

Stephenson returned early with two of the mounted police. To his most important question, "What water was to be found lower down in the river, the reply was, 'Plenty, and a *flood coming down* from the Turon mountains.' The two policemen said that they had travelled twenty miles with it on the day previous, and that it would still take some time to arrive near our camp. . . . In the afternoon, two of the men taking a walk up the river, reported on their return, that the flood poured in upon them when in the river-bed so suddenly, that they narrowly escaped it. Still the bed of the Macquarie before our camp continued so dry and silent, that I could scarcely believe the flood coming to be real, and so near to us, who had been put to so many shifts for the want of water. Towards evening I stationed a man with a gun a little way up the river, with orders to fire on the flood's appearance, that I might have time to run and witness what I so much wished to see, as well from curiosity as from urgent need. The shades of evening came, however, but no flood, and the man on the look-out returned to the camp. Some hours later, and after the moon had risen, a murmuring sound, like that of a distant waterfall, mingled with occasional cracks, as of breaking timber, drew our attention, and I hastened to the river-bank. By very slow degrees the sound grew louder, and at length so audible as to draw various persons besides from the camp to the river-side. Still no flood appeared, although its approach was indicated by the occasional rending of trees with a loud noise. Such a phænomenon in a most serene moonlight night was new to us all. At length the rushing sound of waters, and loud cracking of timber, announced that the flood was in the next bend. It rushed into our sight, glittering in the moonbeams, a moving cataract, tossing before it ancient trees, and snapping them against its banks. It was preceded by a point of meandering water, picking its way, like a thing of life, through the deepest parts of the dark, dry and shady bed, of what thus again became a flowing river. By my party, situated as we were at that time, beating about the country, and impeded in our journey solely by the almost total absence of water,—suffering excessively from thirst and extreme heat,—I am convinced the scene never can be forgotten. Here came at once abundance, the produce of storms in the far-off mountains that overlooked our homes. . . . The river gradually filled up the channel nearly bank-high, while the living cataract travelled onward much slower than I had expected to see it; so slowly, indeed, that more than an hour after its first arrival the sweet music of the head of the flood was distinctly audible, as the murmur of waters and diapason crash of logs travelled slowly through the tortuous windings. . . . The next morning the river had risen to within six feet of the top of its banks, and poured its turbid waters along in fulness and strength, but no longer with noise. All night that body of water had been in motion downwards, and seemed to me enough to deluge the whole country."

So little has as yet been ascertained respecting the climatology of western, north-western and northern Australia, that it is not known whether they also are subject to these tremendous visitations; but as we have reason to believe that the intertropical parts of the country are favoured with a more constant supply of rain as well as a lower degree of temperature, it is most probable that they do not there occur.

Independently of the vast accession of birds attracted by the great supply of food, as mentioned above, there are many species which make regular migrations, visiting the southern parts of the continent and Van Diemen's Land during the months of summer, for the purpose of breeding and rearing their progeny, and which retire again northwards on the approach of winter, following in fact the same law which governs the migrations of the species inhabiting similar latitudes of the Old World. There are also periods when some