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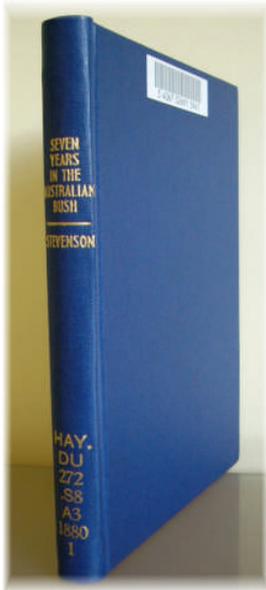
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## Seven Years in the Australian Bush

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# SEVEN YEARS

IN THE

# AUSTRALIAN BUSH,

BY

JAMES B. STEVENSON.



LIVERPOOL :

WM. POTTER, PRINTER, 30, EXCHANGE STREET EAST.

1880.

## CHAPTER I.

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EARLY in the month of January, 186—, I found myself, along with my friend W—, and some five hundred others, who, like us, had left home, to try their fortunes in Queensland, on board the good ship lying in Moreton Bay. We had made what was then thought an excellent passage, viz.—ninety days, and had just dropped anchor, to await the arrival of the health officers, who were to inspect us before we were allowed to go on board the river steamers that were to carry us to Brisbane.

How welcome the sight of land was after three months of nothing but sea! Moreton Island is anything but a verdant or inviting-looking place; but how we then feasted our eyes upon it, and longed for a scamper upon the smooth sand which formed its beach! Away to the westward, with the aid of a glass, we could distinguish Sandgate, the Brighton of the Brisbanites; and, following the coast line to the north, we could see the glass-houses towering above the horizon. It was with less pleasurable feelings that we gazed upon a green, hillocky island to the southward, which was pointed out to us as the quarantine station. About a month before we made the land, a malignant fever broke out on board, and by the time we made Moreton light, twenty-five or thirty of

## CHAPTER V.

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As soon as the cattle had been returned to their different runs, all the hands who had been upon the expedition received their discharge, at the same time being read a lecture for disobeying orders. The overseer sat by with a grin of satisfaction on his face, as each of us presented himself for a settlement. His triumph was however short lived, as he received his *congé* immediately afterwards, with an intimation that he did not possess the requisite ability to lead an expedition through new country.

Before we left the station, Mr. G— offered any of us who chose to remain a re-engagement upon the old terms, which most of us agreed to, but I, feeling rather sore upon the subject of my dismissal, declined the offer. I therefore made my way over to H—, who was very glad to see me, and offered me the highest wages to go back to my old quarters. There had been no one there for some time, as it was impossible to get stock men. I accepted his offer, and taking a supply of rations with me started off, with my old friend Toby for a mate. H— warned me to be careful, as the blacks had become very bold, and some horrible murders had been committed by them. One, which I shall here relate, will be remembered by many old Northern hands. On a sheep station not far from H—'s they had been very troublesome for some time.

## CHAPTER VII.

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Shortly after our return a gentleman who had a station in the neighbourhood offered me a situation which I accepted, and was soon installed in my new quarters. This station had been formed for many years. The country consists chiefly of scrubby ranges and low flats running out to the sea coast, which are thickly timbered and covered with long grass in places as high as a man on horseback. There were large numbers of wild horses and cattle all over the run. They were very troublesome, as some of the quiet stock were continually joining them, and the proprietor suffered considerable loss in consequence. He determined therefore to clear off as many of them as he could. The stockmen were all blacks born on the run, and they knew every tree upon it, which was a great advantage. The country, as I have said, consists of mountain ranges, with here and there an open glade. Thick vine-scrubs cover the sides and tops of the ranges, and through these the wild horses had cut numerous paths for themselves just wide enough for one to go along at a time. These paths intersect each other almost every few yards, and form a perfect labyrinth. If a man unacquainted with the run loses himself there, he is lucky if he gets out under a day or two, as, from the nature of the country, a compass, or even the sun, is of no use to him whatever.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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The station was about two days' ride from the main road, and the first night we stayed at the homestead of one of my future neighbours. His run was stocked with sheep, but at that time bid fair not to be stocked at all, as he told me the mortality among them was frightful. And, indeed, next day, when we got on my own run, evidences of the fearful effects of the long drought met the eye everywhere. Round all the water-holes, or at least what had been such, but were then only mud-holes, lay dozens of dead and dying cattle, which, crowding there to drink, got stuck in the tenacious mud, and were not able to extricate themselves. Here and there a few that had as yet escaped, stood or lay beneath the almost leafless trees, their heads hanging listlessly down, and every bone in their bodies showing out through their parched hides with horrible distinctness.

Numbers of kangaroos, mere living skeletons, were seen on every hand, with scarcely life enough left to move out of our way. The whole scene formed a picture of desolation, which I trust it will never be my fate to see again.

Towards evening we reached the homestead, which was prettily situated upon an extensive sand ridge overlooking a large river. The house was an old-fashioned long slab

## CHAPTER IX.

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It was some time after this before we began work again, as on a station of this kind there is almost nothing to do when not employed moonlighting. There are usually a very small number of quiet cattle, generally only what is known as the milking mob, and therefore there is none of the work common upon ordinary stations. No camp work, or boundary riding, as the more the cattle are disturbed the harder they are to get. It is, therefore, best between the musters to leave them perfectly quiet.

One of my neighbours, the superintendent for a large firm, had a book muster of 70,000 head. There were about four thousand quiet cattle on his run. As there was a large frontage of open downs, former managers had by dint of hard work been able to keep these separate from the large portion of the herd which frequented the scrubby country lying back.

The super of this station, at the time of which I write, seldom or never went out on the run himself, trusting entirely to his stockman to carry out his orders. Upon one occasion, the manager received instructions from his principals to muster two thousand head of store cattle, and have them ready for delivery at a certain time. He immediately consulted his stockman, who saw no difficulty in the matter. He could easily get that number in the

CHAPTER X.

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After a week's ride, I arrived at the station. It was a very large one, for, besides the four or five thousand cattle I was to take charge of, there were over one hundred thousand sheep depasturing upon the immense territory leased by the enterprising firm to which they belonged.

The cattle run consisted of the country lying upon each side of a large creek, which, with many offshoots, ran right up into the heart of the Ranges, the beetling cliffs of which formed a natural boundary. The herd was well tired and quiet, and two or three stockmen and some black boys were quite sufficient to work it properly. My hut or cottage was situated about thirty-five miles from the head station, and on the lower end of the creek ; so that all the cattle were above us, and were easily kept from straying. I liked the place very much. The work was easy compared with that of the last station I had been on. The nature of the country was more interesting, and when not engaged after cattle, I had a grand field for exploration among the Ranges.

After I had been there some time, having completed the periodical branding, and started off a mob of fat cattle, accompanied by one of the stockmen and a black boy I set out to try and reach the top of the

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