The aborigines are immensely superior for exploring. The little boy I captured is still with us.

**December, 28—**

Started at 7 a.m. along the south bank of this creek, and in two miles struck the creek again, there being a very large nigger camp in this bend. Many vines newly cut on this creek with sharp instruments; must be tools stolen from the Johnstone surveyors. Some men armed with swords and shields were coming towards us, commencing, as usual, with frantic actions, working themselves into a volcanic passion. My boys being dispirited, I left them a short distance behind, and met the niggers myself, and the rifle soon made them subside into a more pacific demeanour, and then permitted us to pass. A great quantity of food was lying about their camp, as before described, they had a pair of canvas saddle bags, some pint pots, pieces of red blanket and tent, and two white cockatoos chattering and walking about the camp. I also saw many human bodies cured like smoked bacon, one very large and quite perfect, excepting the head, the top of which had been severed at the mouth, and the lower jaw brought down over the chest, its row of white and gaping teeth giving the body a strange aspect. I think the top part of the head is severed from the body because they cannot preserve the brains. The body has rather a greasy and withered appearance, and not a very pleasant smell. The one described was in standing position, with a conical shaped basket by its side—for the purpose of carrying it, I should imagine. The other bodies were in a doubled position, and jammed into small baskets. Another little boy here chummed in with the one we had; this last is a very pretty child, and does not seem to have any fear, but looks and laughs at everything with comical amazement. We travelled until 4 o'clock over basalt tableland, deep chocolate-coloured soil, undergrowth very dense in places, geological formation basalt. Crossed some of my old tracks this afternoon but the Kanakas did not notice them; Mr. R. A. Ryan and Mr. Stamp accompanied me on that occasion. We camped here having descended the coast range scarcely noticing the altitude. I had to carry one of the little boys about two miles today.

The Kanakas are very downhearted, quite confident that I am lost, and I did not enlighten them on the subject. I passed a very miserable night having very feverish symptoms, and the sandflies being in myriads. The moon rose late and when it was sufficiently high in the heavens, to surmount the jungle, and shed its dull rays upon us camped in the bed of the creek, it had a

sulky appearance—heavy rain before long, I think. The Kanakas rose also, thinking me asleep; they were about an hour puzzling themselves with the position of the moon, trying to discover the geography of the country, but they came to the conclusion that the moon rose in the wrong place.

**December, 29—**

Was up at the dawn of day. Told the Kanakas to follow the creek down, and in a short distance they would strike the river and see an old camp of ours; which they did while I prepared the morning meal. They returned to camp, their sooty faces beaming with joy; "Alright Massa" they exclaimed, "Me see him big fellow river, and old fellow camp belonging to you and me. My word you too much savee long a scrub, soon see him altogether Kanaka". Travelled down the south side of the North Johnstone River, struck surveyors traversing about dinner time, and was among them the remainder of the day. Turned down the river in the afternoon, and camped just below a surveyors old camp. Heat suffocating, and I feel very ill. Had to carry one of the little boys several miles. Black tracks very plentiful here.

**December, 30—**

Got away at about 7 a.m. Kept down the south side of the river; banana trees and vegetation very dense; in two miles struck a surveyor's line, bearing about north and south; told the boys to follow it north and it would bring them to the river. I lay down suffering from a severe attack of fever, caused by the malaria inhaled from these jungles, the heat being terrible. In half-an-hour I followed the boys' tracks, and in one mile overtook them—at least I heard them, east of the line, bushed, having cut several circles to the eastward. Put them straight, and in one more mile struck the North Johnstone, about seven miles above the township, the last half mile being a mass of banana trees. The river here has high alluvial banks, and is a broad sheet of tidal water. I was in a very weak state with fever, so, camped. Cut down a lot of banana trees and constructed a raft, on which I started one of the Kanakas down the river to borrow a boat. He returned in about two hours, saying the aborigines had attacked him in a bend of the river, and would not let him pass. Cut down more banana trees, made the raft larger, gave the two Kanakas two snider rifles and started them again. My boys mixed the last johnny cake, while I lay down but not to sleep.

**December, 31—**

Kanakas did not return until afternoon. Mr. M'Donald had kindly lent them his punt and had also forwarded some rations. We soon bundled our swags into the punt, and pulled down the river midst a tremendous storm, raining like fury, arriving at the Johnstone township on New Year's Day, thus completing our journey in ten days, camping nearly every day at dinner time and doing a lot of rambling about. My track was very level, excepting the earlier part of the journey, while following Douglas' tracks, part of which were very rough.

Shortly after my arrival, the two Thornborough aborigines ran away; I do not know what for. I promised faithfully to take them back again. I visited Mr. H. M. Stapleton, who added injury to insult by giving me a cheque for the sum of £20, and which was dishonoured; so I only received £20 for my two trips, and that was at the Johnstone before starting, fitting out my boys. I mention this, because many people think I have been well paid.

And now, having endeavoured to give a faithful portrayal of the narrow limits explored by me of this great stretch of jungle, as well as of the race that inhabits it, before laying down my pen I will embrace the opportunity of thanking a few of the residents for their many kindnesses to myself and boys, for it is not probable that I shall visit there again.

Mr. and Mrs. Bourke were kind in the extreme; also Mr. and Mrs. M'Donald, Mr. and Mrs. Stamp, Mr. Miskin, and Surveyor Waraker, and last but not least Mr. Kevin O'Doherty and Mr. Owen Jones were unceasing in flooding me with their hospitalities; their boys and boats were always at my disposal; they made their home my home the whole of my stay on the Johnstone.