

## TRACKING KANGAROO IN QUEENSLAND

By George Styles

**W**EST from Brisbane 350 miles, or rather more than half way between that city and the eastern boundary of South Australia, runs the river known by the native name Warrego.

Some few years ago, and before there was a railway anywhere within 300 miles of this stream, when the only means of travel was the squatter's horse, or the bullock dray which brought the provisions from the capital over the long and often deadly track for those patient beasts, I took the position of what was known then as a "colonial experienced" hand.

Employees of this class were usually young fellows who were sent out to sheep or cattle stations, either because they were expensive luxuries to their parents in Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide or some other commercial center, or else because they wanted to serve a kind of apprenticeship to the business of the squatter.

How it was in my case is of no consequence. I know that I found myself at the Warrego on a splendid station carrying 75,000 sheep, and it was a part of my duties to carry the weekly rations to the different shepherds' huts, of which there were nine.

Blacks were numerous in those days, many of them hardly half civilized, and they roamed over the Macleay plains on the west and northeast as far as the Expedition range.

They are all gone now; a full-blooded native is much more rare now than a white man was then, and white men hardly averaged twelve in fifty miles in any direction.

Being of an active, sport-loving disposition, I found the keenest satisfaction in the boomerang and spear-throwing feats of the natives, and in their hunts.

The kangaroo, the wallaby, the emu, the native bear and the wildcat, were our favorite game. The kangaroo then had a range practically untrammelled by any of civilization's barriers. It was my good fortune to share in many a hunt in which I was the only white man, and when the only weapons were the spear and the formidable waddy, or native club. Old Boodooma was a chief of one of the small tribes, and a

hunter the fame of whose skill in spear-throwing; and the apparently unerring instinct with which he located the game, was known for miles around. Of all trackers in the world the Australian is peerless.

Often have I seen Boodooma, while leading a party of six natives with myself, tramping the trackless bush, suddenly halt the party, and in a moment I would hear the measured hop of the kangaroo in the scrub, as his great tail-lever at each leap, beat the dry herbage. This halt was the signal for the sending out of the scouts. Not a man stirred until the leader ordered him to do so. Then usually, four of them moved off in such directions that they formed a square with the kangaroo in the center. So stealthily did they move that it was difficult for me to hear them at a distance of ten paces. I was never able to find out in what way Boodooma assigned to each man, what I may term his goal, on reaching which the attack was to be made. The bush or scrub was often too dense to see far enough ahead to pick out any particular spot for this purpose. Possibly it was a native secret, and Boodooma loved to be wiser than a white man, when he could be so.

The kangaroo is a timid animal, and a breaking twig will startle him. Hence as soon as the men started, they were on the alert to notice two things; first, whether the animal got beyond their lines so to speak, and secondly, that their actions should be noiseless and out of the kangaroo's sight. If the kangaroo is not disturbed he is a leisurely feeder.

Each man carried from three to five spears, with heads made of the terrible claw of the kangaroo's hind feet, the most formidable weapon the animal has. Gradually the distance between the men was narrowed, so that each was within spear distance of the others. Boodooma and myself were hidden behind an eucalyptus tree, where we stood for half an hour without speaking. Then the game, a female and her mate, a splendid forester or boomer, as the largest male kangaroos we there

called, came in sight. The hunters' cunning had outwitted the instinct of the brute, so that all unconscious of danger the pair were within thirty paces. They cropped the scanty herbage, and occasionally the male drew himself up to his full height, fully five feet ten, and drew down with his short fore legs, the tender ends of the branches. It was while he was at this disadvantage, that one of the blacks threw a spear. Each hunter had evidently seen the weapon as it flew, for six others followed almost simultaneously, and both animals passed wounded within five feet of our tree.

Boodooma's skilful aim threw two others, and the harsh yell of triumph of the blacks broke the silence of the bush. Pursuit followed, and both were found so near dead, half a mile distant, that it was not thought necessary to use the waddy.

The white man's method of hunting the kangaroo is very different. He hunts with dogs trained for the purpose. The dogs are a cross, in which the deerhound is prominent. It needs this trait for speed, but other blood for strength. In other words, the kangaroo dog must have a judicious mixture of speed and strength. The best kangaroo dogs I have known were smooth coated, weighing perhaps sixty to eighty pounds.

The native hunt' is of course tame as compared with the chase, and in it the danger is reduced to a minimum, as compared with horsemen and dogs, rushing through the scrub and bush, and risking collisions with trees. The hunter is following an animal which; if a male, often covers forty feet at a bound, and for a time it gains rapidly on the dogs. But it seldom escapes. It is a fierce fighter, and to be in "at the death" is, more likely than not, to include death to more than one dog.

I remember one such case when we were out with three dogs and had followed a kangaroo for perhaps half an hour, bringing it to bay in a branch of the Warrego, which ended in a morass. At this point the water was but little over a foot deep and when we heard the sounds of the dogs, indicating that the game was at bay, we drew rein, for the run was a dangerous one. Just before reaching the river, we had to cross a little plain of a few acres in breadth, extending down the stream for a couple of miles. We had hardly entered the open, when my

companion cried, "there goes Jack clawed to death."

The kangaroo had backed up against the opposite bank, which was hardly higher than his head, and as Jack; whom previous contests ought to have made more cautious, rushed for its throat, the terrible hind claw nearly disembowelled him. This frightened the other dogs, and no amount of coaxing or threatening could induce them to do more than stand at a respectful distance and yelp.

Neither of us cared to venture within reach of that claw. Firearms we had none. So I dismounted and crossed the stream, intending to attack him from the top of the bank. Before I could do this, however, the kangaroo cleared the water at one bound, and was off down the narrow plain, looking back every few seconds, as they usually do when moving fast. Our two dogs were tired out, and the boomer escaped.

There is a smaller species of the kangaroo called the wallaby, which is not as much hunted as the larger kind, though it can give a smart chase.

Emu hunting is a sport that once was common in the far interior of Australia, and a royal game it was. So far as my experience is concerned, "droves of emus" are a fictitious marvel. They are usually found in pairs, which would be expected from the monogamous nature of the bird. It prefers the plains and light timbered country to the dense bush.

The eastern spur of Stoke's range, one hundred miles west of our station, was one of our favorite hunting grounds, and Boodooma was our main henchman in our expeditions after the emu, which generally extended over a week. He followed the native method of hunting the bird with spears, but the white man who chased them with horses and dogs, bagged the most game. This Australian ostrich, as it is sometimes called, can run with surprising speed, but tires after a run of a few miles. The dogs are therefore trained to let the bird wind itself, and when it is reached, to keep out of the vicious backward and sideways kick. It can break a man's leg with that same kick, although such accidents seldom happen, because the emu hunter, whether white or black, knows the danger. It sometimes happens, though. Of one such result I was a witness. It was the last day of our camp in the range, and

Bulla Bulla, a native lad, caught sight of a male in the myall bush skirting the plain, on the edge of which we were camped. Two dogs were soon in chase, followed by Bulla and myself on horseback. After a run of perhaps a couple of miles, the bird was nearly exhausted, and one of the dogs leaped for its throat. The bird turned a little and the dog's bite was fastened on the rudimentary wing. The emu stopped for

the final struggle. The lad dismounted, intending to strike it with his waddy, but fearful of hitting the dog, he waited a moment and the bird's leg shot out. A fracture of Bulla's right shin made him drop his club and howl with pain, but the dogs secured the game, which proved to weigh about 130 pounds. They are getting scarce now. During a foot journey of over 800 miles I did not see a dozen.

## THE PRIDE OF THE MEADOWTHORPE HUNT.

By Alfred Stoddart

**B**OADICEA, Major Barclay's flea-bitten gray mare, was the best-known and best-beloved four-legged member of the Meadowthorpe Hunt. Verses had been made about her, songs had been sung about her, and her picture, painted by a celebrated artist, hung in a conspicuous place in the Meadowthorpe Hunt Club. Many and varied were the great deeds she had done, great races won, great leaps taken, great runs finished. It was Boadicea who had once taken the park gates at Halliday Hall, carrying Major Barclay's 165 pounds safely over six feet of iron palings; it was she who had jumped the toll gate on the Meadowthorpe pike one dark night in a mad race during which two other good horses were ruined and one man lamed for life; it was she whom Major Barclay had jumped over a stack of bayoneted rifles during an encampment of militia; it was she who saved the honor of the Hunt when everyone else failed—Boadicea—the pride of the Meadowthorpe "first flight," and this was how it happened.

The Cedarbrook Hunt was not very far from Meadowthorpe—that is as far as actual distance was concerned. But in prestige and "sporting blood" the Cedarbrook crowd was considerably removed from the Meadowthorpe set. Some pretty good fellows belonged to the Cedarbrook Hunt Club, and they had some good horses too. Moreover, they showed excellent sport on occasions. But it was not Meadowthorpe.

When you have said that, you have expressed it about as well as the thing can be expressed. The Meadowthorpe hard riders are perfectly willing to admit that there are other places in the world where very decent fox hunting may be had—such as Melton or Market Harboro'—don't you remember poor old Whyte Melville's Jack Sawyer?—or County Meath, or even Cedarbrook. But none of them is Meadowthorpe.

It chanced, however, one wintry day, that the Meadowthorpe hounds having chased their fox over the border of the Cedarbrook's county, fell in with the latter's hounds, apparently hot on the scent of the very same fox. It transpired that there had been two foxes in the beginning, but they had melted into one. Therefore the two packs of hounds followed suit and the Meadowthorpe and Cedarbrook club members found themselves riding side by side.

That was a great run. Mile after mile was reeled off without a turn or a twist. What a game old fellow that fox must have been!

He escaped with his brush, as he well deserved to do, but when the thing came to be talked over a curious fact was observed. Maudsley of the Cedarbrooks was up with the hounds when the fox went to earth, a yard or two in advance of the pack's yawning jaws. Then came another and still another of the Cedarbrook crowd—Hawkins, their M. F. H.; Battersby, and Murphy, their huntsman.