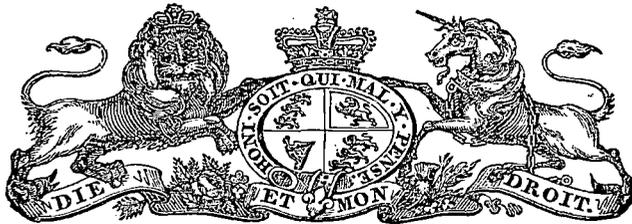


(No. 53.)



1896.

SESSION II.

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

ROUTE TO THE WEST COAST:

Report of Mr. George Campbell Meredith on the Track from the
Navigable Waters of the Gordon River to its junction with the
Serpentine River.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.

Cost of printing—15s.



Hobart, 16th November, 1896.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit to you the following Report of my efforts to find a line of country on the north side of the River Gordon, from the Franklin River to any accessible point above the junction of the Serpentine with the Gordon, along which a track or road can be made, which, I am pleased to say, have been attended with success.

Leaving here in the s.s. *Glenelg* on the 3rd of October, I arrived at Strahan on the following evening, and, through the courtesy of Captain Miles, was enabled to arrange for a steam launch to take me, men, and baggage, to the head of the navigable waters of the Gordon on Tuesday, the 6th, arriving there at 2.30 P.M. that day.

It was not until Monday, the 12th, that I was enabled to make a fair start from my depôt, which was formed about one mile above the junction of the Franklin and Gordon, when I took by boat a load of rations and tent to a spot about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles above where the "Sprent" comes into the Gordon. It was my intention to have gone higher, but the river being high for boating, progress was slow, and rain beginning to fall, I put my rations under cover while they were dry. Finding the course of the river very tortuous, and the banks on the north side consisting principally of limestone cliffs with deep ravines, through which the small creeks run, I abandoned the idea of attempting to get a track along the river.

The next morning—the 13th—I started to cut a track through the scrub and to feel my way. By making some easting, got a good view of country which, although horribly scrubbed, was level. On Saturday, the 24th, was opposite where I had left tent and tucker on the 12th. Shifted camp to end track, broke through to where the supplies were, and brought them out. From this till Monday, the 2nd November, continued chopping my way through on a south-east course, running under and gradually ascending a sandstone range, when I came to a break in the range. I had shifted camp twice during this time, and worked seven days a week all through.

On this day, leaving the men to log up a level place to sleep on, I continued breaking through for about two hours, when I found myself on the brink of an enormous chasm, through which the river was roaring at the bottom, about 300 feet below me. On going up a razor-backed spur for 400 feet I got the first view since starting, and found I was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles above the Serpentine, which could be traced very nearly to Lake Pedder.

During the 3rd and 4th I was engaged in cutting round the north side of this hill, and by following a large stream for the last half mile, came upon the Gordon where a suspension bridge could be put across, the approach on my side being easy, and on the opposite side a low spur runs right to the river, ending with a cliff just high enough to carry one end of a bridge clear above flood, the width of the river being about four chains from cliff to cliff.

The whole length of the track runs on easy country, and, if desired, a railway grade could be put all the way. The first six miles is principally through country that would have to be corduroyed, for which there is any amount of material. The rest is on sandstone, and would only require forming to make a good road.

Although the line is a good one I cannot recommend its adoption, because, from what I have learnt during the time I was cutting it and on my return journey, I am fully satisfied that a line equally good, if not better, can be obtained on the south side of the Gordon, which would obviate the necessity for bridging that river and the Franklin, both of which would be expensive works. On the south side the only bridge of any consequence would be one across the Serpentine, which would only be a trifle as compared to either of the others.

Distance, about 16 miles from Franklin River to point of contact with Gordon River, about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles above the junction of Serpentine River.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

GEORGE MEREDITH.

The Honorable the Minister of Lands, Hobart.