

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

By HIS SON, S. A. WHITE.

VIII.—THE ORNITHOLOGIST AND SAILOR.

So at noon, Friday, April 9th, 1880, the anchor was weighed, and Samuel White started upon his last voyage.

It is now my intention to try and narrate the principal happenings of this voyage, from memory and from notes, also from the few scanty notes of my father now available.

We drove to Henley Beach about 10 p.m. on the evening of the 8th, and after some delay the yacht's boat took us on board. The decks were so hampered with luggage, gear, stores, &c., that it was impossible to make a start that night. All the next morning was taken up stowing away things and clearing up the decks. About mid-day the "Elsa" started down the Gulf with a very light breeze, which freshened, and later on blew strongly from the S.E. Standing on the one tack we fetched into American Beach, and dropped anchor about midnight in four fathoms of water. A south-easterly breeze blew strongly all next day, so the little ship remained at anchor, and my father took his wife and family ashore in the small boat, and we all enjoyed ourselves after being very seasick the night before. Most of the day was spent searching for shells along the beach, and amongst those collected was a fine pair of paper *Nautilus*. In the evening my father rowed us off to the ship again for another night's roll. We lay about 2½ miles off shore, and a good big swell came into the bay from the eastward. Next day, being Sunday, 11th, and the wind blowing very strongly from the S.E., the "Elsa"

lay at anchor, and we spent the day on shore, my father collecting specimens and taking notes of sea birds in the vicinity of the beach, all going on board again in the evening. Next morning, under main and stay sails, we ran in shore within half a mile. The crew then manned the two big boats, and got off a quantity of wood and water, and while this was in progress my father took my brother and sister and myself in a small boat, which he called the "Duck Boat," along the coastline for about five miles in search of *Nautilus* shells, but we had no success.

On Thursday, 13th, about noon sail was set for Antechamber Bay, and we beat round with a light wind, coming to anchor after dark in five fathoms of water, the schooner rolling terrifically on a big swell. All were glad to get away next morning, after rolling about most unpleasantly all night. With only a light and variable wind we were some time making out against a heavy swell. During the afternoon we passed the Pages, where we spoke the "Orient" top-sail schooner, bound for Port Adelaide. The 15th found our little craft plunging into a big head sea, but during the day the wind went round to the north, and the sea went down.

Flying around us were great numbers of sea birds—several species of petrels and albatross, and we hooked a number of large baracoota. Early in the morning we were off Cape Shank. The night set in cold, with driving showers, which became heavier towards midnight, accompanied by thunder and lightning, and we were under double reefed main-sail all night. The little craft was like a duck, and kept wonderfully dry considering the big seas that were running. Just after dark we spoke the schooner "Lady St. Albans," bound for Port Adelaide, and soon afterwards passed Cape Northumberland. The next day (the 16th) we passed Portland Bay, and we again took a great many baracoota. These voracious fish are caught by fastening a piece of wood or coloured rag just above the bare hook, and towing the line astern. When travelling at five to seven knots the fish are invariably caught if any are about. They seem much better flavoured if put in salt and water for 24 hours. Baracoota is rather dry and solid, has few bones, and is moderately well flavoured.

By Saturday, the 17th, we were off Cape Otway, with numbers of sea birds in attendance. The wind blew nice and fresh for a while, but later died out to a calm, and only two

or three baracoota were caught during the day—the pace of the craft being too slow. Often when these large fish were hauled in sea birds chased them, screaming frantically. For the next two days (19th and 20th) the wind was exceedingly light, variable, and baffling. We were off Wilson's Promontory at 2 p.m. on the 20th. Very rough weather, with strong head winds and high seas were experienced on the 22nd and 23rd, and on the 24th we beat past Gabo Island. The wind went down, but the seas were very high, and the sails and gear were very much chafed with the rolling of the vessel. On the 25th it was very wet, heavy rain falling all day and night. Next day was the best run we had since being out, and we did over 90 miles, but when 25 miles off Sydney Heads the wind died away. Several other craft were in company with us. On the 27th we entered Port Jackson. We first dropped anchor in Elizabeth Bay, to send all the powder and some of the arms up to the magazine. Next day we beat up to Lavender Bay, where we lay several days while Samuel White secured a house for his wife and family, and having selected one at Double Bay the yacht was shifted around there, where she lay at anchor until the 15th of May.

My father's first troubles with the master and crew started here, for they became mixed up in a drunken brawl on shore, which hurried the departure. Having shipped a quantity of stores and re-shipped the powder and arms, at 8 a.m. on the 16th of May, 1880, the "Elsea" sailed out of Sydney Harbour, with a light wind from the S.W. The wind continued very light and baffling till the night of the 18th, when a run of 90 miles was made, then light, variable winds and very strong currents were met with. On Monday, 24th, the end of McPherson Range was passed. The country looked exceedingly rugged and broken, Mount Warning looking like a pointed cone above the rest. Later on in the day the end of Strasbrook Island came in sight. The vessel was close enough to the coast for us to see that it was well wooded, and that there was a lighthouse on the rising ground at Point Danger. On the 25th the wind kept steady till daylight, when it fell to a dead calm, and at 2 p.m. the yacht was abreast of Moreton Island. At sunset the sky became overcast, and a series of squalls broke over the craft from the N. by W. About midnight a tremendous squall came up from the W., which lasted several hours, with heavy rain, thunder and lightning. For a time everything was lowered on deck, but

after a while the crew got the vessel under double reef, the little ship behaving wonderfully well under the severe blow. The next day (the 27th) the wind continued strong, blowing very hard at times. The owner of the ship put in a lot of time that day with carpenter's work, for the rolling of the ship the day before upset everything. The storeroom doors and the bulkheads were smashed in, and things were generally tossed about. The master made a complaint about the binnacle light, and a change was made from oil to kerosine, with great success.

