

AUTOBIOGRAPHY 1872-1901

1933

F.W. Staubwasser

Events and experiences during my lifetime.

I was born in the year 1872 on the 5th day of May (Sunday) at Regensburg Bavaria, Germany.

My mother's maiden name was Sophia Kolb, and she was the only daughter of the Mail Contractor between Bavaria and Italy. Her brother was managing the mail service in Italy where he died when he was only in his twenties. The mail in those days was carried per coach over the Alps, and many relays of horses were needed. It was the largest mail contract in Germany. Mother's parents were very wealthy, but very unfortunate circumstances deprived my mother of everything her parents possessed. Mother's mother died first and her father married again. Then her father passed away and her stepmother married a man who squandered all her inheritance.

As father and mother never mentioned the names of these unkind step-parents I do not know their names, but they were living in a town called Ulm on the Danube.

Mother had a very good education. Music and Art were her favourite subjects and she was also a good marksman with a revolver. She was an ideal military woman - tall and walked like a well trained soldier. She knew no fear and was a real Christian woman. During the war in 1871 she asked for a special permit to visit father at the front. It was granted to her and she saw actual fighting, but nothing prevented her from visiting father.

Father's name was Joseph. He was the son of a saddlemaster, and was born at Wertinger, Bavaria. After passing his entry examination to the University he joined the Bavarian Army. As a very young lieutenant he married, mother being still very wealthy they spent their honeymoon in Italy, and in the Bavarian Alps. Out of this happy union nine children were born, eight boys and one girl. The eldest boy, the girl and the youngest boy died in early infancy. Joseph died in 1920, Emil in 1926 (Cloncurry) and Otto fell in the great war Sept. 1914. Now a little of my dear father.

Father fought in the war 1866 on the side of Bavaria and Austria against Prussia, although having been in the thick of the battles he escaped without injury. Father often said that this war should never have occurred. He told us that during a lull in the conflict, he and other officers paid a visit to the Prussian Officers, had beer or wine with them and retired to their units to fight on again when ordered to do so

The next war he fought was in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. He then held the rank of Captain and took part in the big battles at Weisenburg, Worth, Metz and others. He received several decorations for bravery. Father did not like to speak to us about the war, but in a few letters to mother he gave some of his experiences..

1. At the battle of Weisenburg a cousin of his made a reconnoitring tour although he had been warned about the presence of Zouaves. Late in the evening an orderly

reported that the Major had not returned from his trip. My father accompanied by two soldiers went out into the dark night looking for him, and after a few hours they found a dead soldier. On turning him over they discovered that his ear and fingers were cut off and the eyes stabbed with a dagger. The body was so disfigured that recognition was impossible, but the wedding ring on one of the fingers proved that it was father's cousin who had fallen into the hands of the Zouaves.

2. On a route march from one battlefield to another a franc-tireur fired at father's soldiers. This man was promptly arrested, a court martial held and according to war laws he was condemned to death. The sentence could not be carried out at once as a shot would have caused disaster to the battalion, so the prisoner had to march with the troops. Passing through a village the prisoner asked a favour to see his wife and children before the sentence was executed. Father granted him ten minutes interview. The march was continued and when they came in sight of a forest the Franc-tireur told father that if he advanced one or two kilometres further on the waiting French Lancers would exterminate the whole battalion. Scouts were sent out and they reported that the statement by the prisoner was correct. The death sentence was cancelled and the prisoner returned to his family.
3. On another occasion a young franc-tireur was observed in a cornfield aiming his rifle at an advance guard. He was taken prisoner and the usual death sentence was passed. He was to be shot next morning. At night the prisoner asked for paper and pen; he wrote a very touching letter to his mother. Father read this letter before posting it, and was so impressed with its pathetic contents that he made up his mind to give this lad his liberty. At 6 a.m. the lad was ready to die for his country. He was blindfolded and a soldier who spoke French asked him if he had anything to say before the order was given to fire. The answer was "no" but instead of the crack of the rifle, the young Franc-tireur received a smack from father's whip and was told to run home as fast as his legs would carry him. Needless to say he did not waste much time in getting there.
4. Another extraordinary incident occurred during the battle at Woerth. A French officer and my father came face to face. They were in the act of firing off their revolvers, but neither did so. Father asked the Frenchman if he was married.

"Yes"

he replied, you are addressing a father. "So am I", said Father. They passed each other fighting others. During the occupation of Paris by the German troops, father again met this officer, who presented him with a beautiful white Arab horse.

In the Great War 1914/18 there was a German General in command of the troops fighting in the Balkan States. His name was General McKenzie. This General was attached to the battalion in command of father as a lieutenant. I have a photo of the staff.

Father was a strict disciplinarian, kin hearted and a soldier in every sense. Parliamentary or sectarian influence had no bearing on him. His country came first.

I am sure the same qualities are instilled in my son Oscar and my girls Louise,

Freda and Florence.

Father died on the 5th January, 1885.

Now we come to my doings i.e. what I did and what I did not do and what I should have done.

Like all my brothers I received my primary education in the State Schools and the secondary in the Grammar School at Regensburg.

My boyhood at home was all one could desire. At school it was not so, not so much my fault as the teachers. Most of the teachers were ante-militarists and they had no time for the sons of officers.

My brothers at all times kept well together. We were known in the town as the fighting Staubwassers. Hardly a day passed without a fight with some section of the schoolboys. In summer we used stick shaped like swords and in winter we attacked our enemies with snowballs, which we dipped in water the night before converting them into ice balls. One of these would put an enemy out of action at once; if it happened to land on his nose. Our free hours were always spent in the open, winter or summer. Sundays were spent in the forests, if it was not raining.

As my progress at the grammar school was anything but good, I left school and entered as an apprentice to the Engineering section of the Bavarian Government railway. I had the honour of being the first apprentice in the Railway Department. I received practical training in the following branches Mechanical section including the making of tools, black smithing, boiler making and the last few months were spent in the assembling department and the testing of new and repaired engines before they were delivered to the traffic department.

Trial trips were most interesting and exciting experiences. To sit in a cabin of a big steel horse and travel at the utmost speed on a straight line of 30 to 40 miles and listen to the tune of the engine, write down your own observation and that of the chief engineer is all a young apprentice could wish for. During my three year's apprenticeship I had very little time for recreation. The working hours were from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day except Saturdays when I worked from 6 a.m. to 12 noon. As I was living a long way from the Works I had to leave home at 5.15 a.m. summer and winter alike.

Twice a week I received instructions in the evening in English from an old lady. Her voice was so monotonous that I often had a good sleep while she was talking away in English.

On Sunday I attended the lectures in chemistry, physics and engineering at the technical school.

At the conclusion of the apprenticeship I was given a railway pass for a round trip (on the Bavarian Railway only). This gave me an opportunity of visiting many relatives I had not seen before.

In 1889 I attended the Engineering School at Mittweida in Saxony. Here I did not do what I should have done. I met a smart young set of students who had more money than sense, and instead of attending lectures I made bicycle tours into the beautiful mountainous country of Saxony. I also became a member of the Bavarian Club "BAVARIA". This reckless student life was of course not to my advantage, and when the final examination was to be passed I was not prepared for it.

My dear mother ordered me back to Regensburg, and she and my relatives were at their wits end what to do with me. After a few days this wise council apprenticed me to a coppersmith. Here I was to learn the art of making all kinds of boilers, pipes etc.. It was rather interesting but as it was a job without pay I did not put in my full time. Instead of beginning at 6 a.m. I started at 9 a.m. and finished at 5 p.m.

Now I had a great longing to see other countries. I had been in Saxony where I met students from all over the world and they gave me some wonderful descriptions of their country.

To enable me to wander I must first of all do duty as a soldier. How I passed the medical test I do not know, because I was by no means a strongly built lad. I selected to serve in the Navy artillery. In a few weeks I was ordered to leave for Friederichsort, a few miles from Kiel the German Navy headquarters. It was to be my first long railway trip. I arrived in Hamburg about 12 at midnight. At the station I saw several hundreds of men, women and children with their baggage awaiting to be transferred to a steamer, leaving for America. All except a few men looked very downhearted. Such a sight almost made me give up the idea of leaving Germany. Looking for a cab to take me to a hotel, I was accosted by a perfect gentleman. He wanted me to go with him to his hotel. He took my luggage, but I resented. We exchanged a few strong words which brought along a policeman. I explained the situation to him and the man was arrested. The policeman blew a whistle, and a cabman arrived and I was taken to my hotel.

On arriving at Friederichsort and before I entered the barracks I put up at the best hotel and knowing that it would be a long time before I would have the chance to have good dinner again, I ordered the very best also a bottle of rare wine. At a table next to me were two officers having their dinner - not as good as mine. At 3 p.m. I marched into the barracks and by 5 p.m. I was in the uniform of a sailor. Although the dialect and food were so much different to what I had been used to, I soon made friends, but amongst the non commissioned officers were terrible bullies. They did not like me because the commanding officer, Captain Korper took a great interest in me. As a recruit one has to do all sorts of be-littling work, such as cleaning out the room, getting the early morning coffee for yourself and room mates, in fact all the

domestic work allotted to a housemaid, but the limit was reached when one has to clean the closets. This sort of labour makes one inclined to desert. At all events I could see that the commanding officer would sooner or later give me a better position, so I did housemaid's and yardman's work to my best ability. Another very trying job was the peeling of potatoes for the cooks. During this process the poor recruits now and then gets a rotten spot thrown in his face. Of course one can never find out who threw the spot.

Once I nearly landed in the military prison, for a period of at least 5 years. The young German Emperor visited a Warship whilst coal was being taken aboard. His War Lord fell into one of the open bunkers holes and injured his leg rather severely. When I saw this mentioned in the paper I said "Serves him right" he should know that when a ship is coaling the bunkers are open". A non commissioned officer heard my remark and promptly reported it to the commanding officer. But instead of being court marshalled I was called to the Office where the Captain explained to me the serious charge, gave me a terrible dressing down and told me I could think what I liked but must not express my opinions in words. Now these enemies of mine left me alone from that day. Some were of the opinion that I was a relation of the Captain, and I allowed them to believe it.

After a few months service I was appointed as despatch orderly to Admiral Schroder. I had no more to do with the non commissioned officers, as a matter of fact if they asked me what I was doing I had the privilege to say that it was none of their business.

Having performed my duties to the satisfaction of the Admiral, I was permitted to retire in 1891 after nearly two year's service, which I did. There are a few incidents I must mention before I get into civilian clothing again.

On the 7th May, 1890 I hired a Sailing boat and with my mate August Wester I sailed out into the Baltic Sea. As neither Wester nor I knew anything about sailing we took with us a sailor, Mr Gross, who was also serving with us in the Artillery, a Pole by the name of Zagrazewsky who expressed a wish to come with us. All went well till we were well out to sea when the sail became foul on the top of the mast. As the wind and sea were rather rough we could not release it and the sailing became difficult. Our sailor artillery man said he could fix it and climbed up the mast just as the boat was riding on the top of a very big wave, and over she went. The boat had such heavy ballast in it that not even one man could cling to it, so all we could do was to swim about and keep near the boat in the hope that some lookout from one of the numerous Forts would see us fighting for our lives. The Pole could not swim so we had to keep him aloft between us. We were in the water for about one hour and a quarter when to our delight we saw a Warship making for us. A launch from this boat picked us up with their boat hooks, then righted our boat and put us back into it and told us to be more careful. We now made for the nearest landing place. As we landed there were hundreds of people waiting for us. The news of our misfortune became known all over. We were taken to a hotel where hot coffee and a good meal were served to us, which we appreciated very much.

On the 27th May another misfortune befell me. A recruit asked me to show him some of my collection of compressed gunpowder etc. Prior to going to my room I passed an officer whom I had to salute holding my cigarette the lighted end upwards in my hand. Of course unknown to me the cigarette ignited my sleeve. I took one piece of compressed Powder cakes out of a box which contained several pieces and also compressed gun cotton, and on going towards the window the powder flared up in a terrific flame, burnt that back of my uniform and inflicted a serious injury to my right hand wrist, marking me for life. I had to spend over a month in the Military hospital. Again no enquiry was held and the non commissioned were now absolutely sure I was relative of the captain.

I was rather sorry when the time came for me to say Goodbye to the Navy Artillery, because it made a man out of me, taught me to obey my superiors, even if they had less education than I had, but were proficient in their own particular profession. Also eight words once spoken to me by Captain Korper stuck in my memory for ever. I had to take on oar of one of the boats and I said I could not row. The Captain called out to me "THERE IS NO SUCH THING MAN CAN'T DO" take the oar". I did and rowed all right although I got a good many knocks in my back. After this whenever I was asked can you do this or that I say Yes and I always did my best and never failed.

On October the 8th 1891 I entered the service of the Austrian Steam Navigation Company (Danube Navigation). Here again I had to begin right from the bottom and served as fireman on the S.S. No. 3 a powerful Rescue steamer fitted with most powerful pumps and lifting gear. It was a boat on which all space was taken up by machinery etc. and so there was very little room for the housing of the crew. I had to sleep with the other fireman in a hole - that is all I could call it. The mattresses were on the floor, there were no sheets supplied, and in place of blankets we were supplied with goatskins, which had long hair on one side and looked like leather on the other. The skins still smelt of goats.

There was only hard work on this steamer. One rarely slept and lived amongst machinery, stinking goatskins and the lowest type of men. I was really glad when this horrible period came to an end. I often wondered why I did not leave this boat and run all the way home. On the 13th February I passed the examination for Marine fireman and also the preliminary exam for Assistant Engineer.

As Assistant Engineer I served on the following steamers: "GREIN" "PRESSBURG" and "FLORA". On all these steamers I had a very good time, the 1st and 2nd Engineers being very fine fellows.

Whilst on the Flora I came to Regensburg. We arrived there on a Sunday morning and as we had not sufficient oil for a special machine I had to go to our agent, whose office was right in the middle of the town. There was no time to change my clothing so in my greasy uniform I set off with two firemen to get the oil. We had to pass the square where the Military Band gave their usual Sunday music. Before

crossing the square I saw all the Officers, their wives and children so I pulled down my

greasy cap well over my eyes and passed all those who knew me well without being recognised. They even made room for this greasy fellow to pass.

On our trip back to Wien (Vienna) an accident occurred which was partly my fault and also the captains, but of course the Skipper put all the blame on me. Passing under a bridge the chimney and masts have always to be lowered; This has also to be done when even only coming near a bridge. As soon as we passed under the bridge the order was given to the Engine room "Ahead" I put the engine ahead at full speed and in a second or so I heard a terrific crash. The chimney and mast struck the bridge and fell on the Captain's bridge doing a lot of damage. The Captain said he gave the order "Ahead slow" which he did not. Neither of us had a witness, but as usual the captain came off best. Before further enquiry was made I left the Company. The river trips on the Danube were very nice and the scenery wonderful. The life aboard the steamers was also very good (as engineers). For dinner and evening meals we always had Wine or Cider free of charge.

The winter months I spent on an ice breaker. Every day with full steam ahead the steamer cleared the canal of ice.

On the 19th September 1892 I left for Munich and on the 14th October my brother Emil and I left our dear fatherland for Australia via Genoa. We left Munich about 7 a.m.. It was then very cold and snow was falling. We crossed Lake Constand (Bodensee) but owing to heavy fog saw practically nothing. All went well till night came. We were along in the compartment and Emil fell fast asleep and I became very homesick, the first time I ever experienced such a terrible feeling.

On the German Italian border the train pulled up and all passengers were ordered to enter a large room. Soon our luggage came and the Italian Customs Officers requested us to open the boxes etc. They themselves made an inspection put everything back nicely and handed the keys back. We then had to pass through a narrow door on each side of which was a Customs Officer feeling our pockets and so on. If a man looked rather too fat he was ordered to another room where he was properly searched. Ladies with a great chest have to undergo a strict examination for certain, by the lady Customs Officer. The journey through Italy was very interesting, the weather being beautiful. We passed through the great Mont Blanc tunnel at daytime and about 6 p.m. we arrived in Genoa where we put up at a hotel recommended to Emil by a lieutenant of the Bavarian Artillery.

On arrival at the hotel we were met by a host of servants in rainbow coloured uniforms. They took our luggage, even our coats from our arms. It seemed everyone wanted to carry something and I am sure if we had not moved on they would have carried us also to our room.

Our bedroom was very large and beautifully furnished. After we had washed a servant announced that dinner was ready. On entering the dining room we were shown to our seats. The waiter unfolded the serviettes and I really expected him to wipe our mouths too. All this fuss indicated to me that the daily bill of this house would be too high for our capital, so on the second day I made enquiries about the price of board and lodgings which to my horror was well over 25/- per day exclusive of tips.

Next day we left for a cheaper hotel. On leaving the Hotel Grant a servant stood on every step of the vestibule saluting and holding out a hand to receive a tip. I passed them by pretending not to see them and left with my money in my pocket, but good natured Emil gave everyone a tip. Our fourteen days stay in Genoa was very pleasant. We were out every day but a great part of the time was spent in the cemetery because the monuments were the work of famous artists.

All the musical halls were visited in the evenings also the beautiful gardens of the Villa Palavitschina was open one afternoon to visitors.

14.10.1892

After all fourteen days was a long wait for the steamer to take us to land gold and most extraordinary freedom.

Before embarking we again had to pass the Italian Customs Officers to whom we had to show our Military pass and permit to leave Germany.

We booked as steerage passengers - on the S.S. Oldenburg - but by paying 10 Pound to the Quartermaster we had for our sole use their cabin, which was situated in the middle of the boat between the Sailors quarters and the 1st Saloon. A cabin boy attended to our wants and brought us meals from the second class saloon, so we were really better off than the second class passengers, we had more freedom.

The Mediterranean Sea was very smooth. At Port Siad we visited the Moslem Temple, had a ride on donkeys round the town and beach and witnessed a native wedding.

We left Port Said at night and about 11.30 p.m. the Oldenburg ran into the bank of the canal. We were on deck at the time and the impact was rather severe. In a second women and Men in night attire rushed on deck quite panic stricken, but the strong electric light from the steamer played on to the labd showing them there was no collision. This occurrence gave me a good idea of what a panic on board ship on the high sea would be like.

Our next port of call was Colombo. Here we spent two days, but owing to the unsettled weather we were not able to see much of the town. The fruit market, the lake a little outside of the town and the museum were the only places of consequence we could visit.

From Colombo to Perth we ran into a gale. It became very rough, passengers were not allowed on deck, and we felt very sorry for them to be locked down in such hot weather.

Although this gale lasted for several days I was not seasick. When the Oldenburg left Germany, Cholera was prevalent in Hamburg and she had to fly the yellow flag. We were not allowed to enter Port at Freemantle and had to anchor at sea. The sea was running very high and the small steamer from the Port could not make fast. Passengers for Western Australia had to be hoisted up in a basket and swung out on to the steamer. We had on board a German butcher who was a very objectionable person. As he was swung out the sailors deliberately dipped the basket at the time when a large wave carried the small steamer a good distance from the liner. The poor butcher was well and truly submerged, much to the delight of the passengers, crews and even officers.

Melbourne received us in a very drastic manner. The ship was allowed to make fast on the pier but no one was allowed to land.

After tea we were informed that all passengers must go on deck. Men with pumps, boilers and long hose arrived and in a few minutes sulphur fumes were forced into every corner of the liner. Quite a number of the passengers had attacks of Asthma.

On arrival in Sydney, passengers and their luggage were landed on a quarantine island - rather a nice place. Here all luggage was disinfected in large boilers. We were informed that ammunition, matches and other things which were likely to cause damage when great heat was applied to them, must be removed. Now we did not like this idea of unpacking, so Emil made himself busy. He found out that luggage that had gone through the process was marked in a certain manner, so he marked our luggage in the same way. The officer in charge, seeing our boxes were marked and yet were amongst those that had to be treated, gave orders for his men to move our boxes to the other marked O.K. and told his men to be more careful and not to mix the luggage.

We landed in Sydney almost penniless, but we knew that a cheque was waiting for us at the German Consulate.

I did not enjoy our stay in Sydney, as I had no liking for large towns and was longing for the bush life.

We took the first steamer that left for the North. It was the good old S.S. Wodonga. Xmas day was celebrated on board between Mackay and Bowen. We had a splendid dinner and plenty of it, yes so much that the movement of the boat forced me to hang over the rail and I did what bad sailors as a rule do. This was my first experience of seasickness.

On the 27th December 1892 we landed at Townsville. We had just sufficient

time to catch the train for Charters Towers. Well I did get a surprise when I saw the Queensland steel horse. Compared with those used in Europe it looked like a toy to me.

We arrived in Charters Towers about 5 p.m. I was very disappointed. I expected to see a pretty little town surrounded by palm trees and tropical bush, whereas there were enormous hills of stones, and many little houses built of galvanised iron. Again the desire to leave at once came over me, but we must first of all find our friend Smith (Schmidt).

Mr Max Schmidt's mother lived in Munich and she told us that her son Max had a station in Queensland and that he told her in one of his letters that he would like to have one or two young men to help him in managing his station. The poor old lady wrote to him telling him that we were coming out to Australia to help him.

We put up a boarding house (Mrs Langthrees) where we made enquiries of the whereabouts of the station owned by Mr Schmidt, but nobody seemed to know anything about a Mr Schmidt.

We wrote a letter to him and addressed care of the Post Office, Charters Towers. Several days passed by without hearing from him, but one afternoon a quarts-dray pulled up in front of the boarding house a driver covered with dust enquired after us. Oh what a shock we received. It soon became apparent to us that Schmidt never possessed a station and that he had told his dear mother a deliberate untruth. Had Schmidt known what effect the lie would have upon him later on he would have acted otherwise. When his mother died she left all her money and effects to the young lady who had nursed her for years.

Schmidt and his wife lived in an iron house outside the town. We boarded with them for a few days, but upon finding out that Mrs Schmidt was not the kind of woman one would care to associate with, we left them.

We decided to find some work. There was a Mr Goudgen who did wood-carting for the mines, so we became his wood cutters. We made our camp about eight miles out of town in a very dense scrub. The tent was made from old corn bags, beds from the same material were spread on the ground. The cooking utensils consisted of a frying pan and two billycans and the working tools were axes and a shovel. Neither Emil nor I had ever swung an axe, but we managed to make a living out of it. It was hard work, the food was the plainest man could have and the drinking water which had to be brought from a spring two miles away from the camp was of an opaque colour and had a very earthy taste. Fresh bread and meat we received only twice a week. We laboured under these trying conditions for more than three months. It was a day of rejoicing when Mr Goudgen brought us a registered letter from home - money came from Rome. We broke up camp and the first thing we did when we came to town was to have a good meal. After purchasing three horses, a strong wagonette and all the necessary things required for a trip we made for the various stations. Having bought a good stock of drapery and clothing we left Charters Towers as hawkers.

Our first night in the bush was spent at Anna Branch. Arriving there late in the evening we discovered that we had left the over of the wagonette at the Towers. Emil drove back to town next day, and I remained at Anna Branch with our goods and provisions.

Soon after Emil left a number of blacks paid me a visit. They seemed to be very friendly but their dogs caused me a lot of trouble as they came round at night looking for food. The howl of the dingoes also proved very annoying. After Emil returned we gave the horses a good rest.

We always made an early start, so as to give horses and ourselves a good rest at mid-day, our next move was to Hillgrove Station. At the bush hotel near the Dalrimple Racecourse we had a rest and good dinner. Hillgrove Station was reached late in the evening and as we did no business there we left again the following day for Bluffdowns Station on the Basalt river. The homestead was very pretty and across the river was a dam holding back a great sheet of water in front of the house. This lake was a sanctuary for birds and other animals. At this station I saw real station life for the first time and I was so delighted with it that I had a longing to stay there.

I also had my first experience of bush surgery. I had a nasty boil under my arm. I mentioned it to one of the station hands who took me to the school teacher who was also the station medico. A pickle bottle was warmed and put over the boil and as the bottle became cooler and cooler the boil seemed to be drawn into it. It was barbarous treatment, but nevertheless very successful. We sold some of our goods there.

Mary Vale was the next station we called on. For miles we passed through bushes in flower. From there we returned to Charters towers via Wando Vale, Nulla Nulla, Southwick and Anna Branch. We sold nearly all our goods on this journey, but made very little profit.

At Charters Towers we purchased new stock and more than for the first journey because we were undertaking a longer trip.

We called at Hillgrove Station via Anna Branch again, then to Bluff downs Cargoon, Lolworth, Oakvale, Pentland. At Pentland there was a plague of grasshoppers and flies. The eyes of our horses had to be protected with a mosquito net. At the hotel meals were served under a mosquito net. Needless to say we did not stay there very long.

Our next destination was the Southern cross. The people around about this place were very poor, so off we went to Fanningtown, Reid River and Clair. Here we rested partly because the Burdekin River was rising and because there was splendid grass for our horses. On arriving there late in the evening we took our horses down to the river for a drink, but none of them would go near the river - even the dog refused to enter the water, so we had to bring the water in buckets up the bank for the animals. None of the animals would take a drink even in the morning, so water had to be carried

up the bank again. Emil wanted to have a swim in the river, but I advised him not to as I had a fear that either alligators or snakes were about.

At 9 a.m. the mailman passed us. He drew our attention to a monster Alligator. We were indeed very lucky because the alligator could easily have had us whilst we were filling the buckets.

Kalamine was reached in the afternoon. There were a large number of Kanakas employed here and we did very good business with them with our highly coloured handkerchiefs etc.

There was another hawker at this place but he did not seem to have the articles the southsea islander wanted, so we did all the business and naturally made him jealous. He called on us but had little to say. He inspected our wagonette and must have found out that we did not have our name and license number on the wagon. This sneak must have telephoned to the police at Ayr that we were selling goods without a license.

When we told the police that we had no license he remarked "In the name of the Queen I arrest you" and that the man in blue did. We had to pack up and get ready for the trip to Ayr.

When we arrived in Ayr it was raining in torrents. The Sergeant of Police greeted us by saying "One of you two fellows has to be locked up" Emil must have noticed that I was terribly upset for he said without hesitation "all right I'll go".

Now I was left by myself, outside the horrible police station, in torrential rain. I could not make a fire to boil water for tea so got under cover not to sleep but to curse the sneaky hawker, the police and all the surroundings. The policeman came out to me and asked me if I would like some tea. I told him he could keep his tea.

I was glad when morning came, although it was not raining the wood was too wet to make a fire with it, so I also had no breakfast. Again I was invited to have breakfast with the police, but I preferred not to dine with these men who had locked up my brother. At 10 a.m. I was told to come to the police court. There was poor Emil with the police before Magistrate and some J.P's Emil was asked if he was willing to take out a license. For having said he would he was only fined 1 Pound. As soon as the court was over, Emil invited the magistrate the jurymen and the police to come over and have a drink. He called out to me to come along but I could not make up my mind to have a drink with men who arrested us, locked Emil up and fined us 1 Pound.

When Emil came back from the hotel he informed me that he was put into a cell in which were two kanakas, but at tea time the sergeant asked him to have tea with him. He had soup, roast beef and vegetables and pudding. For breakfast he had coffee steak and onions. I only had bread and water as I thought Emil would have the same in the cell.

From Ayr we drove to Inkerman. Here we met about 100 to 150 blacks. We camped quite close to them much to our regret. They were mourning over the death of a child. They were howling all night and their wailing had a very depressing effect on us.

One of the blacks was a very intelligent chap. I bought a boomerang from him (3 feet two inches from tip to tip) also a spear and a woomera. He gave me a lesson on how to use them. The boomerang was very hard to throw owing to its size.

From Inkerman we moved to Bowen just at the time when the Queensland National Bank closed. We could not sell our goods. All we could do was to exchange our goods for meat, butter, flour etc. There were men in Bowen who gave 5/- for one Q.N. Bank note, but we did not part with any of our notes.

Having secured a good supply of provisions we moved on to Strathmore and along the Cape river to Nataldowns. Here we rested about for a week because our next journey was to be through the bush to Victoria downs. We were advised not to make this trip as it had been made by a white man once who said he would not do it again.

I think this advice made us all the more determined to do it.

We bought sufficient food from the station to last us at least 10 days. The men at Natal downs were quite right when they said we would have a rough time. We had to make more than eight crossings at the various creeks and it was hard work with pick and shovel. The creeks were dry so we had to dig in the sand for water and as the grass was scarce one had to watch the horses at night for fear they did not go too far away from our camp. One of the crossings was particularly hard to make. It took us several hours to do. When completed Emil was to drive the horses down the creek and I was to direct him. As I could not stand right in front of the crossing I took position to the left and called out to my brother to come along. As he came near the crossing my attention was drawn to a howling dingo at my back and poor Emil thought the crossing was where I stood. He drove rather fast and before I could prevent him, he took the wrong crossing. Horses, wagon and Emil fell over the steep embankment. Nobody was hurt but the pole of the wagon broke in two places. We exchanged a few compliments, but there was no time for argument. We had to get the wagon out of the creek because a storm was working up. We worked together, made a new pole and drove through the creek on to the high ground.

After six days journey we crossed the last creek. Now the question was what direction were we to take so looked about for tracks human or horses or even cattle tracks would have been welcome. After an hour or so we came across the tracks of shod horses. They were quite fresh so we followed these tracks and by night came upon an outstation. There was no light in the house, but in the kitchen we saw four men sitting round a fire. We did not like the look of them so retired to our wagon and

lit a fire. I took some sweet potatoes out of the garden and had boiled corn beef and sweet potatoes, a dish every bush man appreciates.

Next morning we left very early without being noticed by the men. In three days time we pulled up at Victoria downs. The manger was very good to us, permitting us to let our horses loose in a good grass paddock. We told him that we would show him our goods in the morning. When morning came the nice manager was converted into a positive nasty uncouth being. He told us that our horses were confiscated till the arrival of the police. He would tell us no more. We were quite helpless and all we could do was to await events.

The police arrived, God knows where from. We were asked if we had any objection if he made a search and our reply was that he could do as he pleased.

After the search the manager and policeman had a conversation and we were told that we could leave the station and that the horses would be brought to us. Whilst waiting one of the station hands explained all the mystery to us. We informed him that we could clear up this matter, but as we had been treated so shamefully we declined to give any information that would lead to the apprehension of the men they were seeking.

Just before we left the manager and the policeman approached us in quite a different manner and almost got on their knees when asking for information. Now we let them see that we were of very much different and better breed than they were. We gave them all the information they needed. It seems that the men we saw in the out kitchen were some sort of desperadoes. They broke into the house by removing some of the floor boards, helped themselves to tobacco, guns, ammunition, some little money left by the manager and a quantity of preserved fruit, and food.

The police failed to find the men because they left the station not by road but entered the creek so no person could follow their tracks. The manager's wife asked us to come over to the store. She gave us cakes, eggs, fruit and preserved vegetables and also apologised on behalf of her husband for his rudeness.

We now made our way back to Charters Towers via Mount Leyshon. At the last named place we did some mining in the creek and found a few nice gold nuggets. This inspired us to give up hawking and go in for mining. At the Mount Leyshon Battery I was employed for a few weeks as a fitter. Our third trip was undertaken with the intention of making our fortune out of gold mining. It brought us again to Anna Branch then to Southwick station. From here we lost our way to Mary Vale and for three days were practically without water. Our poor horses were in a bad way. On the third day (evening) we let our horses go without hobbles to see if they could find water. Sure enough they kept on at a fair pace in one particular direction. We followed them and in about an hour's time came to a running creek. At some considerable distance we saw a horse with a pack saddle hanging between its front and hind legs. As it was dark we could not investigate so waited till next morning but to our regret no horse could be seen next morning.

Our map indicated that we must be near Mary Vale and so it was that we arrived at the station about noon. Here we reported that we had seen a saddled horse without a stockman. The stockman went out to look for the horse and returned with it late in the evening. It was the packhorse of the mailman but the mailman could not be seen. We heard afterwards that the mailman had been found dead in the bush.

The second day after leaving Victoria Downs we camped in a very dense scrub with large tee trees. Owing to the scarcity of grass the horses had to be hobbled very short. Whilst sleeping in the wagon Emil woke and heard the horses galloping. He left camp without telling me. About 1 a.m. I woke and found that Emil had left camp. My calls were not answered so I fired three shots in the air and still there was no reply. We always arranged that if one of us should get lost in the bush three shots from a revolver were to be fired and when answered a single shot was to be fired every 10 minutes so as to give the lost one the direction of the camp. I was now certain that Emil must have gone after the horses as I did not even hear their bells. Sitting near the fire and wondering what I could do, an idea suddenly came into my head. I fired a tall tee tree. In a second it was an enormous torch. Emil saw it and about 4 a.m. he arrived with the horses.

From Maryvale we went direct to Christmas Creek on the upper Burdekin. There we sold our wagonette, and purchased pack saddles and riding saddles. Now it was much easier for us to go to the various goldfields.

Our first field was the Dry River. We had to leave our horses about 15 miles south of the river as the nature of the ground made it impossible for horses to live on. This Dry river was in reality a dry river. There was not a sign of water anywhere. An old miner who was the only living person there informed us that the report in the paper was a shameful lie and he himself could not make a living there.

We made a trial, washed sand here and there but never found a speck of gold. Early next morning we returned over this rough stony country to the place where we had left our horses. We had no difficulty in finding them as there was an abundance of good grass and good water.

On the road we met a teamster who admired my two horses. He made an offer i.e. he said he would give me 4 Pound-10-0 and two other horses for my two horses, so I agreed to the bargain.

The new saddle horse was a stockman's horse and I soon found this out. We came upon a mob of cattle driven by stockmen, and when my horse heard the men yelling and the cattle running in one direction it made off in a gallop after the cattle. I had no control over it, it simply did its station work.

Nearing Percyvale I was stricken with a severe attack of diarrhoea, so we had to pitch camp for a few days. Some blacks paid us a visit and one of them was a medicine man, at least it seems so because he said to me "poor fellow sick" me make him all right". Next day he returned with some little roots which I had to chew, and to my surprise a cure was effected. On reaching the Percy we discovered that Typhoid was rampant amongst the miners and several deaths had occurred, so our stay there

was very short. Here for the first time I saw how funerals are conducted on a mining field in the bush. The coffin was placed on a dray and the friends of the deceased sat on the coffin smoking pipes and telling all the good and bad doings of the dead man. When they returned, the hotel was visited and again whilst drinking beer and spirit's the past life of the deceased was mentioned and the whole ceremony ended with a fight or two.

We decided to make for the Big Reef via Carpentaria Downs.

I worked at the Big Reef Crushing battery as engine driver. It was the hardest work in my life. I had to fire one boiler with 5 feet long timber and the other with 4 feet wood, see to the engine and attend to all machinery and pumps. A Mr Carius was manager and he was a man who thought he knew everything and all other men were fools. He informed me one day that I had insufficient water in the boilers and this and that was wrong. We had a very heated argument which ended in my resigning at once and telling him to take my shift over. As he could not even stop the engine he had to look for the other engine driver, thereby exposing himself as a fool.

In a few days I was engaged at a mine in Durham. I had to drive the winding engine only 4 hours a day and received a whole days pay but to my regret the job did not last long.

Emil remained at the big Reef having been employed as a miner. I returned to camp and after a few days decided to return to Charters Towers, to see a doctor as I had not been in the best of health.

At the big Reef we camped near the dam, our food consisted mostly of wild ducks, pigs and pigeons, dried vegetables etc. Sundays were spent in hunting kangaroos.

Before I left for the South our horses were stolen. The black fellow who had been looking after our camp and horses could not find them so Emil and I set out to get them and one evening we came across a camp in a dense bush. Four or five men were there and also our horses. We reported this to the police at Georgetown but for some unknown reason they did not come to help us get the horses. There was nothing else to do but to take the law in our own hands. One morning early Emil paid a visit to these horse thieves whilst I remained some distance on a little hill with my gun ready to use should they attack Emil. Seeing that we meant business they handed over the horses. Returning to our camp, our black fellow and his wife told us that a tribe of black fellows were coming to kill them. We put those two under our bunks and awaited the arrival of the mob. Soon after our breakfast about 30 niggers with spears and other weapons came along asking where the two blacks were. We advised them to clear out or we may use our guns. They complied with our request, but all that night we heard footsteps. Early next morning our two black friends took to the bush and we never saw them again. Now came the time to make for Charters Towers. Emil accompanied me as far as the foot of the Range, I facing south Emil north we had a little conversation but when it came to say Goodbye neither of us could do so, so we parted in selence and with a firm shake of hands. Now I was alone with my two horses, with a long journey in front of me. As it had been raining for several days

the travelling was all but pleasant. My poor horses often sank up to their bellies in the sodden ground. The first night I camped under a tree and owing to the heavy rain I had to go without a cup of hot tea. Arriving at the Percy I put up at the hotel to have a good meal and dry bunk to sleep on. I left the Percy early next morning in very heavy rain. Late that day I arrived at an outstation and camped on the main road, fixing bells and hobbles on the horses. After having a hot meal I made my bed under a tree. At 9 p.m. the Head stockman, a real bully woke me and demanded that I take off the bells from my horses. I pointblank refused to do so, and warned him not to interfere with my horses, as they like myself were on the highway and not on station property. Next morning I called on the outstation purchased some rations, also some horseshoes. I received permission to use the blacksmith's shop I commenced shoeing my horses. The packhorse submitted to the amateur shoeing but the saddlee horse kicked me into the corner of the shop. The kind carpenter of the station finished the shoeing. My next camp was a few miles off the track. I saw in the distance a roof made of bushes. It was a branding camp where there was a nice well with very cool water which had rather a nasty taste. The grass was more than 3 feet high so I had to be very careful when making a fire. Here I experienced one of the most restless nights in all my life. Dingoes, owls and other animals kept up a most mournful concert. I left the place without filling my waterbag as I discovered that the nasty taste of the gloriously cool water was due to a dead dingo floating about.

Whilst on the road heavy rain again set in and at dark I arrived at the out station of Christmas Hill. An old stockman, smoking his pipe sat in front of the fire. I addressed him in the usual manner "Hello is the billy boiling. The following reply in a scotch dialect was flung at me "Damn you fellows wanting tea, get to hell out of that" I replied "same to you". You might tell me where I can camp out of the wet". Scoty pointed to a hill saying the blacks were camped there last week but have left. I rode up the hill, found some deserted black fellows huts made out of the bark of trees. I entered one of them and found in it a bunk made out of bark and made myself as comfortable as possible with the wet saddle as my pillow. The whole place smelt of blacks but nevertheless I was glad to have a rest after a long ride and to be out of the rain. Early next morning I left for Oakpark Station. Owing to the incessant rain I could not make Oakpark this day, so was obliged to camp under a tree in a sitting position. My sleep was often disturbed as I found it hard to keep my balance whilst in a land of dreams. I arrived at Oakparks about noon. The owner of this station, Mr Nimo, was a gentleman. He would not let me go to Lindhurst, as the land between the two stations was under water. I had to wait for the mailman and go with him. During my three days stay I made a sailing boat out of galvanised iron for Mr Nimo's little son. I also did some repairing to the roof and other things. The mailman and I left Oak Parks before sunrise. I was glad I had a companion on this trip. The first crossing of a creek was very dangerous. My packhorse was carried down the creek and had great difficulty in landing. At about 10 a.m. we came across a dray up to the body in water. On boxes on the dray a man, his wife and three young children were camping. We asked them if they needed any help. All they wanted was some matches with which to make a fire on the top of the stump (an old tree). They had no warm food or drink for over a week as the matches had been lost. Arriving at Lyndhurst the mailman sent a telephone message to Oak Park to send some men and horses to the marooned teamster.

The weather now cleared up and Lyndhurst began mustering and branding. Mr Barnes (owner) asked me if I would like to earn some money. I accepted his offer at once. I was then asked if I every helped spraying (do not know if this is correctly spelt). Without hesitation I said yes, but I recall I did not know what it was or what had to be done. In the evening I paid a visit to the black station hands and from them I obtained the information I wanted. Work began next morning at 6 a.m. Mr Barnes asked me what I was best at. I told him the taring would suit me best. Well I must say I carried out my task to the satisfaction of Mr Barnes but I was told to be more observant after a cow had been speyed and well tarred by me turned round and charged me. I just reached the top of the stockade as the infuriated cow crashed with full force into the middle rail, breaking her two horns. I was sorry when the job was finished as I took a great liking to station work. The trip from Lyndhurst to Wandovale was uneventful and very lonely excepting about 8 miles before Wandovale. My packhorse showed signs of laziness and stubbornness so I used my stock whip more freely on him and in some inexplicable manner the whip got under his tail with the result that he bolted and wrenched the ship handle out of my hand. I could not follow the bolting beast as the contents of the packsaddle were strewn about in all directions. Arriving at Wandovale I found my horse in a stockade, having arrived there a few hours before me.

The manager and his wife were very kind to me and gave me excellent tea and breakfast and also on leaving a bag of oranges. I was again forced to camp under some trees. The trip from Wandovale to Nulla Nulla could not be made in one day. I did not call at Nulla Nulla but camped a few miles further south in a beautiful spot. Southwick was the next station and here I had to purchase some rations and left next morning for Charters Towers. A stockman from Southwick had to take some horses to Charters Towers so we travelled together. The Annabranck creek was in flood and pack horses and others would not enter the water. My saddle horse seemed to be the only one that was game to cross the creek but when none of the other horses would follow it turned round again. I made a second attempt without success. The stockman now made use of his whip on my horse but instead of making the crossing the beast threw me into the water and galloped off into the bush. It was getting dark when we were all together again and it was decided to cross the creek further down. I was not in favour of this suggestion as I knew that a man had lost his life in the quick sands there only a few months ago.

My pack horse and the horses of the station we were driving entered the water quite willingly but when in midstream they all disappeared. We had got into quick sand. There was a terrible commotion and the poor beasts struggled for life. The stockman called out to me to get off my horse and hold on to the stirrup. We all went right under but the horses ploughed through dragging us along with them. It was my first experience of quick sand and I hope my last.

We reached the Anna branch Hotel about 10 p.m., had some salt beef, bread and butter and tea as black as ink and were charged 2/- each. As the charge of a bed was 5/- I could not avail myself of the luxury of a nice warm bed as I had only 3/- left. Again I had to camp under a tree this time standing up. At about 5 a.m. I made a fire and had hot bread and tea with condensed milk. I did not wait for the stockman to resume the journey and arrived at Charters Towers about noon. Good old Mrs Goudgin made me welcome and gave me a hot irish stew etc.

I consulted Dr Hair and soon recovered under his treatment. Idle life was no good to me. I could not get employment as a fitter so on seeing an advertisement in the paper for a yardman at an hotel I applied for the position and was engaged. It was at the Miners Arm Hotel and it was not a nice place. I left to take another yardman's at the Oak hotel.

Having met Dr Hair he offered me the position as warder at the Charters Towers Hospital and I accepted same.

Dr Hair was exceedingly good to me and advised me to go in for dispensing.

My position at the hospital was not as an ordinary warder. I had care of the operating room, the instruments, was required to attend to out patients, perform dresser's duties, attend at all operations, post mortem's etc. On my free evenings I received tuition in dispensing at the Medical Hall from Mr J. Wilkinson.

I had not been long in Charters before I met at Mrs Goudgin's place a little girl with long brown hair, large brown eyes and no shoes or stockings. In her hand she was holding a bridle and was on her way to look for her pony. Our eyes met and the arrow fired by little Amour pierced our hearts. It seems that we were not the only ones who felt that we must meet again for Mrs Goudgin arranged for a party in a few days, and at a game of cards Miss Jeannie Harrison and I were partners. Our courtship was not approved of by Mrs Fowler and all sorts of strategy had to be resorted to so as to enable us to flirt. We weathered all the numerous storms, and when I resigned from the staff of the Charters Towers Hospital, we received the approval of Mr and Mrs Fowler to become engaged.

One of our secret meetings was exposed by my little white foxy. One beautiful night we were sitting on the rocks near Jean's house. I made my departure when we saw Mr and Mrs Fowler returning from church, but my foxy had not made up his mind who he would follow and this little delay proved fatal. Foxy was seen by Jean's mother and the maternal temper rose to a high degree. Poor little Jean was ordered to her room and as the door was closed with rather unusual force a box of sweets fell from the sill. Maternal temper now rose to its utmost. The absolute proof that Fred had been there was now on the table.

On another occasion I met Mr Fowler on the road after leaving my little girl at about 9.30 p.m. on a Sunday. Knowing that he detested drunken men I imitated one and was so successful in this imitation that Mr Fowler did not recognise me. I heard

him say “disgusting brute”.

Dr F. Hare who was Inspector General of the Queensland Hospitals offered me the position as dispenser of the Diamantina Hospital. I resigned from the staff of the Charters Towers Hospital and entered the service at the Medical Hall. To become a competent dispenser I worked seven days a week, week days from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m., Saturdays 8 a.m. to 12 noon and again from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. and on Sundays from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

My loyalty to my superiors has been rewarded. Dr Hare, Dr Huxtable, Dr Forrest, Dr Lister, Dr Vorse, Dr Gladworthy and Mr J. Wilkinson took a great interest in me and helped me in all my undertakings.

I left Charters Towers with a very sad heart, leaving behind me the girl I loved so much and so many good friends.

Brisbane did not appeal to me at all. I hated Queen Street because I could not sit down on the kerbstone when waiting for the tram, we used to do at Charters Towers if tired after going up and down the main steets. At the Diamantina I met Miss Chatfield and from the first day I could see that we would work well together.

Dr Francis Hair, my greatest benefactor since I left Germany, became Medical Superintendent of the Diamantina Hospital. He was one of those English gentlemen who would do his utmost to help others to rise in the profession they had adopted.

Copy given to O.D. Harris, by Mr Staubwasser’s grandson (Dr. Michael Harrison) in 2000.