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## A Sketch of the Life of Samuel White— Ornithologist, Soldier, Sailor, and Explorer.

BY HIS SON, S. A. WHITE.

### [II.—THE ORNITHOLOGIST.]

In December, 1860, John White, the father, met his death through an accident with horses, and this was the turning point in Samuel White's life, for he was then free to gratify his longing to put the whole of his time into the pursuit of ornithology and the collecting of other natural history specimens. In 1861 we find that in company with his brother William he made many short trips to such places as the Black Swamp in the south, and Wirrabara Forest in the north, and they were on a big collecting trip up the Murray River in the early part of 1863. During these trips valuable notes and observations were made, and many specimens collected. In the winter of 1863 Samuel White prepared for his first big expedition, and a great undertaking it must have been in those days. Three horses attached to a dray, with ten months' stores, constituted the outfit. The enterprising ornithologist, accompanied by his man, named Cottrell, set out from Adelaide to penetrate the vast interior, which was then unknown. By August 23rd, 1863, we know he was at St. a'Becket's Pool, lat., 28° 30', for it was here he collected the type specimen of *Artamus melanops*. Pushing on past Lake Hope, and away to the north of Lake Eyre, taking his position each day and marking it down on a blank map, beset by privations and hardships beyond description, and attacked by hos-

tile natives, but never daunted he and his companion were shaping their course for the centre of the continent. One disaster after another befel them, and when north of Lake Eyre the last horse died. That indomitable spirit of the explorer was forced back. The dray, with nearly all the valuable specimens, had to be abandoned in the desert, and the two men set out on the homeward journey on foot. The fearful privations and hardships this journey entailed would fill a book of fiction if told in detail, but it must suffice to say that Samuel White and his faithful servant reached his home at the Reedbeds after months of tramping. This intrepid ornithologist must have had a great constitution, for we know that he was on the Murray River again in 1865, this time accompanied by his brother William, when a good many specimens were collected, both birds and insects, the brother taking a keen interest in the study of insect life. In 1867 Samuel White made preparations to go further afield, and entertained the idea of proceeding high up on the Queensland coast and penetrating to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and from there down to South Australia. With this object in view, and accompanied by his brother William, he set out in a small boat bound for Sydney. There they changed into a still smaller one called the "Saxone," and during their progress up the coast to Brisbane they encountered one of those violent storms that often visit those latitudes, and were nearly wrecked. Reaching Brisbane at last they transhipped into another boat called the "Black Prince," a very small and leaky boat she was, not fit to go to sea, for large holes in her hull were stopped up by sacking dipped in tar and nailed over with pieces of packing cases. In this state she sailed up inside the Great Barrier Reef, and when a blow came on the captain had to seek shelter under one of the numerous islands till it had passed. After a very anxious time they landed at Cleveland Bay, where Townsville is now situated, but then there were only two habitations and three or four white men, one being a blacksmith who was induced to put together a pair of strong wheels, on which was constructed a body. While this was being done the White brothers were camped on the bank of a reedy creek, and had commenced their work amongst nature. The strange birds to be found in that part of Queensland interested them much. At this time the brother, William, became ill with scurvy owing to privations and want of proper food, and it affected his feet so badly that, being

unable to stand, he had to keep his bed for days. It was found that where they had formed their camp was the track used by many snakes on their way to the creek to water, and on many occasions the reptiles passed over the prostrate form of the invalid. Once when the elder brother was away a snake instead of passing through the boughs (on which the sufferer's bed was made) to the water, remained under the bed. William watched for some time, and at last saw the snake under him, and reaching for a gun (which was always left near him for his protection) shot the snake. Hearing the report his brother, Samuel, was soon on the scene wanting to know the trouble, and when the invalid explained his brother lectured him for wasting such a priceless commodity as ammunition. His brother having almost regained his health Samuel White purchased a roan mare to draw the rough cart, and he set out in August, 1868, to find his way to the Gulf of Carpentaria through a thick mass of tropical jungle and broken ranges, with his only guide, a map, which proved to be worse than useless.

*(To be continued.)*

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