

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

BY HIS SON, S. A. WHITE.

IV.—THE ORNITHOLOGIST.

So the brothers battled on beset by all kinds of obstacles and privations, some days making good progress, others little or none, hacking their way for days through thick jungle, scrub and creepers, levering stones and logs out of the way to allow the horse and cart to pass. All this time collecting was going on, and most interesting and rare specimens were added to the collection. The thorny scrub and lawyer vines tore the clothing from their bodies and at last the supply of shirts gave out, so Samuel White and his brother were forced to make shift with shirts made from 50-lb. flour bags. A hole

was cut in the botton through which the head was passed, a hole at each side was made to which sleeves of the same material were attached. Before reaching Brisbane, the horse and cart and many other things were disposed of and the brothers went into Brisbane to ship home the valuable collections. After a short rest, they set out once more westward. This time they had to depend on what they could carry for they intended making along the rough ranges which extended down through the country they wished to explore some little distance from the coast and it was impossible to take any kind of conveyance. Setting out one day from Brisbane the naturalists made their way into the ranges and soon found themselves in very rough country. They were the first white men to climb Mt. Lindsay. Before reaching the top, they had to pass up several bare faces of rock by means of the creeping plants that hung down. The top of the mountain is called the tea-pot on account of its shape resembling the bowl and spout of that well-known utensil. Under the mass of rock which resembled the spout a beautiful lake was discovered upon which there were many water-fowl including pelicans. Where the overflow found its way down the mountain side a deep channel was cut, round the opening of this channel or cavern a mass of most beautiful sub-tropical vegetation grew, beautiful flowering creepers and gigantic masses of fern, while further in ferns of more delicate and exquisite shape clung to the damp rocks. Outside some fine *Castanospermum* trees shed their crimson blossoms over all. The vegetation round the entrance was so thick and rank that the interior was shrouded in semi-darkness. The travellers hanging to the vines and creepers pushed their way into this huge slit in the face of the mountain and to their surprise they saw many white spots floating about in the darkness. These spots were in pairs like eyes and the mystery was not cleared up till one of the objects was captured and it was found to be a beautiful dark blue butterfly with a large white spot on each wing, the insect was such a dark shade of blue that it was not discernable in the dim light, only the white spots as they hovered round. After securing a number of these insects, which must be lovers of darkness, because they would not allow the naturalists to drive them out into the light, the brothers continued on their way. Having to ford rivers, which came in their way, which in some instances were in flood, crossing was not made without much risk to life. Many valuable notes were made each day, as well as collecting, but the latter was much re-

stricted, as a small collection only could be carried to points where it could be forwarded. When they got down into New South Wales, the Hawkesbury River gave the travellers much trouble, because this fine river throws out innumerable arms into a very rough country, so they had to climb one rocky ridge after another to be confronted by one of these arms. It was here that the King Parrot was met with in numbers, and the brothers spent some time in observing these birds in their natural habitat. Having crossed the Hawkesbury river at last, they pushed on to Sydney, and camped a few miles from the town; a very rare moth was captured at this camp. (In 1880 I accompanied my father when he tried to locate this camping place, but found it a densely populated centre.) Having sent on their collections and having had a rest for a week, the naturalists once more set out on foot—this time Melbourne was the objective. Travelling some distance inland they soon lost the sub-tropical jungles and the animal and insect life changed with the country, their collecting soon dwindled down to a few specimens each day. From a pastoral point of view, the country was excellent, with great stretches of open timber beautifully grassed, and in some cases open downs. Although the naturalists admired the wonderful timber and beautiful country, they missed the prolific collecting ground amidst the sub-tropical belt, still they found much to interest them in bird life, on this journey between the capitals of New South Wales and Victoria, the overlapping of species alone was a most interesting subject. In due course Melbourne was reached and the brothers decided to take boat home, and they reached Adelaide some ten or eleven months from the time they had set out. The same journey in these times of rapid transport would be thought little or nothing of, but in those days it required some pluck to face it, as well as being a good bushman and able to put up with much privation to bring the journey to a successful termination.

[To be continued.]

