REPORTS ON OVERLAND TELEGRAPH CONSTRUCTION.

Ordered by the House of Assembly to be printed, May 2nd, 1872.

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RETURN to order of the House of Assembly (Mr. WARD, 24th January, 1872), being copies of CORRESPONDENCE received from CHARLES TODD, Esq., POST-MASTER-GENERAL and SUPERINTENDENT of TELEGRAPHS, and R. C. PATTERTON, Esq., relative to the PROGRESS made in the CONSTRUCTION of the NORTHERN TERRITORY SECTION of the ADELAIDE and PORT DARWIN TELEGRAPH.

[Telegram from Brisbane.]

September 26th, 1871.

Omeo arrived at Palmerston 24th of August. I found only 156 miles of line wired complete from Port Darwin, instead of 225, as expected, the work having been almost at a standstill since Mr. McMinn's departure—owing to disagreement between Mr. Burton and the Government Resident, which led to the Government Resident withdrawing his boats from the service of the Telegraph; these boats being required for conveying the wire from Palmerston to Southport. Mr. Burton alleges that, had the Government continued the use of these boats, the line would have been wired to the end of the poling—one hundred and twenty-five (225) miles from Palmerston.

Burton and King, with advanced constructing party, will leave Southport about the 7th prox. Full report by mail.

ROBT. C. PATTERTON,
Commanding Telegraph Expedition, Palmerston.

Palmerston, 18th September, 1871.

Sir—I have the honor to report that I dispatched Mr. Burton with the advance construction party for Section No. 4 from Southport, on Friday the 8th instant. He is accompanied by Mr. Stephen King, jun., who will keep in advance, select the route to be followed by the line of telegraph, and effect a junction with the central section.

Mr. Packard, of the Northern Territory survey staff, also accompanies him as far as the Roper crossing, where he will leave him for the purpose of taking charge of some teams now at the Catherine River, and piloting them along the traverse taken by Mr. King previously to my arrival at the head of the navigation of the Roper River, where I have appointed a rendezvous at which he will meet Captain Sweet with the Gulnare, and load up with rations for the advanced section—Mr. Burton only having sufficient to last him to the end of the year. I expected to have found Mr. Burton's six teams of five horses each at Port Darwin or Southport on my arrival; but so certain was he that the Roper would be selected as the main base of operations, that he had sent these teams on to save the bullocks the first forty miles of land cartage, and to send them round with the empty drays.

On the first trip of the Gulnare I determined to accompany her myself, as I was extremely anxious about the issue. The largest boat that had ever been up to Southport was the Lavrakasiph belonging to the Government Resident, who kindly lent her to me to act as pioneer for the Gulnare, and who also sent his coxswain on board to assist Captain Sweet by his local knowledge of the reef and sandbanks of the South Arm, which has never been properly surveyed. Southport is distant twenty-five miles by sea from Palmerston, and forty miles by the telegraph line. The Gulnare was forty-eight hours in making the passage; she grounded four times on the way up, but on each occasion was got off without damage, through always starting with the first of the flood tide, and having two kedge anchors in the boats in constant readiness in case of necessity. On her return she grounded three times—on one occasion lying over as much as twenty-three degrees, but returned in safety to Palmerston after a passage of fifty-one hours.

Enbroided A—No. 82.
Emboldened by the success attending the first trip, I loaded her up at once with a full cargo of wire, rations, and drays, and dispatched her again on the 14th instant. This time, my presence being urgently required at Palmerston, in consequence of the arrival of the *Golden Fleece*, I did not feel it necessary to accompany her, and I am glad to be in a position to state, that I have received intelligence of her safe arrival at Southport. It is due to Captain Sweet, and Mr. Cook, the coxswain, who acted as pilot, to express my sense of the care and attention which they displayed in conducting the schooner through the intricate navigation of the area.

On the arrival of the remainder of the stores in the *Layt*, they will be transhipped to the *Gulnare*, and sent round to the head of the navigation of the Roper, where a depot will be formed for supplying rations to the different sections.

I shall only have sufficient transport power at my command to provision the several sections until the end of the year; the establishment of the Roper depot is therefore an absolute necessity, as it would have been impossible for any of the teams, after depositing the wire, to have gone to Port Darwin and returned in time with the necessary supplies. I hope by this means to reduce to a minimum the risk of any of the construction parties falling short of rations.

The *Antipodes* arrived on the 6th instant, with only half a day’s supply of water left. I understood from Mr. R. D. Ross that thirty-six days’ supply would be placed on board every ship leaving Sydney and Newcastle; it appears, however, that the tanks on board the *Antipodes* were not properly filled, and that some were sent away quite empty. Only three bullocks were lost on the passage, but in, the first five days after they were landed, twenty more died; and, from the appearance of the remainder, when dispatched from here, it is to be feared that there will yet be further losses.

Six died the day before they left for Knuckey’s Lagoon, and their number was then reduced from one hundred to seventy-seven, and I have no hope of being able to take these up for some time to come. I forward a report on this stock from the Chief Overseer of Transport:—The main causes of the weakness of the stock, and of the mortality among them, seems to be old age, scarcity of water, and the quality of the fodder provided for the voyage, which was so bad that some of the bullocks refused to eat it for days together; many of the bullocks also lost their teeth, and I have elicited from several of the drivers who came with them, and who, in some cases were the original owners of their teams, that they have themselves driven some of them for over eight years. Had the stock by the *Antipodes* been of a better stamp, and had they arrived in proper condition, I should have been able to dispatch the construction party to Section No. 3, from Southport, by this time. As it is, I have been obliged to fall back upon the stock arriving by the after vessels to complete the amount of transport power necessary to start this party.

The now unavoidable delay in the dispatch of the construction party for Section No. 3 will cause a corresponding loss of time in the starting of those for Sections Nos. 2 and 1.

The *Golden Fleece* and the *Himalaya* arrived simultaneously on the 13th instant, and I have been busily engaged in discharging them ever since. All the bullocks and horses are now out, as also some of the drays. The horses were all landed safely, but five bullocks were lost in swimming the salt water, and several have died since landing, and I have experienced great difficulty in landing the stock from these vessels; and, with the exception of the loan of some boats, I have had no assistance from the ships. The crew of the *Himalaya* mutinied the morning after arrival, and the same evening three of them deserted, taking with them one of the boats; the other boat, with a crew from the ship, was occupied for some hours in looking after the deserted, and thus much valuable time was lost. I have much pleasure in bearing my sense of the care and attention which the remainder of the stock may start at once for Southport. I therefore sent as many bullock drays as possible to Sydney by the *Golden Fleece* to the *Gulnare*, so that the weak bullocks might have a fair chance of recruiting their strength.

On the 16th instant, at noon, just before the last of the stock came ashore, the water in the wells in the neighborhood of Palmerston entirely failed, and I was unable to water more than half the stock; I was therefore compelled, despite the weak condition of some, to dispatch 180 bullocks at once to the nearest water distant nine miles—where they did not arrive until midnight, having occupied eleven hours on the journey, with a loss of four of their number on the way through exhaustion.

I am landing the drays, and having them put together as quickly as possible, in order that the remainder of the stock may start at once for Southport. So soon as all the drays are landed and put together, the 180 bullocks sent away to water on the 16th instant, will be brought back and proceed at once with the empty drays to Southport. It is a matter of great regret to me that I am not in a position to report very favorably of my progress. I have been here two or three days, and have only been able to start one of the four working parties, owing to the late dispatch of the vessels from Sydney and Newcastle. The *Golden Fleece* and the *Himalaya*, with the bulk of the stock, have only been in port four working days, and the whole of the bullocks and horses will have left Palmerston before mid-day to-morrow. The bullocks and horses were put on board of the *Golden Fleece* and *Himalaya*, and only a part of the bullocks will be dispatched to Southport, as I have but one vessel at the time of writing, and have to man the ship by my own men. I alone have been able to take a few tons of coal out of the *Antipodes*; and as her lay days expire to-day, I have been compelled to sell the remainder of the coal to the captain. This will form the subject of a separate report.

Until I see the condition in which the stock is landed from the *Layt*, which has not yet arrived,
arrived, and the further losses on that landed from the Himalaya and Golden Fleece, I shall not be in a position to determine whether I shall have enough transport power to dispatch all four working parties: should such a calamity occur, one party will have to proceed to the Roper in the Gulnare, with wire and materials for the section immediately adjoining that river, and there await the arrival of such teams as can be spared from the other sections, after depositing the wire on the ground. I sincerely trust, however, that I may not be forced to take this step, although the heavy losses on the stock by the Antipodes, which will probably yet amount to thirty per cent., before it is set to work, fills me with apprehension as to the future.

I found it necessary to apply to the Government Resident for the services of the senior surveyor, Mr. McLachlan, and his assistant, Mr. Packard. The Government Resident telegraphed to me that, with Mr. McLachlan, who is a Magistrate, I should take the police also, as they were not required at Palmerston, and would be of assistance in guarding depots, and so relieving other men who could work with the construction parties. He reminded me that their cost to the Government would be no greater if they were usefully employed on the telegraph work than if they remained idle at Palmerston.

Captain Douglas also stated that he anticipated a rush to the new goldfields before the return of the expedition, and that in that event the presence of Mr. McLachlan, who held the appointment of Warden, would be required there, as also that of the police, and he has arranged with me for their return to the goldfields, distant 180 miles from Palmerston, on the line of telegraph, in case his anticipations are realized. Acting upon the suggestion of the Government Resident, I applied to him for the services of the police, who, with the exception of one remaining at Palmerston, will be divided over the various sections, this will allow one trooper to accompany each party.

In conclusion, I would draw your attention to the fact that the average length of each of the four sections into which I have divided the work is 110 miles, exclusive of the wiring yet to be done upon the portion already poled; and, that taking the most hopeful view of my position, and assuming that I shall be able to start all four sections from Southport, I shall judge that the death-rate of bullocks is abnormally high, from three to five weeks of this year left by the time the different parties arrive at the beginning of their respective lengths; or in other words, in order to establish communication by the end of the year, I shall have to clear the line and erect the wire at the rate of fifteen to twenty-four miles per day.

I have the honor, &c.,
R. C. PATTERSON,

Palmerston, 24th October, 1871.

Sir—I have the honor to inform you that the ship Laya, the last of the chartered vessels, arrived here at noon on the 21st September, having on board sixty-one bullocks, and a considerable cargo. Four bullocks died on the passage, and the remainder were in a very weak condition, owing to the scanty supply of water furnished them during the last few days of the passage—the water placed on board for the cattle having all been consumed two days before the vessel arrived in port. I much regret to inform you that, since the date of my last report, the mortality amongst the bullocks has continued up to the present time, and this despite the fact of their having been placed on good feed and water.

The best men at my command have been in charge of them from the beginning; amongst others are Mr. Bedford Hack and Mr. George Bayfield, both of whom were at Lake Hope for some years, also Messrs. Giles and Deane, all men of great experience with stock. All that care, forethought, and unremitting attention could do, has been done, but the bullocks have died notwithstanding.

The Government Resident, at my request, appointed a board composed of his own officers, some weeks since, to report upon the causes of the great mortality amongst the stock. That report has not yet been sent in, but I trust to have it in time to forward by this mail.

The bullocks were shipped for this port—sixty from Victoria by Messrs. House and Co., and four hundred and twenty from New South Wales, by Mr. R. D. Ross. Out of that number one hundred and ten are dead, twenty-one are too weak to travel or to be driven loose, and thirteen are lost, making a total of one hundred and forty-four bullocks lost to the expedition, or twenty-nine per cent. of the number shipped. The deaths amongst the horses have not been so great as amongst the bullocks, amounting only to ten per cent., but a great number of them are very light and are quite unfit for work. Messrs. Bayfield and Hack have been engaged during the past three weeks in breaking a number of them in for harness. Some are very wild, and could not be handled save by roping and throwing them—others were confirmed jibs; and, altogether, they have been a source of great trouble and delay.

In my last report I informed you that I had divided the work into four sections, averaging one hundred and ten miles each. The advanced construction party for the southern section—Section 4—left Southport on the 8th of September. Owing to the late arrival of the ships, and the small number of bullocks on hand, the construction party for the third section, under Mr. McLachlan, the senior surveyor of the Northern Territory staff, was not dispatched from Southport until the 30th September. The construction party for Section 2, under Mr. Rutt, left Southport on the 7th October. It had, before then, become evident to me that I should have to abandon one of the sections for the present, for want of transport power to carry on the wire and rations for Section No. 1, and I determined then to stretch the wire on the three most southerly sections, and leave Section No. 1 to be completed hereafter, when I had sufficient teams released from the other sections.

On the 4th instant, I received a telegram from Mr. Burton, from the Catherine River, informing me that his party had arrived there, and giving me an account of his journey. I cannot do better than give an extract from the telegram, it is somewhat confused, but it will I think, convey a general idea of disaster:—"On the journey, one bullock dray was left at Mount Carr, broken down and useless. Nearly the whole of the new plant has required repairing repeatedly, including No. 82.
including the breaking of two axles and one wheel, which renders the wagon useless; also, one wagon, bind wheels and axle; one bind wheel, one front wheel of bullock wagon, and three poles broken; nine pairs of wheels so bad, compelled to cut and shut tires; twelve bullocks unfit for work, three dead; three horses dead, and twenty-five per cent. of bullocks knocked up." At the Catherine River, Mr. Burton met the six wagons and horse teams, referred to in my last report, five of which he was obliged to take in order to lighten the load, and to provide for further rations taken from the Catherine depot, thus leaving only one waggon to proceed to the head of the navigation of the Roper River, to meet the Guinare. Mr. Burton was furthermore obliged to leave fifteen miles of his wire behind him, owing to the state of his stock.

Seeing that Mr. Burton had had a list of casualties, travelling at the rate of seven miles per day, and that he would not, in all probability, reach the beginning of his work before the end of the year, at which time his rations would have been consumed, I determined very reluctantly to abandon the southern Section, No. 4, instead of Section No. 1, as I had originally intended, and to start Mr. Burton at the beginning of Section No. 5, so as if possible to ensure communication through the first three sections soon after the end of the year; and establish a horse express service across the gap of Section No. 4. On the 5th instant, Mr. Burton started the last of his teams from the Catherine, southwards. In addition to his bullock teams, he had there ten horse wagons, in good order, with the strongest horses to travel further, and twenty-five per cent. of bullocks knocked up.

Mr. Burton was furthermore obliged to leave fifteen miles of his wire behind him, owing to the state of his stock.

Mr. Burton's success in reaching the starting point of his work with anything like the amount of line material he should have; he has already been compelled to drop over thirty miles of wire. I am not justified in anticipating any better fortune for the parties following Mr. Burton. This tract of desert sand, without either water or grass, has to be crossed by all the teams; and I must expect similar losses with every party. Under these circumstances I thought it advisable to stop Mr. Burton at the beginning of Section No. 2, and let him start his work there; and, as I could not again
again dispatch Mr. Brock on foot with a message to him, I determined to wait until Mr.
McLachlan arrived with his party at the Catherine, to send an express after Mr. Burton, to stop
his party at the beginning of Section No. 2. I could thus ensure 200 miles of line being done,
whereas if I had pressed him on to Section No. 3, with his stock so much reduced, it might end
in further loss of time. On the evening of the other two companies starting at the Catherine, which I feared they would have to do, I should have had several gaps in the line,
between the various sections. I also came to the conclusion that it would now be useless to stretch
the wire in the temporary manner originally contemplated. Could I have ensured the wire being
temporarily suspended over three sections, before the end of January, 1872, I would have adhered
to the original idea, as the gap would easily have been bridged by horse express, but now that I
was compelled to increase the gap to a great length, probably 240 miles, a horse express service
would have involved the employment of several relays of men and horses, and the establishment of
several post stations, to all of which I should have had to cart rations. Considering the small supply
of rations I should have, at the end of the further section, the limited transport power at my
 disposal, which was already taxed beyond its strength, and the fact that the express service would
have been established in the very middle of the wet season, when travelling would have been very
uncertain, I came to the conclusion that I should best serve the interests of the Government
by constructing the line in a substantial manner at once, thus avoiding the increased cost both
of labor and material which would have been incurred by going over the line a second time to
straighten and complete it, after it had been open for traffic. I was strengthened in this conclusion
by the knowledge that the object which was to have been gained by, in the first instance,
simply suspending the wire on “trees on or near the direct line, wherever I could, and in other
places planting only ten poles to the mile” (tide instructions), was now unattainable by any effort,
and that by adopting this course, I should have been simply adding largely to the cost of the work
and delaying its final completion, without obtaining any compensating advantage. I may add,
furthermore, that after I had so decided, I received a letter from Mr. Little, the Station-master,
urging upon me the adoption of this very course.

On the evening of the 14th instant the Bengal returned to Port Darwin, followed the next
day by the Gulnare. The schooner was on the reef from the evening of the 5th to the morning
of the 14th instant—the Bengal having rendered important assistance in lightering her by
transhipping her cargo. In the opinion of the two gentlemen appointed by the Government
Resident as a Board of Survey, the Gulnare had sustained such damages as to render her return to Port Darwin necessary for the purpose of further examination. On the 17th the schooner was reached and re-examined by the surveyors, who sent in their report the
same day, condemning her as unseaworthy, and recommending that she be sold for the benefit of
those concerned. I had then no alternative but to charter the Bengal to take the place of
the Gulnare. Captain Douglas, being a nautical man of great experience, I requested him to make
the necessary arrangements for the charter, which he kindly consented to do. His arrangement
with the master of the Bengal is to proceed to the head of the navigation of the Roper River
with the balance of the stores and material, and to return to Port Darwin with the boats lent me
by Captain Douglas. The charter is at the rate of £400 per month. In a minute to the
Government Resident I objected to the Bengal returning to Port Darwin on account of the
increased expense to the expedition, as the intention of the captain was, after leaving the Ro per,
to proceed to Sourabaya. The Government Resident, in reply, assured me the detention would
not be serious, and that it was necessary for him to have his boats returned. The cutter
Larrakia was placed on the deck of the Bengal, and will be put over the side in the Gulf of
Carpentaria for the purpose of proceeding to Normanton with my despatches and telegrams.
She is to proceed to the head of the navigation of the Bengal, in order to lessen the risk, I propose to divide the balance of the
rations between the Gulnare and the schooner yet to be chartered. Mr. R. D. Ross, whom I have
consulted, quite agrees with my conclusions; I therefore felt it to be my duty to leave the two
purchase parties dropping wire at the.

I cannot here refrain from noticing that the stranding of the Gulnare on a reef was a
contingency which I foresaw as possible before I left, and as much impressed with the
consequence that would ensue in case of her total wreck, I both considered could
render her return to
Port
Darwin contrary to my strongly-expressed wishes on the subject, and had it not
been for the accidental presence of the Bengal, in getting her off the reef, the expedition would certainly have
collapsed altogether. The same risk is now being run by the Bengal, and I shall be much relieved when I hear of her safe arrival at the Roper.

Four hundred pounds per month is certainly a large amount to pay for a barque of 250 tons,
but there was no alternative but to charter her. It is calculated she will be three months from
the time her return ; and as a chartered vessel, in addition to the charge of 400 pounds, one hundred and twenty pounds (£210) will have to be paid for the assistance the Bengal rendered
to the Gulnare in getting her off the reef.

On the 20th inst. I received a telegram from the Catherine River, announcing the arrival
there of the Bengal. Nothing more disheartening than his report could have followed an extract from his telegram will show:—“I arrived here to-day, having left my horse-drays twenty-six
miles back, camped on the Stony—the horses spelling until they are able to proceed. Nearly
all my horses knocked up. * * * I have left one horse behind at the Duffield, knocked
up; and am afraid I shall soon have to leave a good many more. With regard to the bullocks,
six have died, and five left behind knocked up. I have left one bullock-dray behind, and divided
the wire amongst the other teams. The wheels of all the new drays are coming to pieces; I shall therefore have to remain here several days to make repairs. * * * * * Under present circumstances, I should only mislead you if I said I expected to reach my section with all my loading.

The receipt of this telegram confirmed my resolution to arrest Mr. Burton's progress at the commencement of the second section, and allow him to start his work there, thus abandoning, for the present, the two southern sections, or rather more than half the entire length of line. I therefore instructed Mr. McLachlan to send back to his horse teams to procure four horses, and send on three men with a message to Mr. Burton to that effect. On the night of the 22nd, Mr. McLachlan informed me that he had selected the four best horses he had, and that they had just arrived from the Catherine, three of them unable to proceed further, having been three hours accomplishing the last five miles to water. He stated that it was quite impossible to forward a message to Mr. Burton with his horses in such condition. Immediately south of the Catherine there is a track of desert country twenty-five miles wide entirely destitute of grass and water; the disasters attending the passages of this track by Mr. Burton's teams were a proof to me that it would be useless to attempt to push an express across with Mr. McLachlan's horses, his stock being in much worse condition than were Mr. Burton's at the same point; there was, therefore, no alternative for me but to allow Mr. Burton to proceed according to his last instructions to Section No. 3. It is quite certain now that, lightly as the teams were loaded, a great quantity of wire will have to be abandoned at the Catherine, and at other points along the route to enable the teams to reach their respective destinations. The rate of travel of Messrs. Burton and McLachlan's teams for the first 160 miles has been forty-two miles per week, and this along a well beaten track; the stock arriving at the end of this distance diminished in numbers, and, in many instances completely knocked up.

So much time will have been taken up in travelling that the various parties will stand in need of further supplies soon after reaching the commencement of their respective sections. On the 3rd, it was reported all the teams were loaded, with rations sufficient to supply all, with provisions, to the end of February; after that date the supplies must come from the Roper. The wet season is expected to set in about December, and soon after the rains begin, I understand the country becomes quite impassable, and continues so for five or six months. Last season the rainfall at Palmerston, in the four months from December to March inclusive, amounted to 522 in. as under.

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In the same latitude as the Roper, in northern Queensland the country is visited during the wet season by terrific hurricanes, and is liable to very heavy floods. Mr. Ross, the explorer, informed me that I had everything to dread from the floods. On his way through he had seen flood marks twenty feet on the trees, over flats many miles in extent. Should the wet season set in during December, and be so severe as has been represented to me, there can be no doubt that the collapse of the expedition must follow. Should the wet season not set in until January, I shall be enabled to obtain supplies from the Roper sufficient to last me until the end of April. It is apparent, therefore, that in any case the expedition cannot be prosecuted through the wet season, should the country remain impassable after the middle of March; and, in the event of its being possible to travel then, the expedition can only be saved by strong reinforcements of stock and plant from Adelaide, to be sent to the Roper in readiness to start on 

On the 3rd, I started all the teams with the intention of getting his teams across the desert country south of the Catherine—losses having been avoided had the Roper been made the base of operations. I cannot refrain from reiterating my former opinion that had the Roper been made the main base of operations, not only would the risk of a disastrous retreat have been avoided, but in all probability I should have been enabled to suspend the wire before the end of the present year. It has not been my fortune to conduct this expedition under favorable circumstances, and with the prospect of a successful issue; I have had the infinitely more difficult task of fighting against continued reverses and making the best of a series of disasters culminating in the stranding of the Cuthbert, and her consequent condemnation, and in the great loss of stock sustained by Mr. Burton, of the advanced section in getting his teams across the desert country south of the Catherine—losses which there is every reason to fear will be shared in equal measure by the parties following for the other sections, and all of which would have been avoided had the Roper been made the base of operations.

The performance of the stock in South Australia, in conveying loading for the interior sections can form no criterion of the capabilities of stock brought round here by sea with passages varying from twenty-one to thirty-one days, with but a limited supply of water, which supply was in two of the ships exhausted before their arrival in port. In every case in which a condenser was employed on board a vessel the amount of water condensed bore no proportion to the size of the ship, which it was supposed capable, and to this even the steamer Omeo formed no exception. The bullocks conveying loading from Port Augusta to the central sections had the advantage of making a fair start with such an abundance of feed and water, that they in many instances arrived at their destinations in better condition than when they started. Here, on the contrary, the stock arrived after a trying passage through the tropics, so enfeebled that they died by the score after they were landed; every chance was given to the stock to recruit their strength, and 90 per cent. of those that have died were never yoked. The New South Wales horses were
were landed in admirable condition, but the majority of them have proved unsuited for the work; they are all extremely light, many of them confirmed jibs, and nearly 20 per cent. were so unmanageable that they had to be broken in afresh to harness. Mr. McLachlan's drays, with three horses each, were loaded at starting with 22cwt. of stores and 43cwt. of horse-feed, which latter item would be reduced daily; he has travelled these teams at the rate of seven miles per day, resting on Sundays; they have accomplished 135 miles, and are now spelling, as they are completely knocked up.

I expect to leave for the interior on Thursday next the 28th instant, as I hope by that time to have completed all my arrangements. Mr. Little has undertaken to superintend the loading of the Bengal, with the balance of the wire, line material, and rations. These stores have already suffered much in the shipping, unloading, reshipping, and transshipping to which they have been subjected. They were shipped from Adelaide in the first instance by the Aldinga; at Melbourne, they were taken from the Aldinga, and placed in a large store; three days were spent in opening cases and sorting out the stores for the supposed Roper contingent; the stores were then shipped by the Omeo, and at Newcastle 100 tons of the provisions were discharged and stored. Here they remained for some weeks, when they were shipped in the Laju, for Port Darwin. On the arrival of the Laju, the stores were transhipped to the Guilnare, when the Guilnare stranded. Half these provisions were transhipped into the Bengal in order to lighten the schooner; and on the return of the Bengal to Port Darwin, these stores were landed and returned to the store, to be again put on board the Bengal. So soon as she has completed the delivery of her original cargo, the balance on board the Guilnare will then be transhipped for the Roper, where they will be finally landed and curtied to the relief of the various sections, should the country be passable.

I have, &c.,

Chas. Todd, Esq., Supt. of Telegraphs, South Australia.

R. C. PATTERTON.

P.S.—I enclose sketch plan, which will help to elucidate my report.

N.T.O.T. 48/1871.

Palmerston, 25th October, 1871.

Sir—I have the honor to inform you that in order to complete the line before the end of 1872, from Darwin to latitude 19° 30', it will be necessary to send at once to the head of the navigation of the Roper River, either thirty teams of bullocks, with drays and gear complete, or thirty teams of horses with wagons and harness complete—five horses in a team; or forty teams of horses, with spring drays, three horses in a team, and harness complete. In any case, they should be accompanied by proper drivers.

In the event of the bullocks being sent, ten should be considered a team, and twenty per cent. in addition to that number should be shipped to allow for deaths on the voyage, and after landing; this would make the number of bullocks 360. If horses are sent, ten per cent. above the number should be allowed for deaths on the passage, and a few spare horses should be sent; in any case, whether bullocks or horses are sent, six saddle horses with saddles and bridles complete, must be sent in addition.

The bullocks, if bullocks are sent, should be small compact animals, thoroughly broken in, and not too old; and the bullock drays should be as light as possible to carry two tons.

If horses are sent, they should be thoroughly broken in, stanch, quiet, not too light, and between five and six years old. If wagons are sent with the horses, turned to be quite equal to the carriage of two tons, and be as light as possible; if spring drays, they should be equal to the carriage of thirty cwt. The whole of the plant should be built of thoroughly well-seasoned timber, especially the wheels, and, if possible, no new plant should be sent.

Unless these reinforcements are dispatched at once, it will, in the event of a long wet season, be necessary to recall all the construction parties to the Roper depot in order to ensure their safety. Additional supplies will be required at once to provision the various parties to the end of the year 1872, a schedule of which is subjoined. It will also be necessary to send the required tools for building the three stations proposed to be erected between Palmerston and latitude 19° 30'.

I have, &c.,

ROBERT C. PATTERTON,

Chas. Todd, Esq., Superintendent Telegraphs.

Commander N.T.O.T. Expedition.

Schedule referred to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Article</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flour</td>
<td>56,100lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biscuit</td>
<td>56,100lbs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>56,100lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>12,480lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>1,260lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>1,980lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sago</td>
<td>2,160lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oatmeal</td>
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<td>Limejuice</td>
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<td>Salt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mustard</td>
<td>200lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>250lbs.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the foregoing, it will be necessary to send nine months' supply for 200 men of vegetables, herbs, curry powder, baking powder, currants, jams, coarse salt, pickles, candles, maize, Worscester sauce, and apples.

R. C. PATTERTON, Commanding N. T. O. T. Expedition.

Palmerston, 26th October, 1871.

Sir—I have the honor to inform you that I have this day received a telegram from Mr. McLachlan, from the Catherine, which shows that his stock is even in worse condition than would be

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be inferred from my general report of two days since, and which makes the necessity for instant reinforcement still more urgent. The following is a portion of the telegram referred to:

Mr. Brock, with three men, arrived here last night, having left six drays last night. Brought horses into water and good grass. Two drays left fifteen miles back. Mason's bullock teams will probably arrive to-morrow night. His saddle horses knocked up looking for bullocks. Three horses left behind altogether, completely knocked up; must be left; and one horse dead. Mason has lost two more bullocks since last account. I will endeavour to bring on the two drays that are fifteen miles back to the Catherine; but I shall be obliged to leave two or three horse drays here altogether, and a quantity of loading. It is the only chance. None of these horses will be able to proceed down the Roper to meet the Bengal.

It is certain now that Mr. Burton's safety cannot be ensured if his party are allowed to proceed to the beginning of Section 3. I have therefore determined at all hazards to send an express message to arrest his progress, and I have instructed Mr. McLachlan accordingly. I do not know how Mr. McLachlan will get across the dry country south of the Catherine with his horse teams, but I am much afraid it will only be with a terrible loss of stock, and will be for your consideration whether the requisition I have sent for reinforcements should not now be largely increased, as it was made out before the receipt of the above telegram.

I forward herewith a copy of the report upon the bullocks sent in by the Board appointed by the Government-Resident, and referred to it in my general report of the 24th instant; I also forward copy of my letter to Captain Douglas upon the subject.*

The Edinburgh and Hibernia have both arrived at Port Darwin with the deep-sea cable, and the Investigator, with the shore end is daily expected. Upon her arrival, the Construction Company will proceed at once to lay the cable from Port Darwin to Banjoewangie.

The electrician for the Construction Company, and half the operative staff of the British Australian Company have arrived, the remainder of the staff will come by the Investigator.

By the Dutch frigate Ceres I sent a duplicate copy of my report of the 24th instant. I also sent a telegram to Galle to catch the mail steamer to Adelaide. Mr. Ploos Van Amstel, the Consul-General for the Netherlands, kindly undertook to forward it from Batavia.

I have, &c.,
ROBERT C. PATTERSON, Commanding N.T.O.T. Expedition.

* Since writing my general report, the thirteen lost bullocks have been found, but most of them too weak for work.

[Enclosure No. 1.]
Palmerston, 13th September, 1871.

Sir.—Seeing the great mortality that has taken place in the stock landed by the British Expedition, I should feel obliged if you would appoint some competent member of your staff to report upon the stock yet to arrive. Such a report would be of more value than one emanating from any officer of the expedition. I conceive it to be necessary in a matter of such grave moment, to furnish the Government with the fullest information, and to obtain an entirely unbiased report.

I have the honor, &c.,
B. C. PATTERSON,
Commanding N.T.O.T. Expedition.

[Enclosure No. 2.]
Palmerston, 26th October, 1871.

Sir,—With reference to Mr. Patterson's letter to you of the 13th ultimo, and forwarded by you to us with a request that we would report upon the causes of death of the stock landed here for the use of the Overland Telegraph Expedition, we have the honor to report that we have carefully observed the stock, and especially the bullocks, from the time of their landing to their leaving for the interior.

Some of the bullocks died from Broncho-pneumonia (verified by post-mortem examination), but by far the greater number from sheer exhaustion, from being old, worn out, and utterly unfit for work, even in a more temperate climate.

We have the honor, &c.,
J. STOKES MILLNER,
F. W. HOOD,
Government Resident, Government Resident.


N.T.O.T., 50/1871.

Sir,—I have the honor to inform you that I left Palmerston yesterday for the interior, and that I arrived here at noon to-day.

I have no further information to give you, save that five of McLachlan's horse teams, loaded with rations, which left a week after the main party had started, have arrived fifteen miles north of the Catherine, with a loss of thirty-three per cent. of the stock on the road.

My object in addressing this further communication to you is principally to urge upon you the necessity of sending instant reinforcements of stock and plant to the Roper, as it is daily becoming more evident that without such assistance the work can never be completed.

I trust there will be no necessity for the withdrawal of any of the working party to the depot to be formed at head of navigation of Roper River; but in the event of the Bengal drawing too much water to allow of her ascending the river as far as the bar—which is very possible—the difficulty of keeping up the supplies will be greatly enhanced.

With the reinforcements of stock and additional supply of rations it will be necessary to send sufficient staples for lighting conductors to do 400 miles of line, as I can only find 260 lbs. altogether at Palmerston and Southport.

It would be as well also to send binding wire, solder and soldering fluid sufficient for 150 miles, as I fear I shall run short.

My time has been so much occupied that I have not been able to make out a full list of miscellaneous stores required, but it will be sufficient to state that, with the vessels bringing reinforcements to the Roper, there should be sent fresh supply of clothing, boots, &c.; rope, and about fifty mosquito curtains. For the medical officer there are required fifty ozs. quinine, twenty-five ozs. chlorodyne, two gallons concentrated solution acetate of ammonia, and six lbs. of tincture of hyoscyamus.

Three cwt. of shot, assorted sizes, and sixty lbs. of sporting powder should also be sent, as it is found valuable in saving meat by providing change of food for the men. It is very essential that
that a supply of wines and spirits for medical purposes should be also sent, as past experience in the Northern Territory has proved the necessity of stimulants during the wet season. I regret that I have had no time to make out a proper requisition for stores, and my present circumstances are such as to render clerical works all but impossible, which must form my apology for this somewhat incoherent communication.

I have the honor, &c.,

ROBERT C. PATTERSON,
Commander N.T.O.T. Expedition.

C. Todd, Esq., Superintendent Telegraphs, Adelaide.

Southport, Northern Territory, 3rd November, 1871.

Sirs—I have the honor to inform you that on the morning after I had finished my last communication to you, a boat arrived here at daybreak, sent by the Government Resident, to inform me that the Investigator had arrived, with Captain Halpin, the commander of the cable expedition. Mr. Little, the station-master at Palmerston, who came with the boat, informed me that Captain Halpin was willing to send the Investigator to Adelaide for reinforcements of stock and stores, or to one of the eastern ports, on very liberal terms. I accordingly returned at once, and saw him. I found that the steamer was not adapted for carrying stock, and I ascertained from Captain Halpin that he would require eight thousand pounds (£8,000) to send her round to Adelaide, or four thousand pounds (£4,000) to send her to Normanton.

By chartering her to Normanton I should have got my despatches and telegrams to Adelaide at least a fortnight earlier; but I did not consider that the Government would have upheld me in this action. I therefore informed Captain Halpin that I did not feel justified in chartering his steamer.

I left for Southport the next day, and arrived here this morning; and I am on the point of starting on horseback to catch my express waggon, which left here yesterday morning for the south. In this, my last report to you for some months, I may be allowed to refer to the fact that I have not hitherto put forth any excuses on my own part for the failure of this expedition, nor do I intend to do so now: such excuses would only have inferred that self-accusation which excuse proverbially imply. The invisible force of circumstances has been against me from the beginning; but I am satisfied that I have fulfilled my duty throughout, and done the best that was possible under the circumstances for the interests of South Australia. Should the Government think otherwise, I should only be too happy to retire from a post in which no apparent honor can be gained, and in which I have already suffered so much from anxiety and care that nothing in the future can repay me for it.

I have the honor, &c.,

ROBERT C. PATTERSON,
Commander N.T.O.T. Expedition.

Charles Todd, Esq., Superintendent of Telegraphs.

[Copy of memo. from Mr. Patterson to J. A. G. Little, Port Darwin.]

Port Darwin, 17/11/71.

This telegram is sent to put you in possession of the latest information concerning the Expedition, so as to enable you to send substance of it to Adelaide by telegram or otherwise as Government may deem advisable. I will, in addition, send a telegram to the Superintendent, which you will please post. Keeping a copy of it in case Superintendent wishes it sent by wire. The third and last construction party under Rutt, left Southport on the 7th October; I overtook him on the Edith, on the 16th November, a distance of 137 miles from Southport—the average rate of travel per day has therefore been four miles only. When I overtook them their horses were knocked up, but the bullocks were in fair condition, and improving; out of thirty-three horses there were only nine counted as stanch in harness, the remainder being either knocked up or confirmed jibs. I have instructed Mr. Rutt to push the bullocks on, and let the horses come on at their own pace. The bullocks have improved so much that they will now be able to travel much faster than the horses, although their loads have been increased by the loads of three horse drays, that were abandoned on the route through the refractory nature of the horses, which declined to take on even the empty drays. Mr. Hack, with the last of the ration teams, left Southport on the 21st October; I overtook him on the Stapleton, on the 5th November. They spent a week at White Hawk's Jungle, easing his bullocks, so that he had only been seven working days travelling, averaging six miles a day. His horse teams gave great trouble on account of the number of jibs he had; and when I left him he was making arrangements to harness a couple of bullocks in front of the most refractory teams, so that they might be made to travel by some means. Mr. Rutt's party found twenty-six consecutive miles of the road without water; but when I came through, owing to heavy rains, water was plentiful. I arrived at Catherine late last night, having left my waggon and pushed on thirty-five miles on horseback, so as to arrive at Catherine before departure of Bengal. The last of Mr. McLachlan's teams left the Catherine on the 14th November. His bullock teams have got across the worst portion of the twenty-five miles of sandy country south of Catherine, but his horses have been through the heavy rains and ten miles from here, and he has been obliged to send eighty bullocks back to help them on. Mr. Packard's ration party, for the Roper landing, were three times attacked by natives when half-way down the river, and forced to beat a retreat—two of his horses being speared. He arrived back at Catherine with this intelligence on the 8th November. The number of natives attacking the wire has been repeatedly explained to him by Mr. McLachlan, who will send as many teams as can be spared to the Roper landing, to meet the Bengal, after the wire has been deposited at junction of Elsey with Roper. Mr. Burton's party has been stopped in their progress south, at ten miles from Roper, on account of the absence of water. Mr. Stephen King, with whom I have not totted, has made repeated explana-tions to the south and south-east, in search of water but without success. The country is described as being sandy table land, no water to be obtained by sinking. The large creek running south from the Roper, about thirty miles

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miles to the west of the Strangways, which was discovered by Mr. Ross in his last exploration, and which was then a very fine stream, and supposed to be permanent, has been traversed for sixty miles south, and was found to be dry throughout. This is on the most direct route for the line, and water can be obtained by sinking; it has therefore been determined to follow it, and sink a chain of wells in its bed.

Well No. 1 has been sunk ten miles south of the Roper, and water struck at thirty-five feet deep—a fine supply. The well has been timbered, and windlass erected for the use of the following parties. A second well is being sunk at a point seventeen miles further down the creek. The men are working in shifts night and day. The windlass is good, and bullocks and horses improving very fast, but the delay is most serious. Mr. King is about to start for the Daly Waters to select route for the line, and to explore for water. In his last attempt southwards, he was beaten back, having been altogether two days and three nights without water. I hope to overtake Mr. Burton's party in less than three weeks time, after which I return to Mr. McLachlan's section, and from thence proceed to the Roper landing, to personally superintend the forwarding of rations, and ascertain whether the country is passable for loaded teams, as the wet season will probably have set in by that time. The stranding of the Gulnare will, I am afraid, be fraught with the most serious consequences, as the rations will not now arrive by the Bengal in less than forty-five days after the time they would have arrived had the Gulnare not met with mishap, and the additional draught of the Bengal will prevent her reaching the point to which it was expected the Gulnare would attain. Should the reinforcements of stock and plant be dispatched to the Roper without unnecessary delay, I am sanguine about getting the work done well, within the year 1873, if no worse country has to be encountered than that already met with. I might possibly struggle on with the stock I have, but it would cause great delay in the completion of the work, and would be attended with more risk than it would, in my opinion, be advisable to run. The bullocks are improving wonderfully, and I should much prefer bullocks being sent to Roper instead of horses; but the expense of transport, as well as first cost of stock, would be much greater in the case of bullocks, that I have no doubt the Government will elect to send horses, but the horses must be thoroughly stanch and good, and the drays or waggons, as the case may be, light and strong. I much prefer waggons if they can be obtained, but they must be light and well made, and second hand if possible. The New South Wales horses are much too light for the heavy drays sent with them, but their worst fault is the immense proportion of jibs amongst them.

In a separate telegram I will send you the additional items I wish placed upon the requisition, as nearly the whole of my telegraphic correspondence with the two first construction parties has been in private hands, you will be in a good position to answer all the questions that may be put to you from South Australia, or to explain the position in person should the Government desire it. There is no necessity for my sending a lengthened telegram to the Superintendent, as you will be able to let him know all particulars; at the same time, you had better post this telegram to him at once, keeping a copy, so that it may be wired if necessary. The men engaged by me in South Australia are the finest set of men I have ever been connected with, and a credit to the Colony to which they belong. A great number of them have worked for the Engineer's Department in South Australia for years. The men engaged by Mr. Ross are also first-class men as a rule, although they are not all of them up to the first-class men, that I have no doubt the Government will elect to send horses, but the horses must be thoroughly stanch and good, and the drays or waggons, as the case may be, light and strong.

R. C. PATTERTON,
Commanding N.T.O.T. Expedition, Catherine Station.

[Copy memo. from Mr. Little, Northern Territory, Gilbert Town, to C. Todd, Esq., Postmaster-General, &c., South Australia.]

Arrived here last night in Larrabegah, having left the Bengal in Carpentaria on the 11th—Port Darwin, 21st November. Cable successfully completed 20th. Patterson at Catherine, and telegraphed latest intelligence—following summary:

- Mr. Burton, with advance party, detainted ten miles north of Roper for want of water. King made repeated explorations south and south-east searching for it, but without success, country being sandy and tableland, not obtainable by the creek running south from Roper about thirty miles to westward of Strangways, discovered by Ross, and which was then a fine stream, having been traversed sixty miles south and found dry throughout to continuation of Elsey—most direct route for line. Water obtainable by sinking; it has, therefore, been determined to follow it and sink chain of wells. First finished in ten miles from Roper, and fine supply obtainable at thirty-five feet. Second being sunk seventeen miles further on; men working in shifts night and day. Feod good horses and bullocks improving very fast, but delay very serious. King about starting for Daly Waters to select route for line and explore for water. McLachlan with second up Catherine, November 14. His bullock teams have crossed the worst portion of twenty-five miles sandy country, but horse teams stuck in it after going ten miles; bullocks sent back to assist Ross with third section, near Catherine. Bullocks in first condition—improving. Horses hecked up, and many contended jibbers that refused to pull even drays. Average daily rate of travel by this party, four miles. Hack with ration teams, forty miles south of party, greatly delayed by jibbing horses; average rate of travel, six miles. Packard's party, attempting to reach Roper landing to meet Bengal, were attacked by natives three times and driven back; two horses speared. Three parties provisioned up to end of year. Hack's teams may possibly keep them two months longer, after which everything depends upon getting supplies from Bengal at Roper landing. Some doubt about vessel getting past Hawk's Nest Island, where there is only eleven feet at high water; any accident delaying her will be disastrous. Light and waggons must be sent to Roper at once. Sweet state of wind and weather similar as the class required. Penn can carry seventy head of cattle, 150 tons cargo, fifty tons coal; she draws six feet loaded—speed ten knots. Everything must come by steamer—winds.
winds so light and variable that sailing vessels take too long and stock suffer. Be very prompt dispatching first steamer. If her stock can (correct?) light lost—twenty—from landing to line before wet season sets thoroughly, all will be well; but if not, men of the section, and probably of two, will have to return Bengal.

Sweet, after piloting Bengal into river, will wait at mouth to pilot steamer. Horses sent should be stanch and good; New South Wales horses too light, and immense proportion jibs. Stamp should be perfect, similar to those sent by Quee, and five or six years old. Drays and wagons to be light and strong; wagons preferred, second-hand if possible. Loud and bitter complaints about horses—too many jibs. Bullocks of all parties improving in condition and capacity for work fast—weak and old, dead; remainder fine animals. John Bowman, bullock driver of course, died 4th November from sunstroke. Loverskey's, under Mr. McCauley, hundred, proceed from Normanton to Roper with telegram to Patterson; and Sweet, immediately anything definite is arranged about steamer. Telegraph Station now being built in proper place, opposite Mitchell's street—Government Resident superintendent erection. After you have dispatched assistance to Patterson, I must proceed to Adelaide to make arrangements about working and maintenance of line. Arrangements must be made for steamer communications until line is finished. The cable expedition magnificently organized.

Patterson intended being with Burton on 4th December, and then proceeds to Roper landing. Have long requisition from him which I will telegraph after hearing from you. Will be at Gilbert Station on Tuesday. At your end of gap in line. Am receiving every possible assistance from Police Magistrate and Stationmaster here.

16th December.

J. A. G. LITTLE.

Maria Island, off Roper River, Gulf of Carpentaria, 26th January, 1872.

SIR—I have the honor to forward herewith my report upon the progress of the construction of the Overland Telegraph, and the state of the expedition under my command. My last written communication to you was dated from Southport, on the 3rd November, 1871; and, having placed you in full possession of all information relative to the expedition up to that date, I am now to the history of the expedition from that time, disregarding for the present the fact of my having been enabled to transmit you later telegraphic information from the Catherine River via Gallo.

I left Port Darwin for the interior on the 9th November, having previously arranged with Mr. Little, the Stationmaster, to superintend the loading of the Bengal for the Roper, and arrange the transference of the crew of the Gallo to the service of the expedition.

On the 6th November, I overtook the supplementary ration teams under the charge of Mr. Hack, camped at the Stapleton Creek. One of the teamssters named Bowman, from New South Wales, was so much damaged so as to be unfit for use, and so many of them being experienced jibs. One team took ten hours to accomplish five miles over a hard road with a load of little over fifteen hundredweight.

On the 7th November, I arrived at Depot No. 1 of the late contractors; there was a shackle on the line here, and wishing to get a message through to Port Darwin, I camped at this point at mid-day, and instructed the field operator to place his instrument in circuit. Owing to the unsettled state of the weather, the disturbed condition of the atmosphere, or other cause unknown to me, forty-five hours elapsed before I could get a simple message through to Port Darwin. I was much disappointed on two days before—sunstroke being the supposed cause of the delay. I found myself now to the history of the expedition from that time, disregarding for the present the fact of my having been enabled to transmit you later telegraphic information from the Catherine River via Gallo.

On the 10th November, I arrived at Depot No. 2 of late contractors, 126 miles from Port Darwin, and there being a shackle in the line, the field instrument was inserted in the circuit, but although I waited twenty-four hours, I was unable to get a message through to Port Darwin, stating that the disturbed state of the atmosphere. I was rather more fortunate with the Catherine station, at the other end of the wire, as I succeeded in getting a short message from Mr. Packard; after which, though I waited some hours, I could not obtain any signals from either Port Darwin or the Catherine station.

Mr. Packard was in charge of the party sent on by Mr. Burton to the Roper to meet the vessels with supplies from Port Darwin. He was attacked by a large party of natives within sixty miles of the landing, and compelled to beat a retreat—two of his horses being sorely. He then fell back 100 miles to the Catherine River, to await reinforcements or further instructions.

I may remark here that the men of the expedition are very inadequately armed; my requisition provided for arming every second man; and on the requisition being sent back to me for reconsideration and reduction, I returned it with a minute to the effect that I was unable to make any reduction. The Chief Secretary, however, decided to arm every fourth man only, and so relieved me from responsibility in the matter—but not from the grave embarrassment which such action involved, and which led to grave dissatisfaction amongst the men.

I found a memorandum at Depot No. 2, from the construction party of Section No. 1, stating that the party had left there on the 1st November, "All well," horses not fit for other than short journeys. It appeared therefore that the teams of this section had taken twenty-three days to accomplish the eighty miles from Southport, or an average of three and a-half miles per day.

On the 16th November I overtook Mr. Rutt's teams (Section 1) camped on the Edith, 175 miles from Port Darwin. They had been spelling there since the 11th November, horses being shod, and general repairs made. I found that three horse drays had been abandoned on the road, and the loading distributed over the bullock drays, the horses being of such a character that the teams of the discarded drays refused to pull them even when empty. I have been much disappointed in these horses. When they were landed at Port Darwin they were in admirable

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admirable condition, and I thought well suited to the work before them; but most of them have proved too light, and many of them are confirmed jibs—although I can well believe that in the more temperate climate of New South Wales, on metalled roads, many of them would have performed their work satisfactorily and without any sign of jibbing.

I pushed on to the Catherine the same evening (202 miles of Port Darwin), as I was most anxious to get there before the departure of the Bengal from Port Darwin. I arrived at the Catherine at 9 p.m., and instantly placed myself in communication with Mr. Little, from whom I learnt that the English party would not be ready for sea for some days. Mr. McLachlan's party (Section 2) were but a short distance in advance of the Catherine; his bullock teams were seventeen miles off, and his horse teams ten miles, where they were fast in the heavy sand and unable to get on. He was about sending back eighty bullocks to help the horse teams through. I found from Mr. Burton (Section 2) awaiting me on my arrival at the Catherine. He was in difficulties south of the Elsey for want of water. Repeated explorations had been made to the south and south-east for water, but without success. The supposed Elsey Creek of Ross—Birdum Creek—had been traversed for sixty miles, and had proved dry throughout. Mr. Burton had begun sinking a line of wells on Birdum Creek, and at the point at which he commenced (280 miles from Port Darwin) he had obtained water at a depth of thirty-five feet. Well No. 2 was then being sunk twenty miles further on. I thought this information sufficiently disheartening but, painful though it was, it proved to be only the prelude to still greater difficulties.

Such was my position, and such the prospects of the expedition at the date when, from the Catherine, I telegraphed through my final requisition for reinforcements and other supplies, which was simply the confirmation of the action I had taken before leaving Port Darwin. After leaving Palmerston I hoped that the fortunes of the expedition might change so far that I might find it possible to reduce my requisition both for reinforcements and supplies, but I only became more convinced of the wisdom and policy of the step I had taken before leaving for the interior.

I remained at the Catherine until the departure of the Bengal for the Roper, telegraphing very fully to Mr. Little on all possible points of interest connected with the expedition, so that he might be in a position to afford you the fullest information from Normanton or the nearest telegraphic station thereto in connexion with the southern Colonies.

The Bengal did not sail until the 21st November—thirty-five days having been lost by the stranding of the Gulnare.

On the 26th November I overtook Mr. McLachlan's teams at Gum Flat Billabongs, forty-two miles from the Catherine, 244 miles from Port Darwin. Section 3 were in such difficulties for want of water, I instructed Mr. McLachlan to start the erection of the line at well No. 1 (280 miles from Port Darwin), lest by advancing further he should overtake Mr. Burton's party, and so time be lost.

On the 2nd December I caught up to Mr. Burton, and found his party engaged in sinking well No. 2, forty miles south of well No. 1. The men were working in shifts night and day, and were rapidly getting knocked up with such severe work in this hot climate.

At well No. 2 a shaft was sunk to a depth of sixty feet through hard ground and rock, the rock becoming so hard at sixty feet that the shaft had to be abandoned. A second shaft further to the west proved more successful—a small supply of water having been obtained at a depth of sixty-five feet. During the sinking of No. 2 well the water had to be carted twenty miles to the men; five horses to a water cart, the horses having to return the same evening, thus accomplishing a journey of forty miles without a drop of water. These horses were those purchased in Melbourne, and have stood the work wonderfully well, as they are all in splendid condition. Mr. Burton's bullock teams were also those purchased in Melbourne, and are all first-class animals. I remained with Mr. Burton to see the result of sinking a shaft for the third well. Hard rock was encountered at eighteen feet, and after penetrating it for six feet the shaft was abandoned, as the rock grew too hard to work. Three other attempts were made in this neighborhood and rock structure was varying from eighteen to twenty-seven feet. I then instructed Mr. Burton to fall back five miles and sink another shaft, in the hope that better ground might be met with. I further instructed him to send all his teams on nine miles south of the point at which it was attempted to sink well No. 3, and let his teams there discharge their loading of wire and line material, so that they might be free to start at once for the Roper landing to meet the Bengal for further supplies of rations.

I had previously instructed Mr. McLachlan to act similarly with his bullock teams on their arrival at No. 1 well. Similar instructions had also been issued to Mr. Rutt for the disposal of his teams on their arrival at the King.

Before I left Mr. Burton's camp, explorations for water had been made for ninety miles south of No. 1 well, and up to within five miles of the Daly Waters. Judging from the absence of water over such an extent of country, it was supposed that the Daly Waters had dried up, and Mr. King therefore felt that it would be running too great a risk to push on to the Daly Waters, in case on his arrival there he should not find water, and so be unable to get back. On the return of Mr. Stephen King with the exploring party, water was found in Birdum Creek, twenty-two miles south of the camp, at intended well No. 3. There was about a week's supply—two or three waterholes having been partially filled from a thunderstorm the day before. It was to this point I directed Mr. Burton to push forward his teams and form a depot for line material and rations, sending his empty teams to the Roper landing.

On the 7th December I left Mr. Burton, and retraced my steps to visit the other two parties, as a second time, as I hoped to find them both at work on their respective lengths.

I had not gone ten miles before I met Mr. Burt, who had come over from the southern sections in search of supplies, and Mr. Ross; and I then at once decided to send Mr. Burt forward to meet Mr. Rutt, informing you of the state of the work. I directed Mr. Burton to accompany Mr. Burt as far as the Daly Waters, with the view of ascertaining if those waters were dried up; a messenger to be sent down the line to me on his return, informing me of the results of his trip. It is not necessary for me to go into any description of Mr. Burt's journey, as he will have long since informed you on this point, and advised you of Mr. Millner's arrival with sheep and horses at the Roper, as also of the murder of Mr. R. Millner at Attack Creek by the natives.

On
On the 9th December I arrived back at No. 1 Well, where I found Mr. McLachlan camped. His party were at work poling the line, having begun work three or four days before. In accordance with previous instructions, he had reduced the allowance of rations to the men, so as to make his stores last until the 20th January. The supplementary ration teams under Mr. Hack would be due at Well No. 1 the last week in December; but I wished to leave a good margin, so as to be safe if possible.

On the 12th December I arrived at the first crossing of the Roper Creek, 230 miles from Port Darwin, where I found Mr. Rutt camped, his party having started poling the line a week before. Mr. Rutt commenced wiring the line on the 12th December and I commenced the wire line at the Catherine River, which rains had followed him, with but little interruption, to the Catherine. His bullock teams were but lightly loaded—the heaviest load not amounting to 35 cwt.; but, notwithstanding this, there were some days on which he had not been able to accomplish half-a-mile, having to double-bank his teams the whole distance. There were other days on which he was unable to move, having to make the road in advance. Mr. Hack left Southport on the 26th October with twelve bullock teams of eight bullocks each, and twenty-five spare bullocks (the spare bullocks consisting of the weakest animals of each shipment, unfit to yoke, and scarcely able to travel), and three horse teams of three horses each, and six spare horses—the spare horses being in much the same condition as the spare bullocks. Mr. Hack's loading consisted of wire, insulators, and rations for the three construction parties. Fifty-one days elapsed between the time Mr. Hack left Southport and the date of his leaving the Catherine. Mr. Hack is a most valuable officer, and a man of great experience with stock. Had it been otherwise he would not have reached the Catherine some months later, or until after the end of the wet season.

I went through to the Catherine in the same evening, for the purpose of telegraphing to the Government Resident, but I failed to obtain any signal from Port Darwin that night. The next morning I succeeded in getting a simple message through, informing the Government Resident of my return to the Catherine, and asking him if he had obtained any information concerning the intentions of the British Australian Company, the Government Resident having sent me a telegram some days before asking if I could establish a horse-express service across to Port Darwin, where I found Mr. Rutt camped, his party having started poling the line a week after. In my telegram I informed the Government Resident that the establishment of an effective horse-express service during the wet season was a simple impossibility, and the wet season had already set in. This message, though short, occupied two hours in transmitting; and, wishing to add a few words to the telegram at the end of that time, I found that the operator had to repeat the message over and over again, the whole thing ending in utter confusion, and I could not be certain that the message had been properly received.

This represents the telegraph business of an entire day. I did not receive any answer, nor could any further signals be obtained from Port Darwin. Whether the failure in this case was due to the usual "atmospheric disturbance," or some other cause, is a question quite out of my province, and upon which I am not qualified to give an opinion.

I left the Catherine on the 15th December, and the same afternoon passed Mr. Hack camped with his teams at Bacon Swamp, twenty-two miles from the Catherine. His teams had only arrived there at eleven o'clock that morning, having been twenty-two and a-half hours accomplishing the fifteen miles from the last water.

The teams started the day before, half-an-hour after noon, the day being cloudy, and travelled all through the night. I went on the same evening to Mr. Rutt's camp, returning the next morning to Bacon Swamp. The bullock teams started at 10.30 a.m., the eighth team arriving at Mr. Rutt's camp at 10.30 p.m., having been twelve hours accomplishing six and a-half miles; the other four teams were bogged at intervals along the road, and did not get in until the second day after. Mr. Rutt had to send most of his horses to bring the horse teams in.

It had then been raining every day or night since the 12th December, and the country was saturated with water. The country between the Catherine and the King, which was a desert when Mr. Burton came through, without feed or water, was then covered with green feed, and only fifteen miles without water. When the other four teams came in I had stock taken, for the purpose of fairly dividing the rations between the various parties. I had purposely sent flour largely in excess of the proportion shewn on the printed ration list, and the sequel will prove the wisdom of this step. I found that I could provision Mr. Rutt's party (Section 1) with flour up to the 1st April, other items to the 1st March, and meat up to the 1st February.

On Mr. Hack's arrival at Section No. 2, he would be able to provision Mr. MacLachlan up to the same dates as Mr. Rutt, the balance of the stores going on to Mr. Burton, his being the most advanced party; and the furthest from the depot to be established at the Roper landing, would be provisioned on Mr. Hack's arrival, with flour to 1st June, other items to 1st May, and meat to 1st March.

After determining this matter, and urging upon Mr. Hack the extreme importance of getting the supplies to the various sections as quickly as possible, I left for the middle section (Section 2), where I arrived on the 20th December. The country traversed was badly flooded, and the ground was much bogged with pack-horses, so had not been able to accomplish the bed of the river during the inundation; but it would be most trying work for the bullocks, as the country was daily becoming worse; and if the rain did not moderate, the ground would be impassable in a few days.

I found Mr. Burton's messengers awaiting me on my arrival at Section 2. Mr. Burton had accomplished as much as the Daily Waters, and while working as the Daily Waters, in order to send me a man of great experience with stock. Had it been otherwise he would not have reached the Catherine some months later, or until after the end of the wet season.

Mr. Burton found his men at work at the shaft five miles north of the scene of his former attempts at a third well. They were down sixty feet with the shaft without having struck water; and, as the wet season had evidently set in, it was determined to abandon well-sinking for the present, and make every effort to push the party
on to the Daly Waters, where Mr. Burton would commence poleing the line, it being impossible, with the stock he had, to carry on any of the wire. Similarly with Mr. MacLachlan, he will only be able for the present to pole the line, as he has not the transport power requisite to carry on wire. The wire is made of all three sections having been dispatched to the Roper for further supplies of rations. I had hoped to have been able to distribute the wire along the different sections with these teams before dispatching them to the Roper landing; but the slow progress made by the different teams in reaching their respective sections prevented this being done. The near approach of the rainy season rendered their departure for the Roper at the earliest possible date a matter of pressing necessity. The poleing of the line, therefore, is likely to be in the end a very long way in advance of the wiring. It will be understood that this unavoidable revision of my instructions has arisen from circumstances beyond our control.

On the 23rd December I started for the Roper landing, after having written my final instructions to the heads of the respective sections. On the 24th my express wagon got bogged in some flooded country, and four hours were consumed in crossing a flat of half-a-mile in extent. In the afternoon I came upon Mr. Millner and his party, with their sheep, camped at Red Lily Swamp. Mr. Millner’s bullock-drays were bogged about seven miles on; and, although the drays were almost empty, they had been over a fortnight accomplishing five miles. Mr. Millner informed me that Mr. Rutt’s bullock-drays had passed his camp on Thursday the 21st December. They did five miles with their empty drays that day, the next day (Friday) three miles were accomplished, and the day following they were all day doing half-a-mile, taking half the drays at one time with sixteen bullocks attached to each empty dray. At this point two bullock-drays were abandoned, the bullocks being too much knocked up to take on the full number of drays. The country was so unsound that the bullocks could not obtain any foot-hold, and as many as six bullocks in a team have got bogged at one time, and have had to be extricated before the dray could be shifted. On the 26th December, leaving my party behind, I went on eight miles on horseback (Mr. Millner accompanying me) to see what the ground was like. I found all the creeks running bank high, and the whole face of the country under water. It was clear, therefore, that I would have to abandon my express wagon and go on with pack-horses. I bought one thousand sheep from Mr. Millner, for the use of the Expedition, to be delivered to the heads of the respective sections. I also purchased sixteen powerful draught horses for Messrs. McIachlan and Rutt. On the 26th December I resumed my journey to the landing, my party consisting of three others and myself; both saddle and pack-horses were repeatedly bogged on the journey. I passed Mr. Rutt’s teams the next day; most of the teams were bogged, and the drivers were in the like predicament. I arrived at the head of navigation of the Roper on the 30th December, and found that Messrs. Burton and McIachlan’s teams had arrived seven or eight days before, they having had a fortnight’s start of the teams of Section No. 1. Three days before the arrival of these teams at the landing, a boat had come up from the mouth of the Roper; and, not finding any teams there, a letter had been deposited in a bottle, and buried at foot of a marked tree. This letter stated that the Bengal arrived at the outer bar on the 15th December, and would be at the landing, in all probability, on Christmas Day. I waited until the 1st January, at which date there were only two days’ provisions left in the camp, and no signs of the Bengal. I, therefore, improvised a boat out of the body of a horse-waggon, and, with a volunteer crew, comprised of two bullock-drivers, a stockman, and the storekeeper, set forth in search of the Bengal, which I found, after two days’ sailing, rather more than halfway down to the mouth. The heavy floods in the Roper had prevented the action of the usual flood-tide, so that the current was all seaward, and the prevailing wind being from the west, little progress had been made. I at once dispatched two boats with provisions for the men at the landing, remaining on board the Bengal myself to expedite matters, if possible. It was then the 4th January, and it had been raining, with slight intermission, every day since the 12th December. At this time, therefore, my utmost hopes were that the wet season had been more than realized. On the 13th of January one of the boats returned to the Bengal, and the other boat returned on the 15th instant. The river had risen over twenty feet between the 2nd and 7th instant, and the boats could only manage to get to the landing by rowing close to the banks from tree to tree, and holding on at every possible point; meantime the men at the landing were living on jirked beef and water, having been obliged to kill bullocks, as all their supplies were exhausted on the 3rd January.

I learnt that the teams of Section No. 1, which were due at the landing at the head of the navigation on the 2nd, had not arrived up to the 15th instant, owing to the incessant rain. I had before then come to the conclusion that it would be impossible for these teams to reach the landing before their rations were exhausted. I had accordingly sent a letter to Mr. King on the 4th, instructing him to start to their relief with provisions on pack-horses. On the evening of the 13th instant I received a letter from Mr. King, dated the same morning, stating that the country was so flooded that it was impossible to proceed to the relief of the party until the rains had abated, and the ground had become firmer; and the letter closed by an earnest request for a further supply of flour, as the flour sent by the last boats had proved unsound. On the evening of the 14th January, I started in the Dolphin cutter, laden with rations for the landing, but despite a fair breeze, and the efforts of five oarsmen, the boat gradually dropped astern, the flood proving too strong for her, and the anchor had to be dropped. I then borrowed the pinnace of the Bengal, and sending the men ashore to cut a mast, I arranged to have everything ready for a fresh start in the morning.

On the 15th instant I left the Bengal in the pinnace, lightly laden with rations, for the landing, which was due on the 17th. In the meantime Mr. Stein had hired Mr. Stephen with pack-horses for the relief of the transport party of Section No. 1; the rise in the river had flooded the whole of the country back to the ranges, a distance of five or six miles, and at one
time the water had risen so fast, as to make the men in the camp extremely apprehensive for their safety. On inquiry and examination, I found that owing to the flooded state of the country, and the biggy character of the ground, it would be impossible to shift the camp to any other site; the camp is about thirty-five feet above the usual level of the river—an elevation that was considered by Mr. King to be quite beyond the reach of the highest floods, when he chose the site for the camp.

In the afternoon I ascended the Hodgson River, surveying its course and sounding as I went. I found a very good spot for a landing about one and a half miles above the junction with the Roper—the water ranging from thirty to forty feet in depth, the ordinary level of the water being probably ten feet less. I went three miles up the river, but the ranges abut so closely on the banks higher up that I could not find any other available spot for landing beyond the place selected by me, and I have arranged for the construction of a jetty there to run out into thirteen or fourteen feet of water, so that vessels may be enabled to lay alongside, so the delivery of cargo be much facilitated.

I returned to the Bengal before daybreak on the 18th inst. Capt. Sweet, in accordance with my instructions, had left the day previous for the mouth of the Roper in the Larrakeaah to replace the buoys at the bar, which Mr. Little had reported as having being either submerged or washed away. The Bengal had not moved during my absence, and I do not believe it is possible for her to get to the landing at this season of the year, with strong freshes in the river and with westerly winds, without the aid of a steamer.

I started for Maria Island in the Dolphin cutter, on the 19th January for the purpose of meeting the Omeo, and also to ascertain what water and feed there was on the island. Owing to light winds, I did not reach the island until the 22nd inst. I coasted along the west side on the theory, and that theory is simple enough.

I put forward no excuses, as I stated in a former report, for my want of success, because such excuses would only infer self-accusation, and from such upbraidings I am entirely free.

I make these statements with the greatest reluctance; but I feel that in justice to myself and having succeeded in a former report, for my want of success, because such

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The survey of the Roper, made in 1870, under the direction of Mr. MacLachlan, the senior-surveyor of the Northern Territory, has been verified in all the more important particulars. The more important soundings on the west bank of the river were taken in October, and the east bank in July; the former by Capt. Johnstone, the latter by Capt. Sweet, in accordance with the instructions given me for that purpose. I have arranged for the construction of a jetty there to run out into thirteen or fourteen feet of water, so that vessels may be enabled to lay alongside, so the delivery of cargo be much facilitated.

As the opening up of the navigation of one of the finest rivers in Australia demands more than a passing notice, I beg to supply you with a few details of the

Roper River, Northern Territory, 16th February, 1872.

Sir—By the Omeo, which sails from the mouth of the Roper to-day, I have the honor to inform you of the safe arrival of the party and reinforcements under the command of Capt. Sweet, having succeeded in landing the steamers Omeo and Young Australian, and the barque Bengal, up to the Telegraph Depot, at the head of navigation, 100 miles from the mouth of the river, where the cargo of the Omeo has been landed, the horses having been put ashore forty miles lower down. The Bengal was to discharge immediately after the departure of the Omeo.

We
We arrived off Maria Island on the morning of January 27, where we were boarded by Captain Calder in charge of the *Lorrakeegeth*, and shortly after by Mr. Rutt's party. Captain Sweet and Mr. Patterson were both of opinion that the *Bengal* might cross the bar at high water, and that once over the bar she could get up some distance—possibly to the heat, although the greatest care had been taken of them during the voyage. Mr. Patterson and Captain Sweet were both of opinion that the *Omeo* might cross the bar, and a little water, that and as the effects of the voyage at this season were beginning to tell on many of the horses, it became an important question to land them with the least possible delay. We had already lost two, and a third was doomed, having to be shot a few days later, and several others were becoming very weak through the intense heat, although the greatest care might have been taken of them during the voyage. Mr. Patterson and Captain Sweet were both of opinion that the *Omeo* might cross the bar, and that once over the bar she could get up some distance—possibly to the Depot; but the latter was somewhat doubtful, it being two or three days after spring tides, and of course Captain Calder would run no risk without being guaranteed from all loss. Under these circumstances, I requested Captain Calder to accompany Captain Sweet in a boat, to take soundings on the bar at half flood tide, and arranged that they should hoist a signal if they considered there would be sufficient water, in which case the *Omeo* was to follow—I giving the Captain the guarantee on behalf of the Government, protecting his owners from loss to the extent of their policy of insurance on the vessel, and further releasing him from that portion of his charter which required him to go to Port Darwin, being determined, after the information I had obtained from Mr. Patterson and Captain Sweet, to take the *Omeo*, if it could be done safely, up to the landing place, which, in the event of any casualty happening to the *Young Australian*, would be the saving of the expedition. I was the more induced to take this important step, as I learned that the *Bengal* had been lying about sixty-five miles up the river, or thirty-five miles below the Depot, having been unable to proceed further in consequence of the north-west monsoon, since the middle of December, and that owing to the strong freshets they had succeeded in getting up only a few boat loads of the stores to the landing, where the teams from the construction parties in the interior were waiting, and that it was of the utmost importance that these teams should be started immediately the country became passable.

Captains Calder and Sweet having satisfied themselves that the vessel could cross the bar in safety, we steamed ahead, and entered the river the same evening, anchoring for the night about fifteen miles from the bar.

I enclose for your information a copy of the engagement entered into by me with Captain Calder. I also arranged to provide for the passengers for Port Darwin during their stay at the Telegraph Camp—the Captain, of course, engaging for their passage at owners’ cost, to destination, in the *Tararua*.

On the next day (Sunday), by availing ourselves of high tides, we succeeded in getting up to a long reach above Bengal Island, forty-five miles from the bar. From this point to beyond the Three Island Reach, the water shoals, with mud bottom, however; and we found it necessary to land the stock—eighty-three horses—next day (Monday), before we could proceed further, and then, it being neap tides, we only succeeded in getting to Three Island Reach by Wednesday—fifty-four miles from the mouth—the *Bengal* being a mile ahead.

The *Lorrakeegeth* and the *Dolphin* came up on Thursday, February 1st, reporting having left Maria Island the previous Sunday. Immediately dispatched Meikleham in the *Lorrakeegeth* back to the mouth to look for the *Young Australian*, and bring her up without delay. He met her the following day, wooding, just within the mouth, and brought her alongside the *Omeo*, shortly after noon of Saturday the 3rd.

Her arrival enabled me to lighten the *Omeo*, and on Sunday I started in the *Young Australian* at 7 a.m., for the Depot, or landing, with fifty or sixty tons of cargo, and arrived at 3.37 p.m., boarding the *Bengal* on the way up.

At the landing I found a number of teams from Messrs. Burton and McLachlan’s parties, in charge of Mr. King, which had been there since the 19th December. Another lot of teams from Mr. Rutt’s party was at Leichardt’s Bar, some seven miles higher up. These last teams had got down with the greatest difficulty, owing to the boggy and flooded state of the country.

The whole of the parties had endured considerable hardships; and when they arrived at the Roper were nearly destitute of provisions, and with no signs of the second day, and succeeded in sending up supplies.

We discharged the *Young Australian* next day (Monday), and on Tuesday steamed down to the *Omeo*, which we were glad to see afloat.

On Wednesday, February 7th, I arranged for the *Young Australian* to tow up the *Bengal*, the *Omeo* following in their wake; but, after a few miles, on rounding a sharp bend in the river the *Omeo* struck on hard ground, and, after getting off and again touching, it was decided that the *Young Australian* should tow the *Omeo*, and in this way we reached the landing or Depot, about two miles above the Hodgson—a fine tributary of eighty or ninety yards wide, down which a heavy freshet was flowing when we passed on our return—on Thursday the 8th.

The next day we commenced to discharge alongside a substantial jetty, which had been built by Mr. Patterson, and the *Young Australian* brought the *Bengal*.

We had thus succeeded in bringing up the first Roper fleet with safety, and that during neap tides, and therefore under the most adverse conditions. The same remark applies to our return trip. We left the landing or Depot midday on Tuesday the 13th, and reached the mouth at low water, neap tide, at 11 a.m. on Thursday, having touched the ground (soft mud) only once on the passage down, frequently steaming at the rate of eight knots. This morning we crossed the bar shortly before high water, but at dead neap, having two feet to spare, the vessel drawing.
eighty-three miles from, his no positive knowledge of Mr. Burton having arrived at his section—the latest advices from him recorded visioned with flour and sheep till the 1st of June. It will be seen from Mr. some of these difficulties, it being remembered that, as the advanced party, he had to explore the 1ecord of the river comparatively easy and being dated December 16th, at which date Mr. Patterson reports that the work was steadily progressing at the rate of three and a-half miles a week, the line being poled for 226 miles. Mr. Patterson having fortunately purchased 1,000 from Mr. Millner. Mr. McLachlan has charge of the second section, extending from No. 1 Well (280 miles south of Port Darwin, vide map accompanying Mr. Patterson’s report herewith), to north end of Daly Waters, about 365 miles from Port Darwin. The work on this section was started on December 8, and when Mr. Patterson left for the Roper, on December 23rd, about eleven miles of the line were cleared and policed, and the work, including the wiring, was progressing at the rate of three or four miles a week. The wire is stacked, and near No. 1 (All Saints’) Well, the north end of the section, and would be speedily distributed.

Mr. Burton, who is one of the most experienced officers on the work, having been connected with it from its first commencement, was placed by Mr. Patterson in charge of the first section (7 third section)—assisted by Mr. Stephen King, jun. and, consequently, had the greatest difficulty to contend with. The country ahead, to secure the safety of his own men and those who followed. The exploration for water for ninety-five miles south of Warlock Ponds having proved that the country was dry throughout, he had to leave the teams at Warlock Ponds, and sink a series of shafts to find water, with a rise of three feet tide. There are several good sites for townships. As before noted, the Oneo ground several times, and Captain Calder, as a matter of precaution, insisted on my agreeing to pay the expense of docking her on her return to Melbourne, but he has assured me, on more than one occasion, that he feels certain she has sustained no damage.

In coming down the river, the Youg Australian, in charge of Captain Sweet, as pilot, led the way, and the Oneo, in charge of Captain Lowrie, followed. At one sharp bend of the river, previously mentioned, where the channel is close to the bank, with rocks on the opposite side, we saw a patch of sudden and a short distance ahead, we saw his picture of the result of the exploration. The construction parties at work on the line under Mr. Rutt, continuing it from the point where it was left by the contractor, at the King, to a point 280 miles south of Port Darwin, including the wiring from the Catheringine. No communication has been had with this party since 10th December, at which date Mr. Patterson reports that the work was steadily progressing at the rate of three and a-half miles a week, the line being poled for 292 miles from Port Darwin, and wired for 226 miles. Mr. Rutt’s party is provisioned up to April 1st, with flour and sheep, Mr. Patterson has fortunately purchased 1,000 from Mr. Millner. Mr. McLachlan has charge of the second section, extending from No. 1 Well (280 miles south of Port Darwin, vide map accompanying Mr. Patterson’s report herewith), to north end of Daly Waters, about 365 miles from Port Darwin. The work on this section was started on December 8, and when Mr. Patterson left for the Roper, on December 23rd, about eleven miles of the line were cleared and policed, and the work, including the wiring, was progressing at the rate of three or four miles a week. The wire is stacked, and near No. 1 (All Saints’) Well, the north end of the section, and would be speedily distributed.

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My great anxiety now is to dispatch the teams from the Roper with rations and material for the construction parties, and to establish an express service to convey messages over the gap between the two ends of the wire.

Up to the present date all agree that the country, owing to the heavy and continuous rains, has been in such a state that nothing could have been done even had the reinforcements arrived sooner; no time, therefore, has been lost. Mr. Patterson hoped to get some teams away this week, but heavy rains during the last few days (about ten inches in a fortnight) will, I fear, prevent a start being made till next week.

There are rations and 150 miles of wire for the south end of the line yet to be carted, and the available transport power, even when reinforced by the Tararua, will be scarcely able to carry these away, so that the wire cannot be connected throughout until many circumstances before the end of June or July; long before that time, however, the express service, which Mr. S. King starts in a few days to organise, will have established communication; and as the work advances, the time occupied in the transmission of messages between the termini will be rapidly lessened. The express service will, I trust, be established in a few weeks.

In reviewing the work accomplished, I feel it to be due to Mr. Patterson to state that he has had to struggle against great difficulties, which he is now, with the prospect of fine weather, overcoming.

On his arrival he was embarrassed by heavy losses of stock. The country for some distance from Port Darwin—it being the end of the dry season—was nearly destitute of feed. Further on there was no surface water. Valuable time was thus occupied in sinking wells, and then the early setting in of the north-west monsoon with rains of almost unprecedented intensity—48·205 inches of rain falling between the 1st of July, 1871, and the 24th January, 1872, in seventy-four days, as compared with 22·279 inches, in thirty-four days, in the corresponding period of the previous season, the rainfall in December alone being less than 20·006 inches, and in January up to the 24th 18·261 inches—rendered the country in many places utterly impassable, and entailed severe hardship to himself and men, and further serious losses of transport power.

I am unable to attribute to him any want of management or want of forethought; on the contrary, so far as I can at present see, Mr. Patterson has done everything he could to forward the work entrusted to him, and though no doubt we could to forward the work entrusted to him, and though no doubt we could have done better, it is the consequence of the first breakdown of the contractors, which lost the best season of the year for carrying on the work. I have, of course, not yet had an opportunity of inspecting the line, and shall not have till I return from Port Darwin; but I trust everything is going on well, though I am extremely anxious, owing to the long time that has elapsed since the several parties on the work were communicated with.

The Government Resident having, per Young Australian, recalled Mr. MacLachlan to Port Darwin, I have arranged with Mr. Patterson for Mr. Mitchell, who came with me in the Omeo, to take his place. Mr. Mitchell is an able and energetic officer, and will, I feel assured, push the work forward.

I regret to have to communicate the loss of one of the men named Jeremiah Harcus, who was lost in the bush on the 10th December, and, although every search was made, no traces of him or his horse could be found. I have conveyed the sad intelligence to his father at Canterbury, in New South Wales, per letter this mail, a copy of which, with Mr. Patterson's report of the occurrence, is herewith forwarded for your information.

[Here Mr. Todd narrates the particulars of the death of Mr. J. Millner, which have already been published.]

The Young Australian will be off the mouth of the Roper to meet the Tararua, and after her stock and cargo are landed, and the passengers and cargo for Port Darwin are reshipped, I shall go round in her to Port Darwin, and arrange for the line between that place and the Catherines being thoroughly inspected if required. Mr. Little will probably accompany Mr. MacLachlan overland to Port Darwin for the same purpose.

In conclusion, I beg to acknowledge my great obligations to Captain Calder, the commander of the Omeo, who has now made three voyages to the Northern Territory in connexion with this undertaking. He has on each occasion rendered every assistance in his power, and in this instance has far exceeded all his previous services in the manner in which he has for the sake of the work so cordially co-operated with me in bringing the Omeo so far up a comparatively unknown river.

The Hon. Chief Secretary, Adelaide.

I have, &c.,

C. TODD.

Roper Landing, N. T., March, 1872.

Sir—I have the honor to inform you of the arrival of the Tararua at the Roper depot, eighty to 100 miles above the bar, where her stock of cargo have been safely landed.

The number of horses shipped from Port Adelaide, was seventy-seven, of which, as will be seen by Mr. Thomson's report, a copy of which is herewith annexed, seven were landed at Port Darwin—the vessel going there first, as will be explained presently—four died on the voyage, and sixty-six were landed here; of those landed in the Roper, the majority were in good condition, showing that they had been well cared for during the voyage.

I left the Omeo at Marta Island, on Saturday the 17th ult., on which day she took her final departure. It was then understood by all, Capt. Calder who had received advices from his owners respecting the probable date of the Tararua's sailing from Port Adelaide included, that the Tararua could not arrive before the end of the following week; and, as I was anxious about the safety of the horses landed from the Omeo, some fifty miles up the river, continuous and heavy rains having fallen, I determined on making for the mouth of the river, where the Young Australian lay till noon of Monday, wooding just within the river, close to the Fish Creek Arm.
Arm. Finding a very heavy freshet, I considered it absolutely necessary to get the horses up to the landing or depot as quickly as possible, and accordingly started up the river, arriving at it the next morning. The water was close up to the top of the banks, and the camp and horses were surrounded by water. Next day, Tuesday 20th, I took a lot of horses on board, and sent the Larrakeyah down to the bar to keep a look out for the Tararua. The current was so strong as we ascended the river that we did not reach the landing till 3 p.m. of the 21st. I found that the river had risen fifteen or sixteen feet, and was still fast rising at the rate of four or five feet in twenty-four hours, ultimately rising thirty-three feet, or nine feet above the jetty. It was imperatively necessary therefore to bring up the remainder of the Omeo's horses without a day's delay; and, having the Larrakeyah cruising outside the bar, I felt no uneasiness concerning the Tararua even should she arrive during my absence. The last cargo of horses was brought to the depot on Friday, and the next day I started down the river in the Young Australian, arriving at the mouth the same evening, and anchored off Maria Island on Sunday.

From Captain Pearce's verbal report I gather that the Tararua left Newcastle on February 6th, and made a very rapid passage of twelve days to Maria Island, where she arrived on the evening of Sunday the 18th, the very day on which the Young Australian left for the mouth of the Roper. Unfortunately he failed to discover the mouth of the Roper, and mistook for it a narrow channel, the entrance to which is some miles to the north, and has only two feet of water on its bar. Captain Pearce states that he followed up this creek to its junction with the Roper, but did not follow the Roper down—had he done so he could not have failed to discover his mistake, and would no doubt have seen the buoys on the bar.

Regarding this creek as the entrance to the Roper, he appears to have come to the conclusion that, the river having proved impracticable, the Omeo had gone on to Port Darwin; and, acting on this, it will be seen by his certificate annexed hereafter, that he was unable to take for the safety of the stock in his charge, and in ignorance of the fact that they would be useless at Palmerston, directed Captain Pearce to proceed to Port Darwin after a stay of two days off the Roper.

It will be seen that the mouth of the river was left without a look-out from noon on Monday till Thursday morning, and I must accept whatever blame may attach to me for this neglect; but it will be for the Government to consider whether, with ten (10) lay days provided for in the charter party, the officer in charge—Mr. Thomson—was justified in pursuing the course he did, or whether, under his instructions, he had the power to order the Tararua to proceed to Port Darwin after only two of the lay days had expired.

The Government Resident—a copy of whose letter on the subject I enclose—fortunately peremptorily refused to allow Captain Pearce to land stock, and ordered him to return to the Roper without delay. The Tararua accordingly sailed on Wednesday the 28th, and arrived off Maria Island on the following Sunday, at ten p.m., where I boarded her from the Young Australian the same night.

On Monday, March 4th, I transhipped a quantity of cargo into the Young Australian, and sent her up the river, with instructions to tow down the Bengal, into which I proposed to ship the whole of the stock and cargo, should the Tararua not be able to cross the bar. Captain Pearce meantime agreed to take the Tararua up to the landing for £250, he taking all the risk; and on the following day, Tuesday, we crossed the bar, though only just after neap tides, and got about fifty miles up the river the same day. We grounded on a mudbank, in a wide shallow creek, early on Wednesday at low water, and did not succeed in getting off till high water on Thursday afternoon. The Young Australian returned from the landing on Thursday without the Bengal—the freshet in the upper part of the river being still too strong. The Tararua finally reached the landing at 11 a.m. on Friday.

Under separate cover I enclose copy of correspondence with Captain Pearce, relative to the arrangements for conveying the Omeo's passengers and portion of cargo to Port Darwin by the Young Australian, the Tararua not having sufficient fuel to return to Port Darwin, or even to carry her to Brisbane or Newcastle. No accident having happened to the Tararua, Captain Pearce, under my agreement with Captain Calder, could not, in my opinion, insist on my taking his passengers and cargo (left by the Omeo) to Port Darwin free of charge; but in view of the whole of the circumstances, and to avoid any claim being set up for the detained occasioned by the return to the Roper, I have agreed to send them on by the Bengal, and to facilitate the return passage of the Tararua. I am employing all the hands and teams available in loading her up with wood. She will sail on Wednesday next the 28th inst.; and, on the return of the Young Australian, I shall give immediate dispatch to the Bengal, which should arrive at Port Darwin at the beginning of April, when her charter will be terminated.

With regard to the work, I regret to have to inform you, that owing to the continuous and heavy rains throughout February, and more or less during the present month, the country between the low land and the Roper without delay. The Government Resident—a copy of whose letter on the subject I enclose—fortunately peremptorily refused to allow Captain Pearce to land stock, and ordered him to return to the Roper without delay. The Tararua accordingly sailed on Wednesday the 28th, and arrived off Maria Island on the following Sunday, at ten p.m., where I boarded her from the Young Australian the same night.

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With regard to the work, I regret to have to inform you, that owing to the continuous and heavy rains throughout February, and more or less during the present month, the country between this and the line still continues impassable for teams, and dangerous even for pack-horses, so that I have been unable to establish communication with the working parties in the interior. I sent Messrs. King and Giles, two of my most experienced men, out some distance at the beginning of April, and, acting on the report of Captains Burton, I decided on sending them four weeks' rations by pack-horses, and accordingly Mr. Giles started on Saturday for the line, on McLachlan's section, with about fifty pack-horses, and a party of eight or nine men. They made a good start, but a man who has just come in from the Liverpool Hills via Larakeyah, says that the rains of the last few days have made the country as bad as ever, and I fear that Mr. Giles will have great difficulty in getting through safely.

In view of the importance of pushing on the work, which so greatly depends on the means of transport, it will be readily understood that it was only because it was imperatively necessary that I decided on diverting so large a proportion of our transport power, where the force employed was so disproportionate to the work to be performed.
Mr. Patterson and Mr. Mitchell—the latter to take Mr. McLachlan’s place, he being recalled to Port Darwin, will start in a few days, and will probably overtake Mr. Giles, and I shall stay here to superintend the dispatch of the teams, after which I shall proceed to Port Darwin.

We may hope that Messrs. Rutt, McLachlan, and Burton will complete the line as far as seventy miles south of the Daly Waters, which, supposing the southern parties from Section E to have reached Attack Creek, will leave about 200 miles of line to complete the communication. Rations and materials for this section, about 100 tons, will have to be carted from the Roper; and, for this work, we have available here seventeen bullock-teams and twenty-five horse-teams, (i.e., on the return of the pack-horses); and, after carefully considering the position, I do not feel myself justified, especially in the present condition of the country, in holding out any hope of through wire communication being established before the end of July or early in August; though, of course, long before that, an efficient estafette will be organized, which, practically, will place the Australian Colonies in telegraphic communication with the British Australian cable at Port Darwin. It will be obvious that I cannot even establish this service until I can get provisions carried south of the Daly Waters, which, up to the present time, has been impracticable.

Mr. Little will return to Port Darwin in the Bengal, which will sail in a few days, with instructions and means to form an efficient party to repair the line between Port Darwin and the Catherine, where the communication has been suspended since December. The Government Resident informs me, under date February 28, that Mr. G. G. Todd was then about to start for the purpose of repairing the break; and the communication may, before this, have been restored.

I shall go to Port Darwin in the Young Australian, and, after completing the arrangements there, I propose to return to the Roper, and travel overland to Adelaide, carefully inspecting the whole of the line, so as to leave it in good working order. Since the date of my last despatch of the 16th ultimo, I regret to have to report the death from consumption of Daniel Cavenagh, at the Roper Camp, on the 5th March, after a few days’ illness. He was engaged by Mr. Ross at Sydney.

Should my anticipations respecting the completion of the line be realized, as I have no doubt they will be, the bulk of the men now on the work will be on their way back to the Roper in August, where they should be met by a steamer to arrive some time during September; but of this I shall be able to advise you more precisely by telegraph. The remainder of the men will remain to build the stations; and the stock, what is not required for maintenance purposes, I propose shall be driven overland, if not required, or a better market should not offer in the Northern Territory.

I enclose a report from Mr. Patterson, explaining an apparent discrepancy in previous communications as to the date up to which the three interior parties are provisioned, from which it appears that inclusive of the supplies brought up by Hack’s teams, but exclusive of the 1,000 sheep purchased from Millner, were provided with flour to the 1st April, with meat to 1st February, and with other items to the 1st March. The provisions on Hack’s teams, intended for Burton, south of the Daly Waters, would carry him on to June, or for a period of nine months from the time of his leaving Port Darwin; but there is reason to fear that Mr. Hack would fail to reach him, as the wet season had well set in before he got to the Catherine.

I have, &c.,

CHARLES TODD,
Postmaster-General and Superintendent of Telegraphs, South Australia.
The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Adelaide.