

BUSH SKETCHER.

"DOWN MARLO WAY."

By TOM TREGELLAS.

(See photographs in the "Pictorial" Section.)

Leaving Flinders street station a little before 8 in the morning, we ran on to Bairnsdale, and changed trains for Orbost. At Orbost we found our motor waiting, and, getting our luggage aboard, were soon speeding the 10 miles to Marlo down the banks of the Snowy, under big headlights that showed drowsy cattle lying by the roadside, and countless rabbits scuttling for their burrows on the river. We reached Ricardo House at half-past 10 at night. Next morning was cool, and we took boat across the backwater for a day amongst the sand dunes.

Marlo is the place par excellence for studying the conditions which produce these immense piles of drifting sand. Such is the influence of the wind and tides, especially after a hard blow or spell of stormy weather, that frequently the whole foreshore undergoes a change. At one place on the Ninety-mile Beach a small stream of fresh water ran trickling to the sea; but in less than a fortnight a big blow not only piled up the drifting sand, but completely blocked the waterway to a height of 20ft., and dammed back the water for a distance of 200 yards. When we were there a pair of teal, a black duck, and cormorant were already disporting themselves in the pool. The mouth of the Snowy also changes with the altered conditions. When the sand blocks the entrance (as it did in 1910), and the river rises high enough, the water overflows the banks, and follows the line of least resistance, a new outlet being the result.

The sand dunes along the backwater are very picturesque. Looking down from the high cliffs at Marlo, you see that the backwater extends to Point Ricardo, a distance of about five miles, with an average width of 200 yards, and is guarded against the influence of the great rollers of the Southern Ocean by the almost parallel banks of sand that form the dunes. Here and there along the dunes tea-tree, cushion-bush, native currant, and saltbush have established themselves. Marram grass has been planted and is doing well.

Great numbers of duck assemble on the points and headlands. Dotterel and plover patrol the beaches. Cormorants and darters ply ceaselessly to and fro, and countless gulls and terns circle overhead. Along the foreshore tea-tree has possession; but a little farther back the musk, hazel, wattle, pittosporum, and lilly-pilly hold undisputed sway, and the mahogany gum, banksia, and peppermint gum flourish. Looking from the big sand dune on which the trigonometrical station is situated, a wonderful view of

station is situated, a wonderful view of Marlo is obtained.

Close at hand, and almost at one's feet, lie the lagoons in which the map says "bream, perch, and ludrick" teem; a little to the right is seen Marlo Hotel and Ricardo House, and here at the door "bream, salmon, skipjacks, silvers, trevalli, flathead, and yellowtail" are obtained. In the middle distance are Stirling's Lagoon, Shag Creek, the islands in the river, and Lakes Corringale and Watt-Watt, with the junction of the Brodribb and Snowy. Further off may be seen the silver streak of the Brodribb, extending nine miles to Lake Curlip; the Snowy, with its fringe of willows and redgum, and at the back of all the mountainous country, extending to the limit of vision.

Leaving Marlo by drag, and keeping inland for a mile or two, one passes the junction of the Bellbird and Cabbagetree Creek roads; then the road turns out to the cliffs, and keeps within sight of the sea and within reach of its breezes till Cape Curran is reached. This is a bold, rocky headland much patronised by visitors from Orbost and Marlo for the crayfishing.

The cape is reached in 10 miles — the drivers say it is nearer 15 — it consists of scattered and broken granite rocks, sheltered on the landward side by a belt of tea-tree. There is a reserve of 25 acres. Fresh water is obtained from a spring, and four parties were already in possession when we arrived.

The crayfish are caught at low water between the rocks and in the pools. They are numerous and of great size. To catch them a lump of shark or a dead cormorant is lowered by means of a rope on to the sandy bottom, and a movement of antennae under the ledges denotes the presence of a hungry "cray." In a little while the creature ventures out; the bait is quietly raised, and the net slid underneath, and the job is done. Low tide is anxiously awaited by the watchers on the cape, and as soon as circumstances permit all hands repair to the rock pools and the fun begins.

The big rollers from the sea continually swirl and roar through the rock openings, and with each successive rise the kelp and seaweed sway with the motion, and one has to watch one's chance for a fish.

The open sea, the granite rocks, the swirling pools, and the ardent fishermen made a series of excellent pictures, which were committed at once to the camera. The surroundings impressed themselves indelibly on the memory.