Among the Riverine Pastoralists.

By Harold M. Mackenzie.

"Brookong."—"Goree.

The former station ranks among the largest and best of our Riverine freeholds, and, as a matter of fact, is quite the largest run in that portion of Riverina between the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers, its area comprising something like 200,000 acres, or in other words about 32 square miles.

On a glorious morning, brilliant sunshine, and air delightfully fresh, I left Coonong to "Brookong" via Urana. The distance from Coonong to the latter place is about ten miles, the road for a considerable distance skirting the eastern shore of the Urana Lake, and unlike the country as yet seen in this part of Riverina, is both varied and pleasing. On one side a view of the lake stretching away for miles until lost in a blue haze, whilst on the other undulating country, grassy uplands, and belts of pine or eucalypti.

Emerging thence, a long plain is crossed with the white houses of Urana gleaming in the dazzling sunlight.

"Urana is by far the cleanest town I have yet been in. Its streets are well gravelled, planted with shade trees, and well kept; its buildings, such as the recently built public school (around which some Urana maidens were playing cricket), its hospital, post-office, and several others would do credit to many a town of greater pretensions.

I know of no more dreary and depressing tract of country than that between Urana and "Brookong." Plain follows plain in an unvarying monotony, with nothing more lively to cheer one up than gangs of black cattle or sheep. On the horizon, a glimpse once of the Urangeline Greek, and the far-away Galore Hills, skirting the eastern boundary of "Brookong." What a contrast is this sort of country after the rich vegetation of "Monalong".

Approaching "Brookong" home-station the scene changes to one of a far pleasanter character. The Brookong Creek, with its shady evergreens, is a welcome relief after the eighteen-mile drive from Urana. Crossing a bridge, the first impressions of the station are decidedly pleasing, with its colony of white houses. Several rustic encampments of hawkers near the creek, the barracks, a spick and span building with its trellised verandah and the manager's house, surrounded by a tastefully laid-out flower garden. To have inspected "Brookong" in the style of "Coonong" or "Widgeaw" can be done is quite impossible on a short visit, considering its extensive area, so I contented myself by taking notes of what immediately came under my observation.

The working expenses of a large place like this must weigh heavily, in dull times like these, on the owner's mind, despite the fact that curtailment in every branch has been rigidly enforced. The proposal to cut "Brookong" up into small farms to suit the carrying capacity of this station, in an ordinarily good season, is about 170,000 sheep, which have a strain of blood right up between it and "Brookong." The carrying capacity of this station, in an ordinarily good season, is about 170,000 sheep, which have a strain of blood right up to the true Vermont type. Indeed, on all the stations near by in this part of Riverina, I find that people are of the opinion that the sheep on "Goree" would, in Mr. Robertson's opinion, be far more so in the future. Time has amply proved his prediction correct.

The cost of carriage, too, is an important matter with farmers, whose expenditure in taking up blocks must be on a scale, at least for the first year or two, both prudent and economical. The nearest point that permits of direct railway communication with either Melbourne or Sydney is The Rock, a station on the trunk line, about thirty-four miles distant, or else to Yerong Creek, the distance being about thirty-four miles distant, or else to Yerong Creek, the distance being 34 miles by rail.

The carrying capacity of this station, in an ordinarily good season, is about 170,000 sheep, which have a strain of blood right through them of the true Vermont type. Indeed, on all the stations near by in this part of Riverina, I find that people are of the opinion that the sheep on "Goree" would, in Mr. Robertson's opinion, be far more so in the future. Time has amply proved his prediction correct.

The class of sheep to be found at Goree have been raised to their present standard of excellence by a celebrated ram by "Matchless," owned by Messrs. M'Farlane Brothers, "Barooga," the flock's origin from which is bred from rams purchased from Mr. Thos. Shaw, "Woowryrite," Victoria. Mr. Duncan Robertson is to a very large extent a believer in Yankee sheep, without carrying the rage for American blood too far. Referring to this ram, "Barooga" by name, he took first prize and champion at Narandera. At Wagga he succeeded in obtaining a special prize (10 guineas) in addition to being the best grass-fed ram and champion for 4 loads and over. The present ram (value £50) that he has on the property now is, or was, that ram. Mr. Robertson was offered no less than 750 guineas, and refused, unfailingly, as it so happened, for not long afterwards the celebrated "Barooga," despite the attempt of a Urana medico to perform a successful operation, came to an untimely end. Although, in point of age, but 100 years old, both at Urana and Goree, it is hardly any wonder that the loss of so valuable a sheep should even now be remembered with no small amount of regret.

The Galore Hills are about twenty miles from the home station, and as a "coign of vantage" for discovering the fire flie are invaluable on a large station like this. In summer a man is camped on the top, who is ever on the alert to give notice in case of an outbreak, when he rides up at top speed, a man as he is no doubt. The fire-fighting team is absolutely essential, the chances being that a fire on the run might burn for days without being detected, whereas by this arrangement it is generally checked before causing widespread havoc. A summer or two ago there were no less than sixteen bush fires at "Brookong." An admirable institution is telephonic communication with Urana, enabling messages to be sent expeditiously, besides an enormous saving in horse-shoe, which, of course, was necessary every time a telegram was despatched.
During one of my drives with Mr. Robertson, I was interested in seeing, for the first time, a large flock of what are commonly known as black sheep, but in reality approaching more a rich broody brown or Buff colour. These sheep were, at one time, extensively bred at "Goree," owing to the then fashionable demand for wear-obviated. The wool was manufactured at Hull, in order to have himself and friends clad in apparel of this particular colour, the wool itself remaining unblended, and its quality proving itself of such durable texture that no one could wear it out. Mr. Robertson, desirous of having a home-felted manufacture of this garment, purchased a special half-acre estate in the fashionable suburb of Richmond, and established a wool-washing factory, the profits of which were devoted to the encouragement of sheep farming. In doing what he can to prevent them taking up land, rather encourage the squatters to know to what profitable account his land can be turned, thereby putting a higher value on the freehold of the squatter.

As for sheep, the Sydney Stevedoring and Wool Dumping Company Limited, one of the large and successful wool dumping enterprises, has been established at 32 Circular Quay, New South Wales, under the management of Messrs. M. P. H. and E. C. J. Gibson. It has been estimated that the wool scurf obtained in the Australian wool market amounts to £2294. In other respects, too, there was an improvement, in seeing, for the first time, a large flock of what are commonly known as black sheep, but in reality approaching more a rich broody brown or Buff colour. These sheep were, at one time, extensively bred at "Goree," owing to the then fashionable demand for wear-obviated. The wool was manufactured at Hull, in order to have himself and friends clad in apparel of this particular colour, the wool itself remaining unblended, and its quality proving itself of such durable texture that no one could wear it out. Mr. Robertson, desirous of having a home-felted manufacture of this garment, purchased a special half-acre estate in the fashionable suburb of Richmond, and established a wool-washing factory, the profits of which were devoted to the encouragement of sheep farming. In doing what he can to prevent them taking up land, rather encourage the squatters to know to what profitable account his land can be turned, thereby putting a higher value on the freehold of the squatter.

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