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NOTES ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF SOUTH
AUSTRALIA—No. II.

A NATURALIST'S RAMBLE—NO. I.

UNDER this title I shall introduce my readers to many delightful scenes of hill and dale, of evergreen lands and flower-covered plains, touching a little on the accommodations met with on the way, and on our variegated scenery, but speaking principally of the animated objects—of our birds with their sweet notes and beautiful plumage, and of the lesser tribes of the insect world, which enliven every walk of the naturalist, giving a charm to every scene, and novelty to the most frequented places.

Our first ramble will be from Adelaide up the mountains, to the hotel (yes, a hotel on the mountains, and superior to many in the town,) of our old friend Crafer* in the Tiers, and lying to the right of Mount Lofty as we face the range of hills. We proceed by the Mount Barker road through a lovely and diversified country. This road, from its many singular and romantic features, and leading as it does over the tops of the mountains, has often been likened to the pass over the Simplon from Switzerland to Italy.† Few think of attempting any journey up the mountains except on horseback, or in a conveyance, but the true way to enjoy this beautiful part of the country is by

* Since kept by a Mr. Hancock.

† This comparison, by some may be thought absurd, but many who have been on the continent and beheld scenery which none could fail to admire, speak of the former as a great undertaking, and which when completed will be nearly as extraordinary for our infant colony, as those stupendous mountain passes for the talent, means, and numbers of the individuals employed in their formation.

walking, to use the means which nature has given us, at least those who have the power to do so, for at every spot, in every bird and insect that skims the air, or in the flowers that please both sight and smell, there is some new beauty to admire, that will often turn the rambler aside from the path.

Rising early, though a difficult task to some, must be attempted on commencing these excursions, to get far on our way among the shady and refreshing foliage on the mountains, before the heat of the day comes on, which is always, even in the winter months, (except at the fall of our rains) soon after the sun has risen. Perhaps the best time of the year is the month of October, after the greater showers have refreshed the earth, and all nature looks green from recent moisture, combined with a general and not too ardent warmth,

We proceed south-east from Adelaide, through lightly wooded and variegated scenery, here and there opening into a champaign country, where the hand of the cultivator and agriculturist displays itself in every direction, by the numerous well-fenced fields of corn, now within one month of their (this year) truly plentiful harvest; the tapering stems waving with one accord their bearded heads, as they bend slowly like the undulating motion of the sea before the light and grateful breeze, as it comes loaded with fragrance from the mountains' side, catching, as it passes by, the aromatic odours of the various plants that fringe the banks of our little mountain-streams. This is one of the most beautiful and gratifying sights in nature, a sign of plenty and of wealth.

We now leave the home scenery in our rear, and ascend the mountains, which rise before us in gently rounded slopes of every form and size, spread out like a verdant carpet, with grassy knolls here and there, and thickly studded with the straggling gum tree, which still prevails, with its airy foliage and curiously twisted branches, sometimes laden with hanging bark. Wild flowers of every hue, often combined with the most delicate smell, delight the eye and the senses on every side; they form one of the peculiar features of this country, and many of those most beautiful are found growing among scrub, or in sand or stones, while in every degree of soil we meet with these lovely emblems of the botanical world.

As we ascend higher up the sloping hills, on turning round, a most extensive prospect breaks upon our sight. The distant and opposite shore of St. Vincent's Gulf lies veiled in a flood of dazzling light, which plays in prismatic or golden colours upon the rippling waters of the Bay. The road has often a very romantic effect in many of the angles or turns that at intervals occur; large masses of rock here overhang the perpendicular bed of the stream, while slate, with quartz and

granite curiously veined, give promise of latent treasures beneath. One great drawback certainly is the want of those magnificent waterfalls or spreading lakes, that are met with in the mountainous scenery of almost every other country,* though this is in some measure compensated by the view from the whole of the Mount Lofty range, for here the creek is seen running inland, winding along like a silver band, with the expanse of waters beyond.

Occasionally one of many little rivulets, formed principally by the late rains, crosses the road, dashing down mimic rocks that intercept its course, and casting its light foam into the air; but this additional beauty is not seen in the summer months. The slight and drooping Cassowary-tree now appears at intervals, increasing in numbers as we proceed, which may be considered a substitute for the weeping willow of more temperate climates†

Some miles before we come to the hotel, and at about eight from Adelaide, our mountain scenery greatly changes, the more common Eucalypti being replaced in general by the stringy-bark as it is here called, one of our most useful timber trees. Among the feathered tribes many of the larger birds are more common, their haunts being less disturbed than in places near the town. That singular bird, the (so called) laughing *jackass* here reigns supreme. Sitting on some lofty branch, while its partner generally chooses an adjacent tree, they laugh at each other with the most laudable perseverance, or at other times seemingly at the expense of those passing by, so different to their former sable masters, hitherto the lords of this fair creation. As soon as one has fully satisfied himself another takes up the joke, their notes ringing and thrilling through the woods for some time without cessation on all sides. Hawks, also, are very plentiful, but their food, the smaller birds, seem rather scarce, though at intervals a few flit quickly by. The black and white magpies, at all times known from this striking contrast in their plumage, are likewise seen flying by pairs in the dells or at the base of the hills.

At last we attain the summits of the mountains, and the prospect is greatly extended; the gullies covered with luxuriant grasses and herbs—the mountains on either hand with their ever-changing foliage—the Gulf, with the various promontories distinctly visible, stretching out into its deep blue waters, and the whole extent of plain and wood

* There are, I believe, two small waterfalls in the mountains, one of which is said to flow all the year round.

† I do not mean to compare this tree in elegance with the sacred and symbolical weeping willow of England; but the Cassowary-tree would, from its light foliage, be an ornament to our cemetery, and also a beautiful mourning emblem, instead of the straggling foliage of the gum tree.

lying at our feet, present altogether a scene not often beheld, even by travellers who can boast their acquaintance with the continental quarters of the globe, and still less frequently in such vicinity to the metropolis of the country.* Within half a mile of our destined resting-place, the woodlands begin to bear decided marks that the hand of man has been engaged amongst them, for the sawyers have here commenced felling those trees most serviceable at the beginning of the colony, being then used for building, and still for fencing, &c. This clearing gradually increases as we near the hotel, always of course the principal seat of attraction; it is calculated, that the wood collected in the yard of this building alone, would serve all the wants of the inmates for fuel for the next ten years, and there is no doubt that what at present is cut down, would, if necessary, supply the town of Adelaide for fifty years to come, and additional timber being often wanted for other purposes, the place of all would soon be supplied by the young trees that would in the mean time spring up.

We may now consider ourselves as arrived at Crafer's hotel, a stone house, one story high, containing large and commodious sitting-rooms, and a row of neat bed-rooms above. Here every requisite may be obtained at a moderate charge, which will be thought the more so, when the distance that everything has to be brought is considered, and which cleanliness and civility render doubly acceptable. On the opposite side of the road is the first house here built for the accommodation of passengers, a low wooden building, its proprietor erecting the present one, as soon afterwards as possible. The prospect from the latter certainly possesses no beauty, the view being too much confined, for a hill rises at once before us on the opposite side of the road, which though covered with shrubs and underwood, presents the features most prevalent at this part of the country, being strewn with felled and leafless trees; this, however, it is to be hoped will soon be remedied by their removal. On this hill the Entomologist, if he has not before journeyed this way, may revel in the acquisition of new species of the insect tribes. They consist principally of the Coleoptera, (beetles) and these of the weevil family,† in the crevices of the stringy-bark trees. Though the lesser butterflies now occasionally pass over us, this hill is but seldom visited by the variegated wasps, or the rapacious dragon flies; the grasshoppers, (*Locustæ*) now distributed over the whole country,

* A lady and gentleman whom I accompanied in my last ride over the mountains were much struck by the beauties of the scenery, my female companion in particular remarked, that it pleased her as much as any thing she had seen on the continent, chasing for a time from her mind the picturesque loveliness of its rivers and lakes.

† Most of which I mentioned in the *Signs of the Month*, in my last number.

hop from stone to stone, or if taken by surprise, often shew they have attained their perfect form by the expansion of their beautifully shaded wings. Under the bark of the trees may be seen many singular though small field bugs, all in their larva or pupa states, and under stones, or fallen logs, the active Carabi and snake-like Scolopendræ and Iuli, and here and there a female scorpion from two to three inches in length, with her sting curled over her back, ready to defend herself from injuries—the formidable mother of a hopeful brood.

The tourist or naturalist (for I speak only of those who come for pleasure not business) had better rest here the first night, and start by sunrise the following morning, to observe with renewed delight the various beauties still in store for him.

It is a fine moonlight night! let us therefore stroll out for a time to enjoy the cool breeze, so refreshing after a hot day. We shall now be saluted by a very unique concert, which is so far professional, that the performers are well acquainted with their parts. We will approach the banks of the nearest rivulet; and at once perceive that these musicians are the frogs, who each in a different key sing merrily the whole night long, if undisturbed, with various modulations and great regularity; approach their haunts, however, within one hundred feet, and this novel entertainment ceases at once. They will now remain quite mute for some time, though their friends in the distance are going on as cheerily as ever. At last an old croaker of the party nearest to us, begins with a faint hoarse note, as if trying to banish the fears of his companions, but for some time it will not do, his own voice gradually dying away in a *sigh*. As he finds it difficult to get a single response, he waits a little longer, till one by one, they reluctantly chime in, and if the listener keeps perfectly still, their shrill mechanical notes are heard once more in all their strength; if now, however, the least sound disturbs them, a much longer period (perhaps ten minutes) elapses before they will again commence. The smallest pool or puddle contains its separate coterie all equally engaged in these revelries.

As soon as the sun has thrown his gladdening light o'er the sky, we set forth after a short breakfast, to the "Deanery," four miles further on the Mount Barker road. Again a "change comes o'er the spirit of" the scenery, and novelties once more attract us; the road now leads through woods with foliage more closely set, but without bearing the least dark or sombre appearance. Here truly nature luxuriates unrestrained, for though the soil is stony, and bad for agriculture, which no one would think of attempting on these heights, yet it is of such a description that everything flourishes with redoubled vigour. The innumerable flowers, plants, and underwood, of a size

and growth several times larger than we have hitherto seen them, shoot up intertwined with each other in all their native wildness, giving to the mind the idea of an Indian jungle. The grass tree, as it is usually called, with its long subulate leaves, springing from the ground in many rays diverging from one common point, is here very common, frequently bearing in its centre a bullrush eight or ten feet in length.* Flowers, generally of a purple hue, are seen training up the stems of many of the trees, surrounded by others, combining every variety of color that Flora's kingdom can present. A cloudless sky is above our heads, but the intense rays of the sun which now begin to shoot obliquely through the trees, are agreeably lessened by the overhanging foliage. Insects without number, and of various kinds, wing their way on every side. Wasps and ichneumon-flies, some of a golden hue, hover round the native honeysuckle, which, with many other sweet smelling plants sends its delicate perfume on the air. At one turn of the road the whole atmosphere is scented with the exquisite smell of wild honey, proceeding from a waving sea of small white flowers rustling with the gentle breeze, among which thousands of bees are revelling in undisturbed enjoyment.

Such are the various natural beauties that everywhere we meet till we come in sight of the "Rural Deanery." This is a small public house lately built, and kept by Benjamin Deane and spouse, a good natured and worthy couple. It is placed upon the opposite bank of Cock's Creek, to which we descend by a rather steep hill. The water of this clear stream is said to be worth coming from Adelaide alone to taste. At the "Deanery," our appetites being sharpened by the walk, a cup of coffee will be found very refreshing in the small though neat parlour, where this agreeable beverage, with plenty of eggs, milk, butter, and home made bread, will be served (perhaps) by the beautiful daughter of our host.

About ten miles beyond this lovely spot, lies the fine district of Mount Barker, which will probably form the subject of some future number, though its capabilities are now generally known.

So much for those who not having seen this country, give it for their own mischievous intention and purposes a generally bad name, speaking of its barrenness, its unwillingness to yield even its natural productions, and its unfitness for the culture of all those that are foreign; but the previous slight sketch will prove how unfounded are these statements, though but a small portion of the country is there mentioned, and of

* This is very different in appearance to that going by the same name which is met with in the more rocky and less accessible parts of the mountains, having a trunk, and each leaf (if such it may be called) being smaller, and four-sided or square.

that principally the more ornamental parts. Perhaps some may say that I speak of these verdant lands only at a time of year when they are in their most perfect and flourishing condition. This I admit, but ask in return, who would visit for pleasure the beautiful lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, or other inland scenery of our mother country in the severe winter season? but would not rather prefer the mild days of autumn, or the bright budding season of spring.

Our more trying period is during the heats of summer; in England during the bitter winter months, when most vegetable life is extinct or chain bound, to a much greater degree and for a much longer period than in our more favored climate is ever likely to be the case, from the most severe effects of our sultry seasons.

SIGNS OF THE MONTH.

In November and the following months only, the more remarkable species of insects will be mentioned.

Class Arachnida (spiders, &c.) There are at all seasons to be observed several hundred species of spiders, though but little is known of them. Scorpions vary generally from half an inch to three inches in length, but seldom exceed this size.

INSECTA.

CHILOPODA (Centipedes.) October 16 and 18.—Our largest red-legged stercorarius *Scholopendra* rather common in its chosen retreat.

CHILOGNATHA (Millepedes, &c.) Oct. 5—Many small species of *Iuli*, colors brown and black, none of large size.

APHANIPTERA Oct. and Nov.—Fleas now very active, but (apparently) not common.

COLEOPTERA (Beetles.) Encounter Bay, Nov. 2.—A new species of spined black and white *Curculio* (L.) near the Bay in the sand, under logs of wood, &c. Nov. 3.—Along the sea shore—hundreds of beautiful *Coccinellide*; colors yellow striped with black, also many pupæ of the same.

Nov. 12—Many brilliant insects of the Lamellicorn tribes.

Nov. 14—Our most beautiful and nearly largest species of *Curculio* (L.) black with metallic green punctures, found on flowers and gum trees; length one inch.

Nov. 24—Some minute but beautiful *Buprestide* on a wild mallow, near the Torrens; colors, shining green tipped with purple.

ORTHOPTERA (Grasshoppers, &c.) Nov. 7—Found in scrub or underwood, many miles in the interior, the larva of a Mantis (n. s.) length three inches, color light green with white stripe down abdomen.

Nov. 13—A minute species of this family flies by night into rooms.

Nov. 2 to 30—Park Lands and plains. About twelve species of

Locustidæ very common—a few singular *Achatidæ*, and many minute light yellow larvæ of the genus *Truxalis*.

DERMAPTERA (Earwigs) Encounter Bay, Nov. 3—Under whales' bones on the shore. Many individuals of a species of this tribe (second species I have seen)—length half an inch, color dark—all in their larva and pupa states. [In the same situation, and washed by the spray of the sea were some moderate sized spiders!]

HEMIPTERA (Land and water bugs, &c.) at Willunga, thirty miles S. of Adelaide, Nov. 2—A few nocturnal *Cimicidæ* and *Reduviidæ* the largest of the latter half an inch in length, colors dark; promuscis very powerful.

Nov. 2 to 20—Many small Cicadæ on the wing.

Nov. 24—At Walkerville, on a wild mallow, near the river. Some scarlet and black species of *Reduviidæ*, and similar but more vividly colored ones of *Acanthidæ*, of both sexes.

Nov. 28—The first species (had in hand this year) of our largest common Cicadæ; color black; wings strongly veined and transparent; longitudinal length one and a half inches; transverse of wings, just four inches.

NEUROPTERA (Dragon-flies, &c.) Nov. 2, near Willunga—*Panorpidæ* of last month, very common in the woods.

Nov. 8—Thousands of winged white ants (*Termites*) flying in every direction (a good meal for poultry).

TRICHOPTERA—One species common this month (Nov.), antennæ long; wings light brown.

HYMENOPTERA (Wasps, Ichneumon-flies, &c.) Oct. 1 to 5—Females of largest species of *Mutillidæ* found at the roots of the gum trees; a few wingless females of *Atta Truculentæ*.

Oct. 5—On the mountains. Many new species of *Formicidæ*.

Oct. 14—North Adelaide. Several new species of Fossorial insects in flowers—of *Chrysididæ* on fences, and some small female *Mutillidæ* on trunks of trees.

Oct. 15—A very elegant species of *Evaniidæ*—ovipositor long.

Oct. 16 to 22—North Adelaide. A few small yellow species of *Ichneumonidæ*—Sand wasps of families *Scoliidæ* and *Sphegidæ* now common.

Oct. 24—The first species of the *Vespidæ* I have seen—genus *Oydnerus*, colors, orange and purplish black, length, nearly an inch. Soon after, many more new species, all small—some scarce *Andranidæ*.

Oct. 28.—Two individuals of our largest species of Ichneumon—fly—colors black with white spots, legs red. Small *Sphegidæ* common.

The consideration of the two remaining orders (Lepidoptera and Diptera), must be deferred till next month.

As partly applicable to the present subject, I must beg to correct the statement in the last Magazine, No. 5, page 164, that "Mr. Wilson is a naturalist, and has had his attention much directed to the entomology of this province." Mr. Wilson is neither a naturalist generally, nor an entomologist in particular, and has had neither time nor inclination to attend to the entomology of this, or any other country.

NATURÆ AMATOR.

December, 1841.

ERRATA IN THE LAST NUMBER.

Page 175, line 16 from top, for *Buprestis* read *Buprestis*.

Ditto, line 24 from top, for *Necrophorus* read *Silpha* (L).

I AM A SINGLE MAN.

PER CONTRA

TO THOMAS HOOD'S "I'M NOT A SINGLE MAN."

O! list and hear with tender ear
 All ye who single be,
 Each grief and woe I'll let you know,
 Of an unhappy *he*;
 The troubles I do meet, and why
 I wish life half a sprun,
 Is all because (I can't say *was*)
 "I *am* a single man."

None can reveal but those who feel
 How *single* men are vex'd,
 And how their lives for want of wives,
 Are *doubly* sore perplex'd;
 How I can tell so very well,
 The snares that them trepan,
 You'll see quite clear, when that you hear
 "I *am* a single man."

I AM A SINGLE MAN.

From *morn* to eve I *mourn* and grieve,
 With many a grievous sigh;
 When other's *hearts* are light as *harts*,
 A heavy heart have I;
 And tho' at night the *spirits* bright
 With spirits from a cann,
 Soon off they wheel, and make me feel,
 "I am a single man."

I can't tell sure how I endure,
 And be so free from wrath,
 The scandal showers that on me pours,
 And overflow my path;
 If I but meet upon the street,
 And speak to a fair one,
 A thousand eyes do wink! with cries,
 "I am a single man."

If to a *ball* I go, then *baul*
 Goes every busy tongue,
 If I but chance to throw a glance
 On one that's fair and young.
 And it is hard, upon my word,
 I can't pick up a fan,
 But what folks jeer, and laugh and leer,
 "I am a single man."

If I speak *low*, then round will go
 Something I *never* said,
 If I *proclaim* some news or name,
 There's *marriage* in my head;
 And they're so nice, I can't dance twice
 With almost the same one,
 But what they say, "they've fixed the day,"
 "I am a single man."

Nor dare I say, "allow me pray
 To see you safely home,"
 But marriages with carriages
 Must from my kindness come;
 Each compliment I do repent,
 For then doth dream each one
 Of weddings—rings—and household things—
 "I am a single man."

If I neglect to shew respect
 To maids *not* young or bright,
 Behind my back they call me *black*,
 I'm an unhappy *wight*!
 Oh! if I could, and not be rude,
 Devise some lucky plan,
 To stop each tongue that so hath sung,
 "I am a single man."