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PART IV.—THE PRIMARY INDUSTRIES.

CHAPTER I.

THE PASTORAL INDUSTRY.

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—Closer Settlement of Darling Downs.—Cattle-Rearing.—Meat-Freezing Works.—Over-
stocking.—Dairying.—Station Routine.—Charm of Pastoral Life.—Shearing.—Hospitality
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The pastoral industry in Queensland is, in point of duration, well
within the compass of a single life. In about seventy years it has attained
its present dimensions, and, as progress in the early years was very slow,
its magnitude to-day supplies striking testimony to the energy and
enterprise of two generations. The description of Queensland as a huge
sheep and cattle farm with contributive industries, which without very
great extravagance might have been offered forty years ago, has long
ceased to be applicable. But though other industries have grown into
importance, reducing its pre-eminence, the pastoral still retains its un-
questioned lead and is deservedly regarded as the main source of the
State's wealth. Bearing in mind that the total exports from Queensland
for 1907 were rather over fourteen and a-half millions sterling, of which
pastoral produce claimed more than half, it will be seen that this title
to precedence cannot be challenged. With an abatement of £529,000
for butter—dairying being associated with agriculture—this imposing
sum is the direct product of the natural grasses. It can hardly be
surprising then, after realising the potential wealth of these pastures, that
visitors should be struck with the fact that rainfall—past, present, and
prospective—is a constant and very prominent topic in all grades of social
intercourse.

That a continent so suited to the abundant propagation of animal life
should have been so poorly equipped by Nature with an indigenous fauna
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As soon as settlement was established, the new land had to be stocked with the domesticated animals of the old. Captain Phillip, the first Governor, in 1788 made a very modest start. He brought with him from England 7 horses, 7 cattle, and 29 sheep, besides pigs, rabbits, and poultry. Remembering that in those days England was from six to nine months distant from the new settlement, it is not perhaps surprising that pastoral progress was slow. In 1800 there were only 6,124 sheep and 1,044 cattle in Australia. But five years prior to this the seed destined to produce a giant growth was already germinating. A shrewd young soldier had detected the germ of Australia's future wealth. With a strange prescience, unaided by experience, Captain Macarthur recognised that the dry climate of Australia was peculiarly adapted to the growth of a fine type of wool. Starting from most unpromising ewes from India, he gradually improved the strain by the introduction of Spanish blood. He was fortunate at the start in getting three rams from the Cape, part of a gift from the King of Spain to the Dutch Government, and by sedulous culling with a bold disregard for carcass, although fat wethers at the time sold for £5, he succeeded in establishing a good merino flock the wool from which created an excellent impression in England. English manufacturers, who had hitherto drawn their limited stocks of clothing wool from Spain, welcomed the promise of a new source of supply.

Macarthur had taken some wool with him to England, when deported in consequence of a fatal duel in 1803, and its fine quality was at once recognised and appreciated. He was fortunate in being still there in the following year, when George the Third, in the hope of encouraging the production of fine wool, sold a portion of his Kew stud flock, the progeny of Negretti sheep, another gift of the Spanish King, so that they might be distributed amongst his subjects. Macarthur was the principal buyer, securing seven rams and a ewe at very moderate prices, the highest being under £30. He was an enthusiast, and could see the enormous possibilities of the virgin continent he had left, with its mild dry climate and almost limitless pasture lands, for the maintenance of great flocks, the wool of which could be improved to the finest type. He asked the British Government for a grant of land to feed his flocks, assuring them that he was "so convinced of the practicability of supplying this country with any quantity of fine wool that it may require that I am earnestly solicitous to prosecute this important object, and on my return to New South Wales will devote my whole attention to accelerating its complete attainment." This request—in spite of the adverse opinion of Sir Joseph Banks as to the suitability of the new land for wool-growing—was granted, Lord Camden instructing the Governor of New South Wales to grant Macarthur such lands "as would enable him to extend his flocks in such a degree as may promise to supply a sufficiency of animal food for the colony as well as a lucrative article of export for the support of our manufactures at home." Macarthur selected near Mount Taurus, and the Camden estate, long famous as the source from which many studs were either formed or replenished, was established. How limited at this time...
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was the world's production of this superfine wool—suited to the manufacture of the finest fabrics—may be gathered from the fact of one bale of Macarthur's being sold at Garraway's Coffee House in 1807 at 10s. 6d. per lb., the cloth from which provided England's Farmer King with a coat.

But not till the merino had passed beyond coastal influences was the improvement of growth due to an eminently suitable habitat fully realised. Wentworth and others had in 1813 pushed across the Blue Mountains, and the occupation of the interior began. In the Mulgwa district, which was stocked with sheep about 1824, the clip improved so distinctly on the original Spanish stock as to form almost a new type. Increasing in length and gaining in softness and elasticity, it has commanded ever-increasing attention from manufacturers, and has long been recognised as the premier fine wool of the world.

Tasmania, starting with Macarthur's stock, and following on his breeding lines, had proved peculiarly adapted for the growth of a dense fleece of fine wool. As numbers rapidly increased in this small island, flockmasters had to look about for an outlet. This was easily found on the mainland, and sheep were soon pouring across the narrow strait into the district of Port Phillip, which in 1851 was proclaimed the colony of Victoria.

After Macarthur's death in 1834, his system of breeding was carefully followed by his widow, and when in 1858 the flock was dispersed the stud ewes numbered about 1,000. These, passing into the hands of flockmasters of New South Wales and Victoria, were the foundation of many of the noted studs of to-day. The Victorian flocks, starting from the Tasmanian, early competed with the island of their origin in excellence, and, though Tasmania still maintains its reputation as the home from which the studs of the other States are constantly replenished, it has of late years gone largely into crossbreds. The most noted studs, however, are still maintained undefiled, except that the introduction of the American Vermont blood has been in some cases cautiously tried, with results that have provoked much controversy.

Other pioneers of the industry, the Rev. Samuel Marsden for one, started with the same Spanish blood, crossed with the hardy and prolific Indian ewe, but unlike Macarthur they found the temptations of the fat stock market irresistible. Remembering the great price fat wethers commanded in those early days, it must be admitted that the temptation was considerable. Macarthur, however, by steadily rejecting all mutton
breeds and making a fine description of fleece his one object, deserves grateful recognition as the founder of the Australian merino.

Although the settlement of Moreton Bay was started in 1824, it was long before the pastoral industry made any progress in the territory which is now Queensland. In that year Governor Brisbane sent Oxley to explore Moreton Bay and report on its suitability for a convict outstation. From information given by two white castaways living with the blacks, he found the river which Cook in 1770 and Flinders ten years later had failed to discover—though both, confident of its existence, had spent days in the Bay searching for its embouchure. Sheep and cattle were sent as supplies. But in a few years the settlement was abandoned, the officials and prisoners returning to New South Wales; and in 1842, when Moreton Bay was proclaimed a free settlement, the Government livestock were dispersed by sale amongst the settlers. Blacks were numerous and very hostile, and, though cattle thrived well, the country was found unsuitable for sheep, so that expansion from the Moreton district was very slow.

But already in 1827 one man had been favoured with a glimpse of what is still regarded as the garden of Queensland. Allan Cunningham, starting from the Hunter, had pushed steadily North for 500 miles till he emerged from the broken highlands of New England on to the famous Downs which he named after Sir Charles Darling. He was enraptured with the country, which he described as clothed “with grasses and herbage exhibiting an extraordinary luxuriance of growth.” Yet it was thirteen years before anyone took advantage of his discovery. To a later generation acquainted with the great value of the lands, which as a distinguished botanist Cunningham could not have failed to recognise, this appears one of the most astounding facts in the history of exploration. Many a time he must have discoursed to his friend Patrick Leslie on the rich vision he had been privileged to look on, yet it was not till 1840 that the latter with a small flock followed in his footsteps. What increases the surprise at this apparently strange lack of enterprise is that the year after Cunningham had found the Darling Downs he visited Moreton Bay, and succeeded in crossing the range from the coast by a gap since known by his name and reached the vicinity of his old camp, thus demonstrating that the natural port of this rich region was little over a hundred miles distant. Leslie, who settled in the neighbourhood of where the flourishing town of Warwick now stands, was rapidly followed by others who established the fine squattages that have since become famous. Although a few
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sheep had previously been introduced in the Moreton district, Leslie and his confreres must be regarded as the fathers of sheep-farming in Queensland.

Difficulties of carriage long retarded any attempt to occupy the splendid territory farther West which Sir James Mitchell had explored in 1846 and Kennedy had farther penetrated a year later, crossing the Barcoo and discovering the Thomson River. Though the existence of these vast rolling plains was known, the presumption that no industry requiring a fair amount of labour could pay, handicapped with five to six hundred miles of land carriage, checked any attempt to occupy them. Nor was this unreasonable. The difficulties and uncertainties of such an undertaking might well prompt hesitation. Yet, in view of the rich returns from flocks elsewhere, it was impossible that these solitudes should for very long await easier conditions. A few adventurous spirits pushed out to these great undulating plains. Their example was quickly followed. In the early sixties a general migration westward began, and wherever water was met with the country was taken up. In 1869 an Act was passed granting 21-year leases to applicants who had taken up areas and stocked them to the extent of twenty-five sheep or five cattle to the square mile. It was found that on these Western pastures, rich with succulent grasses and saline shrubs all the year round, and in winter abounding in herbage of many descriptions, all stock grew and fattened amazingly. The climate, too, falsified all predictions, and instead of converting the wool to hair, which experts had prognosticated as the inevitable result of an ardent summer, grew an excellent fleece of fine lustrous combing wool. A frantic rush for country set in. Flocks and herds were hurried out by jealous owners anxious to forestall one another in the scramble for leases. In a few years the whole territory, except where absence of water forbade settlement, was parcelled out in sheep and cattle runs. It had not yet been recognised how country destitute of surface water could be utilised. The smaller the paddocks, the less the sheep wander and the larger the number that can be carried on a given area. The best rams procuraible from the Darling Downs and noted Southern studs rapidly improved the flocks. In 1873 wool rose to a price not touched for many years; a boom in Queensland stations set in, and the remnant of the pioneers who elected to do so sold out at prices that gave a rich though tardy reward for long and toilsome enterprise.

With such easy conditions of tenure and lands of unsurpassable quality for grazing, it might naturally be expected that these pioneers amassed easy fortunes. The falsification of such expectation is a melancholy story. Though the cattle-men in many cases managed to struggle on, the majority of the sheep-owners went under. The difficulties were

enormous. Railways had not yet penetrated the country, though a small start had been made. Wool took from six to nine months reaching the coast by bullock dray, and the carriage of supplies to the station cost more than the goods themselves. Frequently the next clip was awaiting carriage ere the previous one had left the station. Wages were high, and all forms of labour scarce. The quality of sheep, too, was poor, many of them being the culls from Southern flocks, bought at high prices. The depression in the wool market, with high rates of interest on borrowed money, strained the pioneer's resources to breaking point, and in too many cases years of strenuous endeavour and hardship ended in ruin.

But brighter days were in store. As railways pushed out, the attention of Victorian capitalists was attracted by the potentialities of Western Queensland. The phenomenal gold production of Victoria had produced a plethora of money seeking investment, which constituted Melbourne the financial capital of Australia. This accumulated wealth, after fructifying New South Wales, flowed into Queensland. A Victorian invasion began. The knell of the shepherd had sounded, wire fences taking its place. Sheep that had hitherto been run in flocks of 1,500 to 2,000, tended during the day by a man and a dog and yarded at night, were now turned into large paddocks by tens of thousands with only a boundary rider to look to the fences. It was found by this method that the carrying capacity of country was enormously increased. Yarded sheep, driven to and fro twice daily, destroy more grass than they can eat, whereas when left to themselves it is all utilised. The smaller the paddocks, the less the sheep wander and the larger the number that can be carried on a given area. It was found, too, that stocking greatly improved the water. On the spongy surface of virgin country, untrodden by any hoof, there was little “run” off the surface after rain, but when hardened by the tread of stock the creeks received a fairer share of the downpour. The best rams procurable from the Darling Downs and noted Southern studs rapidly improved the flocks. In 1873 wool rose to a price not touched for many years; a boom in Queensland stations set in, and the remnant of the pioneers who elected to do so sold out at prices that gave a rich though tardy reward for long and toilsome enterprise.

Although the general course of the industry has been one of great prosperity, it has not been without its serious checks. A severe drought throughout nearly the whole of Australia, culminating in 1902, inflicted terrible losses of both sheep and cattle. Waterholes supposed to be permanent dried up; and pastures within reach of those which proved
permanent were trodden into a desert condition till the stock were too weak to travel back to the surviving pasturage. The outlook was so gloomy that almost universal ruin seemed impending. It is sad to think that whilst stock were perishing in multitudes abundant subterranean streams, flowing southward to discharge uselessly in the Great Australian Bight, might have been available to avert this national calamity. The uses of adversity have never been more strikingly exemplified than by the number of artesian bores put down since that hard experience. These, as the cost of sinking decreases, are multiplying yearly. The artesian basin exists throughout nearly three-fifths of Queensland, and whilst the origin of these subterranean stores is still somewhat of a mystery they are apparently inexhaustible. The supply and the depth at which water is obtained vary considerably; the former runs as high as 3,000,000 gallons per diem, and the latter averages about 1,600 feet.

Whilst artesian boring has been prosecuted with commendable enterprise, the storage of surface water on an extensive scale has not yet received the attention it deserves. Many schemes have been mooted for conserving a portion of the huge volume of water that in the rainy season flows through regions which would gladly retain a share, to waste itself in the Southern Ocean. Doubtless in the future a problem of such fascination will attract the best engineering skill, and a number of inland lakes will result. But that day may yet be distant. One such scheme only need be noticed. The Diamantina River, which in time of flood stretches out to many miles in breadth, flows south-westward through several degrees of Western Queensland. At a point known as Diamantina Gates it finds an exit through a narrow gorge in a low range. Although never yet tested by accurate survey, competent judges have surmised that a substantial dam at this spot would throw back an amount of water which would constitute a veritable inland sea. Other large rivers—the Thomson, Barcoo, Hamilton, Georgina—also offer to the hydraulic engineer splendid opportunities of winning distinction.

In 1884 a notable change of land policy was adopted. The 1869 leases were expiring, and it was recognised that the big squattages could not longer be allowed to monopolise the country. Room was required for smaller holdings. All available country was already occupied under the 1869 leases, and, although under another Act 5,120 acres could be acquired with conditions of improvement and residence, there was no way of getting an area capable of carrying 10,000 sheep. There did not exist a small squatting class. The Minister for Lands, Mr. C. B. Dutton—
himself a large squatter—recognised the desirability of creating such a
class, which would stand in the same relation to the "squattocracy" that
the yeomen of Britain do to the large landowners. In granting a new
lease to the original lessee, Dutton's Act required him to surrender a
portion of his run, from a half to a quarter according to the length of
time his lease had been running. A Land Board independent of Minis-
terial control was appointed to arrange an equitable division of the runs
and to fix the rent of the new lease, which was for fifteen years. Two
years later this was increased to twenty-one years, on condition of the
lessee surrendering another quarter of his area at the end of the fifteenth
year. The portions resumed from the old squattages were surveyed into
areas up to 20,000 acres and thrown open to selection. The old lessee—
who regarded any area under 400 square miles as a paltry holding and
counted his crop of calves by thousands and his yearly lambing increase by
tens of thousands—ridiculed the new departure, maintaining that any
man must starve on such an absurdly inadequate area as 20,000 acres.
But these sinister predictions did not deter selectors from testing the
question. At first grazing farms were only very gradually applied for,
but a few years' experience justified Mr. Dutton's expectations, and a great
demand set in, till now, as soon as opened to selection, there is a keen
competition for them. The difficulty is to survey them fast enough to
provide for requirements. The maximum area has since been increased so
that now as much as 60,000 acres can be held by an individual, provided
the total rent does not exceed £200. It is not unusual for three or four
grazing farmers to combine and manage the combined leasehold as a
co-partnership, which, although not provided for in the Act, is sanctioned
by the Land Court.

A new Act in 1902 offered those who elected to take advantage of it
a fresh lease, at the expiration of the current one, of from ten to forty-two
years, according to classification; and farther resumptions were made for
closer settlement. The classification, which was decided by the Land
Court, was governed by the degree of remoteness from railway and the
demand for land in the neighbourhood.

The low range of hills surrounding the Darling Downs encloses over
2,000,000 acres of land of a quality that invites the plough to convert it
into the granary of the State. As the railway to the New South Wales
border takes its rather serpentine course southwards, coasting round many
of the undulations to avoid cutting through them, the traveller looks upon
a land which he must recognise as capable of maintaining a large farming
the easy terms of payment possible to a Government borrowing money at the value of these estates and rendered their working more profitable. The owners of these flocks and herds had done good service to the State, and deserved the most generous treatment. Successors of the original pioneers, they had bred the stock that helped to occupy the West, and had founded studs that enabled others to replenish their flocks and herds from the purest sources. It was important above all things that no legislative interference should harass men who deserved so well of Queensland, and that no step should be taken to dispossess them which could be suspected of any taint of harshness. In time, doubtless, they would themselves have parcelled out their estates for tillage, but the process would have been slow, the easy terms of payment possible to a Government borrowing money at a low rate of interest not being generally convenient to an individual, and time in the development of a young country is important. Parliament therefore took the matter in hand and decided that where possible these landholders should be bought out on a valuation made by an independent tribunal. A number of properties have been bought by the Government, cut up into farms of from 80 acres upwards, and sold to farmers on liberal terms, payment extending over twenty-five years. Mixed farming and dairying are the chief purposes to which the land has been put, and busy townships have sprung up at the railway stations where a few years ago the stationmaster, his family, and an assistant porter formed the bulk of the resident population. Breeding lambs for export is found to be a profitable branch of the pastoral business on the Downs, and the breeding of crossbreds is consequently increasing, the Lincoln or Leicester being mated with the merino. Southdown and Romney rams have also been tried, but the Lincoln cross has been generally preferred. Crossbred lambs three to four months old bring 10 shillings in London, sold at a combined population of roughly five times that of Queensland, the total of their cattle is only slightly in excess of the Queensland herd. South Australia is also a regular buyer of “fats.” The “stores” that go South to be fattened beyond the State are almost exclusively bullocks of three to four years. Amongst the “fats” of ripe ages is a proportion of dry cows, and a limited number of breeders and mixed cattle also find sale with Southern buyers. But these outlets would have been quite inadequate for the absorption of the Queensland annual surplus had not meat-preserving come to the rescue of the stock-owner. Before freezing works were established, boiling down was the one resource, the tallow, hides, and sheepskins giving a meagre return, whilst the valuable carcass went to the pigs. The late Sir Arthur Hodgson, a leading pastoralist, used to relate with humorous comments his experiences with a first draft of sheep from his Darling Downs station (Eton Vale), brought to Brisbane to be boiled down at the Kangaroo Point works. During the process the owner—educated at Eton, and subsequently a Minister of the Crown in Queensland—went round daily with a handcart selling the legs of mutton at sixpence apiece. Such commercial enterprise has long fallen into desuetude.

To bring the surplus meat of Australia within reach of the eager millions of Europe has not been an easy problem, but it has at length been fairly solved by freezing the carcass, though much has yet to be done in discovering the best method of distribution of so perishable an article and its proper treatment from the freezing chamber to the spit. The various works pay cattle at about 18s. to 20s. per 100 lb., the weight of bullocks averaging about 750 lb., though many mobs, notably the huge beasts from the West, go as much as 200 lb. beyond this. The works are
also buyers of fat sheep, a 50-lb. wether two or three months after shearing bringing from 9s. to 10s. In the six years 1901-6 the exports of frozen meat from Australia totalled 353,514,135 lb. of beef and 371,692,090 lb. of mutton.

An occupation the profits of which are capable of such large additions by increasing numbers is apt to foster a spirit of gambling. In a season of bountiful rainfall it is almost impossible to over-stock country, and owners too often take the risk of availing themselves to the full of Nature's prodigality. Such a policy is most dangerous. When the time of more limited rainfall comes the owner of over-stocked pastures pays a heavy toll for his improvidence, whereas he who has regulated his numbers on the assumption of fair average seasons comes scathless through the time of trial.

Dairying comes more within the department of agriculture, as crops must be grown for feed, the dairy-farmer being necessarily the occupant of a very limited area. The benefit dairying has been to the small stock-owner can hardly be exaggerated. In old days the owner of a herd of 50 to 100 head could look only for a poor living, working for wages for part of the year whilst his family looked after the herd. Now he is a rich man. The monthly cheque from the creamery for a man milking 25 cows easily reaches an average of £20. Except in the few cases where the business has been conducted in a large way by capitalists, it is mostly an enterprise for small men. The work is unremitting, the herd having to be milked twice a day, but the rewards are sure and ample. Butter and cheese factories have sprung up like mushrooms in the last few years, there being now 79 in the State. The yield of butter for 1907 totalled 22,789,138 lb. As returns depend on the amount of butter-fat produced, owners have converted the ordinary breeds of cattle to good dairy herds by plentiful introductions of the true milking strains—Jersey, Alderney, Ayrshire, Holstein, and milking Shorthorn.

Many will probably wonder how cattle grazed over an area of many hundred square miles of country, which in the outside districts is probably unfenced, can be mustered or even kept on the run. Cattle are docilely subservient to custom, and once broken into "camps" will voluntarily seek repose in these shelters. On a well-managed station the crack of a whip will start any mob within hearing trotting for their camp, formed in a clump of shade on the creek, or, if shade is available, on some better galloping ground. Others, seeing them on the move, head towards
the same well-known resort, there to pass the day till the shadows lengthen, only moving off in the cool of the evening to feed. If they are being mustered for branding, the cows with calves are "cut out" and brought to the stockyard to be dealt with; if for a butcher to select a draft of fats, these only are taken and delivered either on the spot or where arranged. At the general muster, which is only made every few years, as the cattle are brought in they are put through a lane in the yard, the long lock at the tip of the tail being cut short; they are thus easily distinguished on the run, so that only long-tails are brought in subsequently. A "bang-tail" muster is recorded in the station books, and, as all sales and other disposals are carefully noted and an allowance made of from 3 to 5 per cent. for deaths, it is not necessary to repeat an operation taxing horseflesh so severely at nearer intervals than three to five years. Stock-horses become very clever, and will turn and twist with a beast through the mob, the rider's whip playing on either side till the animal is run out. Large tailing yards are maintained in different parts of the run to avoid much driving, and at weaning time the weaners are herded for a month or six weeks and yarded at night, which has a quieting effect they never forget. A well-managed herd is noted for absence of rowdiness amongst its members. On a well-improved station the bullocks, heifers, and weaners will be in separate paddocks, and at a certain season the bulls are taken out of the herd and put in a paddock by themselves.

Much has been written of the Australian squatter's life, both in fact and in fiction; yet the charm it exercises remains unexplained. The invigorating influence of perfect health doubtless has something to do with it, as well as the utter freedom and escape from all conventionality. Much of the bushman's time is passed in the saddle, and his dress consists of moleskin trousers, the sleeves of his shirt rolled up to the elbow, and a soft shady hat. He rises at daybreak and after an early breakfast starts his day's work. As frequently he will not return to the homestead till nightfall, his lunch is in his saddle-pouch, to be enjoyed in the shade by some waterhole, where he boils the quart "billy" that dangles all day from a dee on his saddle, and makes the inevitable brew of tea. Probably he has companions and is mustering a paddock half the size of an English county; bringing the sheep to the drafting yards, it may be to draft out the fats from a mob of several thousand wethers, or perhaps to take lambs from their mothers for weaning, or to separate the sexes in a mob of mixed weaners, or to bring sheep to the shed for shearing.
Shearing is of all times the busiest. At this season men, each usually riding one horse and leading another packed with his swag, roam the country in gangs and undertake the work at contract rates, which of late have been raised from 20s. per 100 to 24s. There will be from ten to forty men on the shearing board, according to the size of the flock; and in most of the large sheds men write beforehand to bespeak a stand. Shearers earn great wages; a good man will do from 100 to 200 per day, though the latter number is of course exceptional. The introduction of shearing machines has helped to increase the shearer's daily tally. A host of other men are employed in the shed. Boys gather the fleeces which they throw on a table where they are skirted, the trimmings being divided into “locks and pieces” and “bellies,” and the rolled fleece is thrown on another long table at which the wool-pressers, who turn out, sew, and brand the bales, of an average weight of from 3 to 4 cwt. Wagons are waiting to convey these to the railway, horse and bullock teams being almost equally used. A whip cracks like a pistol shot, and with lowered heads, the bullocks straining at the yoke, the first team draws slowly off to the incomprehensible objurgations of the driver, an incredible number of bales in three tiers piled on the wagon and securely roped.

But this bustling activity is not confined to the shed. Shorn sheep have to be returned to their paddocks, fresh mobs brought in, and the morrow's shearing housed in the shed to escape the night's dew or a chance shower. From daylight to dark during this harvest time everyone is at full stretch. The shearers have their own cook and “find” themselves, sharing together in a general mess; and as they earn good money they “do themselves” really well, denying themselves no delicacy obtainable at the station store. The whistle sounds at 6 p.m.; the last fleece has been gathered, and the men stroll to their camp to discard sodden shirts and moleskins and clean up generally before supper. The twilight is short, night chasing it swiftly from the world. The weird charm of a Queensland night in the bush penetrates with a calm satisfaction difficult to analyse. It is, let us suppose, spring or summer, and the stars appear to hang low from the deep clear indigo vault. The silence is unbroken, appealing to some indefinable emotion. No cry of beast or bird ruffles the stillness, save perhaps the faint tinkle of the bell-bird or the solemn plaint of the mopoke from some distant scrub. The men are sitting outside their hut smoking, or with tired limbs stretched on the short dry grass are lying full length drawing the quiet night into their blood, its cool soft breath soothing the fatigue of the arduous day's toil. Very entertaining to a listener would be the symposium of experiences and amazing political theories of these rough good-humoured toilers, whilst in the pauses one might perhaps enjoy the fantasia executed by the musician of the party on his concertina.

Life at the homestead of many of the old-established stations differs but little from that of a wealthy country home in other parts of the world. Froude in his “Oceana” draws a diverting picture of his anticipations of a bush home and its reality. He had pictured a log-hut in the wilderness, and was taken to Ercildoune, where he was amazed to find a mansion amidst splendid gardens, with conservatories, elaborate drawing-rooms, well-dressed ladies, and all the appurtenances and customs of refined life.

Expecting chops, damper, and tea, the culinary triumphs of a skilful chef would strike an author in quest of the barbaric life with a keen reproach. Had Mr. Froude visited Queensland, he might have found something more suitable for literary treatment. Although in the older settled districts, especially on the Darling Downs, the lessees live in comfortable, well-furnished homes, many bush homesteads are still very primitive. The farther a station is from the railway the more the owner is inclined to dispense with the superfluous, till in many cases he restricts himself to the absolutely necessary. But every year sees an improvement in this respect. Hospitality is unlimited, any visitor being sure of a welcome and a night's lodging; he turns his horses into his host's paddock, and, if there are ladies of the household, his evening is enlivened with music and cultured talk.

Some of the more gigantic enterprises are conducted by squatting companies, the sheep numbering several hundred thousand and the cattle up to thirty or forty thousand. But these stupendous figures need not deter small investors. In the purchase of a station the goodwill is an asset to be paid for, and in many cases this is valued at a high figure. The selector who takes up a grazing farm pays nothing for goodwill, and gets into what is possibly a going concern from the outset with no other payment than the year's rent and the value of the existing improvements erected by the former lessee before the area was resumed from his
holding. It may happen that the country is bare of all improvements, in which case he has to fence it before he gets a lease, his neighbours being liable for half the cost of this work, which forms their common boundary. He pays a higher rent than the representative of the pioneer who created the goodwill which has descended by purchase. What more desirable opening can be found for a young man of limited capital than a farm that will carry 10,000 sheep or 1,500 cattle? He leads the healthiest life in the world, and, although it is full of hard work and includes what would be thought hardships in the home he comes from, a manly youth takes the latter with a frolic welcome, and if he works hard he also plays hard when the occasional races, cricket carnival, and festivities in the nearest township or perhaps at some neighbouring station give the occasion. But above all things it is important that he should not invest till he has gained experience. There is no difficulty in acquiring this, as stockowners are without exception glad of the assistance of a willing young fellow who accepts the knowledge acquired and perhaps a trifling salary as an equivalent for his time and work. After a couple of years of this novitiate as a "Jackeroo," he will be equipped for facing the future on his own account, which with ordinary steadfastness, energy, and forethought he may regard with confidence.