

Narrative of the Expedition Promoted by the Austral- asian Ornithologists' Union to the Islands of Bass Strait.

BY (CAPT.) S. A. WHITE, ADELAIDE.

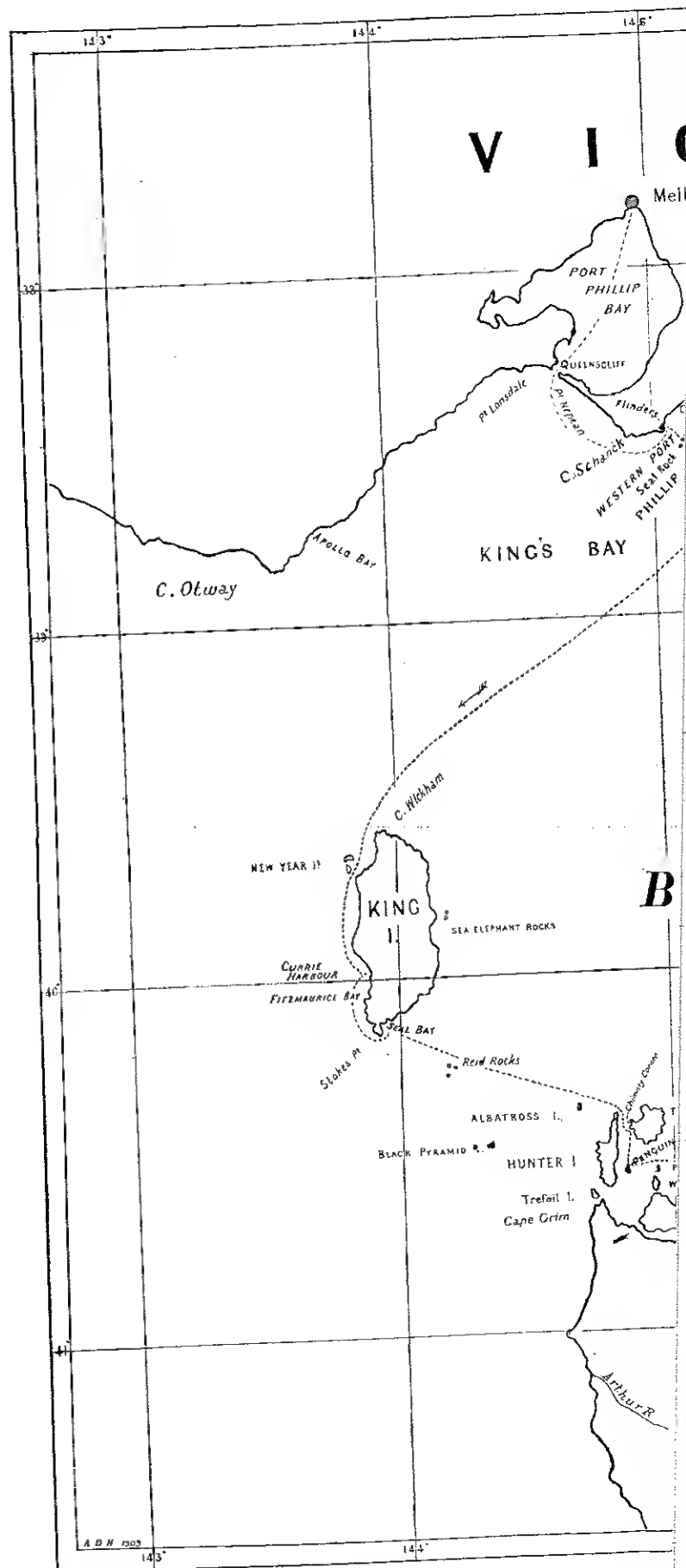
IN connection with the Melbourne session of the A.O.U., the Council resolved to have an expedition to the various islands in Bass Strait, and appointed Mr. A. H. E. Mattingley, C.M.Z.S., sole organizer and leader.

On the 24th November last, at midnight, the following ornithologists and friends met on the South Wharf, Melbourne, and boarded the specially chartered s.s. *Manawatu*, namely:—W. N. Atkins, H. Baker (Consul for U.S. America), J. Barr, C. L. Barrett (*The Herald*), Captain J. Gilkison, W. Grattan, Z. Gray, G. T. Howard, B.A., B.S., M.D., W. Kendall, M.R.C.V.S., A. H. Kenyon, J. A. Kershaw, F.E.S., A. C. Langmore, J. Leach, M.Sc., C. L. Lempriere, M.B., C.M., Edin., A. H. Mattingley, C.M.Z.S., J. W. Mellor, D. Macdonald (*The Argus*), E. B. Nicholls, M.A.C.D., H. Huntington Peck, O. G. Perry, G. M. Robertson, O. W. Rosenhain, A. Scott, A. N. B. Were, Captain S. A. White, and Mrs. S. A. White.

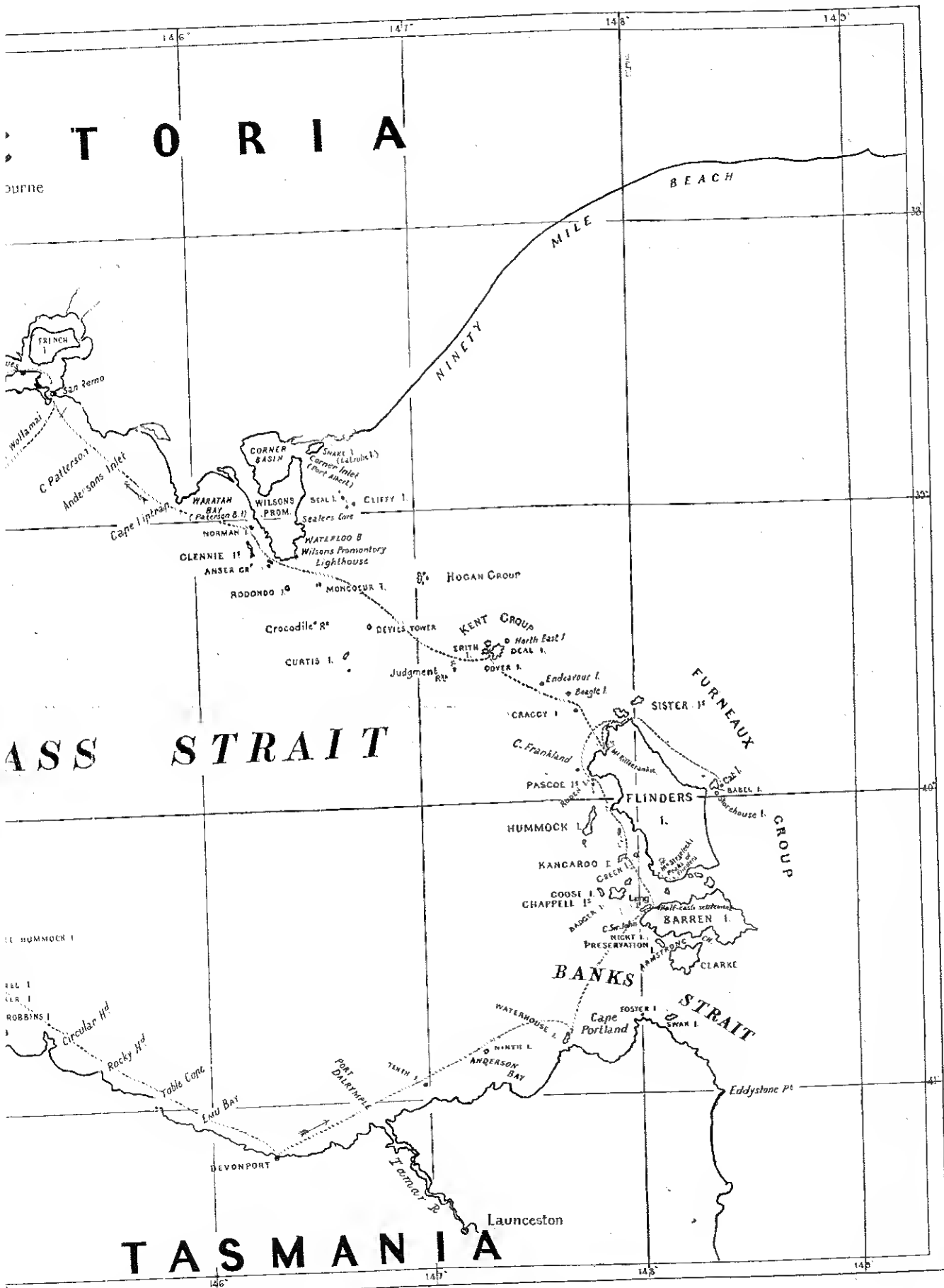
Under easy steam we brought up the following afternoon off Seal Rocks, Western Port, and the deep, wailing cry of these strange animals could be heard several miles to leeward. A strong wind was blowing and a heavy sea was running, but in spite of this Dr. Lempriere's motor launch was at once lowered, and soon a very eager landing party had scrambled down the ship's side and were off to make closer acquaintance with the seals. With such a high sea running it was with great risk that a landing was effected. The leader, with the cinematograph, was the first to make a plunge through the surf, and one by one the rest followed till a small party stood on dry rock, surrounded by five or six hundred seals. These animals were with cubs, and the old lions showed fierce displeasure at being disturbed. In a very short time the cinematograph was in action, giving forth its whirring sound. Disquieted in this way, some of the old seals would rise up on their flippers and give a roar of rage, while others would make their way, with a rolling, awkward motion, to the edge of a rock and plunge into the surf. After a number of records had been taken, and after a good tossing and wetting, all the party were safely on board the little craft again.

KING ISLAND.

We then stood away for King Island. What a place of dread to the old sailing ship masters was King Island in those days when clipper ships plied regularly between Great Britain and Australia! Sailing along the "roaring forties" many a



Map



f Bass Strait (showing Route of A.O.U. Expedition.)

fine vessel dashed on the rugged coast of the island, going to pieces in a very short space of time. I believe over thirty wrecks are credited to this dangerous coast, with the appalling loss of over 800 lives. After visiting King Island one can understand how quickly a ship would go to pieces. Early one morning we rounded the north end of the island, with a heavy sea running, which was rolling in on Navarin Reef with a boom like thunder, the white foam spouting yards into the air, presenting a grand sight. It was on this dangerous reef that one of those many terrible wrecks occurred. The convict ship *Neva* struck it on a wild night in 1835, tearing herself to pieces on its jagged rocks. One shudders when one thinks of the three hundred women convicts who were on board, cast shrieking into the boiling sea; some reached land, only to die of starvation in the thick scrub. It is not an unusual occurrence even to the present day to come upon the remains of a human skeleton in some thick part of the scrub, or to find their charred bones after bush fires. We were glad to enter Currie Harbour, the capital of the island, where we were storm-bound for thirty-six hours; but we put in the time very profitably. Some of our party visited a pretty islet in the harbour, where a rookery of Silver Gulls (*Larus novæ-hollandiæ*) was discovered. Their eggs lay upon the ledges of rocks in numbers, with little or no nest—just a slight depression scratched out, where they deposited their dark olive-brown mottled eggs. Other members of the expedition penetrated the interior of the island in quest of small birds which frequent the dense scrub; others kept to the rocky shore or sandy beach in search of marine objects; and some rash gentlemen essayed a long and rough ride to the opposite coast and back, visiting Sea Elephant Bay, but seeing none of the animals which give the bay its name. My wife and self set out for a 5 or 6-mile tramp into the centre of the island. I regret to say we found that the big timber had been and is being destroyed by ring-barking and fire; the tall bleached and charred trees stand out against a dark sky, monuments of man's destructive hand. We had travelled several miles before we entered the thick scrub, and, in places, dense patches of tall cutting-grass, which made travelling very difficult. It was well into the afternoon when we had gone about 6 miles and camped to boil the billy and have lunch. By this time we had noted several species of birds. On the open heath country, before entering the scrub, the little Pipit (*Anthus*) was very plentiful. Amongst the dense timber the Black Crow-Shrike (*Strepera fuliginosa*) was seen occasionally; the White-bearded Honey-eaters (*Meliornis novæ-hollandiæ*) were fairly plentiful, and their sharp note was continually heard from the thick undergrowth, while the conspicuous yellow marking on the wing would be seen as they darted across some open space from one

thicket to another; the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*), from its solitary perch on a dry limb, gave forth its mournful note; a Blue Wren, the largest of its kind (*Malurus elizabethæ*), was fairly plentiful; so also were the little Tits (*Acanthiza*); the Yellow Wattle-Bird, the Tasmanian form (*Acanthochæra inauris*), was seen in the timbered country. We also flushed a pair of Parrakeets at some distance, which I took for the Green Parrakeet (*Platycercus flaviventris*). In the more open country the Flame-breasted Robin (*Petræca phænicea*) was to be met with; so also the Dusky Robin (*P. vittata*). We saw both the White-fronted Heron (*Notophoxyx novæ-hollandiæ*) and the Night-Heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*). We reached the boat that evening before dark, after a 12-mile tramp through mostly thick scrub.

Next morning we steamed round the coast to the south side of the island, to Seal Bay. Here a boat-load of excursionists found landing very difficult, for all had to leave the boat some distance out and wade through the surf to land. The object in calling here was to visit a great deposit of bones on the slopes of an ever-drifting sand-hill. They are the bones of many animals, most of them extinct before the white man visited the island, such as wombat, Emu, native cat, and a large species of kangaroo—all peculiar to the island; and the theory is that the island, being covered in dense forest and scrub, was subject to fierce fires, such as occur on the mainland. On these occasions smoke and burning cinders are carried by strong winds far across the island, and so the conflagration covers the island, driving or consuming all before it. All living things rush on to escape the flames, find themselves out on a sandy point, where they perish, and we find their bones in countless numbers to the present day.

The warning whistle from the steamer caused the zoologists to pick up their precious bones, and the photographers their paraphernalia, and make for the ship's boat, for it was well known that the captain would not give the warning unnecessarily. It was no easy task to board a small boat tossing in the surf, one moment at one's feet and the next on a big wave. Still, after a good ducking, all got safely on board, and the steamer stood out to sea.

ALBATROSS ISLAND.

Our next place of call was Albatross Island, a large, barren rock rising out of an almost always angry sea. Here we met with a great disappointment, for one of the chief objects of the expedition was to visit a wonderful Albatross rookery that crested the islet at this time of the year. There are few nesting places of these noble birds ever visited by man, and the ornithologists were anxious to get records of the nidification of this

species—the White-capped Albatross (*Thalassogeron cautus*). The elements were against us, for the huge seas swept up to this rugged pile of rocks, spurting white foam high in the air. These seas broke incessantly against the lofty crag, which meant disaster to any landing party. The little steamer pitched and tossed in an angry sea as she steamed past this barren pile, and those on board had to be content with viewing through their binoculars those grand and stately birds sitting on their nests.

HUNTER GROUP.

With much disappointment, the expedition stood away to the Hunter Group, and brought up in a snug little cove called "Chimney Corner," under the lee of Three Hummock Island. Here the *Manawatu* lay peacefully at anchor, and the members of our party were glad to have a little respite after the tossing the elements had given them since last port of call.

Three Hummocks Island derives its name from three high hills which rise in the centre of the island. It is mostly covered with low scrub, and good-sized timber growing along the water-courses in the valleys, while open grass country, with here and there a small swamp, is also to be met with. This island would be a fine field for the botanist, for small flowering shrubs and plants seem very numerous and of many species. Some members of our party diligently explored the sandy beaches and rocks in search of shells and marine objects, while a party of venturesome photographers waded out at low tide to a small islet where several species of sea-birds were nesting, and were afforded some fine photographic subjects. Some of the ornithologists penetrated the thick scrub to study the habits of and procure small birds that frequent such localities, while others tramped some 5 miles or more to a Mutton-Bird (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) rookery. This rookery extended from 2 to 3 miles along the coast, and there must have been hundreds of thousands of these birds incubating their eggs. Pacific Gulls (*Gabianus pacificus*) were found nesting on the rocky points; Black Oyster-catchers (*Hamatopus unicolor*) were also found, with eggs placed on the sand just under the dunes, above high water mark, and the Hooded Dottrel (*Ægialitis cucullata*) was found in like situations. The Pied Oyster-catcher (*H. longirostris*) was seen on the beach in company with the allied species. The Black Crow-Shrike (*Strepera fuliginosa*) was seen along the coast as well as in the timber country, and I believe a nest was taken by one of the party. The little Dusky Fantail (*Rhipidura diemenensis*) flitted about in its restless way amidst the undergrowth; the Fan-tailed Cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*) was observed in several localities; and a Yellow-tipped Pardalote (*Pardalotus affinis*) was giving forth its short note amidst the gum-leaves, almost too far up to be seen. The Green Parrakeet

(*Platycercus flaviventris*) appeared to be plentiful, and a solitary individual or two of the Flame-breasted Robin were seen. I have no doubt if a longer stay had been made on the island a great many more birds would have been identified.

From the Hunter Group a course was set for the Tasmanian coast, but on our way we called at Penguin Island, a mere rock of a few acres in extent, surrounded by dangerous reefs. It was with no little risk that our boat picked her way amongst sunken rocks, and dropped anchor several chains off shore. A boat-load of ornithologists and photographers put off, and after some trouble effected a landing. Bird-life was abundant, consisting chiefly of Mutton-Birds and Penguins, their nesting burrows completely honeycombing the top of the low island. At every step one sank up to the thigh. Several pairs of Pelicans (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) had taken up their nesting quarters on this rock, and in rude nests amongst the tussock-grass were seen the lime-encrusted, dirty-white eggs. The birds themselves, being very wary, had taken flight at the first approach of the steamer, and their ungainly-looking forms could be seen bobbing about on the water some distance out.

TASMANIA.

On 1st December, at daybreak, the *Manawatu* was moored alongside the wharf at Devonport, on the North Coast of Tasmania, in order to take in fresh water and provisions. All were pleased to have an hour or so in the pretty little town, after a week's tossing among the western isles of the Strait. Shortly after midday we cast off from Devonport wharf and steamed down the River Mersey to the open sea. Keeping along the north-eastern shore of Tasmania, we dropped anchor under the lea of Waterhouse Island, but did not land, it being too late, and the glass falling.

FURNEAUX GROUP.

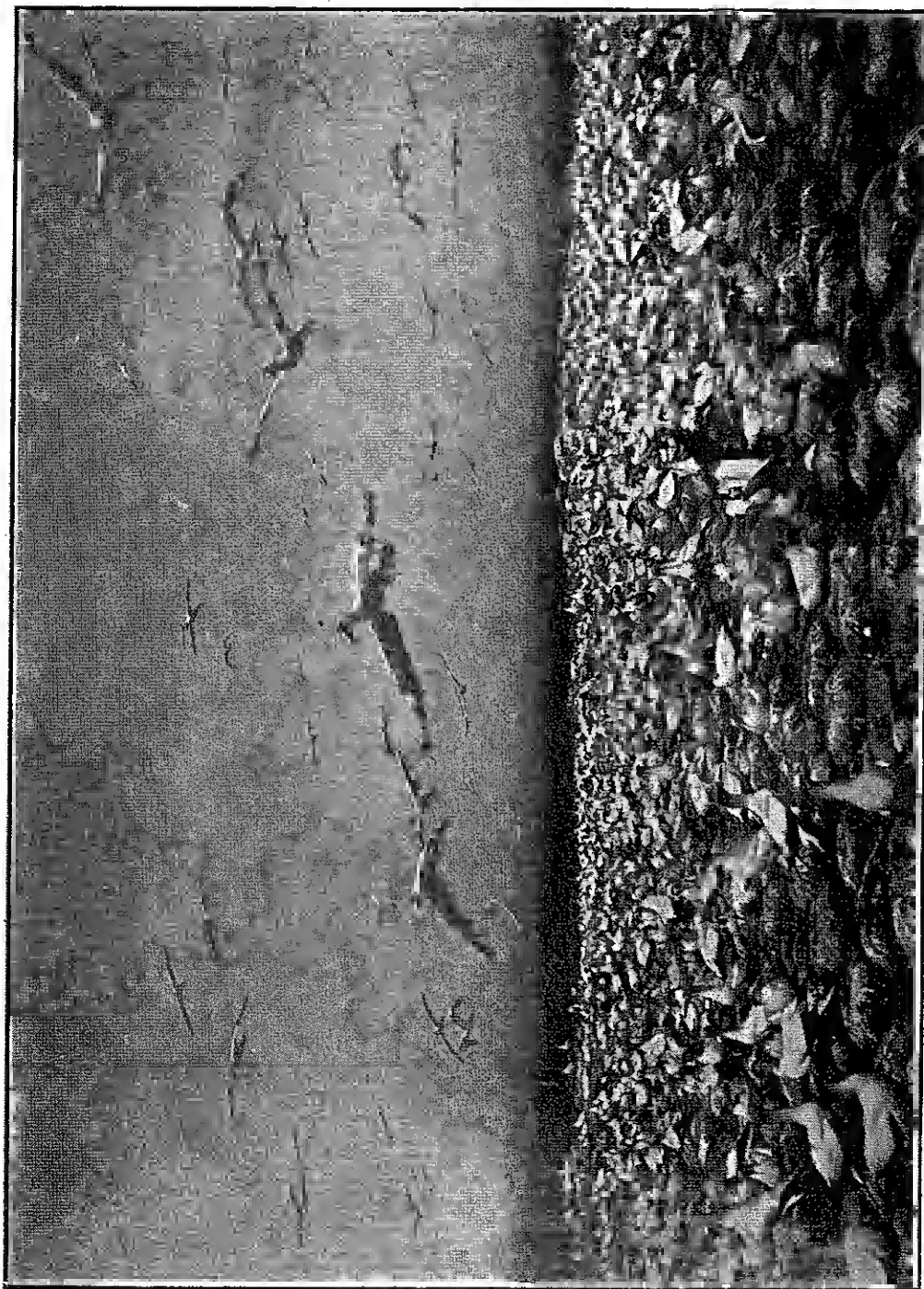
Next morning we made for the Furneaux Group. The run across Banks Strait to Cape Barren Island was anything but pleasant, with a strong wind and a choppy sea, so that we were glad when the anchor was cast between Cape Barren and Long Islands. As we had several medical gentlemen on board who were anxious to visit the half-caste inhabitants on Cape Barren Island, all landed here. The Furneaux Group, which includes the fine island of Flinders, Cape Barren Island, and Clarke Island, with numerous surrounding islets and rocks, was interesting as being the home of a coloured people descended on the one side from the aborigines of Tasmania and Gippsland. In olden days escaped convicts, soldier and sailor deserters, sealers, &c., sought refuge in the solitary isles, and during raids upon Tasmania and the mainland they carried off aboriginal women quite in the

spirit of the warriors of old, who won their brides by the prowess of arms. Amongst these early adventurers there were some startling life-histories, now almost forgotten. From these strange mixtures of blood there has sprung a race of half-castes ranging through every shade of colour from ebony to the fairest. To-day this primitive and peaceful community consists of between 200 and 300 souls, has been isolated for many years, and knows little of the outside world. They have one great annual harvest in the Mutton-Birds, which come to maturity about March, and many thousands of these birds are captured every year, chiefly from Chappell and Babel Islands. Two-thirds of the harvest are sent to the Tasmanian market, after being plucked, cleaned, and salted down in casks. During the reaping of the harvest every soul leaves the settlement, from the aged to the baby—even the dogs and fowls accompany their owners. The remaining third of the salted birds is kept for the year's consumption, but the crop is generally so heavily mortgaged ahead for supplies of flour, tea, and sugar, that the birds of the one season are eaten up long before the new season's harvest of birds is reaped. At the time of our visit to Cape Barren Island very few families had any meat left, and they were living a hand-to-mouth existence. It was sad to see the poor children gathering a breakfast of raw limpets from the rocks and pig-face weed (*Mesembryanthemum*) from the sandy shore. Tasmania not only has a social problem to solve, but a duty to perform towards this settlement. So far she appears to have done little to grapple with it. The people have many traits of their aboriginal ancestors, and the black hunter's plan of feeding bounteously in time of plenty and starving patiently till the next kill. They can only be stirred to industry by example and instruction, yet they are fine boat-builders and expert boatmen, and should make a fine race of fishermen. Now they do little fishing, with the exception of searching amongst the kelp for a species of fish that haunts this giant seaweed. It seems hard that for the want of instruction the children should be born and reared to inherit the same hopeless, helpless future.

On the morning we landed on Cape Barren Island a glorious view spread itself out towards the beautiful island of Flinders; the shoal water, which gave forth all the shades of green and blue, sparkled in the sunlight between the two islands, with a fine background in the lofty, rugged peaks at Flinders, partly shrouded in a purple mist, which put me more in mind of South African scenery than any I have seen elsewhere. This pleasing scene soon brought our artists into action, and they were busy for some time with the blending of colours. The visit of the *Manawatu* was a red-letter day in Cape Barren Island, for not only was she the largest steamer that had visited the settlement, but the kindly doctors on board visited all the sick on the

island, and did what they could to alleviate suffering. In one case they walked 4 miles out on a sandy track, and found a patient suffering from nothing more than sheer starvation, not having enough nourishment to keep up the frame. Then the dental doctors spent the afternoon in pulling teeth. Again, about 50 lbs. of confections and cakes were distributed among the children, the "surprise party" terminating with a phonographic entertainment, which delighted beyond measure these simple-minded people. Ornithologists found bird-life on this island scarce, and represented by only one or two of the more common species. This is no doubt due to their destruction by the inhabitants. Insects were numerous, due obviously to the scarcity of birds. One creature preys upon the other according to the law of nature. Some of the party made fair catches in entomology.

Leaving Cape Barren Island and its forlorn inhabitants astern, the *Manawatu* steamed along the coast of Flinders Island, threading her way amongst many rocks and islets, till Kangaroo Island was reached. On this low, sterile piece of land a family has taken up its abode, and subsists, or exists, by sheep-farming. We landed a member of our party here—a genial spirit, who passes most of the year on Flinders Island amidst Nature's solitude. We also took on some fresh mutton, and then stood along the coast till the Pascoe Group was reached. Here we dropped anchor, under the lee of Roden Island. Soon Dr. Lenipriere's oil-launch was hoisted over the side and lay bobbing about on a choppy sea. When the landing party clambered down into the boat she puffed away to the island, and the landing was anything but easy. The swell would not allow the launch in too close to the rocks, so all had to land by means of the dinghy. The members of the party soon scattered over the island, which is about 50 acres in extent. A pair of Eagles (*Uroaëtus audax*) was seen soaring round the top of a high prominence which formed the centre of the island, but on our approach they flew towards Flinders Island. Their deserted nest was found by a member of our party, situated on the top of the highest crag. It was here we first met with the Cape Barren Geese (*Cereopsis novæ-hollandiæ*). About a dozen were feeding on the pig-face weed, but they flew off as soon as we landed. The mournful call of the Black Oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus unicolor*) was heard, and we came upon a solitary pair on the rocks or sandy beach, but nowhere in any numbers. The nest of the Pied species (*H. longirostris*) was observed on this island, as well as nests of the Pacific Gull, Penguins, and Mutton-Birds. Brown Quail (*Synæcus australis*), Grass-Bird (*Megalurus gramineus*), and the Hooded Dottrel were noted. A party in the ship's boat essayed a trip to an adjacent island, and after a hard pull against



Gannet (*Sula serrator*) Rookery
(Cat Island).

FROM A PHOTO. BY DR. O. L. LEMPRIERE.

a strong current and choppy sea were rewarded scantily, for little bird-life was to be seen and no birds nesting. The old nests of Cape Barren Geese were seen in the tussock-grass. Next morning at daylight we continued on our course northward till the Sisters were reached—two high islands but a short distance from the north end of Flinders Island. We ran between the islands and reached a pretty cove. From thence we landed Dr. Howard and party to remain the night on Flinders Island, while the *Manawatu* steamed down the coast, and we were to return and pick them up on the following day. This land party took four days' provisions, in case of emergency, for should the wind chop round to the west the steamer might have to stand out to sea for several days. Mr. Kershaw joined the party, being anxious to procure a specimen of the Flinders Island wombat, which is supposed to be a distinct species from that of Australia. We continued our course down the west coast of Flinders, with a high sea running, and as we breasted the seas that rolled in from the wide Tasman Sea, that stretches leagues away to New Zealand, our spirits were anything but cheerful, because it seemed as though, like at Albatross Rock, there would be little chance of landing on the wonderful Gannet rookeries, which we were then making for. Strange to say, about noon, just as we were approaching Babel Island, the wind died away, and we steamed in through a channel between Cat and Babel Islands not more than 250 yards wide, and dropped anchor under the shelter of Cat Island, with Storehouse Island near on the starboard and Babel Island on the port bow. Wind and sea had now abated, and but for the slight ground-swell one could imagine oneself on an inland lake—conditions that may not be experienced once in six months. All were eager to land on Cat Island. The cinematograph and operator went ashore in the first boat, for it was always understood that the records were to be taken before the birds were disturbed. After landing on the slippery rocks, which had to be done with care, for as each swell brought the boat up on the rock, it paused but a moment, and was then swept out again, all clambered up the tussock-covered hillside. The whole island is completely honeycombed with Mutton-Bird and Penguin burrows, and at nearly every step one would sink down past the knee, to the discomfort not only of the members of our party, but of the poor bird incubating in the burrow. At last all had gained the ridge, including the only lady member of the party. What a marvellous sight met our eyes! On this bare crest of the island was a Gannet (*Sula serrator*) rookery, an acre of living nesting birds, each sitting on a little raised mound of earth and *débris*, with a slight depression on the top, in which rested a single dirty-white egg. Each bird was just out of range of its neighbour's bill. Amongst the

thousands of these graceful birds of striking plumage many were keeping up a harsh screaming cry, while others were coming from and going to sea. A male bird would come in to relieve his mate in the task of incubation. A strange manoeuvring it was to see the bird alight a yard or so from his mate. Then the relieved bird had to run the gauntlet of the other birds' bills before she could reach the outside ranks (for, like other seabirds, they cannot rise on the wing straight off the ground). When the relieving bird reaches his mate a pleasing performance takes place: the pair crane their long necks and rub bills together many times, then cross and recross necks, uttering a low murmuring love-song the while, in striking contrast to their ordinary cry.

A little colony of Silver Gulls was in close attendance on the Gannets. Not only were they watching closely for the fish that the larger birds might disgorge, but also for any young birds or eggs that might be left momentarily unprotected. There were many young Gannets of all ages, from those newly hatched, which are ugly, black, naked little creatures, up to older young—big balls of white down, with black bills and feet protruding, which gave the birds a quaint appearance. The cinematograph operators and the photographers were busy for an hour, and the results have been satisfactory. The remainder of Cat Island was explored. Pacific Gulls (*Gabianus pacificus*) were seen nesting in numbers on clutches of three large spotted eggs laid on rudely made nests amidst the pig-face weed or short grass on ledges of rock overlooking the sea. The birds wheeled over our heads, giving forth loud, harsh cries of alarm. The nest of a Black Oyster-catcher was also discovered, and the young were photographed. It was with difficulty that the party got about on this island. Most of the island is covered with high, coarse tussock-grass, and this, combined with the underground bird-burrows, made walking anything but pleasant. Birds were not always the sole tenants of these burrows, for snakes were about. Occasionally a tiger snake or copperhead was seen neatly coiled on a patch of decomposed granite warmed by the sun's rays. Little Grass-Birds were flushed now and again from the long grass, rising with a twittering call, to disappear as quickly as they rose.

Having all got on board again in due course, we pulled to Storehouse Island. Some difficulty was experienced in landing here, but we succeeded, and members spread over the island to explore. Large rookeries of White-breasted Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax gouldi*) were found, and, although these birds are generally timid and wary, while protecting their young they allowed the cameras to be placed very near them. Here, as at the Gannet rookery, a colony of the Silver Gulls was on watch, and the Cormorants knew only too well that if they left their

eggs or young unprotected for a minute the Gulls would snap them up. Some excellent pictures were taken of the young in all stages, from fully-fledged birds to those just breaking through the shell. The nests were composed of many-coloured seaweeds fresh from the water, and placed on the gentle slope of a bare granite rock, some hundreds forming the little colony. The Pacific Gull was also found breeding on the island, as well as Cape Barren Geese. The young of the latter were seen in several stages. Just before embarking, breeding burrows of the White-faced Storm-Petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*) were discovered—lovely little birds that one sees thousands of miles out at sea skimming gracefully over the surface of the ocean like Swallows. During calms I have seen them sweeping over the glassy surface of the sea with the ease of a butterfly. Again, during storm, I have seen the little feathered waifs breasting the crests of the mighty rollers one moment, and then descending into their deep troughs with the same easy flight.

The last member of the party had hardly boarded the steamer when the wind went round and came upon us with a sudden burst. The water around, which was like glass during part of the afternoon, was within an incredibly short time lashed into foam, and began to tumble in great white masses upon the treacherous rocks that surrounded us. There was nothing for it but to up anchor and run for shelter without delay. We lay the remainder of the night under the lee of Babel Island, with the wind tearing down a saddle of the island and through our rigging with an incessant wailing dirge. The little steamer rolled much as she tugged at her anchor chains. The following morning found us retracing our course to the Sisters. Here we came to anchor and took on board Dr. Howard's party, which had done good work during the short time it had been on land. The *Manawatu* now steamed along the coast of Flinders Island till Killiecrankie Bay was reached, where we dropped anchor in a snug little corner. Lunch was ordered to be packed, and it was not long before Dr. Lempriere's oil-launch and the ship's boats were conveying the party ashore, to scatter over the country, some to search the rocks and sandy beach in quest of marine objects, others to penetrate the thick scrubs and timber-clad ranges to study bird-life, &c. As evening approached the party re-assembled upon the beach, and just before going off to the steamer a fine haul of mullet was made. The anglers of the party had excellent sport at many of the anchorage places. At one place eight sharks were flapping on the deck at the same time. Bird-life on Flinders Island seemed fairly plentiful. At Killiecrankie my wife and self, as was our custom, took a billy-can and some food and struck into the scrub. We followed a salt arm or creek for some distance, which merged into a freshwater stream, which during a normal

season would be a fine flow, but at the time of our visit, being one of drought, had dwindled down to a brooklet. Along this watercourse birds were fairly numerous. A few small parties of Teal (*Nettion castaneum*) were hunting amongst the weed that had collected in the brackish water near the coast; Blue Wrens of the Tasmanian species (*Malurus gouldi*) were plentiful amongst the thick scrub and undergrowth; Dusky Robins were seen wherever an open patch was met with; and a solitary Flame-breasted specimen was observed. A Whistling Shrike-Thrush (*Collyriocincla rectirostris*) made a great noise amongst the tea-tree; *Strepera arguta* (?) was seen on the wing, and his harsh voice ever and anon came from the timbered range across the flat; little Grass-Birds were flushed from the cutting-grass, and a wary old Crow or Raven surveyed the country from the top of a dead giant of the forest. Seeing a eucalypt in flower on the timbered ridge, we made our way with great difficulty through the dense low scrub and high cutting-grass which covered the alluvial flat between the sea and the spur, and through which the creek wound. The tracks of wallabies were very numerous on the damp soil, and of unusual size. Having at last reached the high ground, we camped a little distance from the flowering gum and boiled our billy, keeping an eye on the flowers for Honey-eaters, but not a bird came. Some *Melithreptus* were seen at a distance, but none came near enough for identification.

KENT GROUP.

From Killiecrankie a course was steered for the Kent Group. The bold and forbidding coast-line of Deal Island was the first to loom out of the mist, with its warning light perched on an immense pile of granite rocks 1,000 feet above the sea. We steamed up a fine channel (Murray Pass) between Deal and Erith and Dover Islands. It had the appearance of a mighty river confined between majestic cliffs of granite in rugged and picturesque formation. We anchored in a charming little bay called East Cove, and the lighthouse superintendent was soon on board, for he and his family had been in a state of wild excitement ever since they had sighted the steamer. They were untiring in their attention during our stay. After inspection of the light station, and being entertained most kindly by the superintendent and his family, our party divided over the island. The fossil-bearing cliffs to the east of the island were a source of attraction to many. Some bones of an extinct kangaroo were unearthed. The chief object of interest in connection with Deal Island from the ornithologists' point of view was the presence of a species of *Sericornis* (Scrub-Wrens), and luckily four specimens were taken—one by Mr. J. W. Mellor (S.A.), and three by the writer, so the purpose of visiting Deal Island was accomplished. Bird-life here was not plentiful. Flame-breasted

Robins were noticed, also the White-naped Honey-eater (*Melithreptus lunulatus*), Shrike-Thrush, and, of course, the usual shore species, such as Oyster-catchers, Hooded Dottrels, Penguins, &c. The next object in view proved a disappointment. It was known that the Blue Petrels were nesting on South-East Island, a mere mass of rocks, and the expedition was anxious to observe them in their nesting habits. It was found, however, to be impossible to land, and it might be days before an opportunity presented itself, so the *Manawatu* stood away towards Victoria, and the further she steamed into the Strait the stronger the wind blew, and the higher the sea rose, till half a gale of wind was blowing, with an ugly beam sea. The little boat was very light, having burnt nearly all the coal, and her rolling and pitching were decidedly unpleasant. We headed for the Glennies, a group of rocky islets known to all those who pass round Wilson's Promontory. The sea was running so high that it was impossible to land, and our course was changed for Western Port. This shelter was approached in the height of what residents along this part of the coast said was the fiercest gale off the land that had occurred for many years, and at times the *Manawatu* was steaming at full speed but hardly holding her own. The little steamer bustled through it, and came to anchor in the eastern entrance of Western Port. During the night the wind shifted to the westward, and blew with renewed violence. The result was that, on a phenomenally high tide, the steamer dragged her anchors, and in the morning she lay high and dry upon a mud-bank, with no prospect of getting off for some time. Some of the party landed at San Remo, and found their way by boat and rail back to Melbourne. Thus ended rather abruptly a most interesting and enjoyable cruise of 15 days among the islands of Bass Strait.

Thanks.—The thanks of the members of the expedition are due to Capt. W. Tait, Chief Officer A. Hawkes, Chief Engineer G. Berwick, and others of the crew of the *Manawatu*, for the active interest they took to make the trip a success.

Results.—Apart from the collections made and the information and enjoyment obtained, the chief results of the expedition are :—

(1.) The Tasmanian Government forthwith set about improving the condition of the half-caste population of Cape Barren Island.

(2.) Cat Island, with its wonderful Gannet "rookery," has been proclaimed a sanctuary for sea-birds.

(3.) Discovery of wombats on islands not previously recorded.

A Suggestion.—All the islands in Bass Strait are nominally

Tasmanian. For the better protection of birds, notably Cape Barren Geese and Mutton-Birds, it is suggested that the islands contiguous to Wilson's Promontory might, for obvious reasons, be transferred to the control of Victoria.

Camp-Out on Phillip Island.

BY A. J. CAMPBELL, COL. MEM. B.O.U.

AS it was inconvenient for some members attending the Melbourne session of the A.O.U. to take the fortnight's cruise in Bass Strait, a land party was organized for a week's camp-out on Phillip Island, Western Port, for observation chiefly among the Mutton-Bird rookeries on Cape Wollomai.*

The party consisted of Mesdames Israel, Mellor, Campbell, Misses Eberhard, Mellor (2), Masters Israel, French, Messrs. J. Mellor, A. C. C. Clarke, A. Bishop, C. E. Campbell, A. J. Campbell (leader), and R. A. Murray (cook).

Leaving Melbourne early on Tuesday, 24th November, by train and steamer the party reached San Remo about 2 p.m. Here fishermen J. F. Brown and Son were in readiness to convey excursionists, luggage, and provisions across the eastern entrance to the appointed camping site on the shore near Cape Wollomai, the great headland of Phillip Island—the selected site of the camp having some days previously been kindly "pegged out" by Constable Kelleher, of San Remo. By nightfall all were safe and snug under canvas.

The encampment consisted of six tents, securely sheltered amongst tea-tree, protected on the weather side by sand-dunes heavily clothed with scrub. The only disadvantage was with regard to water, which had to be carried some distance from soaks.

At 5 o'clock next morning the cook sounded the gong for coffee and biscuits, and shortly afterwards all the party were filing their way through the dewy and scented tussock-grass on Cape Wollomai to explore the Mutton-Bird burrows. Eggs as yet were not plentiful, but sufficient were "hooked" for breakfast. *Puffinus* eggs and bacon (fried) make a most *recherche* meal. The remainder of the day was employed in examining the whole of the rookeries in the neighbourhood, and observations made regarding the extent of the encroachment of wind-blown sand-drifts upon the western side—a serious matter. In the evening, at dusk, the majority of observers were on pig-face weed-covered declivities of the back beach, witnessing the incoming flight of birds—a most marvellous sight, often described by previous writers. The members who remained in camp observed the *Manawatu* (with the A.O.U.'s Strait expedition on board) pass out of the Eastern Entrance and round

* For locality, see map with "Expedition to Islands of Bass Strait."