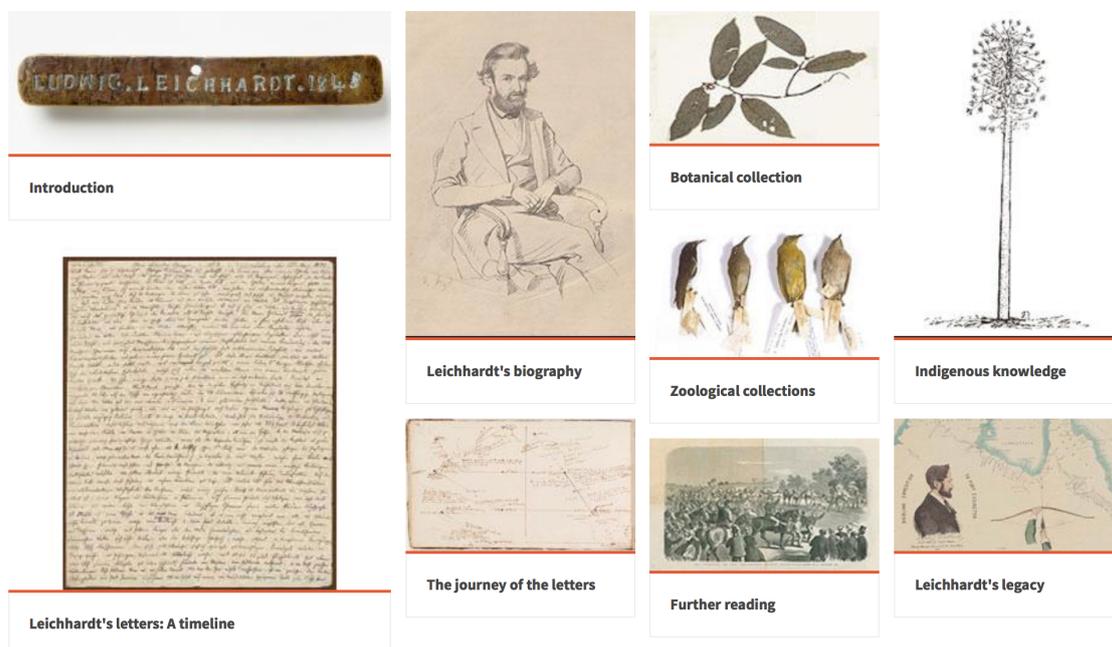


## Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia

Heike Hartmann

Seventeen letters sent by Ludwig Leichhardt from 1842–48 vividly depict his stay in Australia. In this exhibition curated by historian Heike Hartmann, we are introducing a brand new English translation of the letters and a timeline tool with which to view those, this virtual exhibition documents Leichhardt's adventurous stay in Australia and opens up new perspectives for the environmental history of the land, Europeans' engagement with its indigenous population, and international scientific networks at the time. Click [here](#) to read the letters.



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## About

Ludwig Leichhardt's life is inextricably bound with the European exploration of Australia. His first expedition (1844–1845) found a viable route between the east and north coasts of the colony and established Leichhardt's reputation as the “Prince of Explorers.” In 1848 he set out on an expedition to cross the continent from east to west; the entire expedition party disappeared and was never found. Ludwig Leichhardt's travelogue and his natural history collections are of both scientific and historic importance; his mysterious fate has turned him into a figure of legend. Seventeen letters sent by Leichhardt from Australia to his relatives between 1842 and 1848 document his stay in Australia and open up new perspectives for the environmental history of the land.

In 1907 the geophysicist Georg von Neumayer gave the collection of letters to the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. The letters were digitized by the Deutsches Museum, translated by Nadine Zimmerli with reference to the German transcription (Aurousseau 1968), and proofread and edited by Brenda Black.

### About the author

Heike Hartmann is a museum curator and researcher in the field of cultural studies with a focus on visual culture, postcolonial criticism, and the transcultural history of science and archives. She was a member of the ATN-DAAD research project “Leichhardt's Legacies: Locating the Disappeared,” curator of the exhibition “‘Gut möglich, dass meine Knochen für immer auf den Ebenen dieser Kolonie bleichen werden’: Der Australienforscher Ludwig Leichhardt” (Marstall Schloss Branitz, Cottbus, 2013), and editor of the accompanying volume *Ludwig Leichhardt: Spuren eines Verschollenen*.

Heike Hartmann is currently curating an exhibition on German colonialism at Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin. She has contributed to a number of exhibitions, including *Bilder verkehren: Postkarten in der visuellen Kultur des deutschen Kolonialismus* (2005) and *Karl May—Imaginary Journeys* (2007), and she is coeditor of the volume *Menschen—Orte—Zeiten: Fotografie am Deutschen Historischen Museum* (2009).

### Acknowledgments

Heike Hartmann curated the exhibition and wrote the commentaries. She is grateful to all those who contributed their time and knowledge during the research process, in particular:

- Dr. Robert Vogt, Head of Herbarium Collections, Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Freie Universität Berlin
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- Dr. Clemency Fisher, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museums Liverpool
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Chapter: About

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- Gabrielle O’Loughlin, Senior Project Officer, Cultural Program, Kakadu National Park
- Pina Giuliani, Research Officer, Museums and Art Galleries Northern Territory, Department of Arts and Museums, Northern Territory Government
- Kirsten Blair, Community and International Liaison, Gundjehmi Aboriginal Corporation

and

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- The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, and its employees
- everyone else who loaned the books and documents that have made this exhibition possible

as well as

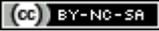
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 2015 Heike Hartmann

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## Introduction



Portrait of Dr. Leichhardt, the explorer. Illustration by William Nicholas (1807–1854), in: *Heads of the People: An Illustrated Journal of Literature, Whims and Oddities*, Sydney, 1847.

William Nicholas, 1847, *Portrait of Dr. Leichhardt, the explorer*, National Library of Australia, Rex Nan Kivell Collection; NK720/40.



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During the colonial period, Australia embodied the last unexplored frontier for many naturalists, including Prussian-born Ludwig Leichhardt, who undertook three expeditions into the continent's interior. His first expedition (1844–45) started from Moreton Bay and ended in Port Essington; it took 15 months and covered some 4,800 kilometers of unexplored terrain. The expedition proved the existence of a viable route between the east and north coasts of the colony and established Leichhardt's reputation as the "Prince of Explorers." "We shall see what the people say when I suddenly emerge from the grave with my pockets full of mountains, mountain ranges, rivers, and streams," the explorer wrote in a letter on his way back to Sydney ([letter to F. A.](#)

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

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[Schmalfuß, 24 January 1846](#)); the public had already given him up for dead.

His next plan—becoming the first European to cross the continent from east to west—was unsuccessful. The first attempt had to be broken off, and he never returned from his second attempt: the entire expedition party disappeared in 1848 and its fate has never been discovered.

Leichhardt's accounts of his travels, his scientific observations, and his natural history collections were well received during his lifetime. His expedition to Port Essington secured him a place in history; his mysterious fate made him into a figure of legend. The first expedition in search of him in 1852 was followed by numerous others. Although the far reaches of Australia continued to be explored and settled during the decades that followed, Leichhardt's unknown fate was never completely forgotten. In the 1860s the Australian colonies competed to send a successful expedition across the continent from south to north. Starting in 1872, explorers such as Ernest Giles, John Forrest, and Peter Warburton made a name for themselves with their untiring attempts to cross the deserts of central Australia. Leichhardt, the lost explorer, was a reminder of the limits of this geographical knowledge; his final resting place remains an object of speculation today.



This nameplate from one of Leichhardt's weapons is the only undisputed relic of the missing 1848 expedition.

Photo by Dragi Markovic. Courtesy of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

[View image source](#).

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Leichhardt has enjoyed a vivid afterlife in public memory: his name has become integrated into botanical and zoological nomenclature; biographies and historical and literary works draw a portrait that is often full of contradictions. The importance given to his work is influenced by the changing political relations between Germany and Australia, but generations of fans have continued to keep his memory alive. Most recently, he appeared on the diplomatic stage as a symbol of German-Australian ties. A number of initiatives in 2013

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celebrating the 200th anniversary of Leichhardt's birth made him known to a wider public and contributed to an increase in scholarship on aspects of his life and legacy ranging across biographical studies, ecology, history of science, and cultural studies.

Ludwig Leichhardt's letters to his family form the basis for this virtual exhibition; they are held today in the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. The [17 letters](#) that Leichhardt sent from Australia to his relatives between 23 March 1842 and 22 February 1848 are presented here in digital form and accompanied by an English translation. The exhibition sheds light on the context of their creation and reception; additional material and commentaries draw connections between Ludwig Leichhardt and the environmental history of Australia.

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-writte-n-aboard-ship>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/chronological-list-ludwig-leichhardts-letters>

**Websites linked in image captions:**

- <http://www.nma.gov.au/collections/highlights/the-leichhardt-nameplate>

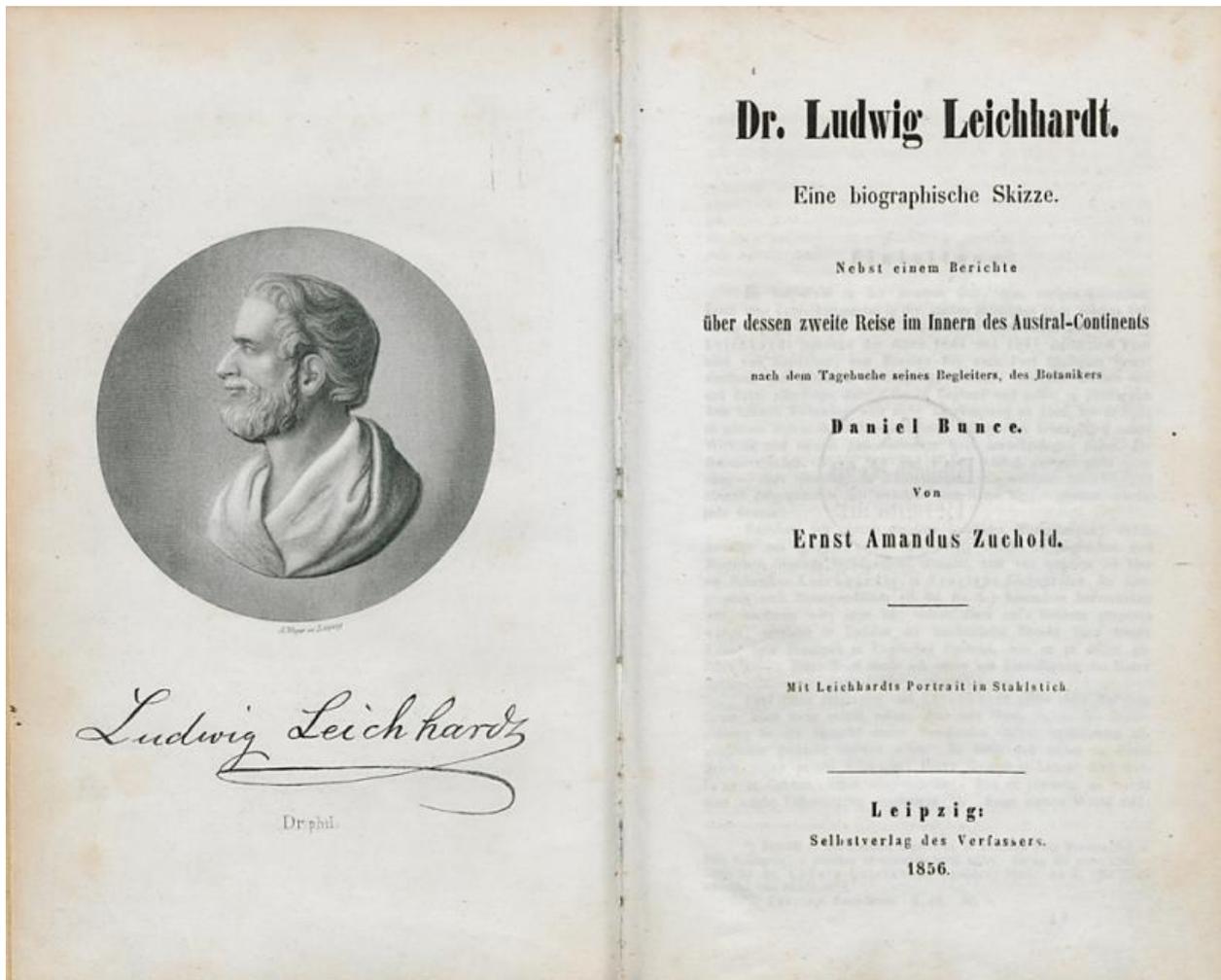
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## Through the unknown reaches of Australia



*Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt: Eine biographische Skizze* by Ernst Amandus Zuchold (1856). Little is known about Leichhardt's first biographer or his reasons for writing. In 1851 Zuchold had already published a German translation of Leichhardt's account of the Port Essington expedition.

Frontispiece and title page of the self-published "biographical sketch" *Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt: Eine biographische Skizze: Nebst einem Berichte über dessen zweite Reise im Innern des Austral-Continents nach dem Tagebuche seines Begleiters, des Botanikers Daniel Bunce* by Ernst Amandus Zuchold (Leipzig, 1856).

Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. Signatur Zu 2987.

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Ludwig Leichhardt's life is inextricably bound with the European exploration of Australia. While the end of his life on his last expedition into the interior of the continent in 1848 remains as mysterious as ever, his biography as a whole is well known. In 1856, Ernst Amandus Zuchold published the first biographical study of Leichhardt's life in his native Germany. In the 1860s, the German zoologist Gerard Krefft's biographical sketch chronicled

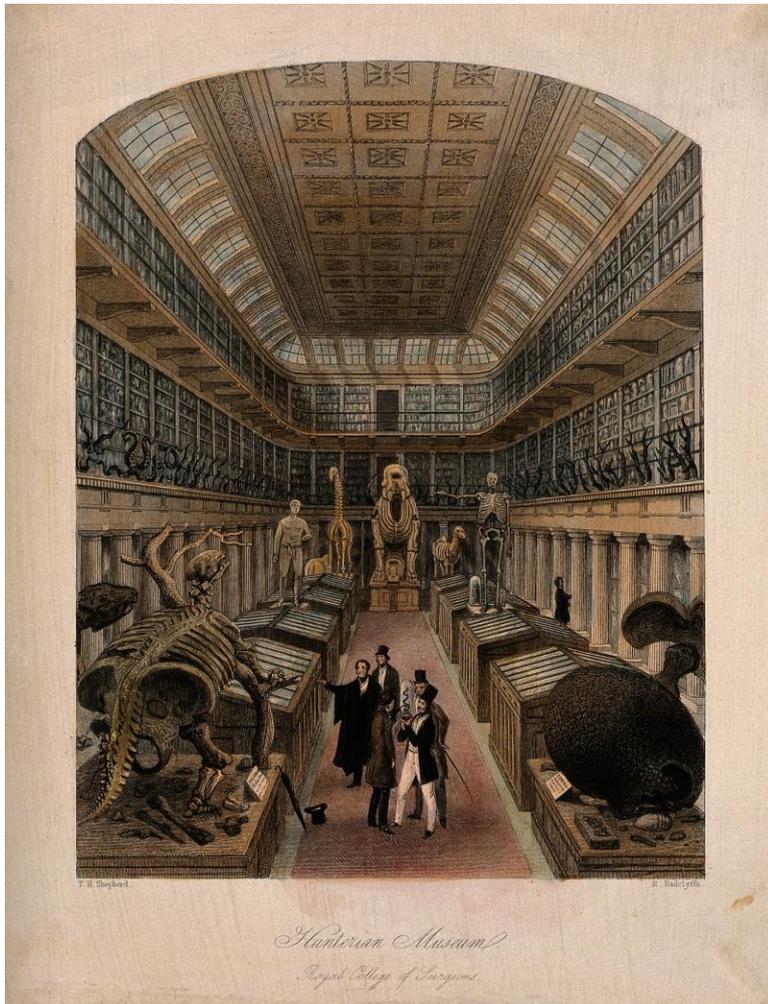
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Leichhardt's life for an Australian audience. He drew upon documents from Leichhardt's personal possessions, which the explorer had left with a friend before departing on his last journey. By 1854, the friend had given up all hope of Leichhardt's return and donated Leichhardt's belongings to the Australian Museum in Sydney, where they were discovered years later by Krefft, who worked as a curator there (Stephens 2007, 195). Since then, in light of changing textual evidence and historical contexts, numerous biographies have revisited the question of Leichhardt's place in German and Australian history and his suitability as an expedition leader.



The Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. Ludwig Leichhardt studied its zoological specimens during his stay in London.

Edward Radclyffe, based on a drawing by T. H. Shepherd, London, early 1840s. Courtesy of Wellcome Library, London.

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Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig Leichhardt was born on 23 October 1813 in the Prussian village of Trebatsch. After graduating from school in Cottbus, he began studying at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität in Berlin in 1831; in

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1833 he transferred to the university in Göttingen for a year. Leichhardt's interests increasingly focused on the natural sciences and medicine. During his studies he became acquainted with the British Nicholson brothers; an especially close friendship developed with the younger brother, William, who also provided him with financial support. In 1837 Leichhardt left university without graduating and accompanied William to England. Together they prepared themselves for careers as naturalists, undertaking excursions, and studying natural history collections in London. In 1838 they continued their studies at the leading research institutions at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. In fall 1840, the two friends departed on a trip across southern Europe, climbing the volcanic peak of Auvergne, visiting ancient ruins and cultural sites in Italy, and trekking through the Alps. But William withdrew from their plans for a scientific expedition overseas. In October 1841 Leichhardt boarded a ship to Australia alone. He was educated in many aspects of natural history and had contacts with important scholars. He was pursuing his goal of exploring the natural world of the fifth continent.



*Views of Sydney, from St Leonards, 1842.* (Tinted lithograph, with hand colouring by Conrad Martens [1842], Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney).

Public Domain. Tinted lithograph, with hand coloured by Conrad Martens (1842).

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. *Views of Sydney, from St Leonards, 1842.*



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Leichhardt arrived in Australia in February 1842 and settled in Sydney. At the time, the interior of the continent was mostly considered unexplored territory, while the British colonies along the coast offered ideal starting points for an expedition. After preliminary field studies in the immediate area, Leichhardt traveled through the colony between September 1842 and May 1844, examining the flora, fauna, and geology from New South Wales to present-day Brisbane. Upon returning to Sydney, he organized his natural history collections, wrote a

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geological treatise, and began planning an overland expedition from Moreton Bay (the region of present-day Brisbane) to Port Essington (near present-day Darwin). The final expedition party traveled for nearly 15 months, arriving at their destination on 17 December 1845. All but one of the eight men, the bird collector John Gilbert, survived the journey across more than 4,800 kilometers of unexplored wilderness.



The expedition to Port Essington traveled across unexplored terrain. Leichhardt's regular measurement of the party's position aided their travel and was used for mapping the route after their return.

*Overland Expedition to Port Essington*. Samuel Augustus Perry (1792–1854), Sydney: W. Baker Hibernian Printing Office, 1846. Canberra, National Library of Australia, MAP F 517.

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Back in Sydney, Leichhardt and his companions were received with many honors. The journey, which was financed by private money from Sydney businessmen, opened a trade route to the harbor of Port Essington. Even today, landmarks along the route still bear the names of the expedition's sponsors. Leichhardt's travel journal, published in 1847, records the characteristics of the regions he passed through, and describes his natural

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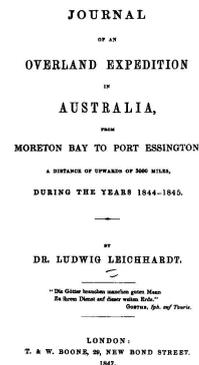
history observations and everyday life on the expedition; it secured his place in history.



This special supplement in a Melbourne newspaper was published on the occasion of Leichhardt's return from Port Essington. Poems were composed in his honor, including "Leichhardt's Grave" by his friend Robert Lynd, who, like everyone else, had already believed Leichhardt to be dead.

Lithograph by Thomas Ham (1821–1870), after a drawing by Joseph Pittman (1810–1882) in *The Port Phillip Herald*, Melbourne, 2.6.1846. Melbourne, State Library of Victoria.

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Ludwig Leichhardt had already begun to revise his field notes while still in Port Essington. He received the printed travelogue, which was composed in English and published in London, in February 1848—shortly before he departed on his last journey.

*Journal of an overland expedition in Australia from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, a distance of upwards of 3000 miles, during the years, 1844-1845* by Ludwig Leichhardt, London: Boone, 1847.

This book is part of the collection *Americana* from the library of the University of Michigan. It has been digitized by Google and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb.

Courtesy of the Internet Archive. [View image source](#).

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In December 1846 Leichhardt set out once more with a new team, this time with the goal of being the first Europeans to traverse Australia from east to west. Their destination was the Swan River Colony, in the region of present-day Perth. After fewer than eight months, adverse weather and declining morale forced the weakened party to turn back. Leichhardt gathered men for a second attempt: after their departure from McPherson's Station on 5 April 1848, he and his companions—four Europeans and two Aborigines—were never seen again.

Leichhardt mentions his scientific aspirations on multiple occasions, for example in a letter to his sister:

If Nature moves you to such affection, just think how it must move me as I make it my task to

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uncover her deepest secrets and reveal the laws which make her so majestic, so glorious.  
([Letter to Auguste Hilgenfeld, 15 May 1844](#))

Natural history had become a worldwide pursuit during this time, and Leichhardt had made it his goal “to serve science ... by traveling to faraway corners of the globe” ([letter to Friedrich August Schmalfuß, 21 October 1847](#)).

His life’s work—contributing to the scientific exploration of the Australian continent—must be considered unfinished. In the colonial backwater Leichhardt never had the resources, nor, in the end, the time, to analyze and interpret his collections and notes; he was able to publish very little. Yet today many museum collections include specimens collected and prepared by Leichhardt—a testimony to his lasting importance for the scientific exploration of the world.

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-sister-auguste-l-hilgenfeld-newcastle-15-may-1844>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-sydney-21-october-1847>

**Websites linked in image captions:**

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## Travel and reception of Leichhardt's letters to his family

1866—The letters' appearance in the Australian press

1881—Publication of Leichhardt's *Briefe an seine Angehörigen*

1888—Mann tries to settle accounts: *Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt*



Drawing of Ludwig Leichhardt by expedition member John F. Mann

Created by John F. Mann, 1846/47.

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Ludwig Leichhardt's letters reached a wide public before finally ending up in the archive of the Deutsches Museum; they have contributed substantially to the contradictory portrait of this "Prince of Explorers." Without them, one of the most important portraits of Leichhardt would probably never have been circulated, and the life of its artist, John F. Mann, might have been a quieter one.

Originally Leichhardt hoped that his correspondence with his family might be connected with a publication—in the best case, a profitable one. Half a year after his arrival in Australia, he proposed that his relatives should see if a publisher were interested in "a publication in the form of letters" so that he could "be of use to you by ceding you the honorarium" ([letter to his mother, 6 September 1842](#)). His most frequent correspondent was his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, a music and drawing teacher in Cottbus. Schmalfuß spoke with

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**Chapter:** Travel and reception of Leichhardt's letters to his family

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scientists and publishers regarding the publication of the letters. But Leichhardt advised him to be cautious: “I am of course pleased that educated men, not just the consideration and greater interest of a friend, deem them worthy of publication. Yet there are things I write which I would not wish to see appear in print” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 21 October 1847](#)). A few weeks later, Leichhardt departed on his last expedition, from which he never returned.

Leichhardt’s unknown fate has made him an object of fascination. In the years and decades after his disappearance, new rumors and theories spread regarding his choice of route and how the expedition met its end. Search missions—sent out from various places in the Australian colonies in hopes of finding survivors, graves, or material traces of the expedition—became matters of public interest; however, they all returned without concrete results. In Leichhardt’s homeland, Schmalfuß continued to try to publish his letters posthumously. In 1855 he asked Alexander von Humboldt to write a foreword and solicited support from the geographical society in Berlin—in vain, as he commented in the family chronicle. But the letters were in circulation, and along their meandering route they became important for Leichhardt’s historical reception. Their history also sheds light on the extensive scientific networks that arose in the mid-nineteenth century as a wave of German scientists emigrated to Australia. Thus, in 1907, it was a German returned from Australia, Georg von Neumayer, who gave the letters to the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich.



When Ludwig Leichhardt set out in 1846 to become the first European to cross the Australian continent from east to west, he confidently listed the starting point and destination: Port Stephens and Swan River (in the area of present-day Perth). But the expedition was forced to turn back at Peak Range.

*Log of My Journey from Port Stephens to Peak Range.* Drawing by Ludwig Leichhardt, 1 October 1846–3 November 1847. Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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## 1866—The letters' appearance in the Australian press



The German geophysicist and astronomer Neumayer

During his stay in the colony of Victoria from 1857 to 1864, Georg von Neumayer established the Flagstaff Observatory.

Portrait based on a photograph by Frederick Frith, in *Australian News for Home Readers*, Melbourne: Ebenezer and David Syme, 25 July 1864.

Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.



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When Leichhardt's letters to his family reached the Australian press in 1866, they triggered the first public debate about his character and his capability as an expedition leader. Among Leichhardt's most vocal critics were some of the men who had accompanied him. Leichhardt had recruited them himself on location while planning for the expedition, which was undertaken without government sponsorship or funding from Europe. On the other side were German scientists, who played a leading role in the exploration of the Australian continent starting in the mid-nineteenth century. They saw Leichhardt as an important point of reference and dedicated themselves to

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discovering his fate.

Among them were the brothers Richard Schomburgk, a botanist, and Otto Schomburgk, a publicist, who had emigrated to Australia during the Revolutions of 1848, the botanist Ferdinand von Mueller in Melbourne, the zoologist Gerard Krefft, and the geophysicist Georg von Neumayer.



The German-born botanist Ferdinand von Mueller

Ferdinand von Mueller emigrated to Australia in 1847. In 1857 he became the director of the botanical garden in Melbourne, and he soon came to be considered one of the most influential scientists of the Australian colonial period.

Photograph by Johnstone, O'Shannessy & Company Limited, Melbourne, 1864.

Courtesy of State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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In early 1866 several of Leichhardt's last letters to his family were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. They had already been published by the Schomburgk brothers in a German-language newspaper in Australia, and were

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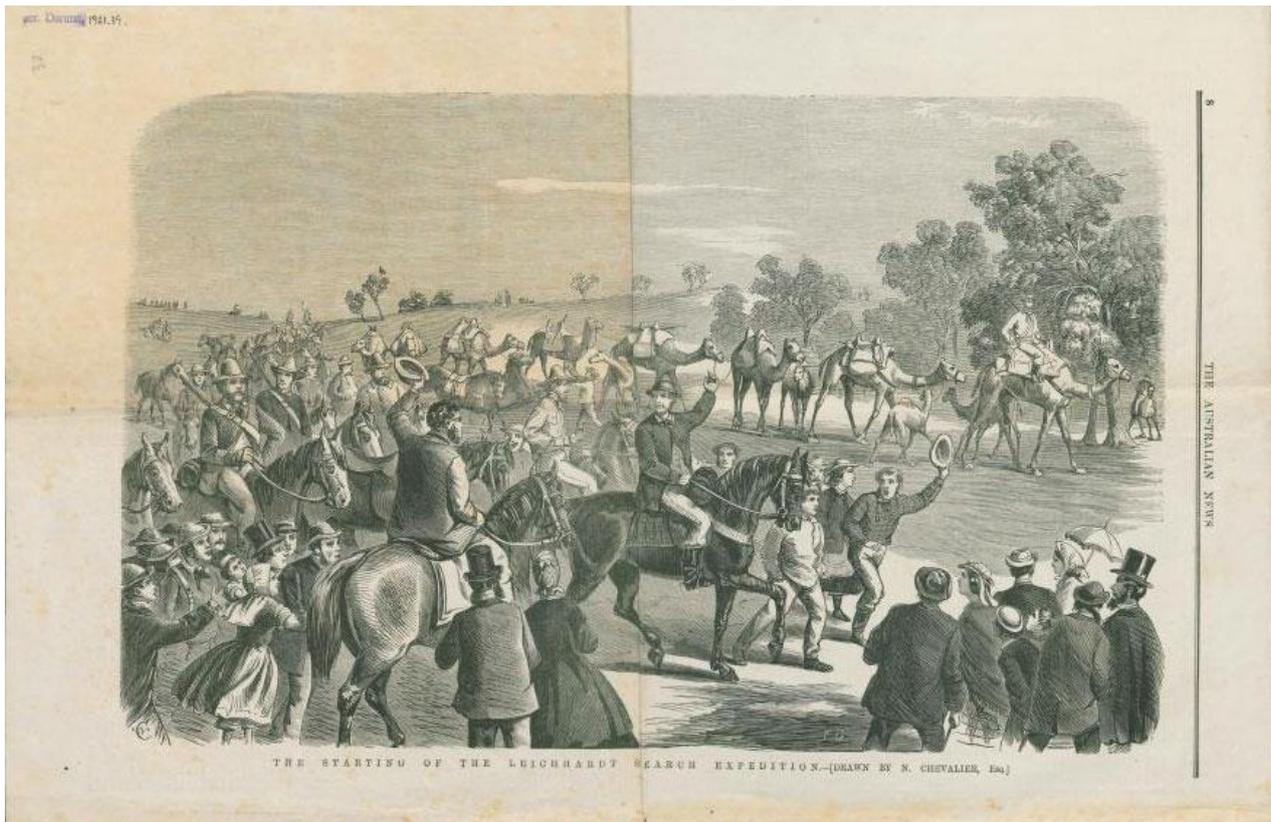
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now made available to a larger, English-speaking audience. At this time the search expedition organized by the Ladies' Leichhardt Search Committee, initiated by Ferdinand von Mueller, was the focus of much public interest, and the German botanist was evidently also involved in the—in places misleading—translation of the letters. Of particular interest was a [letter](#) that Leichhardt wrote in 1847, in which he blamed his travel companions for the failure of the expedition to Swan River ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 20 October 1847](#)).

John F. Mann, the second-in-command of the expedition, wrote a [letter](#) to the editor defending himself. He accused Leichhardt of poor leadership and bad decisions, adding that he was speaking out against “a tacit consent to that kind of hero-worship that can imagine no defect in its object, and that can even paint it in glowing colours without the faintest idea of a dark shade in the picture.” A few days later another member of the expedition, Hovenden Hely, spoke out in defense of Mann's honor, publishing an [additional letter](#) of Leichhardt's that portrayed his companions in a more positive light. The German zoologist Gerard Krefft, who was in charge of Leichhardt's papers and collections in his capacity as curator at the Australian Museum in Sydney, used the opportunity to publish a [biographical sketch](#) of Leichhardt. In July the news arrived of the death of the leader of the Ladies' Leichhardt Search Expedition. Again, Leichhardt had still not been found—but his image had become more contradictory.



The departure of the *Ladies' Leichhardt Search Expedition* was a major occasion. The search expedition was expected to take two years. In addition to 40 horses, the members also took 14 camels with them.

Nicholas Chevalier (1828–1902), in: *Australian News for Home Readers*. Melbourne: Ebenezer and David Syme, 25.7.1865. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Slg. Darmstaedter, Forschungsreisen/Australien, Australien 1844: Leichhardt, Ludwig Bl. 32.

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### 1881—Publication of Leichhardt's *Briefe an seine Angehörigen*

In Leichhardt's homeland, his nephew, Otto Leichhardt, took over the task of publishing Leichhardt's letters after Schmalfuß's death in 1876. Later the influential geophysicist Georg von Neumayer joined as coeditor, and in 1881 the volume *Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Briefe an seine Angehörigen* ("Ludwig Leichhardt's Letters to His Relatives") appeared under the auspices of the Geographical Society of Hamburg. Von Neumayer lived in Australia from 1857 to 1864; he established the observatory in Melbourne and undertook long geomagnetic field studies. After his return to Germany he became well respected as a polar explorer and head of the Deutsche Seewarte, the marine observatory of the imperial navy in Hamburg. His efforts to solve the mystery of Leichhardt's disappearance were untiring. In 1868 he attempted to convince the British Royal Society to undertake a search expedition into the unexplored interior of the Australian continent, as well as seeking support

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from other sources, but he was unsuccessful.



Neumayer tried to organize a search for Leichhardt in the western part of the Australian interior. The prestigious geographical journal *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen* published his plans and created this preliminary map. *Übersicht des Standpunktes der geographischen Kenntniss von Australien*, 1868, & *Dr. Neumayer's Projekt zur wissenschaftlichen Erforschung Central-Australiens*.

Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1868.

Courtesy of the Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha. Sammlung Perthes, Kartensammlung.

The volume with Leichhardt's letters included his [letters from Australia](#) as well as earlier correspondence from his time as a student in Europe. In the foreword Neumayer explained that in his role as editor he had removed personal details from the letters, in accordance with the express wishes of the author. Included in the volume was also a map that showed the route of Leichhardt's journeys and that of the search expeditions, as well as the location where von Neumayer believed that Leichhardt had met his end. In an appendix Neumayer included an essay "Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt als Naturforscher und Entdeckungsreisender" ("Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt as a Natural Scientist and Explorer"), in which he discussed the rumors and the search parties that have become as

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much a part of Leichhardt's story as his disappearance. A portrait of Leichhardt as a young man was chosen as the frontispiece; it was created based on pictures in possession of family members.

# Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Briefe an seine Angehörigen.

Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Geographischen Gesellschaft  
in Hamburg

von

**Dr. G. Neumayer** und **Otto Leichhardt.**

Mit einem Anhang:

Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt

als **Naturforscher und Entdeckungsreisender**

von

Dr. G. Neumayer,

früher Direktor des Flagstaff-Observatory in Melbourne.

Mit einem Portrait Dr. Leichhardt's und einer Karte von Australien.

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**HAMBURG.**

**L. Friederichsen & Co.**

Geographische und nautische Verlagshandlung.

**1881.**

Cover of *Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Briefe an seine Angehörigen* ("Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Letters to His Relatives"). Edited by Georg von Neumayer and Otto Leichhardt. Hamburg: L. Friederichsen, 1881.

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project. [View source](#).

Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

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When the volume *Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Briefe an seine Angehörigen* was published in 1881, new fire was given to the rumors in Australia about Leichhardt's disappearance. A bushman claimed to have found a tree with the initial "L" engraved in it, as well as Leichhardt's field notebook and other relics of the 1848 expedition. The German consulate in Sydney asked Georg von Neumayer to assess the plausibility of these claims; [Neumayer was eager to believe them](#). In January 1882 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a review, originally written for

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Atheneum, of the collection of letters. The [review](#) repeated Leichhardt's criticism of the reliability of his traveling companions. Once again John F. Mann responded to the accusation in a [letter](#) to the editor and claimed to possess documents that would disprove Leichhardt's statements.

### **1888—Mann tries to settle accounts: *Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt***

Another eight years passed before John F. Mann published his version of the expedition in a book titled [Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt, in the Years 1846–47](#). Leichhardt himself had not published any official report of the unsuccessful expedition; the only account that had previously appeared was that of the British botanist and expedition member Daniel Bunce, printed in an Australian newspaper in 1805 and in German translation in 1857. When Mann's book came out, four decades had passed since the completion of the expedition and the information about the regions they had traversed was obsolete—the land had since been settled. Instead, Mann focused on the portrayal of the social interaction during everyday life on the expedition. He spoke harshly of Leichhardt's lack of “comradeship” and practical knowledge, stressing that he was only interested in making the truth known, and called upon the records of other expedition members for confirmation of what he described.

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As second-in-command on the expedition, John F. Mann recorded the surrounding landscape and everyday life of the expedition through [sketches](#) , including this portrait of Leichhardt in profile.

Drawing by John F. Mann, Sketchbook, 1846–1847.

Courtesy of State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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One of Mann's drawings shows Leichhardt privileging himself in the allotment of rations and parodies his German accent. Drawing by John F. Mann, Sketchbook 1846–1847.

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Another drawing caricatures Leichhardt's inability to handle the pack animals.

Drawing by John F. Mann, Sketchbook, 1846–1847.

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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Frontispiece of *Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt*

For the frontispiece of his travelogue *Eight Months with Dr. Leichhardt, in the Years 1846–47* John F. Mann reworked a drawing he had made of Leichhardt during the trip, adding an Australian bottle tree.

John F. Mann, Sydney: Turner & Henderson, 1888.

This book has been digitized by Google from the library of the New York Public Library and uploaded to the Internet Archive by user tpb. [View image source](#).

As for the reason for which he was not content to let the matter rest, Mann told the press that Neumayer's edition of the letters—and thus the accusations made against his person—were to be found “[upon the shelves of every kindred Society throughout the civilized world](#).” Mann's book did not reach the same broad audience. But the surveyor was skilled at drawing, and during the expedition he had made a number of caricatures of Leichhardt in his sketchbook. He chose a drawing of Leichhardt standing before a tent as the frontispiece of his report.

This sketch portraying Leichhardt as a lanky eccentric who seems little at home in the Australian landscape made

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a lasting impression, and continues to be published widely today.

The travels of Leichhardt's letters reveal the scientific networks between Germany and Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century, as well as offering an impression of the fascination surrounding Leichhardt's disappearance and the prestige that finding him, or at least an explanation of his fate, would have offered. Their story also makes clear how certain voices won out over others in the struggle for recognition and remembrance. Travel reports solidified the authority of particular individual explorers, while their traveling companions and the collective trials and tribulations generally faded into obscurity.



On his many scientific expeditions Georg von Neumayer took geomagnetic measurements. The renowned artist [Eugène von Guérard](#) accompanied him in 1862 to Mount Kosciuszko, where he sketched the wagon in which Neumayer transported his scientific instruments.

Drawing by Eugène von Guérard, in Sketchbook XXXIII, No. 15, Australian Colony Victoria, 18–19 October 1862.  
Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6591/>
- <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13125268>
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- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/chronological-list-ludwig-leichhardts-letters>
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- <http://acmssearch.sl.nsw.gov.au/search/itemDetailPaged.cgi?itemID=919039>
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## Botanical collection in Europe and Australia

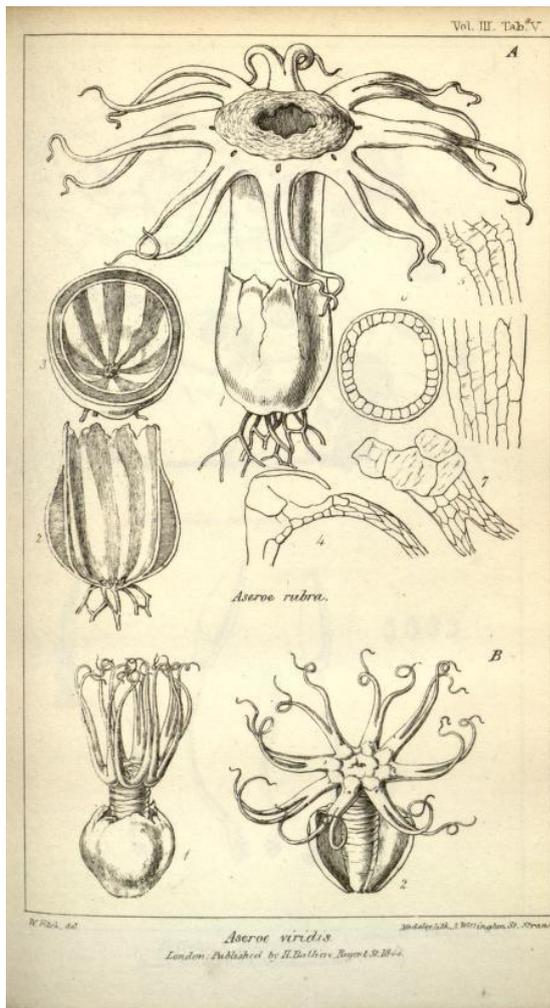


Illustration of the fungus *Aseroe rubra* based on a drawing by Ludwig Leichhardt.

*London Journal of Botany*, edited by William Hooker (1785–1865), Vol. III (1844), Tab. V. WWW, Biodiversity Heritage Library.



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The collections of the botanical garden in Berlin contain this fig tree specimen prepared by Ludwig Leichhardt. The species *Ficus stephanocarpa* was described for the first time in 1905 by the botanist Otto Warburg. Warburg based his [description](#) on a sample that he had gathered during a trip to Australia, but it is likely that he also referred to Leichhardt's specimen when he was working with the collections in Berlin. "An endless, indomitable drive compels me to study this natural environment and to solve this country's mysteries," declared Leichhardt in one of his letters from Australia (letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 20 October 1847). He had prepared for his career as a naturalist at the most prestigious scientific establishments in London and Paris. Natural history practices of the time put particular emphasis on extensive collection of animal and plant species in order to discover the natural

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order that connected all living things. Leichhardt's letters offer insight into his place in the scientific networks among which large numbers of specimens circulated during the first half of the nineteenth century. Preserved specimens were substituted for their living counterparts, allowing them to be transported, examined, described, compared, and consulted repeatedly—as in the case of the Australian fig tree, which Warburg declared to be a new species, probably using Leichhardt's specimen as a reference, 60 years after it had been collected.

When Leichhardt arrived in Sydney in 1842, he had in his baggage a handbook from the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris, which contained instructions on how to properly prepare specimens. In the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew he had familiarized himself with the plants of Australia and made contact with its influential director, William Hooker, although he did not manage to secure a commission to collect plants for the institute. In Sydney Leichhardt found a scientific network that was still in its infancy, dependent upon the enthusiasm of local amateurs and imperial initiatives and suffering from the economic recession. Neither the Australian Museum, founded in 1827, nor the botanical garden, established in 1816, were very constructive in Leichhardt's opinion, and he tried in vain to get a position, as he reports in a [letter to his mother \(6 September 1842\)](#). He began to create his own botanical collection and wrote to William Hooker for literature to aid him in classifying his finds; he included a drawing of a fungus in his letter. Although Leichhardt never received a response, Hooker identified the fungus and had the drawing published along with Leichhardt's description. Leichhardt never learned of this publication—a vivid example of the difficulties in taking part in scientific discussions from the colonial periphery. Leichhardt sent no more specimens to Kew, but delivered his collections to Berlin and Paris instead.



Specimen of *Gleichenia circinata*, collected by Ludwig Leichhardt in the British colony of New South Wales, 1842

Courtesy of Botanischer Garten und Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem.  
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Specimen of an Australian fig tree, *Ficus stephanocarpa*, collected by Ludwig Leichhardt the British colony of New South Wales, 1842.

Röpert D. (ed.) 2000+ [continuously updated]: Digital specimen images at the Herbarium Berolinense.

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Courtesy of the Botanischer Garten / Botanisches Museum Berlin.

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Specimen of *Dicksonia dubia*, collected by Leichhardt in New South Wales, 1842

Röpert, D. (ed.) 2000– (continuously updated): Digital specimen images at the Herbarium Berolinense.

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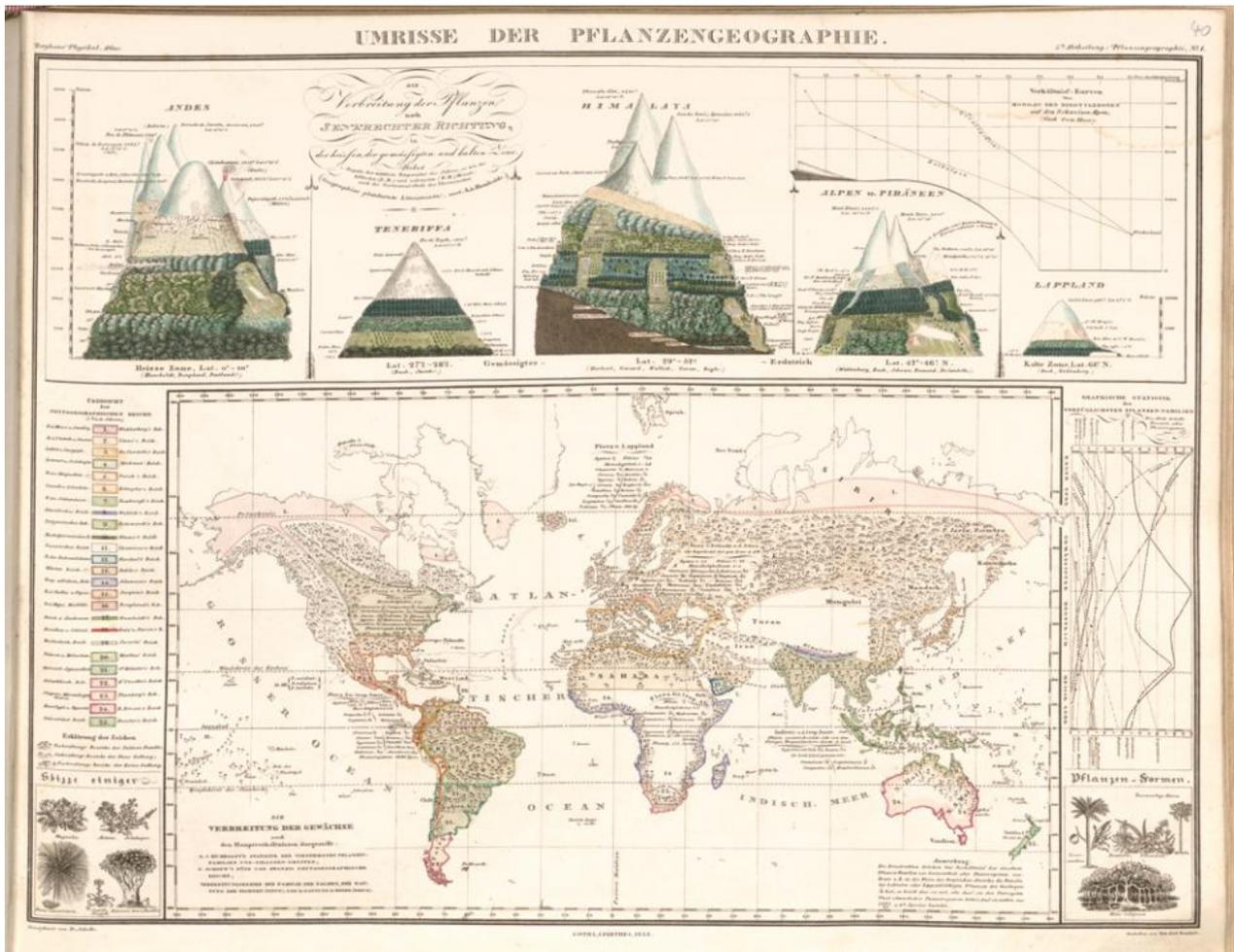
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From September 1842 to April 1844 Leichhardt traveled through the colony of New South Wales, armed with only the most basic equipment, and gathered botanical and geological specimens, as he wrote to his mother: “Think of a young peasant in jacket and pants on a small black horse, a woolen blanket and satchel strapped across his saddle, a heavy hammer on the saddle horn and a smaller one in his pocket, and you will have fairly accurate vision of your dear son as he rides across the forest of Australia... . If the region is notable, I pause, give my horse a rest, and wander about the area in order to look about and collect whatever seems interesting to me” ([letter to his mother, 27 June 1843](#) ). In order to preserve his botanical specimens, he begged paper from farmers and missionaries. He relied upon his memory to identify them, and gave descriptive names to unknown species in order to distinguish between them (Darragh 2007). He collected a large number of different species of wood for the natural history museum in Paris; after he returned to Sydney, an additional package went to the botanical gardens in Berlin.

On the Port Essington Expedition the collection of specimens formed a routine part of the everyday activities of Leichhardt and his companions. As the provisions were used up, specimens took their place in the baggage. For protection, Leichhardt wrapped them in packets of rawhide. Shortly before reaching their destination, the party lost several pack animals, and Leichhardt had to abandon his collections: “This forced me to throw away my beautiful botanical and geological collections almost entirely. I burned about 3000 dried plants—the Berlin Museum may join in my lamentations because I had intended to send a part of my collection to Berlin” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 24 January 1846](#) ).

The possibility of discovering new species during an expedition through unexplored territory was not Leichhardt’s only scientific motivation for his overland expedition. The time span and distance of his journeys also offered an opportunity to collect plants in various stages of their life cycle—from blossoms to fruit and seeds—and to observe “the gradual changes in flora and fauna from one coast to the other” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 6 December 1846](#) ). Leichhardt expressed the hope that “even if my dried plants should not be suitable for determining new species, they should nevertheless prove interesting and useful for the botanical geography of New Holland” ([last letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 22 February 1848](#) ). This interest in the influence of geography and related factors on plant life was inspired by Alexander von Humboldt’s study of the geography of plants. Humboldt was his scientific role model, as he confessed in one of his letters: “And Humboldt? His example will always serve as my guiding principle” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 21 October 1847](#) ).



*Umriss der Pflanzengeographie*, an outline of Plant Geography. (Illustration by Friedrich Schelle. CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Courtesy of Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.)

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Although Leichhardt’s travels kept him from his desk, he increasingly felt the need to create the necessary conditions for taxonomic work within the Australian colony, not just abroad: “I do require a safe place for my ever-increasing collections, where they will not only be sheltered from insects and the elements, but also easily accessible for whenever I have time to study them” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 20 October 1847](#) ; [letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 19 August 1846](#) ). His desire to only send duplicate specimens to Europe is remarkable, for it challenged the dominant position of the European natural history museums and the subordinate role of their overseas assistants—mostly working in the colonies—as mere suppliers of material. Leichhardt’s transnational background also played a role here; he was annoyed that his Prussian homeland, instead of “taking advantage of what its native son can offer from abroad, enriching its museums and collections and gathering knowledge about far-off lands” ([letter to A. L. Hilgenfeld, 15 May 1844](#) ) considered him a deserter for not completing his military

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service. Thus it seems plausible that Leichhardt wished to help establish local collections in the Australian colonies.

After Leichhardt's disappearance in 1848, his specimens have survived in various botanical collections in both Australia and Europe. His letters reveal the attitudes of a trained naturalist towards his work and offer insight into the beginnings of natural history museums in the Australian colonies under the shadow of the powerful European institutions.

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- <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/233793>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-mother-charlotte-sophie-leichhardt-sydney-6-september-1842>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-mother-charlotte-sophie-leichhardt-moreton-bay-27-june-1843>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-written-aboard-ship>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-woolshed-or-mr-dennis>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6600/>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-sydney-21-october-1847>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6597/>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-sydney-19-august-1846>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-sister-auguste-l-hilgenfeld-newcastle-15-may-1844>

#### **Websites linked in image captions:**

- <http://herbarium.bgbm.org/object/B200134499>
- <http://ww2.bgbm.org/Herbarium/specimen.cfm?Barcode=B100279285>
- <http://ww2.bgbm.org/Herbarium/specimen.cfm?Barcode=B200135400>
- <http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/0006/bsb00064502/images/index.html>

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

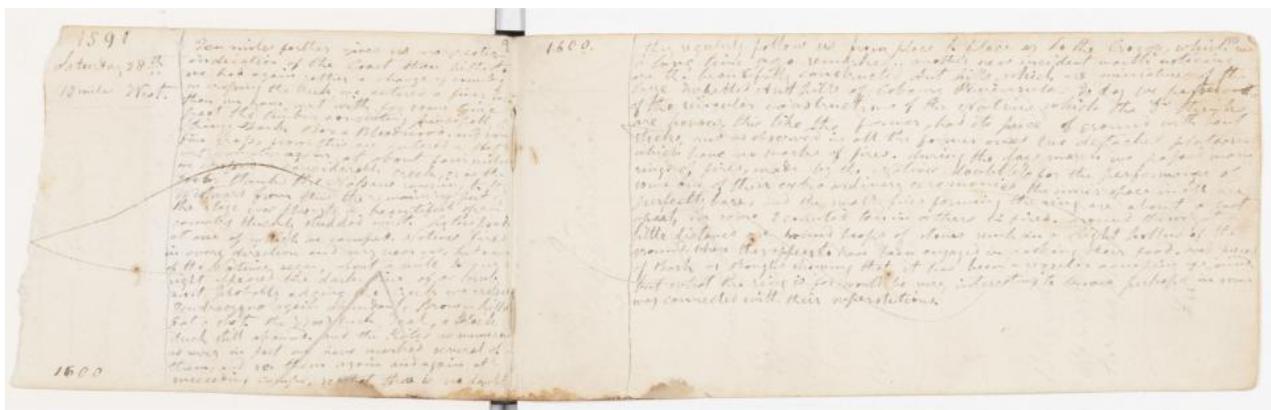
**Chapter:** Botanical collection in Europe and Australia

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## The zoological collections of the Port Essington Expedition

Ludwig Leichhardt had hoped to become a member of an expedition sponsored by the colonial government that was to investigate an overland route from Sydney to the harbor town of Port Essington on the northern coast. When this expedition was delayed, he sought funding himself, gathered a team of men, and set out in October 1844 from Moreton Bay. One of Leichhardt's companions was John Gilbert, an Englishman who was collecting zoological specimens for John Gould, curator of the Zoological Society of London. Gould, accompanied by Gilbert as his assistant, had himself traveled through Australia from 1838 to 1840; after his return to England he published the first volumes of the magnificently illustrated *Birds of Australia*, which cemented his reputation as the greatest authority on the subject. In order to expand his collection, Gould sent his assistant to Australia in 1842, where Gilbert joined Leichhardt's expedition of his own initiative shortly before it departed.



In his last diary entry before his death, John Gilbert reported on an encounter with some Aborigines and speculates about their campsite. It may have been a place of religious significance; other sources suggest that members of the expedition had harassed the women.

Last entry in John Gilbert's diary. Northeastern Australia, 28 June 1845.  
Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

When Aborigines attacked the campsite near the Gulf of Carpentaria on 28 June 1845, Gilbert was killed by a spear; two more expedition members were wounded. Gilbert was considered an insightful observer of the indigenous Australians, and his own notes suggest that the expedition members had violated some law, for which the Aborigines sought retribution by attacking.

After Gilbert's death, Leichhardt saved and transported his specimens despite the difficult travel conditions—even after the loss of several pack animals forced him to abandon his own botanical and geological specimens. The relationship between Leichhardt and Gilbert was tense at times. One of Gilbert's diary entries indicates a growing competition between the two men for natural history specimens, with Leichhardt claiming the first example of any species for himself—with the exception of birds. Later, Leichhardt felt that he had been betrayed by Gilbert, as he wrote to his brother-in-law: "Mr. Gilbert sought to cheat me in manifold ways and I would probably not have been able to enjoy many of the fruits of my labor during this expedition had he

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[doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

**Chapter:** The zoological collections of the Port Essington Expedition

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remained alive. I found out about his plans after his death” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 24 January 1846](#)).



*Lagorchestes Leichardti*, today considered a subspecies of the spectacled hare-wallaby, *Lagorchestes conspicillatus*.

Courtesy of Museum für Naturkunde Berlin.

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After the expedition, Leichhardt sent Gilbert’s diary and bird specimens to England for the attention of Gould. The mammals went to the Australian Museum in Sydney, which lent them to Gould for identification purposes. The collection included a small wallaby that Gould identified as a new species and gave the name *Lagorchestes leichardti* in honor of the expedition leader—although Leichhardt did not possess a gun and so could not have collected it himself—and it was listed as such in his lavishly illustrated book on Australian mammals. The bird collection was a disappointment to Gould, for it included few new species. However, Gilbert’s diary and Leichhardt’s travel report provided him with much information about their distribution, which he used frequently in his own publications.

Clemency Fisher, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museums Liverpool, comments:

I have been working on John Gilbert’s diary from Ludwig Leichhardt’s first expedition (1844–1845) for many years, and have identified a number of specimens of birds he and John Murphy, another member of the expedition, collected on the journey. After examining the

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**Chapter:** The zoological collections of the Port Essington Expedition

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specimens and publishing a few new species Gould sold them to his contacts in private and public museums worldwide. Nearly 60 birds and bird eggs have been found so far, in the Natural History Museum's outstation in Tring, Hertfordshire, and collections and museums in Liverpool and Exeter in the UK, Leiden in the Netherlands, New York and Camarillo in the USA and Melbourne in Australia. Many of the eggs bear the locality and collecting date in Gilbert's careful handwriting. John Murphy's specimens, which would have been prepared as skins by Gilbert, were given to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter by a Miss Fox, but we are still trying to find out what connection she had to Murphy. They were later mounted for display (Clemency Fisher, personal correspondence with Heike Hartmann, 2014).

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

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John Gilbert's birds collection from his expedition with Dr. Leichhardt.

#### **Ornithological specimens from the Port Essington Expedition, Northeast Australia (1844–1845)**

“Bird specimens—now in National Museums Liverpool—which were collected by John Gilbert on the Leichhardt Expedition. Most of them face to one side or another, which is unusual for Gilbert’s specimens, but it meant he could pack more in a box than if they faced upwards. They are also less well-filled with cotton tow and flatter than usual. Right of center, facing each other and with white spots on the wings, are two specimens that were used by John Gould to describe the white-browed robin, a new species” (Clemency Fisher, personal correspondence with Heike Hartmann, 2014).

Courtesy of National Museums Liverpool. All rights reserved.

The birds collected on the Leichhardt Expedition, although small in number, are scientifically significant. Gilbert and Murphy’s specimens of the white-browed robin (*Poecilodryas superciliosa*) and the Queensland variant of the white-browed scrubwren (*Sericornis frontalis laevigaster*) are type specimens of previously unknown species. It is also of importance that several species have shown changes in distribution since they were seen or collected in 1844–1845.

Hartmann, Heike. “Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer’s Letters Home from Australia.” Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

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According to Clemency Fisher, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museums Liverpool,

[t]he Gouldian finch is a good example for changes in distribution. In addition, another important discovery has been the answer to why there are multiple references in the literature and field guides to the possible existence in Northern Territory of the yellow honeyeater, *Lichenostomus flavus*. In fact this little bird only occurs in northern Queensland. The mistake can be traced to the labels on several of the Yellow Honeyeater specimens collected by Gilbert and Murphy from the Burdekin and Lynd Rivers of north Queensland, while they were on the Leichhardt Expedition—which they both referred to as the “Port Essington Expedition” (Port Essington was their destination). Ornithologists since then have taken birds labeled “Port Essington Expedition” to mean they are from the actual Port Essington, on the northern coast (Fisher 2014).

John Gilbert’s participation in the Port Essington Expedition was not only of importance to science. The Australian journalist and ornithologist Alec Chisholm tracked down Gilbert’s diary and used this as a source for his book *Strange New World: The Adventures of John Gilbert and Ludwig Leichhardt*, which perpetuated the image of Leichhardt as a German romantic lacking in mateship and pragmatism, while painting Gilbert in a positive light as everything Leichhardt was not. *Strange New World* had an immense influence on the perception of Leichhardt.

#### Further links and additional materials

1. [Detailed map of Dr Ludwig Leichhardt’s Route in Australia. From Moreton Bay to Port Essington \(upward of 3000 miles, performed in the year 1844 and 1845\)](#),

This map shows the route of Leichhardt’s expedition to Port Essington; it includes topographic and geological notes marked with the date the party reached each location. Noteworthy events are also recorded. By John Arrowsmith (1790–1873), London, 1847. Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Canberra.

2. [The Birds of Australia](#)

John Gould’s *The Birds of Australia* was published in seven volumes and a supplement between 1840 and 1848, and included 700 lithographs. *The Birds of Australia*, London: published by the author, 1848. Republished digitally by National Library of Australia, Canberra.

3. [Letter detailing the circumstances of the death of Mr. John Gilbert](#)

Another expedition member informed John Gould about the death of his assistant. “Letter detailing the circumstances of the death of Mr. John Gilbert,” written by John Roper (1822?–1895) to John Gould (1804–1881), published in: *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*, Vol. XIV, 79–80. London: R. and J.

Hartmann, Heike. “Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer’s Letters Home from Australia.” Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

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E. Taylor, 1846. The digital version is held at the Biodiversity Library as a contribution from the Natural History Museum Library, London.

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-writte-n-aboard-ship>
- <http://nla.gov.au/nla.map-rm791>
- <http://nla.gov.au/nla.aus-f4773>
- <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/page/12862729>

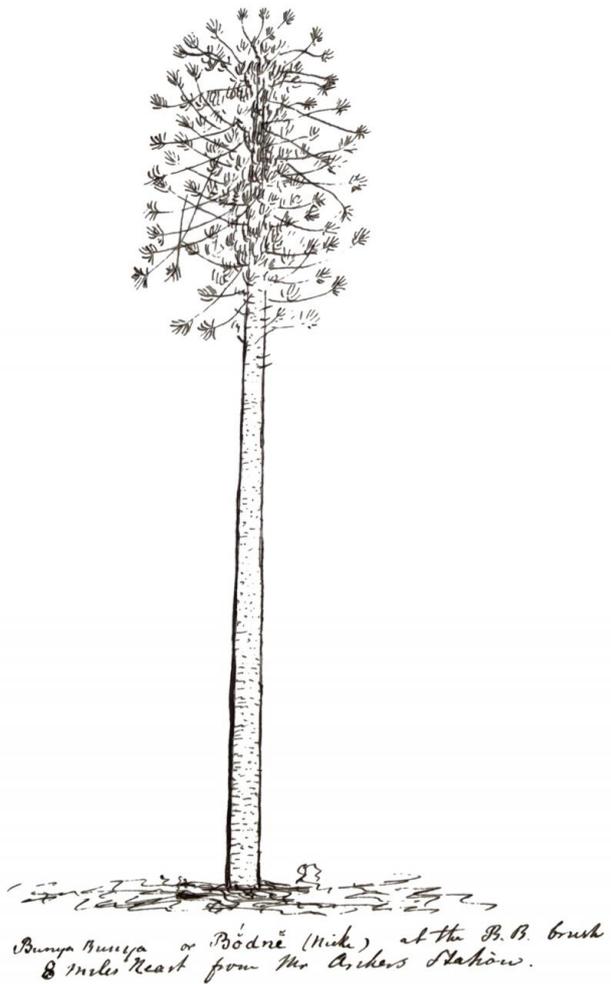
Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

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## Colonial and indigenous knowledge of trees



Drawing of a bunya pine in Leichhardt's field notebook

Under his drawing Leichhardt noted the name “bunya bunya” as well as an indigenous name, “Bodné,” which he had learned from one of his informants.

Drawing by Ludwig Leichhardt in Moreton Bay, 1842.

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.



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While conducting field studies in remote regions of the colony of New South Wales, Ludwig Leichhardt recorded his scientific observations in his notebook. This sketch of a bunya pine was created during his stay at Thomas Archer's Durundur Station. The bunya pine is endemic to the Blackall Range and Bunya Mountains in present-day Queensland. Since the beginning of colonization in Moreton Bay in the 1820s, the tree was well known due to its impressive height, its domed crown, and the large number of cones full of edible seeds. In

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particular, stories circulated about the cultural and social significance of the trees for the indigenous Australians, who gathered to harvest the cones when they became ripe every three years. On these occasions, they performed ceremonies, presented and arbitrated disputes, and engaged in trade. The first accounts were from escaped convicts, and even into the 1840s, when Moreton Bay was opened for settlement by free colonists, few Europeans had ever seen the tree with their own eyes.



William Hooker was the first to provide a [scientific description of the bunya pine](#) .

William Hooker based it on accounts by John Carne Bidwill, whom he honored in the tree's scientific name, *Araucaria bidwillii*.

Illustration in the *London Journal of Botany*, Vol. 2 (1843), 503–6 and plates XVIII, XIX.

Courtesy of The Biodiversity Library.



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Leichhardt not only drew the tree based on his own observations and praised its majestic appearance in his letters, but in December 1983 also witnessed one of the indigenous gatherings. The extensive description in a letter to his mother from August 1843 was based not on his own experiences, but on oral folklore surrounding the bunya

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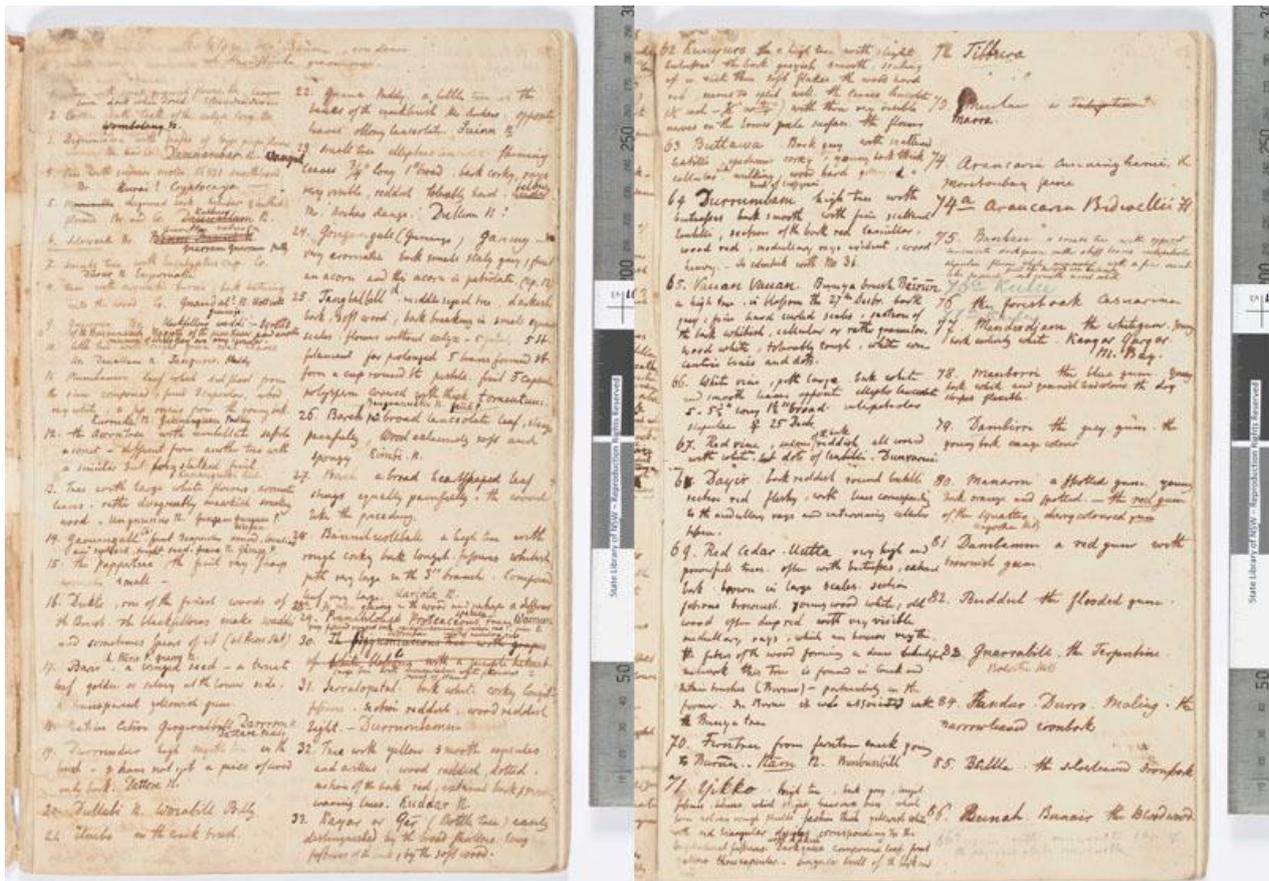
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tree and the customs connected with it ([letter to his mother, 27 August 1843](#)). This included the belief that the practice of cannibalism was part of these gatherings—although there are no accounts by anyone who actually witnessed it (McKay 2002, 66). Leichhardt’s suggestion that warriors killed in battle were eaten in order that their strength might be passed on to the others should be understood in the historical context of the colonization of Moreton Bay, which led to innumerable conflicts between settlers and Aborigines.

The few existing descriptions of the bunya pine were enough to make it interesting as a potential source of lumber. However, reports that the indigenous population fiercely defended the tree led to a prohibition on felling it, although this ban was not strictly enforced (Haebich 2005, 27). The tree was not given its scientific name of *Araucaria bidwillii* until the following year, when the botanist John Carne Bidwell brought both prepared and living specimens to the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew.



Ludwig Leichhardt's catalog of his extensive collection of wood includes short descriptions and in many cases also the indigenous names of the trees.

Catalog of various species of wood from Leichhardt's field notebook. Ludwig Leichhardt (1813-1848), Colony New South Wales, 1842. © State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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At this time Leichhardt was in Moreton Bay, but he was concerned with collecting for a much bigger commission, which he reports on in a letter to his brother-in-law: "Some time ago I received a request from the French Museum to send to Paris a collection of the different species of wood found in the colony. I have tried to fulfill this request and have collected about 130 pieces of wood in this district, 1' in length and 1-3" in diameter. If you consider how about 120 of these trees can be found within the radius of half a mile" ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 2 February 1844](#)).

Settlers and German missionaries had put Leichhardt into contact with local Aborigines, who acted as informants and provided practical assistance in the difficult task. In his field notebooks he lists over 140 types of wood, including brief descriptions of each, and praises the extraordinary ability of indigenous Australians in distinguishing between different types of wood.

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Rod Fensham, associate professor in the School of Biological Sciences, University of Queensland, comments:

In Ludwig Leichhardt's recently published diaries from Moreton Bay there is a catalogue of 259 plant specimens, mostly from the rainforest of southeast Queensland. Most of the trees were unknown to Western science at the time and Leichhardt adopted the nomenclature of his Aboriginal guides. In the rainforest of Moreton Bay his botanical language was almost exclusively derived from the various dialects of his Aboriginal informants. When he was out with Charley he was collating the names of the trees in the Wakka language and when he was with Nikke he was applying Kabi names. His Aboriginal friends not only gave him the names of the trees and their uses, but they also acted as guides through the forest and applied their expert climbing skills to gather specimens from the treetops.

Leichhardt tells us that the carefully catalogued collection had been commissioned by his teacher in Paris, Adolphe Brongniart. Leichhardt's commission seems to have related specifically to wood specimens, and these were received and are still stored in the herbarium at the Jardin des Plantes. Unfortunately it is very difficult to identify rainforest trees definitively from a piece of old wood. Leichhardt was a diligent collector and we could assume that the wood specimens are accompanied by foliar specimens, but if this is the case their whereabouts and hence the identity of the trees remains a mystery. Some of them specimens, but definitely not all of them are in Paris.

The smattering of rainforest trees collected by Robert Brown along the coast and the incidental collections of Allan Cunningham and Charles Frazer were rudimentary compared to Leichhardt's magnificent collection from southeast Queensland.

Until the missing specimens are located and their identity is resolved, Leichhardt's collection remains an omission from the records of Australian science. Its recognition will greatly enhance Leichhardt's undervalued contribution to botany and will reveal an important record of lost aboriginal names and uses. Many of the rainforest locations he collected in have been obliterated over the intervening years (Rod Fensham, personal correspondence with Heike Hartmann, 2014).



Some of the wood samples collected by Ludwig Leichhardt ended up in the botanical collections in Berlin.

*Artanthe aperiuscula*, *Ruyschia clusiaefolia*, *Buettneria acuminata*, collected by Ludwig Leichhardt in the British colony New South Wales, 1842.

Photo by Heike Hartmann. Courtesy of Herbarium, Botanisches Museum Berlin-Dahlem, Freie Universität Berlin.

A letter to his mother also shows how impressed Leichhardt was by the Aborigines' knowledge of the natural world. He describes them as "rather interesting creatures in many respects. They are certainly not lacking in intelligence. They seized the slightest advantages offered them by nature, and in terms of subsistence practices their discoveries are as abundant as our own, who have learned to turn wheat and rye into bread, raise vegetables, catch fish, shoot game, rob bees of their honey, and use certain plants as medicinal remedies" ([letter to his mother, 27 August 1843](#)).

In comparison with many explorers, Leichhardt proved to be a good observer of indigenous practices and was open to experimenting with edible wild plants. In the course of his overland expedition to Port Essington, he tested the suitability of various plants as a substitute for coffee, and shortly before reaching his destination he tried a root known as "allamurr": "These blacks were extremely friendly, and upon seeing that we had nothing to eat but tough dried meat, they brought us the mealy roots of a grass which had a very pleasant, sweet taste" ([letter](#)

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. [doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348](https://doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348).

**Chapter:** Colonial and indigenous knowledge of trees

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to F. A. Schmalfuß, 24 January 1846 ). His travelogue includes many more examples of food sources that he learned about from the indigenous population. They made the journey easier and in some cases were even essential for survival (Fensham et al. 2006, 458–501).

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-mother-charlotte-sophie-leichhardt-moreton-bay-27-august-1843>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-archer-brothers-durundur>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-mother-charlotte-sophie-leichhardt-moreton-bay-27-august-1843>
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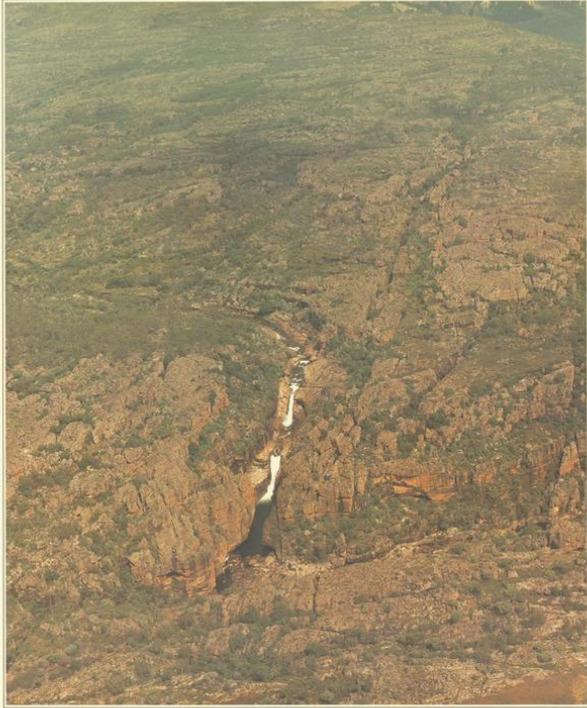
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## On the trail of the Port Essington Expedition: Ludwig Leichhardt's legacy in northern Australia



SANDSTONE PLATEAU, KAKADU NATIONAL PARK. PHOTO: ALLAN FOX

**THE SANDSTONE PLATEAU**  
Rising abruptly 200 metres above the plain and over 500 kilometres long, the escarpment of the plateau dominates the landscape.

1. Deep ravines formed along joints in the sandstone make travel extremely difficult.
2. Many animals seek shelter and food in the clusters of rainforest trees growing on soil pockets on the rocky plateau.
3. Spectacular waterfalls discharge over the escarpment in the wet season.
4. The deep surge pools formed by the grinding action of waterborne sand and boulders are home to freshwater crocodiles and a variety of fish.
5. Geographers will recognise here a classic case of river capture, one stream having taken over the waters of another.

**KAKADU NATIONAL PARK**  
PRODUCED BY AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

Advertisement for Kakadu National Park from the 1980s showing the sandstone plateau in Arnhem Land

Paper by The Australian National Parks & Wildlife Service, Sydney, 1980s.

Courtesy of The State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

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Ludwig Leichhardt was the first European explorer to travel through the north of Australia; his journey is described in his *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia, from Moreton Bay to Port Essington*. The first European reports about the northern region of the continent were based on observations made from the coast by seaborne voyagers. Men such as Matthew Flinders in 1803 or Phillip Parker King in 1818 were unimpressed with

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**Chapter:** On the trail of the Port Essington Expedition: Ludwig Leichhardt's legacy in northern Australia

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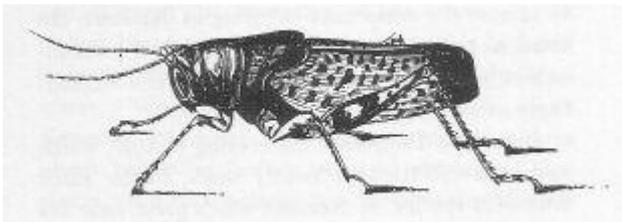
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the view of this landscape from the ship. Leichhardt and his companions were the first Europeans to cross Arnhem Land and the Alligator Rivers region—now mostly part of Kakadu National Park—on their way to Port Essington. Leichhardt summed up his impressions in a [letter to his brother-in-law \(24 January 1846\)](#): “In places this area is very beautiful, in places ... very mountainous.”

He was only a few weeks away from his destination when he came in view of the craggy, dry sandstone plateau, as he wrote in his travel journal on 11 November 1845:

I had a most disheartening, sickening view over a tremendously rocky country. A high land, composed of horizontal strata of sandstone, seemed to be literally hashed, leaving the remaining blocks in fantastic figures of every shape; and a green vegetation, crowding deceitfully within their fissures and gullies, and covering half of the difficulties which awaited us on our attempt to travel over it.

On 17 November 1845 the men came upon a cliff, which offered a view of a “beautiful valley, which lay before us like the promised land.” Three days later they had accomplished the difficult descent. From here the Alligator Rivers showed the way to the coast. One of the primary goals of the expedition, namely to find an overland route from the east coast to Port Essington, had been achieved. But only four years later the British trading post was abandoned.



Leichhardt’s grasshopper, *Petasida ephippigera*

Leichhardt’s description of the rich animal life of Australia lives on today in the insect commonly known as Leichhardt’s grasshopper. Leichhardt crossed the region of the South Alligator River shortly before the rainy season. The beginning of the rains was announced by huge flocks of bright red and blue grasshoppers, called *aldjurr* by the indigenous people.

Illustration by Ludwig Leichhardt, *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia, from Moreton Bay to Port Essington*, London: Boone, 1847.

[View source.](#)



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Leichhardt’s travelogue has not lost its importance, however, and since its publication in 1847 it has been continuously reread and reinterpreted in the light of various historical contexts and interests. In addition to the landscape, flora, and fauna, Leichhardt describes his many encounters with the indigenous Australians—who traded peacefully with the expedition members and in some cases showed signs of previous contact with

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Europeans—as well as the multifarious cultural practices that bound them with the land. Leichhardt even mentions the art of the indigenous Australians in an entry dated 5 November 1845: “The remains of freshwater turtles were frequently noticed in the camps of the natives; and Mr. Calvert had seen one depicted with red ochre on the rocks. It is probable that this animal forms a considerable part of the food of the natives.”

When a major project was started in the 1960s to document the variety, imagery, and history of the indigenous rock paintings, the memory of the expedition in 1845 was awoken once more in connection with one of the most impressive rock painting galleries in Australia, Yuwunggayai. On the walls of a stone shelter, which extends for some 70 meters, are painted images in many styles dating back as far as 50,000 years—including the portrayal of an armed European.

Pina Giuliani, Research Officer, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, comments:

It is not possible to say exactly how many layers of large and colorful human and animal figures cover the main wall of Yuwunggayai. There are hundreds of paintings with image upon image and some obscure the view of paintings from earlier periods. A count by George Chaloupka, curator of rock art at the Northern Territory Museum from 1973 to 2011, of the most recent identifiable images revealed that there are at least 168 paintings of human figures and 212 animal representations. The only clearly visible paintings portraying Western contact are the European holding a gun and a stylized representation of a similar firearm.

The artist has portrayed the man with an animal head, a head like some of the spirit beings that appear in indigenous beliefs. He is shown fully clothed and holding a gun, as if preparing to hurl his weapon much like a spear. The site was first scientifically recorded in 1968 in an area known to balanda—white people—as the Deaf Adder Valley in Arnhem Land. Chaloupka was the second non-indigenous person to record this magnificent cultural site. While working with the indigenous owners of the estate and his indigenous mentors, Nipper Kapirogi and George Namingum of the Badmardi clan, he learnt that the local indigenous name for the site was Yuwunggayai (Pina Giuliani, personal correspondence with Heike Hartmann, 2014).

In addition to the indigenous name Yuwunggayai, Chaloupka called it the Leichhardt Gallery, and suggested that the man with the weapon was a portrait of the explorer or one of the other expedition members. Chaloupka hoped that this intentionally provocative and unsubstantiated interpretation would draw public attention to the rock painting and influence political decisions about the future of Arnhem Land, where large uranium deposits were discovered in the early 1970s. Under colonial law, the entire land was regarded as *terra nullius* and had been claimed by the British crown; at this time, the indigenous minority of Australia campaigned for an end to this, including the transfer of their traditional territories into their management and protection of these lands from exploitation. Future land use would have to involve a compromise between the interests of the uranium industry, indigenous land rights, environmental protection, and tourism. Chaloupka advocated the creation of a national park and the recognition of the land rights of indigenous owners and caretakers. Their support was decisive in

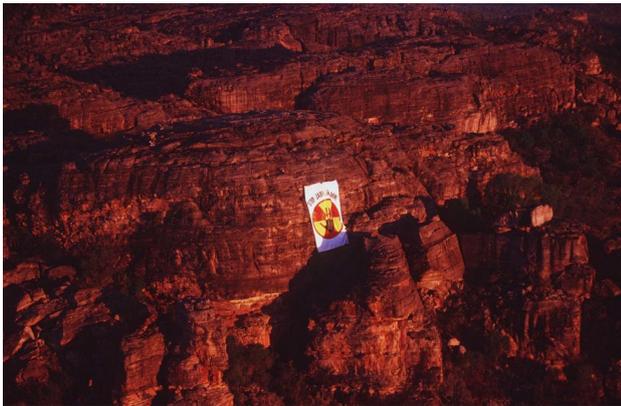
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bringing places of archeological, artistic, or spiritual significance onto the agenda.



Banner unfurled by Mirarr Traditional Owners within the Jabiluka Mineral Lease

Photograph by Sandy Scheltema, 1997.

Courtesy of The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jabiru.

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Mirarr Senior Traditional Owner Yvonne Margarula leads a protest against the Jabiluka mine in Kakadu National Park.

Photo by Clive Hyde, 1998.

Courtesy of The Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Jabiru.

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As the first European explorer in the region, Leichhardt lived on in the debates about the establishment of Kakadu National Park that started in the late 1960s. He made an appearance not only in the name of the gallery of rock paintings, but also of the nature reserve itself.

David Lawrence, Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, remarks:

In 1970 the Northern Territory administration appointed a planning team to investigate the area and prepare a plan of management. It was their report that first proposed the use of the name “Kakadu National Park.” The choice of name was based on fieldwork undertaken by anthropologist Baldwin Spencer in 1912 when he described the land between the East and South Alligator Rivers as the “tribal area of the Kakadu nation.” Following the report, the justification for the use of the name was further advanced by the fact that the Kakadu people helped Leichhardt in his journey to Port Essington in 1845. The Aboriginal presence was to be contained within the shadowy past, not included as part of a vital turning presence. The planning team reported that “the original people split into many groups and are almost extinct, although a few are known at

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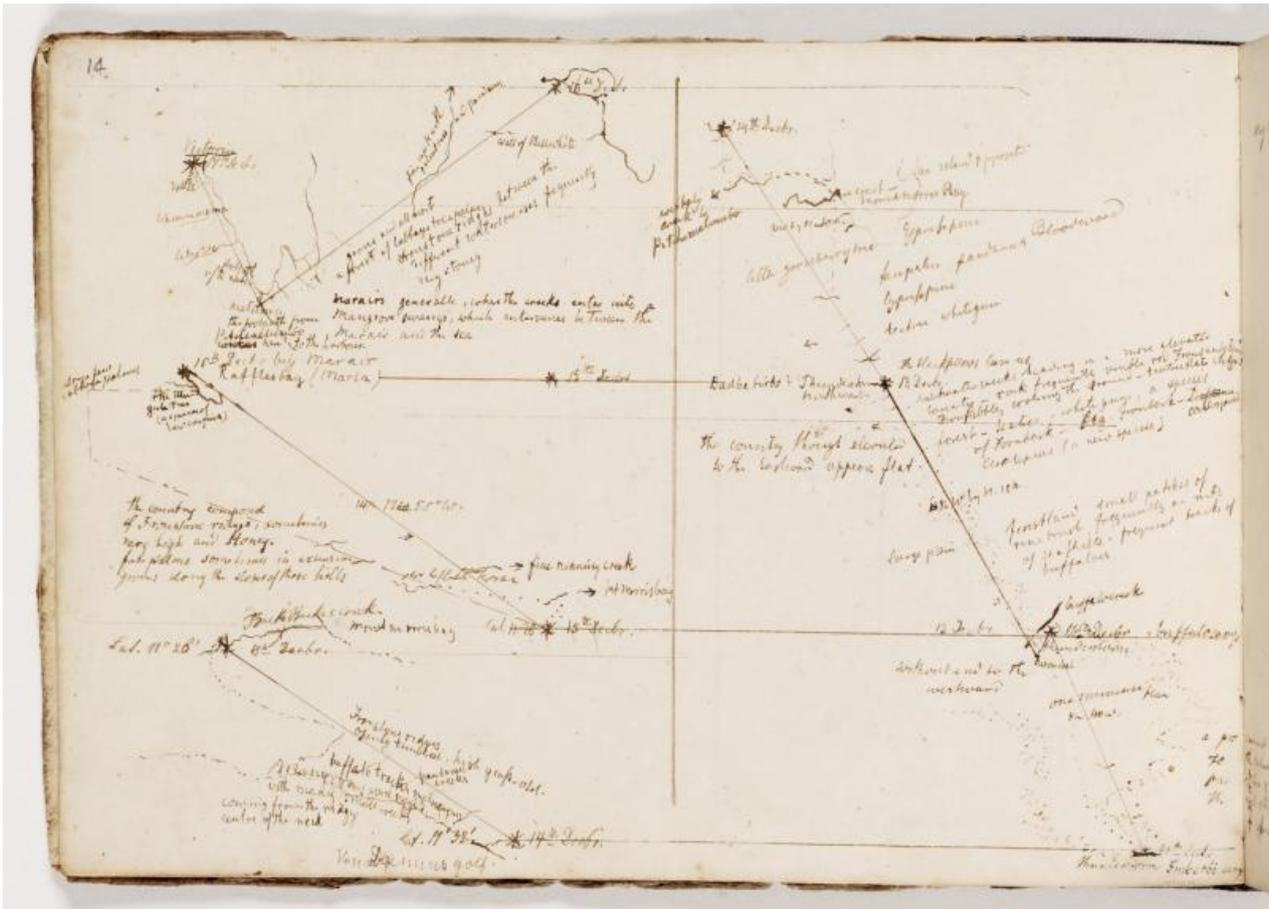
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Oenpelli Mission.” The “original people,” the plan of management stated, had left behind “in many galleries the wealth of primitive art for admiration and study by future generations” (David Lawrence, personal correspondence with Heike Hartmann, 2014).

The first section of Kakadu National Park became a protected area in 1979; between 1984 and 1991 additional neighboring territories were added. The Leichhardt Gallery is not part of the publicly accessible areas, but the indigenous traditional owners (the Aborigine people with claims on the land) have opened it for viewing as a tourist attraction.



In his field notebook, Leichhardt made drawings of the region around his destination, Port Essington. His travel report describes encounters with Aborigines, who provided the expedition with water and food during the final stretch of the journey. Some of them understood a little English. They knew of the European settlement and could give Leichhardt directions.

Hand-drawn map in Leichhardt’s field notebook by Ludwig Leichhardt, 1845.  
 Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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In one of his letters Leichhardt expresses the powerful colonial sentiment that his journey through the north of Australia was not just an act of mapping, but an act of creation, as though he had called the lands into existence by traveling through them: “It is a joy to observe how the land I wandered through emerges out of Australia’s unknown, blank interior” ([letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, 18 April 1846](#)). Leichhardt remarked in a letter to his brother-in-law about his work with a cartographer after his return from the Port Essington Expedition.

Today, these regions have become the site of conflicts resulting from different conceptions of the land, as represented by indigenous Australians and the colonial legacy. Leichhardt’s travels have gained new, unexpected relevance in connection with a number of these disputes.

In 1976 the [Aboriginal Land Rights \(Northern Territory\) Act](#) created a legal basis for Aboriginal people to lay claim to lands that had been taken from them. One of the conditions was that they must be able to demonstrate a continuous connection with the land; this resulted in the reports of European explorers being reread with a view to uncovering indigenous history. In a number of cases from northern Australia, Leichhardt’s travelogues—particularly his many descriptions of encounters with Aborigines—were accepted as evidence of their settlement of the land far back into the past.

Leichhardt’s expedition brought the landscape of northern Australia onto European maps. Most of the names he gave to the landmarks—honoring expedition members, sponsors, friends, or based on events during his travels—are still in use today. Although Leichhardt is mostly recognized for his skills in navigation and descriptions of flora and fauna, his encounters with the indigenous population are also important for Australian society, for the various readings and rereadings of his writings take place on the contested terrain of Australian history.

**Websites linked in this text:**

- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-written-aboard-ship>
- <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/leichhardt/letter-his-brother-law-friedrich-august-schmalfuss-sydney-18-april-1846>

**Websites linked in image captions:**

- <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/5005/5005-h/5005-h.htm>

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## A chronological list of Ludwig Leichhardt's letters, with links.

Ludwig Leichhardt's original letters are held at the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. To view the digitized letters and to read their English translation, please click on the links below:

1. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Sydney, 23 March 1842)
2. [Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt](#)  
(Sydney, 6 September 1842)
3. [Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt](#)  
(Newcastle, 10 November 1842)
4. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Glendon, 16 January 1843)
5. [Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt](#)  
(Moreton Bay, 27 June 1843)
6. [Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt](#)  
(Moreton Bay, 27 August 1843)
7. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(The Archer brothers' Durundur Station, Moreton Bay, 2 February 1844)
8. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Newcastle, 14 May 1844)
9. [Letter to his sister Auguste L. Hilgenfeld](#)  
(Newcastle, 15 May 1844)
10. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Campbell's Station, Darling Downs, 3 September 1844)
11. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(On board the *Heroine*, 24 January 1846)
12. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Sydney, 18 April 1846)
13. [Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß](#)  
(Sydney, 19 August 1846)

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**Chapter:** A chronological list of Ludwig Leichhardt's letters

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14. Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß  
(Mr. Dennis' Station, Sydney, 6 December 1846)

15. Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß  
(Camden/Sydney, 20 October 1847)

16. Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß  
(Sydney, 21 October 1847)

17. Last letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß  
(Darling Downs, 22 February 1848)

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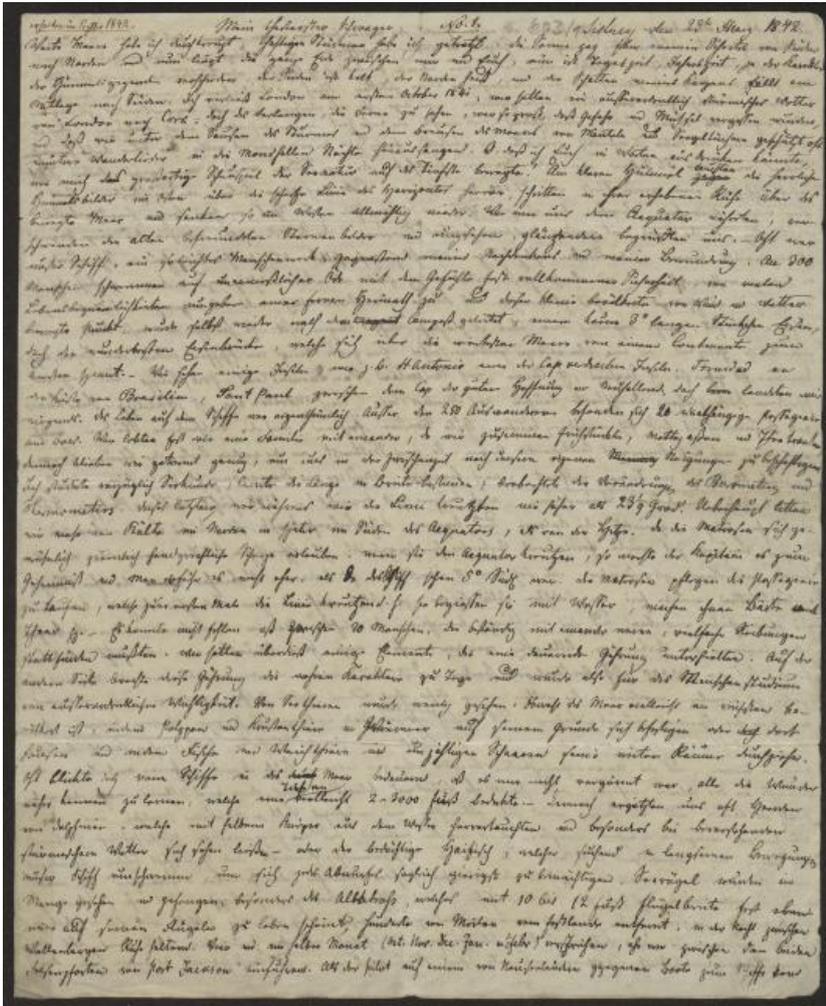
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## The Letters

### Letter to his brother-in-law Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (23 March 1842)



Sydney, 23 March 1842

My dearest brother-in-law,

Vast oceans have I crossed, tempestuous storms have I braved. The sun passed over the crown of my head from south to north and now the entire earth lies between me and all of you, now the time of day, the season, indeed the character of the constellations is different, the south is cold, the north is hot, and the shadow that my body casts at noon falls to the south. I left London on the first of October, 1841; we encountered uncommonly stormy weather between London and Cork; yet the desire to see distant lands was so great that we ignored all dangers and hardships and, shielded by coats and sails, blithely sang songs into the moonlit nights surrounded by the bluster of the storm and the roar of the ocean. Oh, if I could express in words to you how deeply the great spectacle of the ocean's nature moved me! Pinned to the clear sky, the magnificent constellations rose in the east above the sharp line of the horizon, strode in their exalted serenity across the tossing ocean and gradually sank down in the west. As we approached the equator, the old familiar constellations vanished and unseen, more brilliant ones welcomed us. — Our ship, such a frail work of human hands, often occupied my thoughts and commanded my admiration. About 300 people floated over a fathomless, barren expanse toward a distant home with a feeling of complete security and surrounded by many comforts of life, and for its part this small, populated speck, thrown about by wind and weather, was guided by a compass, a piece of iron barely 3" long, yet as such the most marvelous iron bridge that spans the widest oceans between one continent and the next. — We saw a number of islands, such as St. Antonio, one of the Cape Verde islands, Trinidad off the coast of Brazil, St Paul between the Cape of Good Hope and New Holland, yet we stopped nowhere. Life on board was peculiar. Besides the 250 emigrants, there were 20 independent passengers on board. We almost lived like a family with one another since we ate breakfast and lunch and took

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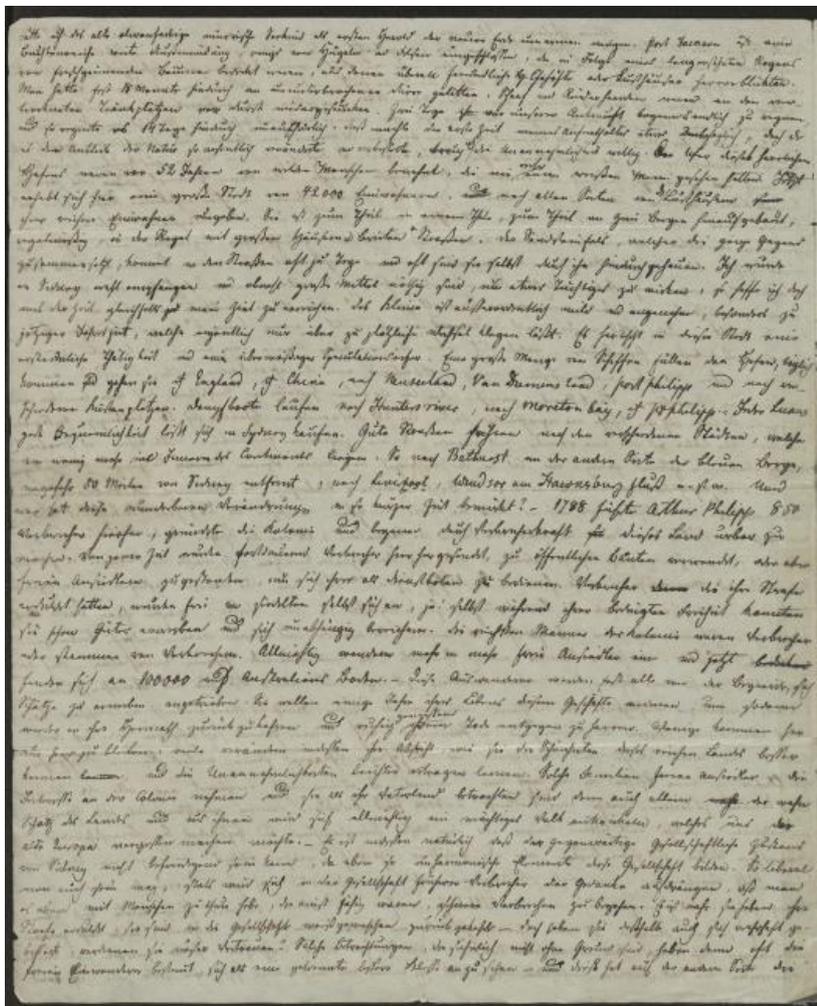
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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (23 March 1842)

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tea together; yet we remained separate enough to pursue our own interests in the times in-between. I primarily studied the art of navigation, learned how to determine longitude and latitude, and monitored the changes of the barometer and thermometer. The latter never exceeded 23½ degrees as we crossed the line. In general we suffered more from cold than from heat to the north of the equator and, later on, south of it. Since sailors usually play rough practical jokes when they cross the equator, the captain kept the crossing a secret and we did not know about it until we were already 5° to the south. The sailors customarily baptize passengers who cross the line for the first time, which means that they pour water over them, adorn them with tar beards, etc. — It was inevitable that among 20 people who are constantly around one another various frictions would arise. Moreover, there were some elements among us that that caused continual disquiet. On the other hand this disquiet revealed everyone’s true character and proved of the utmost importance for the study of people. We saw few sea creatures: although the ocean is probably most richly populated, with polyps and crustaceans and worms living at its bottom or having attached themselves to it, and with fish and mollusks traversing its expanses in countless numbers. I often peered from the ship into the ocean, regretting that it was not possible to become more closely acquainted with the wonders hidden some 2–3000 feet below the surface. — Nevertheless, schools of dolphins frequently delighted us, half of their bodies surfacing out of the water; they made their appearance particularly before stormy weather—or the cautious shark, which circled our ship in slow motion and instantly and greedily seized any refuse thrown over board. We spotted and captured large numbers of sea birds, especially the albatross, which with its wingspan of 10 to 12 feet appears to live constantly on the wing, hundreds of miles away from land, resting between the crests of waves at night. 4 ½ months went by (Oct., Nov., Dec., Jan., and ½ of Feb.), before we passed through the two cliffs that form the entrance to Port Jackson. When the pilot approached the ship on a boat rowed by New



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Zealanders, I wanted to hug the old, olive-colored cantankerous child of the sea as the first herald of a new world. Port Jackson is a broad estuary full of bays, enclosed by hills and cliffs, which were covered in newly greening trees, thanks to a much longed-for rain, and through which we glimpsed friendly-looking homesteads and mansions all around. For almost 18 months the area had suffered uninterrupted drought. Thirst had brought herds of sheep and cattle to their knees at dried-out watering places. Two days before our arrival, it had finally begun to rain and it continued to rain for 14 days without ceasing. This rendered the first part of my stay a bit unpleasant, but I bore the discomfort willingly since it considerably changed and improved the appearance of the natural environs. 52 years ago savages who had never before seen a white man had inhabited the shores of this port. Now a large city of 42,000 residents, surrounded on all sides by the mansions of its rich inhabitants, has arisen. It is built partly in a valley, partly onto two mountains, regularly laid out, generally with large houses and wide streets. The sandstone rock that dominates the entire area often shows through in the streets and frequently they themselves were carved out through it. I was welcomed cordially in Sydney, and although major capital is necessary to effect anything useful I do nevertheless hope to accomplish my goals in due time. The climate is extraordinarily mild and agreeable, especially during the present season, during which only sudden changes in the weather give cause for complaint. An amazing amount of activity and excessive speculation predominate in this city. A huge number of ships fill the port, they come and go daily to and from England, China, to New Zealand, Van Diemen's Land, Port Philip and to various coastal towns. Steamboats depart for Hunter's River, for Moreton Bay, to and from Port Philip. Every luxury item, every article of convenience is obtainable in Sydney. Well-maintained roads lead to the various cities that are situated further toward the interior of the continent, such as Bathurst on the other side of the Blue Mountains, about fifty miles from Sydney, Liverpool, Windsor on the Hawkesbury River, and so forth. And who brought about these incredible transformations in so short a time? — In 1788, Arthur Philipp brought 850 convicts here, founded the colony, and began to reclaim this land with convict labor. Since that time convicts have been continually sent here, used for public construction projects, or assigned as servants to free settlers. Convicts who had served their full sentence were freed and settled down themselves, indeed even under conditional pardon they were allowed to purchase goods and amass independent riches. The wealthiest men of the colony were convicts or are descendants of convicts. But gradually more and more free settlers have been immigrating and by now about 100,000 reside on Australian soil. Almost all of these emigrants are motivated by the desire to amass a fortune. They plan to devote a few years of their lives to this business in order that they can thereafter return to their homeland and spend the days until their death in quiet enjoyment. Few come here to stay: yet many change their plans once they have become better acquainted with the beauty of this rich country and learn to better tolerate its discomforts. These families of free settlers, who take an interest in the colony and regard it as their home country, are the land's sole true treasure and they will develop into a mighty people who might outshine old Europe. — In the meantime it is only natural that the current social conditions in Sydney cannot be satisfactory since the community is composed of such inharmonic elements. In the company of former convicts even the most liberal persons cannot help but remember that they are interacting with people who were once capable of committing grave offenses. It is true; they have served their sentence and have reentered society with a clean slate—yet have they truly been rehabilitated, do they deserve our trust? Such considerations, which are surely not without merit, have frequently led the free settlers to regard themselves as a separate and better class—and this attitude has unified the emancipated convicts on the other

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side, so that now two parties, two predominantly hostile communities face each other, which hinders the progress of the colony. — In past times, whenever a convict ship arrived at Sydney anyone in need of domestic servants stepped forward, and the number of convicts handed over to the new owners depended on the size of their businesses. The owners had legal custody and great control over these convicts, which they abused frequently. The big advantage was that they did not have to pay anything for these convicts and only had to supply them with food and clothes. — Later, meanwhile, when it was recognized that one should not allow the scum of Europe to be sent to this budding colony anymore, the system of assigning convicts to colonists was abandoned and other convict colonies were founded at Moreton Bay (more to the north) and on Norfolk Island. The former has now been opened to free settlers as well. — When a convict had completed his punishment, meaning that he had suffered servitude for 2 or 3 up to 20 or more years, and if had behaved well, he received a permit and could then pursue his own business under police supervision—with the qualification that another misstep would lead to renewed servitude or imprisonment. Only a few obtained unconditional freedom, and there are wealthy men and heads of families in Sydney who are convicts released on conditional pardon only. Since I have left my native country, I have never felt as at home as I do here. One of my traveling companions was a music teacher, a young married man with no children who was following his brother-in-law to Sydney. Upon his arrival here, he rented a house for the enormous sum of 100 dollars per annum, and since he had a spare room, he invited me to live with him to help him with a share of the expenses. I accepted, my room was furnished simply yet comfortably, and in this way I lived exceptionally contentedly under the circumstances, completely absorbed in my studies. For it has a definite fascination for me to watch this newly developing people, which perhaps in less than a century, much like the United States of America, will break free from England to form an independent state or confederation of states. In such a mild climate, with such a bounteous nature, and under

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conditions so conducive to trade an energetic people like the English cannot help but achieve greatness within a short amount of time. In Italy I have often sorely missed such a race and I believe that Italy's condition will not improve until a peaceful settlement of industrious men from the north should occur.

Fruits are to be had in abundance. All kinds prosper here, from our apples, pears, peaches, figs, and grapes to exotic fruits like pineapples, bananas, and coconuts, whether it be in Sydney, which is rather sandy and infertile, or in the distant settlements and towns toward the interior or on the coast. They are, however, very expensive, as are vegetables, whereas meat is extraordinarily cheap, especially at present. Servants' wages are exceptionally high and even boys earn 56–60 Rtl . per year in addition to receiving food and clothing. — As a consequence, servants lead very independent lives and you have to watch out that they don't leave you in the lurch. — From time to time convicts have escaped so as to live freely in the wilderness and to get out of work duties. Sometimes alone, sometimes together, these men have attacked travelers and solitary settlements. They only seize money, watches, and similar valuables; however their raids have never or only very rarely involved bloodshed. These people are called bushrangers and the mounted police are so close on their heels that their ventures are becoming increasingly rare and will soon cease entirely on account of the increasing population. Criminals are now treated here in the same fashion as they would in any of our big prisons. Strictly guarded in prison and prohibited from speaking, they are escorted out to work every morning, whether to erect public structures, to build roads, or to clear woods. They no longer interact at all with the

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residents. Although you might think from the foregoing that social life in Sydney is not generally the most pleasant due to the abiding antagonism between emancipated convicts and free settlers, there are still a great many cultured families residing here who allow me to forget completely that I am living in a convict colony and so far removed from Europe. During my passage I made the acquaintance of the family of a Captain Marlow, who had been transferred from Scotland to Sydney. They treated me with exceptional friendliness and it appears that they mean to act as substitutes for my own relatives as much as is possible. They introduced me to a large number of people, which confused me not a little since I have always led a solitary life and only ever sought a few acquaintances. As of yet I am not fully able to distinguish who I should avoid and who I should seek out and find the accompanying conventional duties very unpleasant. — I learned here that an expedition into the interior earlier than next year would hardly be feasible and since I hoped to be self-reliant during this time I first thought about taking on a few pupils, which pays well. Yet the unfettered feeling of freedom is so strong within me and the prospect of potential aggravation caused by indolent pupils so goes against my current hopes that I gave up on this idea. There is an art academy here and I will probably give a few lectures on botany and zoology during the winter months. However, I can say nothing much as regards my current situation. Every day can bring considerable changes. You should be content in the knowledge that aside from the distance between us I am content and therefore also happy, although I do not dispute the fact that I frequently become impatient when I cannot accomplish something as quickly and brilliantly as I might wish. This is why I frequently think back to William's changed plans with pain, since we could have accomplished our goals much more quickly and securely with his means had he shown the slightest bit of interest in scientific endeavors. Even his brother seems to have already left New Holland, since he has not yet answered my last two letters. Thoughts of finding nothing but wilderness, cannibals and brute settlers here particularly frightened William. Had he seen this prospering city,

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society. doi.org/10.5282/rcc/6348. Chapter: Letter to his brother-in-law Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (23 March 1842) Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6611 Print date: 01 February 2021 11:08:09

where any and all desirable European luxuries are at hand and which is, moreover, not even without means for a man of science—he would have most likely accompanied me and shared my fortunes. I do not deny that I do not at all like the general ambition to amass riches, this very material orientation that prevents the desire for higher intellectual pursuits from surfacing; yet perhaps I am capable of making myself useful by awakening these desires, and this thought appeals to me. There are several men here who have gained financial independence through a variety of circumstances and take an occasional interest in scientific matters. I had a letter of recommendation for Sir Thomas Mitchell, the surveyor general of New South Wales (the head of the land survey commission). He introduced me to Doctor Nicholson, who, however, is not at all related to my William. — Both are influential men and I hope to gradually gain a foothold.

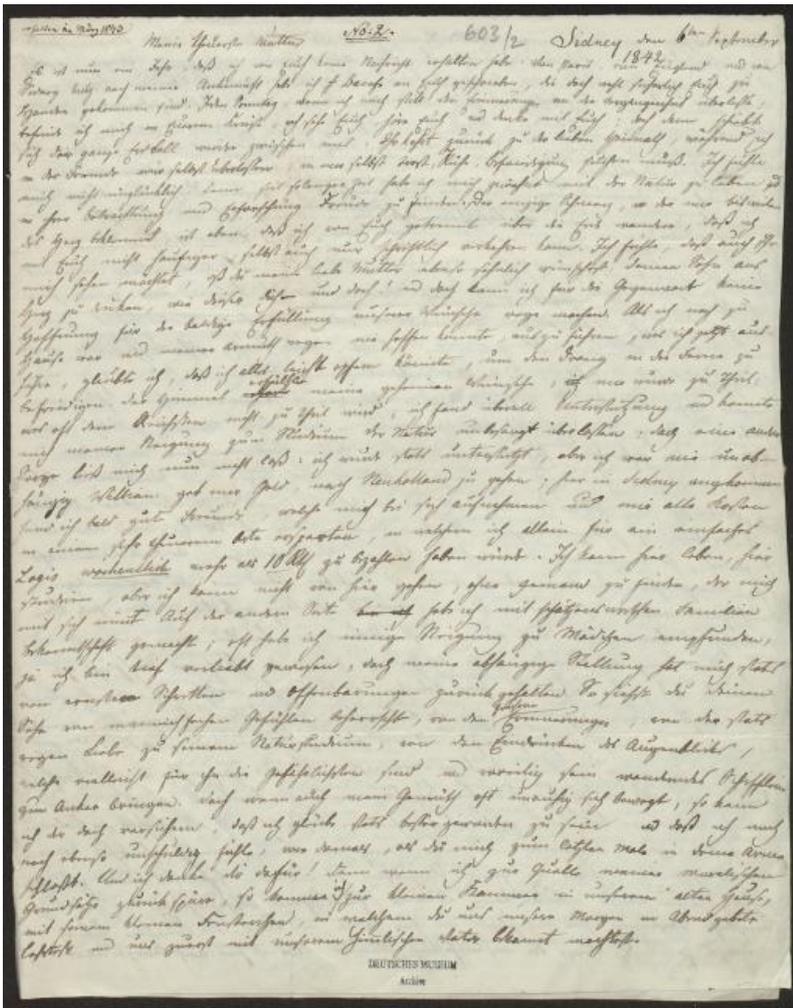
I have met several Germans here. Mr. Kirchner, a young man from Frankfurt am Main, arrived here two years ago, worked as a clerk in the house of a wealthy businessman, married his daughter, and now engages in his own quite profitable speculations. Mr. Schmidt of Stargardt came to New South Wales as a missionary and now resides in Moreton Bay, about 80 miles north of here. His wife accompanied him; they both seem to be quite content. And so there are a large number of additional compatriots here. Generally speaking, the German is well-respected on account of his modesty and temperance and my native country alone often suffices as a letter of recommendation. — Whatever good and praiseworthy things I may write about this country, which like any other also has its own obvious shortcomings, you would surely follow in the footsteps of this restless wanderer, to enjoy life to the fullest in this delightful climate or to begin worshipping God anew amidst what would appear to you like a new creation. — Then again, you are standing on the shore of a vast, tempestuous ocean and the dangers alone, the imaginary dangers, would hold you back. So, farewell my loved ones, convey my love to my dear mother, for whom this letter is after all also meant, and all the others.

Most affectionately,  
your Ludwig

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

## Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Sydney (6 September 1842)



Sydney, 6 September 1842

My dearest mother,

It has now been a year since I have received any message from you. I wrote letters to you from Paris, from England, and shortly after my arrival from Sydney, which you will surely have received. Every Sunday, when I quietly reminisce about the past, I find myself in your presence, I see you, I hear you and I share your thoughts; but then the whole globe once again moves between us; you return to the beloved homeland whereas I am left to my own devices in a foreign land, where I have to find solace, quietude, and fulfillment within myself. I am not feeling unhappy! For so long I have been accustomed to living amidst nature and finding joy in observing and studying it. The only pain that occasionally weighs heavy on my heart is solely the fact that I am wandering the earth far from you, that I cannot communicate with you more often, even if it is only in written form. I feel that you would want to see me, too; that you, my dearest mother, also yearn to hug your son to your heart as he wishes to hug you—and yet! And yet I cannot at present make any promises for the immanent fulfillment of our wishes. When I was still at home and because of my poverty could not dare to hope to achieve what I am accomplishing now, I believed that I could easily sacrifice everything to satisfy the urge to see the world. God in heaven fulfilled my secret wishes: I received what often the most affluent do not receive; everywhere I found support and was able to pursue my affinity for the study of nature without worries; yet another worry then took hold of me: I always received support but was never independent. William gave me money to go to New Netherland; after arriving here in Sydney I soon found good friends who took me in and saved me from incurring any costs in a very expensive place, in which I would have needed to pay more than 10 Rtl. per week for simple accommodations. I can live here, study here, but I cannot leave this place without finding someone who would take me with him. On the

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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Sydney (6 September 1842)

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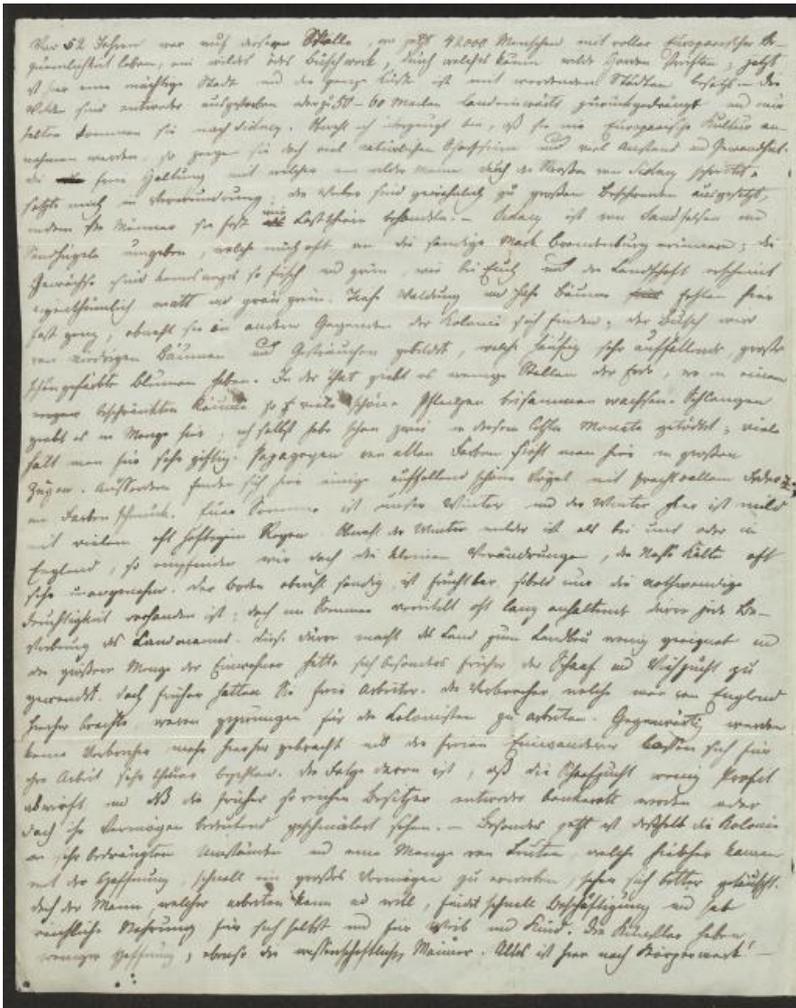
other hand I have made the acquaintance of respectable families; I have often felt favorably inclined toward girls, indeed, I have been deeply in love, yet my dependence has always prevented me from taking serious steps and making my feelings known. So you see that your son is ruled by manifold emotions, by early memories, by the always-burning love for his study of nature, by the impressions of the moment, which are likely to be the most dangerous for him and to prematurely anchor his wandering ship. Yet even if my mind is often restlessly moving, I can still assure you that I believe I have continually improved and that I still feel as innocent as I did the last time you held me in your arms. And for this I thank you! Because when I seek out the source of my moral principles, I arrive at the small chamber in our old house with its tiny window in which you taught us our morning and evening prayers and first introduced us to our heavenly Father.

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This spot—where 42,000 people now enjoy all the comforts of Europe—used to be wild, barren scrublands which fifty-two years ago even savage hordes seldom visited; now a mighty city stands here and the entire coast is dotted with cities being born. — The savages have either died out or been pushed back 50–60 miles into the interior and they only rarely come as far as Sydney. Although I am convinced that they will never adopt European culture, they nevertheless display much natural acumen and a lot of decorum and skillfulness. The poise with which a savage man strides through the streets of Sydney astonished me: the females usually are subject to much hardship since the men treat them almost like pack animals. — Sydney is surrounded by sandstone rock and sandy hills, which frequently remind me of the sandy Mark Brandenburg; the plants are not nearly as fresh and green as they are where you live and the landscape appears strangely dull and grayish-green. Dense woodlands and tall trees are almost completely absent here, although they exist in other parts of the colony; the bush is composed of low trees and shrubs which often sport very large, noticeable, beautifully colored flowers. There are indeed few places on earth where so many beautiful plants grow in such a small space. There are snakes in great quantities here; I have already killed two this past month myself; many are thought to be highly poisonous. One sees big flocks of parakeets in all colors here. In addition, a few remarkably beautiful birds with gorgeous coloring and plumage can be found. Your summer is our winter and winters here are mild with lots of heavy rains. Although winters are milder than at home or in England, we nevertheless frequently find the small changes, the damp cold, very unpleasant. The soil, although sandy, is fertile as soon as the required moisture is present; yet in summer long dry spells often thwarts the farmer's every effort. This drought means that the land is ill-suited for farming and in the past in particular the greater part of the population turned to sheep and livestock breeding. Yet in the past they had access to free labor. The convicts who were transported here from England were forced to work for the colonists. At present, convicts are no longer brought here and free immigrants charge high

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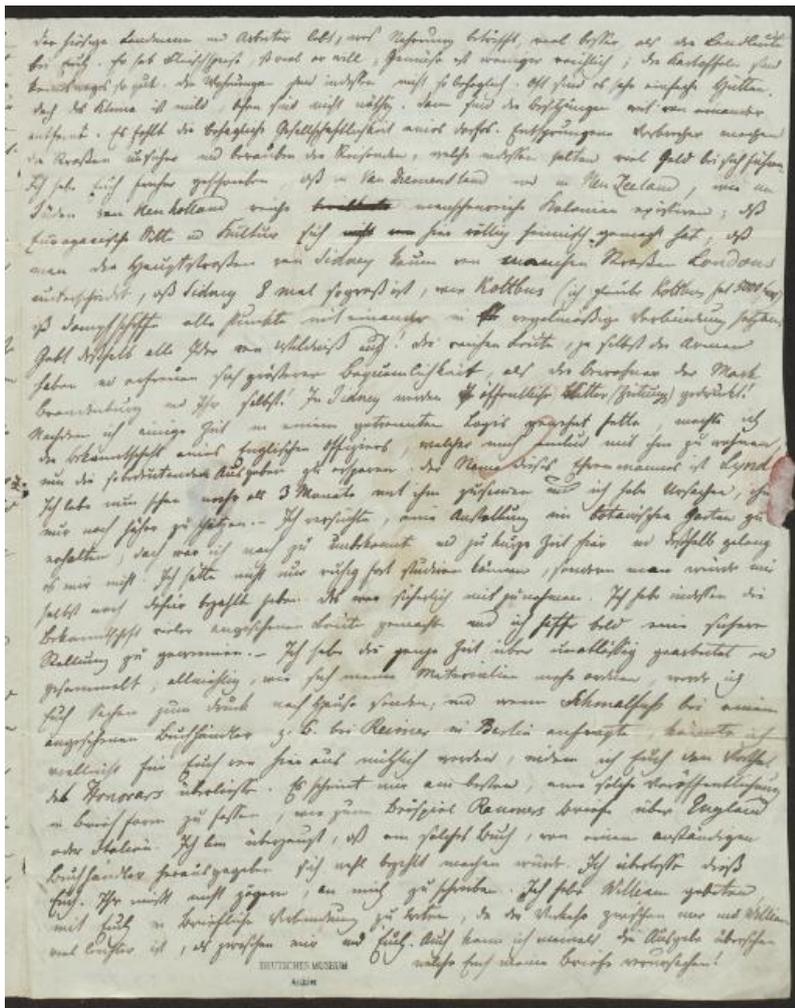
fees for their labor services. As a consequence, sheep farming generates little profit and land owners who used to be very rich are either going bankrupt or are seeing their wealth diminish considerably. — The colony therefore finds itself in dire straits at present and a lot of people who came here in the hopes of quickly acquiring much wealth have been bitterly disappointed. Yet the man who is able and who wants to work quickly finds employment and can provide ample sustenance for himself and his wife and children. Artists have fewer prospects, as do men of science. Everything here revolves around physical labor!

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As far as nourishment is concerned, the local farmer or worker is better off than a farmer at home. He can eat as much meat as he desires, vegetables are less abundant; potatoes are not nearly as good. Living quarters are, however, not so comfortable. Frequently they are but simple huts. Yet the climate is mild. Stoves are not necessary. But then, settlements are far apart. The easy sociability of a village is absent. Escaped convicts roam the streets and rob travelers, who, for this reason rarely carry large amounts of money. I wrote you earlier that rich and richly populated colonies exist in Van Diemen's Land and in New Zealand as they do in the south of New Holland; that European customs and culture are fully at home here; that Sydney's main streets are barely distinguishable from some streets in London; that Sydney is 8 times the size of Cottbus (I believe that Cottbus has a population of 5000); that steamships provide regular connections between all places. Abandon therefore all notions of a wilderness! The rich, and even the poor, live in and enjoy greater levels of comfort than the inhabitants of the Mark Brandenburg and you yourselves! In Sydney, public broadsheets (newspapers) are being printed! After I had resided in my detached quarters for a while, I made the acquaintance of an English officer, who invited me to stay with him to save on the very high rent. This gentleman's name is Lynd. By now, I have already lived with him for more than three months and have good reasons to value him even more highly. — I tried to secure employment with the botanical gardens, yet I did not succeed because I was still too much of an unknown and had been here for too short a time. I could have not only continued my studies in peace, but they would even have paid me for doing so. This would have been too good an opportunity to pass up. Meanwhile, I have made the acquaintance of many highly-respected people and hope to soon secure a permanent position. — I have been tirelessly working collecting this whole time; gradually, as my materials become more organized, I will send you things to publish at home; and if Schmalfuß were to make inquiries at a reputable booksellers, for example Reimer in Berlin, I could perhaps be of use to you by ceding you the honorarium. It appears best to me

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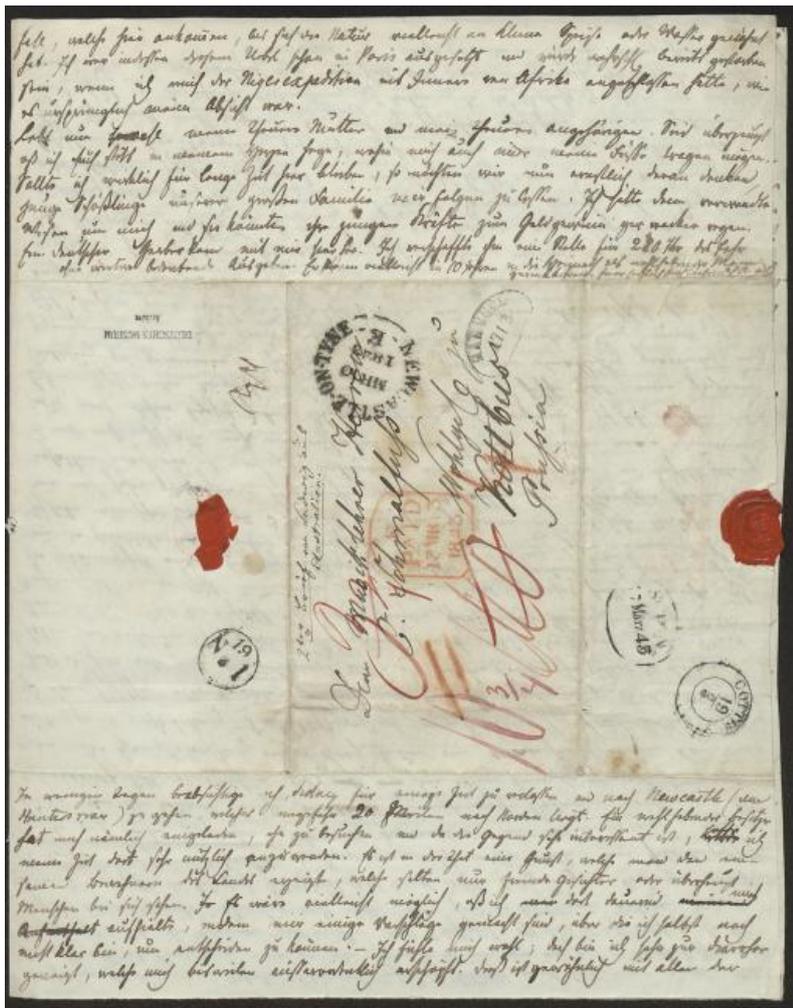
to present such a publication in the form of letters, such as Raumer's letters on England or Italy, for example. I am convinced that such a book, if published by a reputable bookseller, would indeed pay for itself. I leave this up to you. Do not hesitate to write me. I have asked William to get in touch with you by letter since communication between myself and William is much easier than it is between me and you. In addition, I could never ignore the expense that my letters create for you!

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In a few days I intend to leave Sydney for a while and to go to Newcastle (on the Hunter River), which is situated about 20 miles north of here. Specifically, a prosperous landowner has invited me to visit him and since the area is very interesting I hope to fruitfully occupy my time there. It is indeed doing a favor to country's isolated inhabitants, who rarely get to see strange faces or even people at all. It is possible that I might stay there permanently, for I have received a few offers which I have not yet considered enough to make a decision. — I am feeling well; yet I am very inclined toward diarrhea, which on occasion extraordinarily exhausts me. This generally happens to everyone who arrives here until one's constitution has become acclimated to the climate, or perhaps the food, or the water. I was already subjected to this malady in Paris and would probably be dead by now if I had joined the Niger expedition into the heart of Africa, as I had originally planned.

Farewell my dear mother and my dear relatives. Be assured that I always carry you in my heart wherever my feet may carry me. Should I actually remain here for a very long time we might think about having young members of our extended family join me. I would then be surrounded by relatives and they could heartily dedicate the strength of youth to making money. A German tanner came here with me. I found him a position that pays 280 Thaler a year with few substantial expenses. After perhaps 10 years he can return home a prosperous man.

Most affectionately,

Your loving Brother-in-Law and Son

Ludwig

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

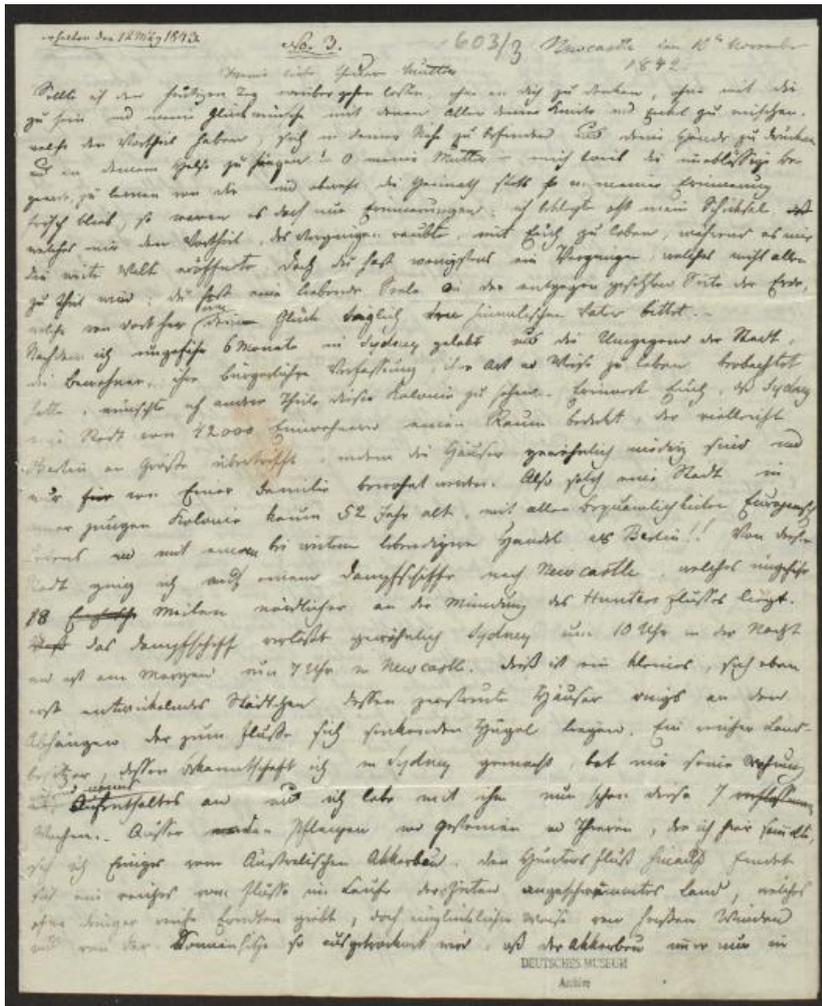
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Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Newcastle (10 November 1842)



Newcastle, 10 November 1842

My dear beloved mother,

How can I let the today pass without thinking of you, without being with you and adding my well-wishes to those of all of your children and grandchildren who have the advantage of living near you and can shake your hand and hug you! — O mother—the incessant appetite to learn drove me away from you and although my home remained continually present in my memories, they were only memories after all; I often lamented my fate which robbed me of the benefit, of the joy of living with you, although it opened the wide world for me. Yet at the very least you can take delight in one thing that not everyone enjoys; you have a loving soul on the other side of the earth which thence daily prays for your happiness to our heavenly Father. —

After I had lived in Sydney for about six months and had studied the city's surroundings, inhabitants, its state of public affairs, and its way of life, I longed to see other parts of this colony. Remember that Sydney, a city of 42,000 inhabitants, covers a space that is perhaps bigger than Berlin due to the fact that the houses are customarily low-ceilinged and only inhabited by one family. Well now, [imagine] such a city in a young colony scarcely 52 years old, with all the comforts of European life and much livelier trade than in Berlin!! From this city I took a steamship to Newcastle, which is situated about 18 miles to the north, on the mouth of the Hunter River. The steamship typically leaves Sydney at 10 o'clock at night and arrives at Newcastle at 7 o'clock in the morning. This is a small city just beginning to develop, whose scattered houses sit atop the slopes of hills that dip down toward the river. A wealthy landowner, whose acquaintance I made in Sydney, offered me his apartment for the duration of my stay and I have now been living with him for these past seven weeks. Apart from the plants, rocks, and animals that I collected here, I've seen something of Australian agriculture. Upstream of the Hunter River there is rich soil that the river has deposited over the years, which yields rich harvests without the aid of fertilizers; yet unfortunately hot winds and the heat of the sun dry it out so much that farms can only count on a good harvest one year in three.

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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Newcastle (10 November 1842)

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3. Tassen sind immer gut zu finden. In diesen Wasserwegen könnte  
 vielleicht ein künstliches Kanal abgegraben werden; das sind allerdings Arbeiten für  
 und die wenigen Arbeiter so schlecht bezahlt, dass sie nicht arbeiten, und man an große  
 Unternehmungen nur mit sehr wenig Nutzen denkt. Auf den Inseln sind man bekommt  
 das beste Wasser, welches die Natur uns bietet. Es wird nicht leicht  
 möglich, die künstlichen Wasserwerke zu bauen, so leicht zu bekommen, da die  
 Masse an Getreide, welche von Van Diemen's Land aus Südamerika eingeführt wird  
 sehr groß ist, als die Felder zu gewinnen können. Die Pflanzen selbst sind sehr  
 im Vergleich mit großen Aufwandsarbeit. Die Pflanzen sind ungefähr  
 100-200 große Masten (25-50 Meilen) Land inwendig; die Rinder sind man für  
 die meisten inwendigen Waldstücken finden lassen, welches man schon die  
 Ziegen die besterhalten unterhalten. Doch das werden die jungen halbes ange-  
 fangen und gebracht. Die Rinder werden man nie in der Nähe der Städte, in  
 welchen man Vieh und Milch verkaufen kann. Man spricht gewöhnlich, die  
 Ziegen zu verkaufen und die besten Rinder an die Küster zu verkaufen.  
 Die Ziegen werden fast nicht, so sie so wenig Fleisch mit Managen geben;  
 die Küster, welche nicht nie von Zeit zu Zeit Mühsamkeit haben sind alle  
 zu Pferde und oft ist Pferd und Reiter den Angriffen der Ziegen Rufe und  
 bleiben zurückgesetzt. — Mit den Ziegen ist es verschieden. Sie müssen regel-  
 mäßig Küster gehalten werden, welche man jährlich von 220 - 350 Thaler zu  
 bezahlen hat. Jede Zeit hat man die besterhalten die Anzahl von 500 - 1000  
 Stück Ziegen. Diese sind den Angriffen der wilden Hunde zurückgesetzt, welche  
 die besterhalten die Anzahl sich der Rinder, und jedes Ziegen findet vernimmt.  
 Die jungen Männer, welche von England hier herkommen, sind gewöhnlich  
 von guten Familien und haben gewöhnlich etwas Geld. Sind sie arm, so treten  
 sie für einige Zeit in den Diensten der Inspektoren an den Küsten der ange-  
 gebenen Inseln. Nachdem sie sich einige Geld verdient, gehen sie landwirtschaflich  
 in die Inseln, in besterhalten Teile und gründen auf eigene Rechnung  
 eine oder zwei Pflanzstationen. — Die jungen gewöhnlich von der Regierung erhalten  
 von 1000 - 2000 Morgen Land, welche ihre große persönliche Nutzung gewährt  
 die besterhalten die Anzahl der besterhalten Preis von 50 Thaler. Die sind meistens  
 nicht besetzt, und wenn der Land zu offen, verkauft kommt, finden sie

Artificial lakes could perhaps alleviate this water shortage; yet there are such few laborers here, and these few demand such extraordinarily high wages, that larger undertakings of this kind are out of the question for now. Apart from wheat, for the most part they grow maize, which is used as animal feed. You will easily recognize that landowners are hardly inclined to cultivate their land since the flour and grain that is imported from Van Diemen's Land and South America is less expensive than what they can produce themselves. They therefore concentrate much more on livestock and sheep farming. The flocks of sheep are approximately 100–200 English miles (25–50 German miles) inland; cattle are allowed to roam freely in wide, unfenced swaths of woodland after each has been branded with its owner's mark. Every year the young calves are caught and branded. Cows are milked only in the vicinity of cities in which butter and milk can be sold. Generally speaking, farmers try to increase herd size and sell the fat stock to the butchers. The animals are almost feral since they have so little interaction with humans. The herdsmen, who only make their rounds to examine the herds from time to time, are all mounted on horseback, and frequently horse and rider are subjected to attacks by the cows and bulls. — It's different when it comes to the sheep. For this, regular shepherds have to be employed, who must be paid 220–350 dollars in annual wages. Depending on the terrain, every shepherd is responsible for 500–1000 sheep. These are vulnerable to attacks by dingos, which combine the cunning of the fox with the strength of a good sheepdog. The young men who arrive here from England typically come from good families and by and large possess some means. If they are poor, they enter into the services of established settlers for a little while, as accountants or inspectors. After they have saved up some money they move further inland to the as-of-yet unsettled parts and use their own capital to establish a cattle or a sheep farm. As a rule they lease between 1000 and 2000 morgen of land from the government, which provides their herd with ample grazing ground, and pay the fixed price of [50?] dollars annually. — They do not own the land, however, and when it is sold at public auction their claims.

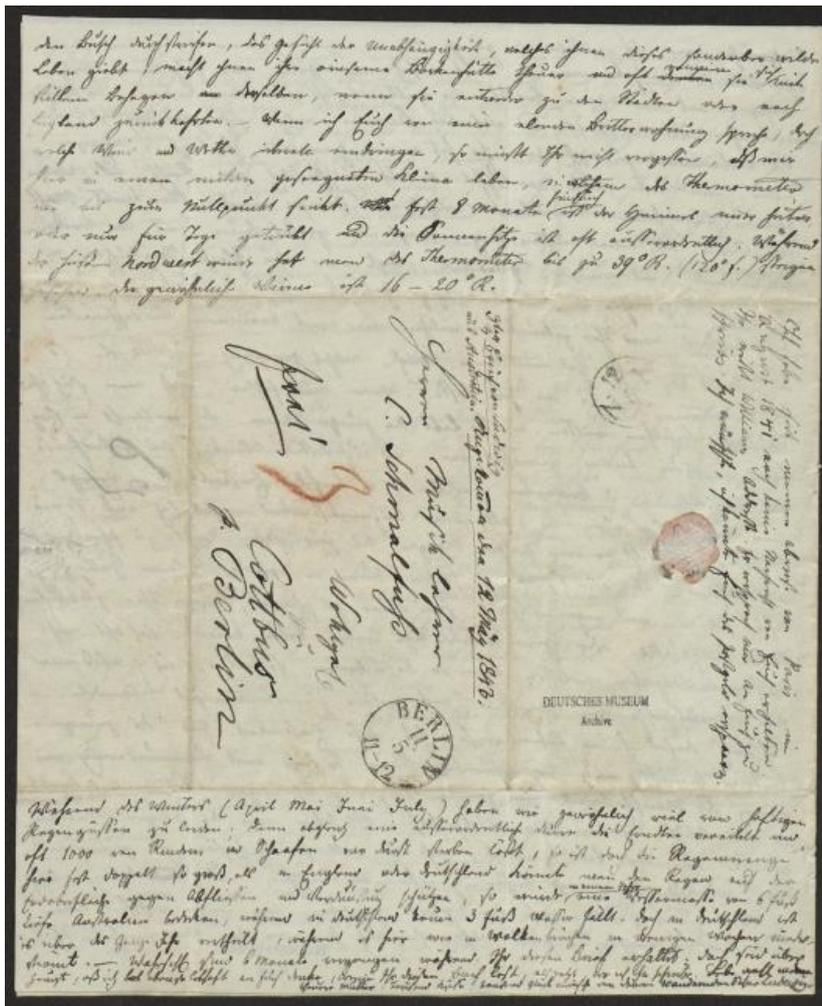
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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Newcastle (10 November 1842)

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atop their horses, which are used to wooded areas, the feeling of independence with which this peculiar, this wild life instills in them renders their solitary bark-covered hut dear to them and they often think back to it with quiet contentment after they have returned either to the cities or to England. If I paint a picture of a miserable shack exposed to wind and the elements on all sides then you must keep in mind that we live in a blessedly mild climate here, in which the thermometer never drops below freezing. For almost 8 months straight the sky is continually bright blue, or only cloudy for a few days, and the heat of the sun is frequently extreme. During the hot northwestern winds, the thermometer has been seen to climb up to 39° R (120° F.). Normally it is 16–20° R.

During the winter (April, May, June, July) we usually suffer under heavy downpours; even though extreme drought blights the harvest and often causes thousands of cattle and sheep to die of thirst, the amount of rainfall here is almost twice as high as it is in England or Germany. If the rain falling on the soil could be prevented from running off or evaporating, within one year a mass of water 6 feet deep would cover Australia, whereas hardly 3 feet of water fall on Germany. Yet in Germany this amount is spread out over the entire year, whereas here it pours down in torrents within the space of a few weeks. — When you receive this letter, 6 months will presumably have passed; yet be sure that I think of you as fervently when you read this letter as I do now while I am composing it. Farewell, beloved mother. A thousand kisses, a thousand well-wishes from

Your wandering son,

Ludwig

[P.S.] I have not received a message from you since my departure from Paris in August 1841. You know William's address. He promised me to write to you. I wish I could spare you the expense of postage.

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

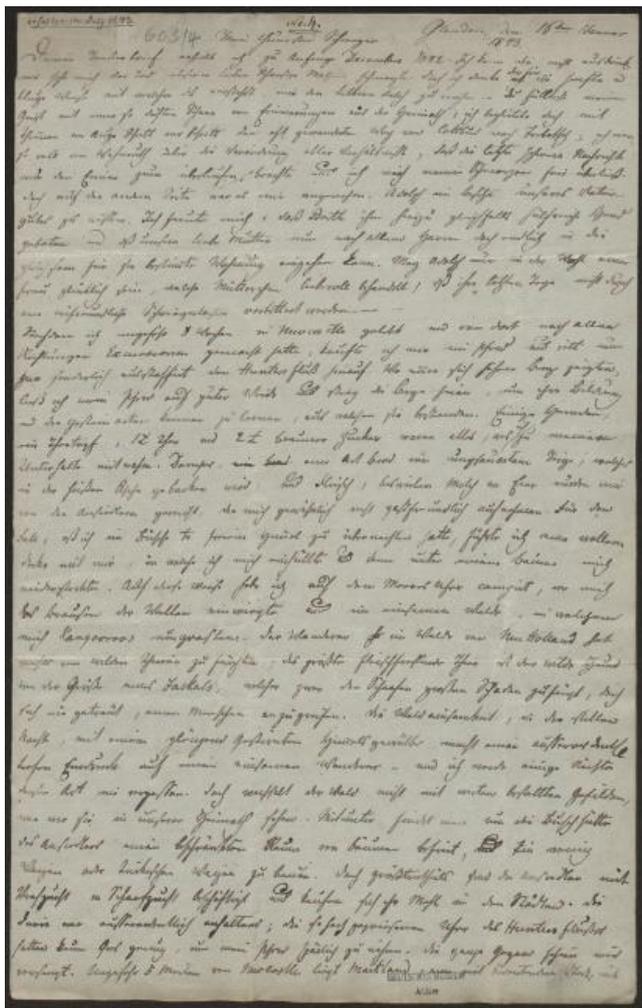
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## Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Glendon (16 January 1843)



Glendon, 16 January 1843

My dearest brother-in-law,

I received your letter of condolence at the beginning of December 1842. I cannot tell you how much the death of our dear sister Mathilde pained me. Yet I thank you for the gentle and diplomatic way in which you broke the terrible news to me. — You filled my mind with a whole host of memories of home; with tears in my eyes I accompanied you step by step on the well-travelled road from Cottbus to Trebatsch; I was so filled with melancholy about how everything has changed that the last, grievous message simply made the bucket overflow and I wallowed freely in my grief. Yet on the other hand I was glad to know that Adolph has taken possession of our father's property. I was happy that Barth has extended a helping hand to him in this and that, by the same token, our dear mother can finally move into the residence reserved for her after waiting so long. May Adolph only be fortunate in choosing a wife who will treat mother well, so that her remaining days will not be marred by an unkind daughter-in-law.

After I had lived in Newcastle for about 8 weeks and from there had undertaken excursions in all directions, I bought a horse and thus, excellently fitted out, rode up the Hunter River. Whenever I encountered steeper hills I left my horse on good pastures and climbed the hills to examine their formation and the rocks of which they consist. A few shirts, a tea kettle, 1 £ of tea, and 2 £ of brown sugar were all I brought to sustain me. The settlers, who usually accorded me a friendly welcome, supplied me with damper, a kind of bread made of unleavened dough which is baked in hot ashes, and meat, and once in a while milk and eggs. In case I had to sleep under the open sky in the bush I carried a woolen blanket, in which I wrapped myself and then laid down beneath a tree. I camped out in this manner along the seashore, where the roar of waves lulled me to sleep, and within isolated woodlands, in which kangaroos grazed around me. — People

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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Glendon (16 January 1843)

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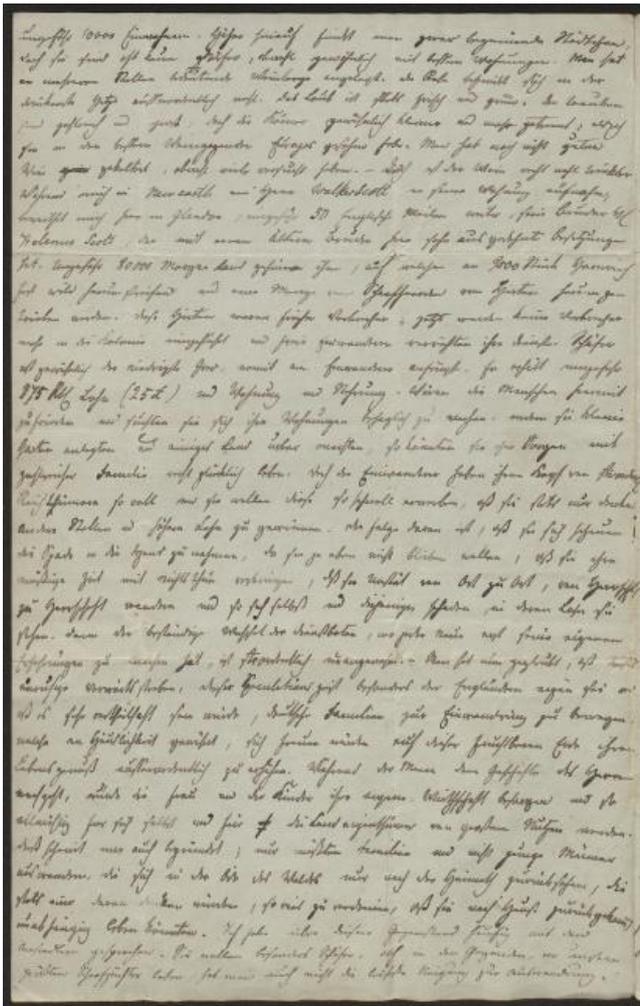
wandering the forests of New Holland have nothing to fear from wild animals; the largest carnivorous animals are wild dogs the size of jackals which, although they do great harm to sheep, do not dare attack humans. The solitude of the forest, in the quiet of night beneath a brightly sparkling firmament, leaves an extremely deep impression on a lonely traveler — and I will never forget some of the nights of this sort. Yet the forest does alternate with open, cultivated regions, as is the case at home. Now and then in the outback, one finds close to a settler's hut a small area cleared of trees for growing a little wheat or maize. Yet for the most part the settlers are busy with livestock breeding or sheep farming and buy their flour in town. The drought has lasted an extremely long time; the highly-praised banks of the Hunter River had barely enough grass to nourish my horse scantily. The entire region appeared as if it had been scorched. About 5 miles from Newcastle there is Maitland, a much more important city of

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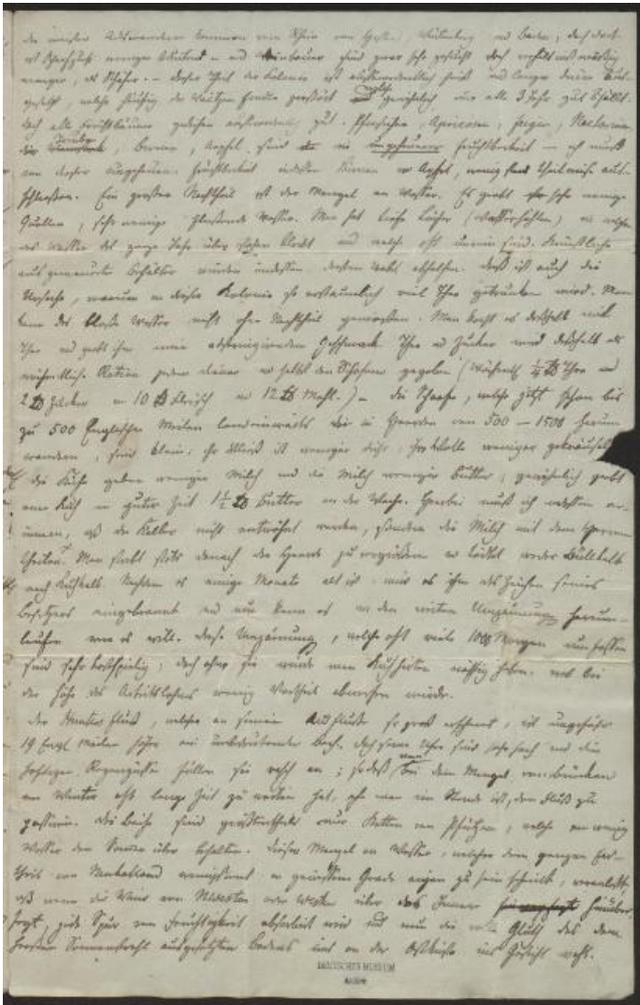
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about 10,000 inhabitants. Although the beginnings of cities can be found higher up, they frequently hardly even qualify as villages, albeit with better dwellings. Considerable vineyards have been established in several places. The vines do exceedingly well in the most oppressive of heats. The leaves are always fresh and green, the grapes are numerous and large, while the seeds are usually smaller and further apart than I have seen them in the best wine regions of Europe. A great wine has not yet been pressed, although many have tried. — Yet the wine is quite drinkable. While a Mr. Walker Scott welcomed me into his home in Newcastle, I am entertained here in Glendon, about 50 English miles away, by his brother Mr. Helenus Scott, who owns vast property together with an older brother. Approximately 80,000 morgen of land belong to him, on which 9000 head of cattle run more or less rampant, and a great many flocks of sheep are driven about by shepherds. In the past, many shepherds were convicts; nowadays convicts are no longer brought to the colony and free immigrants do their jobs. Shepherd is usually the lowest rank at which an immigrant begins. He receives a salary of about 175 Rtl. (25 £) as well as room and board. If people would be content with this and try to make their settlements comfortable by planting small gardens and preparing a bit of land for farming, then they could live quite happily and free of worries with large families. Yet the immigrants' minds are so filled with thoughts of great riches, which they want to acquire as quickly as possible, that they think of nothing except how to secure other employment and higher wages. Consequently, they are reluctant to pick up a spade because they do not plan on staying as it is, so that they spend their free time doing nothing and migrate from place to place and master to master, and in this way harm themselves and their employers. For the constant change of servants is extremely bothersome, since each new person has to acquire experience. — This anxious striving forward, this fondness for speculation, has been perceived as a peculiar trait specific to the English and that it would be very advantageous to convince German families to immigrate, who, used to domesticity as they are, would be eager to greatly increase their

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standard of living on this fertile soil. While the man would tend to his master's affairs, his wife and children would look after the family business and in this way would gradually benefit both themselves and the landowners. I recognize the logic of this; yet whole families must emigrate, not just young men who long for home amidst the bleak forest, and who would always think only of making as much money as would enable them to return home as persons of independent means. I have frequently spoken with settlers about this matter. They are specifically seeking shepherds: yet in the regions where our best sheep farmers live there is no one who is even the slightest bit inclined to emigrate.



Most emigrants come from the Rhine region, from Hesse, Württemberg [sic] and Baden; yet sheep farming plays less of a role there — and although vintners are much sought-after, they are relatively speaking less in demand than shepherds. — This part of the colony is extremely hot and subject to long droughts, which frequently destroy the wheat harvest that usually only turns out well 1 year in 3 to begin with. Yet all fruit trees thrive exceptionally well. The fertility of peaches, apricots, figs, nectarines, grapes, pears, apples is immense — although I have to at least partially exclude pears and apples when it comes to this incredible fertility. The lack of water is a big disadvantage. There are very few springs, very little running water. There are deep holes (waterholes) in which water stands year-round, and which are often brackish. However, artificially constructed brick containers would help redress this ill. This is also the reason why such astounding quantities of tea are consumed in this colony. Plain water cannot be enjoyed without harm. It is therefore boiled with tea and acquires an astringent taste. Every servant and even the shepherds therefore receives a weekly ration of tea and sugar (¼ lb of tea and 2 lb of sugar and 10 lb of meat and 12 lb of flour per week) — The sheep, which already roam up to 500 English miles inland in flocks of 500 to 1500, are small; their fleece is less thick, their wool less curly; cows produce less milk and the milk makes less butter; a cow

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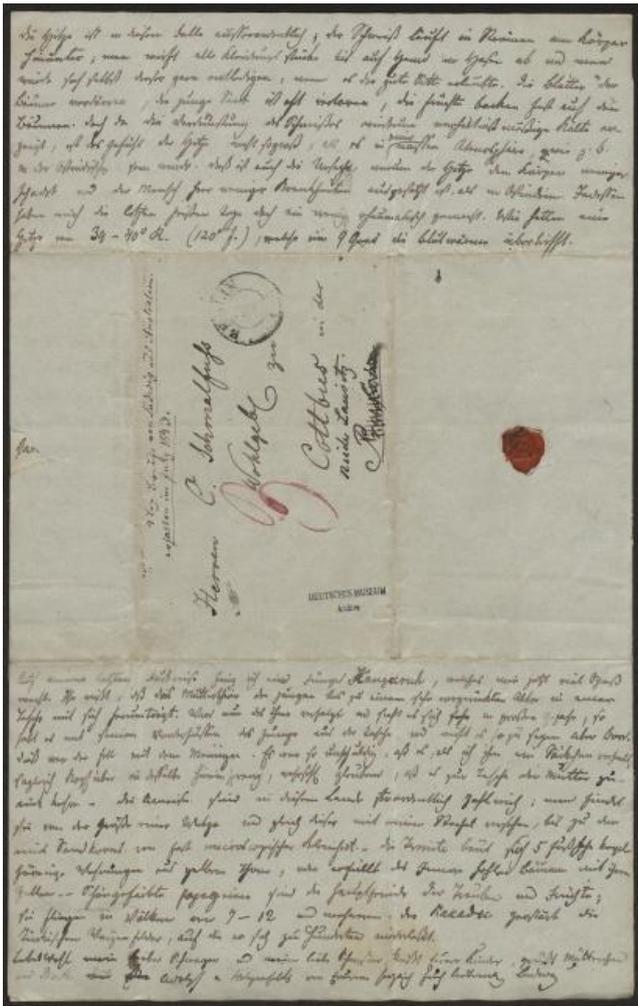
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commonly yields 1½ lb of butter per week when times are good. With regard to this point I must highlight, however, that calves are not weaned but share their master's milk. Everyone is constantly striving to increase the size of the herds and neither male nor female calves are killed. When they are a few months old, they are branded with the seal of their owner and can then run around the vast enclosures to their heart's content. These enclosures, which frequently encompass 1000 morgen, are very expensive; yet without them cowherds would become a necessity and their high salaries would leave little in the way of profit.

The Hunter River, which appears so enormous at its mouth, turns into an insignificant rivulet about 19 English miles higher up. Yet its banks are very steep and the torrential rains quickly fill it; the lack of bridges therefore means that in the winter one has to wait long periods of time before crossing the river becomes possible. For the most part, the rivulets are simply chains of puddles that retain a bit of water in the summertime. This lack of water, which seems to afflict the entire continent of New Holland at least to some degree, causes every trace of moisture to be absorbed when winds from the northwest or west sweep across the interior, and means that those of us on the east coast get the full heat of the earth exposed to the sun blowing on our faces.



When this happens, the heat is unbearable; sweat runs down one's body in streams; all items of clothing except for shirt and pants are discarded and one would gladly take off those as well if decency would permit. Tree leaves desiccate, young crops are often lost, fruits almost bake on the trees. Yet since evaporating sweat in turn has a relative cooling effect, the heat is not felt to be as great as it would be in a wet climate, as prevails in the East Indies, for example. This is also the reason why the heat is less harmful to the body and people here suffer from fewer diseases than in the East Indies. The recent hot days have nonetheless made me a bit rheumatic. We had hot temperatures of 39–40° R (120° F), which exceeds blood heat by 9 degrees.

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During my last journey on foot I caught a young kangaroo, which now affords much amusement. You know that the mother carries the young in a pouch until they are quite advanced in age. Now, if the animal is being chased and finds itself in great danger, it lifts the young one out of the pouch with its front legs and throws it overboard, so to speak. This is what happened to mine. It was so innocent that it jumped head-first into a bag which I held in front of it, probably believing that it was returning to its mother's pouch. — Ants are extremely numerous in this country; you can find some as big as wasps, endowed with a similar stinger, while others are almost microscopically small, only the size of a grain of sand. — Termites construct cone-shaped dwellings of yellow clay that reach heights of 5 feet, or fill hollow trees with their cells — Magnificently colored parakeets are the main enemies of grapes and fruit; they fly around in flocks of 7–12, or even more. The cockatoos destroy fields of maize, on which they land by the hundreds. Farewell my dear brother-in-law and my dear sister, give your children a kiss from me, and convey my greetings to mother and the Barths, Adolph and the Hilgenfelds  
Most affectionately,  
your Ludwig

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

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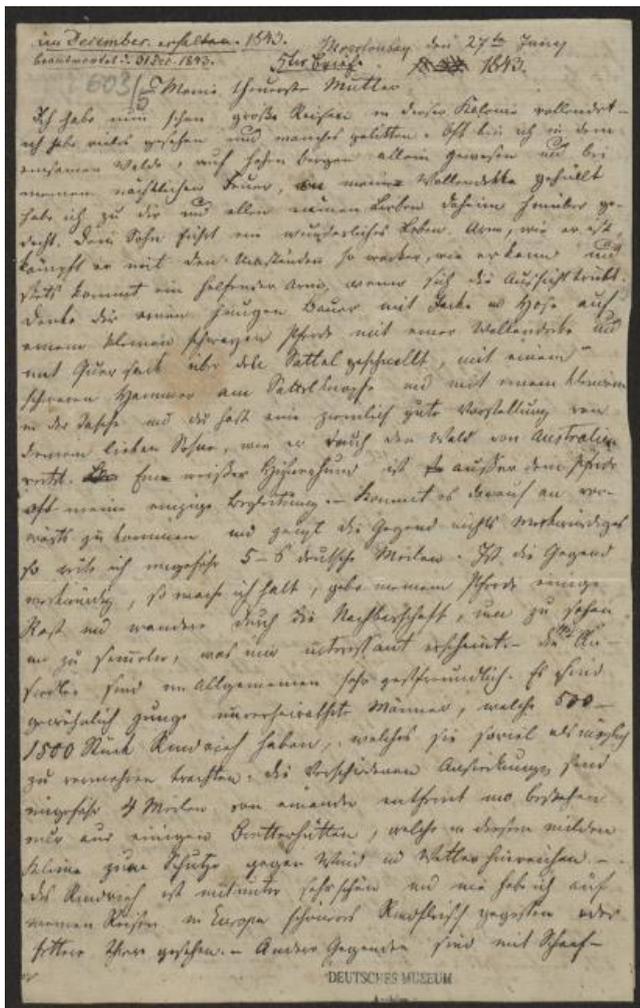
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Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Moreton Bay (27 June 1843)



Moreton Bay, 27 June 1843

My dearest mother,

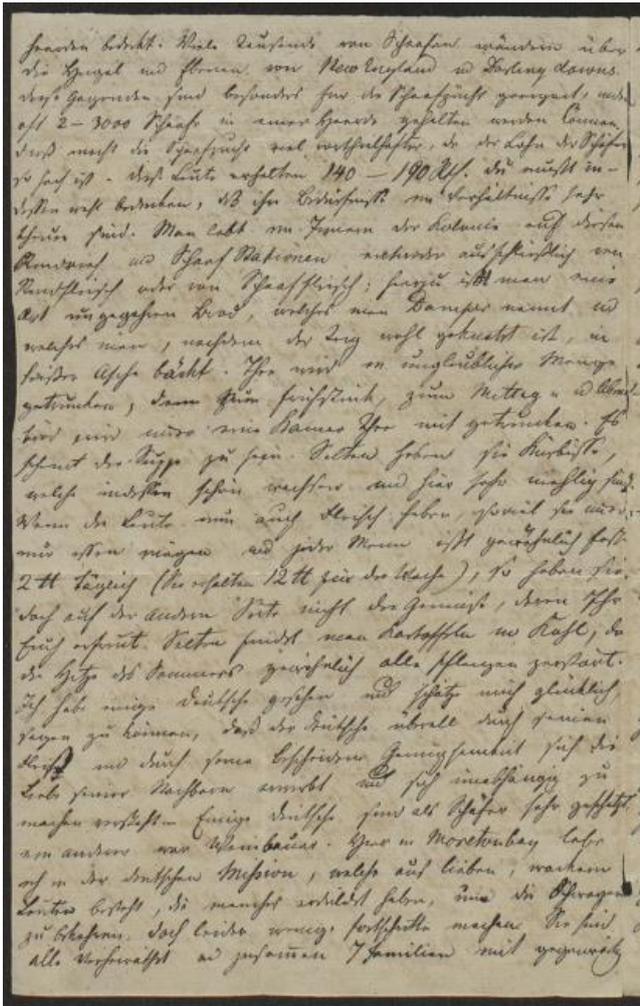
I have already completed long journeys in these colonies—I have seen much and endured many trials. Alone in isolated forests or high mountains, I have often wrapped myself in my woolen blanket by my nightly fire and directed my thoughts to you and to all my loved ones at home. Your son is living a most remarkable life. Poor as he is, he struggles with the circumstances as valiantly as he is able, and again and again a helping hand comes when prospects seem most dark. Think of a young peasant in jacket and pants on a small black horse, a woolen blanket and satchel strapped across his saddle, a heavy hammer on the saddle horn and a smaller one in his pocket, and you will have fairly accurate vision of your dear son as he rides across the forest of Australia. Besides my horse, a white pointer is often my only companion. — When my goal is to make progress forwards and the landscape does not have anything remarkable to offer, I ride for 5–6 German miles. If the region is notable, I pause, give my horse a rest, and wander about the area in order to look about and collect whatever seems interesting to me. The settlers are generally very hospitable. They are typically young, unmarried men who own 500–1500 head of cattle, which they aim to increase as much as possible. The individual settlements are about 4 miles from each other and consist of several huts made of planks, which offer sufficient protection from wind and weather in this mild climate. — Some of the cattle are very lovely specimens, and I have never eaten such good beef or seen such fat beasts during my travels through Europe. — Other regions are covered with flocks

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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Moreton Bay (27 June 1843)

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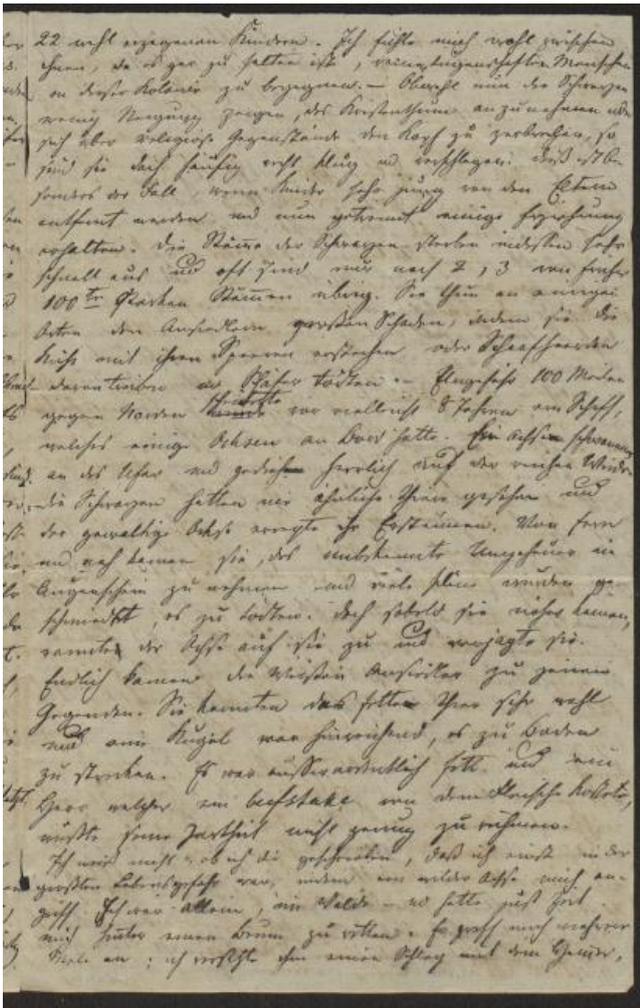
of sheep. Many thousands of sheep wander over the hills and plains of New England and the Darling Downs. These regions are particularly suitable for raising sheep, and often 2–3000 sheep may be kept in a single herd. This makes sheep farming much more profitable, as a shepherd's wages are so high. They receive 140–190 Rtl. However, you must take into account that their needs are comparatively expensive. In the inner regions of the colony on these cattle or sheep stations, they live entirely off of beef or sheep; in addition they eat a kind of unleavened bread, which is called damper, and which, after the dough has been well kneaded, is baked in fresh ashes. Tee is consumed in unbelievable quantities, for a pitcher of tea is drunk with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It seems to serve as the soup. On rare occasions they have pumpkins, which grow quite well and are very mealy here. Although the people have as much meat as they can eat—and each man eats nearly 2 lb a day, as a rule (they receive 12 lb per week)—on the other hand they do not have the vegetables which you take pleasure in. Potatoes and cabbage are quite rare, for the heat of the summer typically destroys all the plants. I have met a number of Germans and I am pleased to say that the German wins the affection of his neighbors everywhere because he works hard and is content with modest means, and because he is self-sufficient. — Several of the Germans are highly regarded as shepherds, and another was a wine-grower. Here in Moreton Bay I am living at the German Mission, which consists of good, upright people who have endured much in their attempts to convert the blacks, but have sadly made little progress. They are all married and together number 7 families at present with

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22 well-raised children. I feel at ease among them, for it is far too seldom that one meets such virtuous people in this colony. — Although the blacks show little inclination to become Christian or to concern themselves with religious matters, they are often quite intelligent and shrewd. This is particularly the case when the children have been taken from their parents at a young age and have received a separate education. The black clans are dying out quite quickly at present and often there are only 2 or 3 individuals left in a clan that once numbered more than 100. In some areas they cause great damages for the settlers by killing cattle with their spears or driving away flocks of sheep and killing the shepherds. — About 100 miles to the north a ship with a number of oxen on board was wrecked about 8 years ago. One bullock swam to the shore and thrived wonderfully on the rich pasture. The blacks had never seen such animals and the mighty bullock filled them with wonder. They came from near and far to catch a sight of the unknown monster and there were many plans made for killing it. But as soon as they approached the bullock charged and drove them away. At last the white settlers reached these regions. They were quite familiar with this fat beast, and one bullet sufficed to slay it. It was extremely fat, and one gentleman who had tasted of its meat could not stop praising its tenderness.

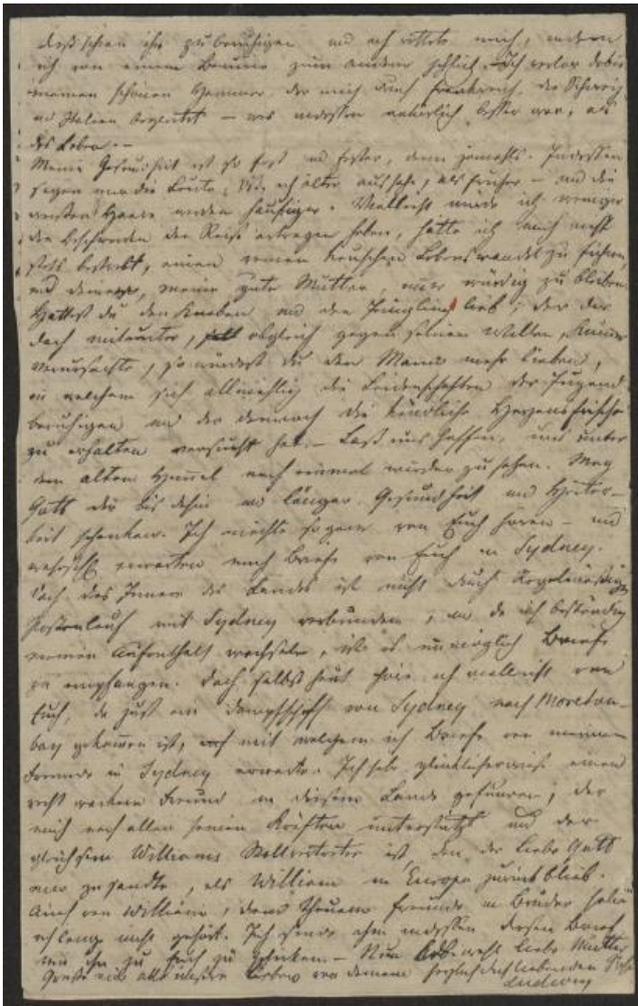
I don't know if I have written to you about how I was once in great danger when a wild bullock attacked me. I was alone in the woods—and just barely managed to save myself behind a tree. He attacked me multiple times; I gave him a blow with my hammer,

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this seemed to cool his anger, and I dashed away, ducking behind one tree after another. — During this episode I lost my good hammer, which had accompanied me through France, Switzerland, and Italy—although of course this was greatly preferable to losing my life. My health is sound, sounder than ever. But people have started to tell me that I look older than before—and the white hairs are becoming more abundant. Perhaps I would have had more difficulty enduring the hardships of travel if I had not always attempted to live a pure and abstinent life and to always remain worthy of the love of my dear mother. If you loved the boy and the youth, who, after all, sometimes caused you sorrow in spite of himself, you would love the man even more, in whom the passions of youth are gradually becoming calmer, even while he strives to preserve the joyful heart of a child. — Let us hope that we will see each other once more beneath the sky of the old world. Until then may God continue to grant you health and happiness. I would so like to hear from you—and probably letters from you are already waiting in Sydney. But the inland regions are not connected to Sydney by a regular postal route, and since I am constantly changing my place of residence, it is impossible to receive letters. Yet I might hear from you today even, for a steamer from Sydney has just arrived at Moreton Bay, which I expect to have letters from my friends in Sydney. I have the good fortune to have found a staunch friend in this country who supports me in any way he can; he might be William's deputy, sent by the dear Lord to me when William remained behind in Europe. From William, my dear friend and brother, I have not heard anything for some time. Even so, I am sending him this letter to pass on to you.

Now adieu, dear mother. Give my greetings to all, from your dearly loving son.

Ludwig

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English translation by Brenda Black.

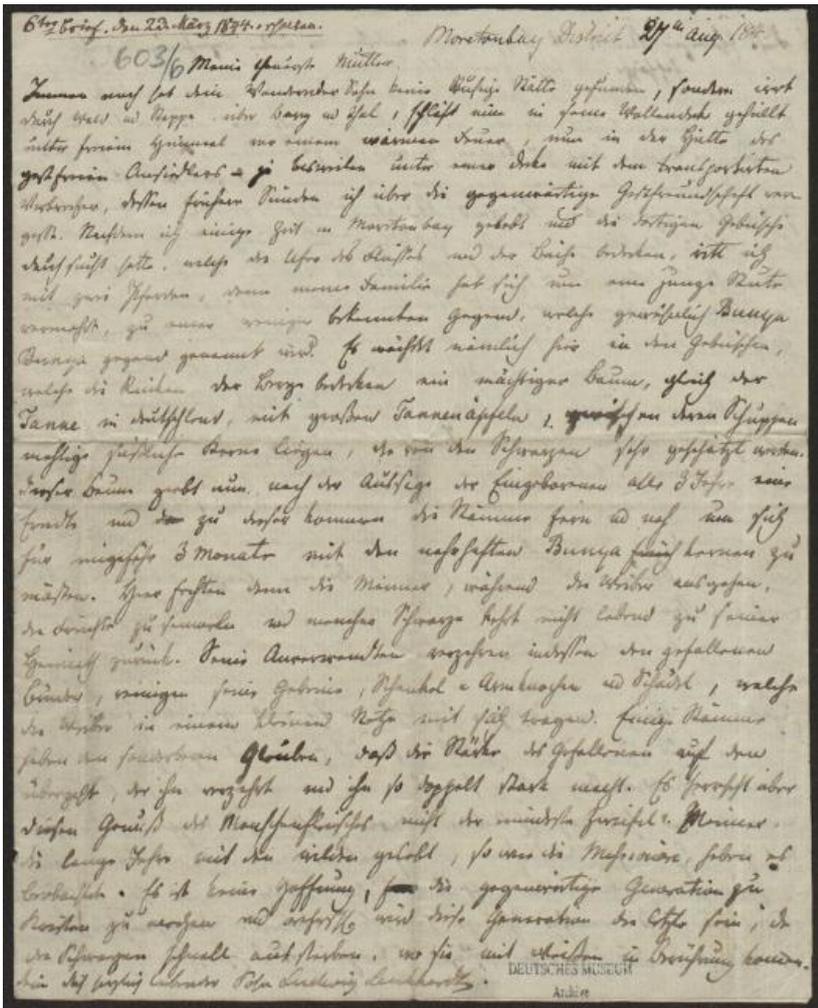
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**Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Moreton Bay (27 August 1843)**



Moreton Bay District, 27 August 1843

My dearest mother,

Your wandering son has still not yet found a place for settling down, but roams across forests and plains, mountains and valleys, sleeping next to a warm fire beneath the clear sky wrapped in his woolen blanket one day, in the hut of a hospitable settler the next—indeed occasionally sharing the blanket of a transported convict, whose present hospitality makes me forget his past sins. After I had lived in Moreton Bay for a while and investigated the vegetation that covers the shores of the rivers and streams there, I took two horses—my family has by now been enlarged by a young mare—to a lesser-known region, customarily known as the Bunya Bunya district. You see, there’s a huge tree [with this name] that grows among the bushes that cover the ridges of the mountains; it is much like the fir tree of Germany and has large cones which contain harbor floury, sweet kernels between their scales and are highly valued by the blacks. According to the natives, this tree yields a harvest every 3 years and on this occasion clans arrive from near and far to gorge themselves on the nourishing Bunya kernels for approximately 3 months. At that time the men fight it out here, while the women go out to gather the fruits, and many a black man does not return to his home alive. His relatives, meanwhile, consume their slain brother, clean his bones—his thighs, arms, and skull—which the women then carry with them in small nets. Some tribes hold the curious belief that the power of the slain man passes on to whomever eats him and renders the latter twice as powerful. There is not a trace of doubt that this consumption of

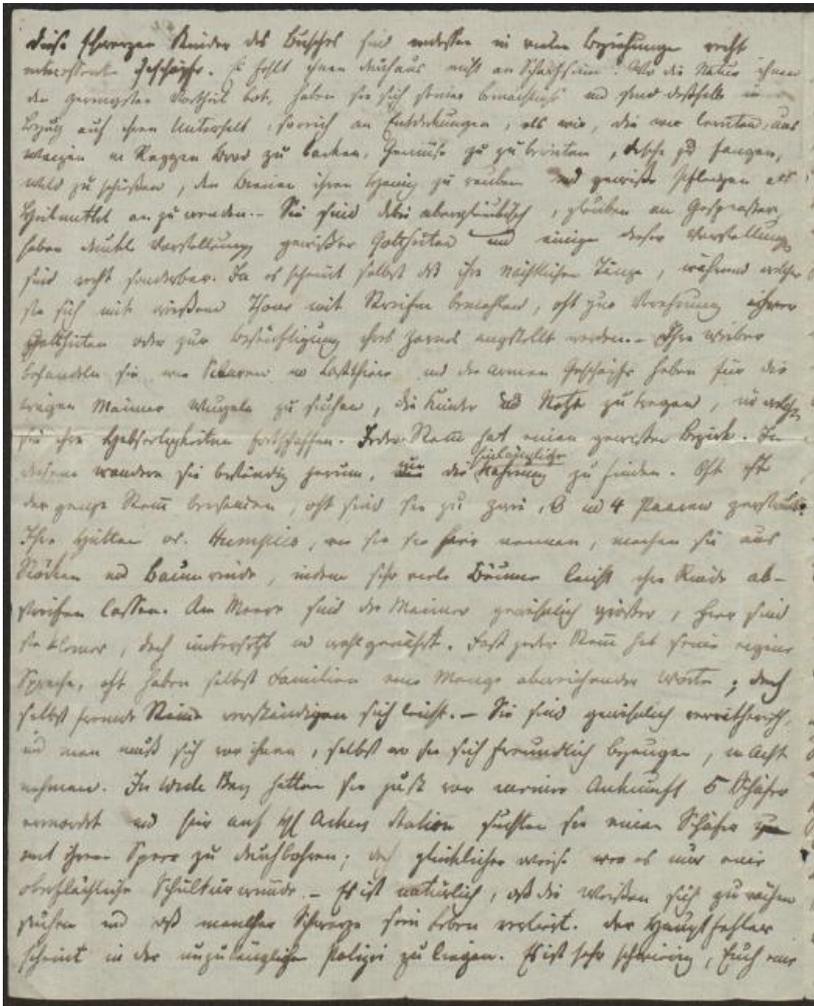
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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Moreton Bay (27 August 1843)

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human flesh occurs; men, such as the missionaries who have spent long years living among the savages, have witnessed it. There is no hope of converting the present generation to Christianity and this generation will most likely be the last one, since the blacks are rapidly dying out wherever they come into contact with whites.



Then again, these black children of the bush are rather interesting creatures in many respects. They are certainly not lacking in intelligence. They seized the slightest advantages offered them by nature, and in terms of subsistence practices their discoveries are as abundant as our own, having learned to turn wheat and rye into bread, raise vegetables, catch fish, shoot game, rob bees of their honey, and use certain plants as medicinal remedies. — At the same time, they are superstitious, believe in ghosts, have dark conceptions about certain deities and some of these conceptions are rather peculiar. Indeed, it appears that their nightly dances, during which they paint stripes of white clay on themselves, are often performed for purposes of worshipping their deities or appeasing their anger. — They treat their women akin to slaves and pack animals and the poor creatures have to search out roots for their indolent men, have to carry the children, and the nets in which they transport their belongings. Every clan controls a certain district. They roam it continually to find sufficient food. At times the whole clan is gathered together, at other times they are scattered into groups of 2, 3, or 4. They construct their huts, or humpies, as they are called here, out of sticks and tree bark, since the barks of many trees can be stripped easily. Along the coast the men are commonly larger, here they are smaller, yet stocky and well-nourished. Almost every clan has its own language; frequently even among families there are a lot of varying words; yet even unacquainted clans manage to communicate with one another easily. — In general, these people are treacherous and one has to be cautious around them, even if they claim to be friendly. In Wide Bay they murdered 5 shepherds just before my arrival and here on Mr. Archer's station they attempted to skewer a shepherd with their spears, yet fortunately he only sustained a

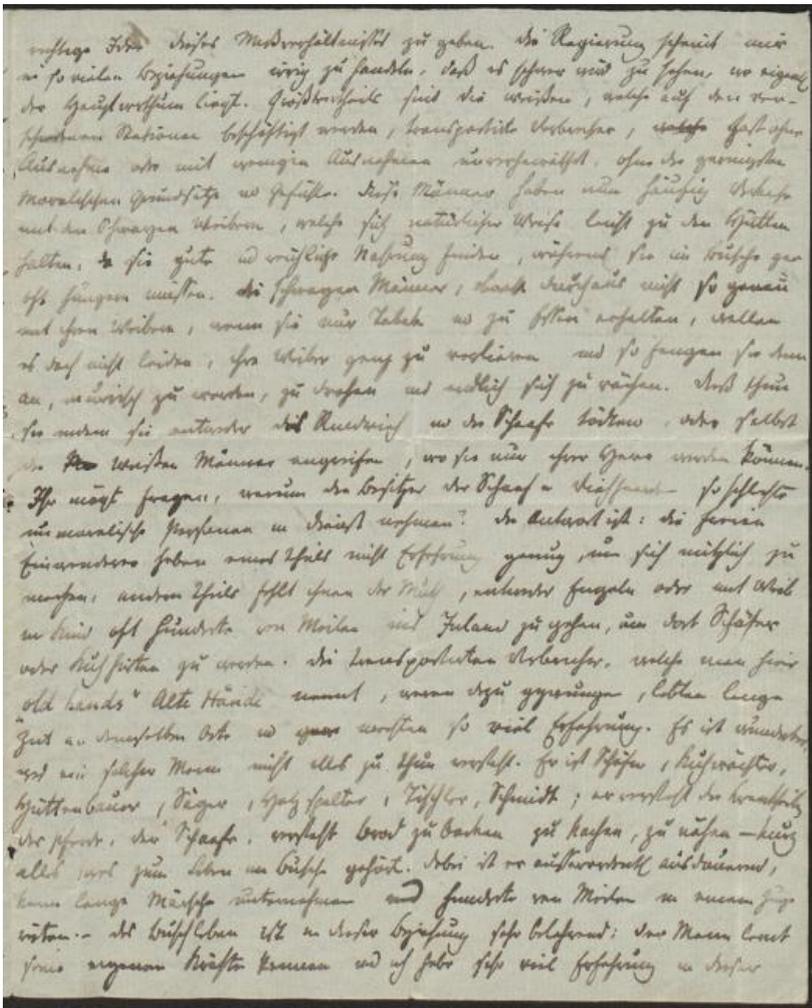
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superficial shoulder wound. — It is natural that the whites then seek revenge and that many a black loses his life. An inadequate police force seems to be the main problem. It is very difficult to convey an accurate picture of this disparity to you. To me, the



government appears to act erroneously in so many instances that it would be hard to determine what the primary mistake actually is. For the most part the whites employed at the various stations are transported convicts, almost without exception or with few exceptions unmarried, devoid of any moral principles or feelings. These men often engage in relations with the black women, who naturally stick close to the huts where they find good, ample food whereas they quite often suffer hunger in the bush. The black men, although not that strict with their women if only they receive tobacco and food, do not wish to lose their women completely and so their mood begins to sour, they utter threats, and finally seek revenge. They do this by either killing cattle or sheep, or by attacking white men outright whenever they can get them in their control. You may ask why the owners of the herds of cattle and sheep employ the services of such bad, amoral persons? The answer is: on the one hand the free settlers do not have enough experience to make themselves useful, on the other hand they lack the courage to migrate hundreds of miles inland, either alone or with wife and child, to make a living as a shepherd or cowherd there. Transported convicts, who are called “old hands” here, were forced to do so, lived in the same place for long periods of time, and thereby acquired a lot of experience. It is incredible what all such a man knows how to do. He is shepherd, cowboy, builder, sawyer, woodcutter, carpenter, blacksmith; he is knowledgeable about illnesses afflicting horses and sheep, knows how to bake bread, how to cook, how to sew — in short, all matters that life in the bush requires. At the same time he possesses extraordinary stamina, can march long distances and ride for hundreds of miles at a time. — In this regard life in the bush is highly educational; a man comes to appreciate his own strength and I have gathered a lot of experience in

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months ago. I do not know whether the formal worship service of the Catholics will be better suited to keep the blacks in one place and to direct their attention to matters of the mind and of God, away from mere physical needs. There would be some hope if, as a matter of routine, the children would be taken away from their clan and educated far away. Yet the English government regards this as an infringement on the rights of British subjects, which it considers the savages to be—and thusly this hope for future success is dwindling as well. —

I hope that you have received my letters; I only have one of yours and I am asking you to write to me by way of William. Farewell, all of you, and please keep me in your hearts and minds, especially you, my dear mother,

Most affectionately, your loving son,

Ludwig Leichhardt

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

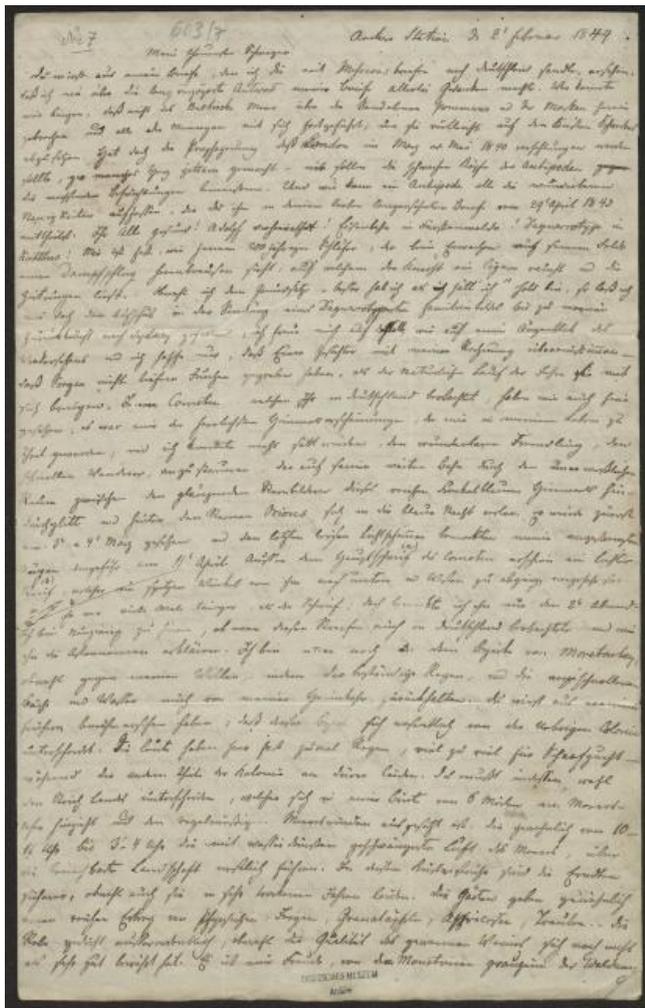
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**Chapter:** Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Moreton Bay (27 August 1843)

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**Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, the Archer brothers' Durundur Station, Moreton Bay (2 February 1844)**



Archer's Station, 2 February 1844

My dearest brother-in-law,

You will learn from my letter—which I sent your way included in missionary letters going to Germany—that I have been worrying quite a bit about the long-delayed answers to my letters. Who could have assured me that the Baltic Sea had not flooded the sandy plains of Pomerania and the March and carried away all my loved ones to deposit them, perhaps, on the coastal areas of Sweden? After all, the prophecy that London was to be swallowed up in March or May of 1840, made many a heart quake—how are the weak minds of the antipodes supposed to master the growing apprehension? And how can an antipodean grasp all the wonderful news of which you inform him in your dear, long-awaited letter of 29 April 1843? All of you healthy! Adolph married! A railroad in Fürstenwalde! Daguerreotype in Cottbus! I almost feel like that 200-year-old sleeper, who, when awaking upon his field, sees a steam-powered plough rushing toward him on which the farmhand smokes a cigar and reads the papers. Although I adhere to the maxim “better to have than to desire,” I acquiesce to your postponing mailing a Daguerreotype family portrait until my return to Sydney; I am looking forward to it as if it were a moment of reunion and I only hope that your faces conform to my reckoning—that sorrows have not carved deeper furrows than the natural passing of time warrants. Here we also saw the comet that you observed in Germany; it was one of the most magnificent celestial phenomena that I have been able to witness in my entire life and I could not get enough of gazing at the wonderful stranger, the fast wanderer, which was gliding on its vast orbit through the unfathomable space between the bright constellations of this deep dark blue sky and was lost to the blue night behind the stars of Orion. It was first sighted on 3 & 4 March and my straining eyes glimpsed the last muted gleam of light on

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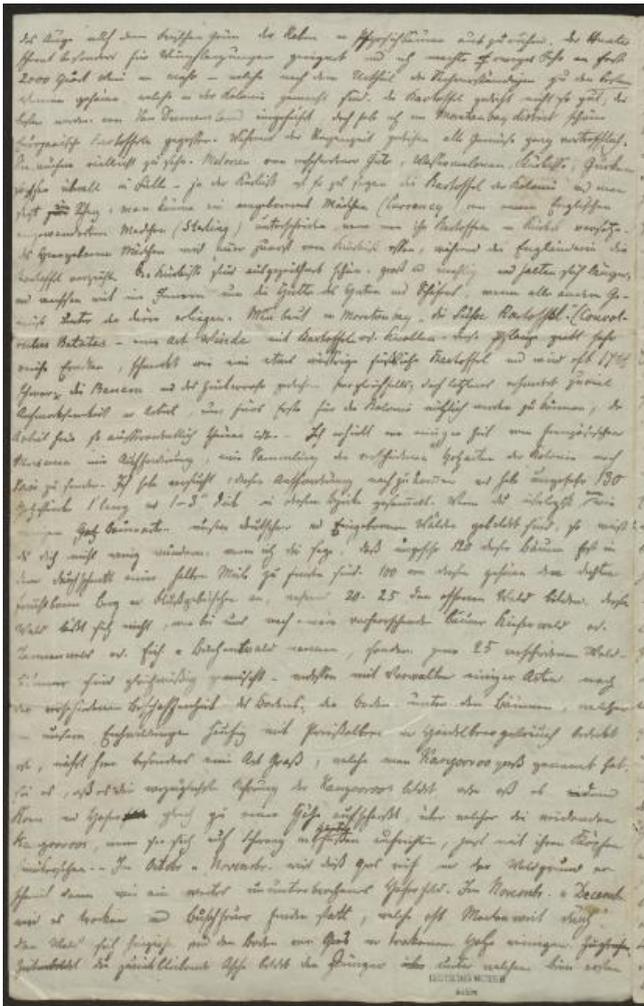
approximately 11 April. Aside from the comet's main tail (a), a lighter tail (b) appeared, which pointed away from it downwards and westwards at an acute angle; about like this: [small diagram]. It was many times longer than the tail, yet I only noticed it on the second evening. I am curious to learn whether this stripe was observed in Germany as well and how the astronomers explain it. I am still in the Moreton Bay District, although against my will, since the constant rains and the rising streams and waters are preventing me from returning home. You will have learned from my previous letters that this district differs greatly from the rest of the colony. The people here have almost too much rain, far too much for sheep farming – whereas the other parts of the colony suffer from drought. Then again, you have to distinguish the swath of land, about 6 miles wide, that runs along the coast and is exposed to regular ocean winds, which habitually carry saturated ocean air westward across the adjacent landscape between 10–11 and 3–4 o'clock. Along this stretch of coast, harvests are more dependable, although they also suffer during very dry years. The gardens commonly produce a high yield of peaches, figs, pomegranates, apricots, and grapes. — Vines thrive extraordinarily well, although the quality of the resulting wine has not yet proven to be very good. It is a pleasure to rest one's eyes on the fresh green of vines and peach trees

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after the woodland's monotonous gray-green. The Hunter seems especially suited for planting vineyards and last year it produced almost 2000 quarts of wine and then some—which according to the experts are among the best wines produced in the colony. Potatoes do not flourish as much; the best are imported from Van Diemen's Land; yet I have eaten nice European potatoes in the Moreton Bay district. All vegetables flourish admirably during the rainy season. Perhaps they even grow too much. Melons of varying quality, water melons, pumpkins, and cucumbers sprout everywhere in abundance—indeed, the pumpkin is more or less this colony's potato and one joke goes: a native-born girl (Currency) can be distinguished from an immigrant English one (Sterling) by serving her a potato and a pumpkin. The native-born girl will first eat the pumpkin, whereas the English girl prefers the potato. The pumpkins are superb, big and mealy, they don't spoil as quickly, and grow deep inland, around the hut of the herdsman and shepherd when all other vegetables would succumb to drought. In Moreton Bay "the sweet potato" (*Convolvulus batatas*) is being cultivated—a type of bindweed with potatoes or tubers. This plant produces high yields, tastes like a sweet, somewhat watery potato and often reaches a weight of 17 lb. Bananas and cane sugar also thrive here, yet the latter requires too much attention and work to be beneficial to the colony at the moment, since labor costs are so extraordinarily high here. — Some time ago I received a request from the French Museum to send to Paris a collection of the different types of wood found in the colony. I have tried to fulfill this request and have collected about 130 pieces of wood in this district, 1' in length and 1–3" in diameter. If you consider how few types of trees form our German and native forests, you will be quite amazed when I tell you that that about 120 of these trees can be found within the radius of half a mile. 100 of these belong to the dense and fertile mountain and river vegetation, whereas 20–25 compose the open forest. Unlike at home, this forest cannot be named pine, fir, or oak or

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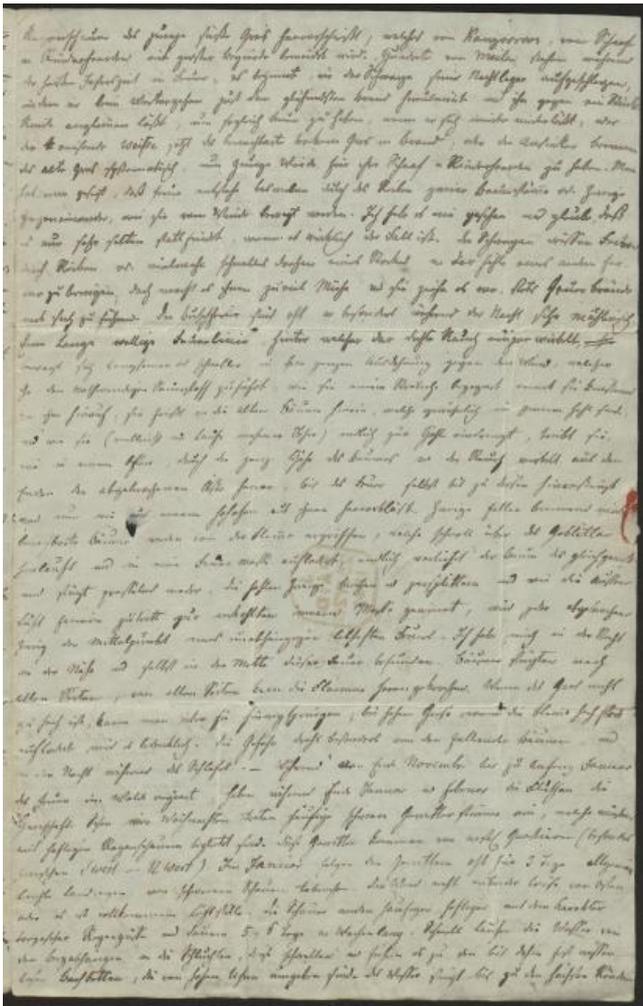
beech forest after the dominant species of tree, but those 25 different forest trees are evenly distributed— however, with some species predominating depending on the composition of the soil; the ground beneath the trees—which is usually covered with lingonberry and blueberry bushes in our oak forests—here nourishes predominantly a type of grass that was named kangaroo grass, either because it is prime nourishment for kangaroos or because, like wheat and oats, it reaches such a height that the grazing kangaroos barely manage stick their heads above it if they sit up on their hind legs and tails. — This grass ripens in October and November and the forest floor then takes on the appearance of a sweeping, continuous oat field. The dry season occurs in November and December and brings with it bushfires, which often extend for miles through the forest and clear its floor of grass and dry wood. The remaining ashes act

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as a fertilizer for the young, sweet grass which springs upon the first rain shower and on which kangaroos, flocks of sheep, and herds of cattle graze with delight. Hundreds of miles are covered with fires during the hot season; it starts on the spot where a black man had settled for the night, when, upon his departure, he removes a hotly-glowing stick from his campfire and leaves it smoldering against a piece of tree bark so as to be able to create a new campfire instantaneously upon settling in again; or the traveling white man sets nearby dry grass on fire; or settlers systematically burn the old grass to generate fresh pasture for their flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. I have been told that at times fires are started by two tree trunks or branches rubbing against each other in the wind. I have never witnessed this and believe that this rarely happens, if there is even any truth to it at all. The blacks know to generate fire through rubbing or rather swiftly rotating a stick in the cavity of another; yet they find this too cumbersome and prefer to always carry burning sticks with them. The bushfires are oftentimes very picturesque, especially at night. A long, wavy line of fire, beyond which thick smoke whirls upwards, moves now slowly, now faster along its entire length against the direction of the wind, which feeds it the necessary oxygen; it encounters a shrub and engulfs it, crackling: it eats into the old trees, which are usually hollow on the inside, and as it (perhaps over the course of several years) finally reaches the tree's cavity, it blows through the entire height of the tree—as it would do in an oven—and smoke curls out of the ends of broken branches until the fire itself reaches them and now blows forth from them as if this were a furnace. Burning branches fall down, and the flames engulf neighboring trees and quickly race across the foliage and flare up in a massive fire. In the end the tree loses its balance and topples over ablaze, its hollow branches break and splinter, and as fresh air gains easier access to the charred materials on the inside every broken branch becomes the center of its own lively fire. At night I have found myself near and even in the middle of these fires.

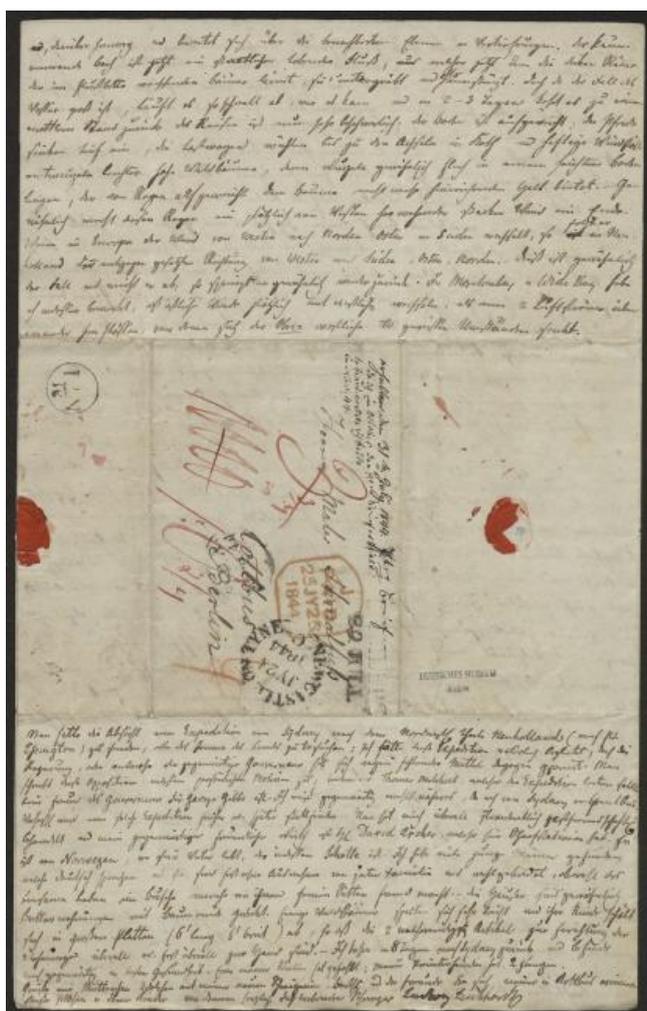
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Trees were toppling in every which direction, from all sides flames crept closer. If the grass is not too high one can jump over them; in high grass, when the flames are blazing high, it precarious. The greatest danger comes from toppling trees or when one is asleep at night. — Whereas fire reigns supreme in the forest from the end of November to the beginning of January, floods dominate during the end of January and in February. Frequent heavy thunderstorms occur even before Christmas, which are often accompanied by heavy rains. These thunderstorms hail from westerly areas (especially between S West–N West). In January, light steady rains frequently lasting three days, with intermittent heavy showers, follow in the wake of these thunderstorms. Winds either blow gently from the east or the air is completely calm. The showers then increase in frequency and severity, taking on the character of tropical torrents, and last 5–6 days or for weeks. Water quickly runs down the mountainsides into the ravines, which swell and carry it to the streambeds between high banks that had been almost dry up to this point. The water rises to the top,



spills over, and floods the neighboring plains and hollows. The barely flowing creek is now a magnificent, raging river, which [now] surrounds, erodes, and frequently uproots the thick trunks of trees growing in the riverbed. Yet since the water plunges sharply downwards it drains as quickly as it came and returns to middling levels within two to three days. Traveling now becomes very arduous. The ground is soaked; horses sink in deeply, carts get bogged down in muck that reaches their axles, and fierce gusts of wind more easily uproot tall forest trees, whose roots usually lie shallowly in light soil, which, when soaked by rain, no longer offers sufficient support for the tree. — Usually a sudden strong wind blowing from the west puts an end to this rain. Although wind changes direction from west to north, east, and south in Europe, in New Holland it follows the opposite path, from west to south, east, and north. — This is usually the

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case, and if it deviates, it usually corrects course back again. In Moreton Bay and Wide Bay I have noticed, however, that easterly winds suddenly change into westerly ones, as if two streams of air were flowing atop one another, of which the upper, westerly one at times sinks down.

There were plans to send an expedition from Sydney to the northwestern part of New Holland (to Port Essington), to investigate the interior of the country. I would certainly have accompanied this expedition, yet the government, or rather the present governor, opposed it on the grounds of insufficient funds. However, this opposition is attributed to personal motives, since Sir Thomas Mitchell, who was supposed to lead the expedition, is no friend of Governor Sir George Gibbs. As I am away from Sydney, I know nothing more concrete about this at the moment. It is likely that such an expedition will take place sooner or later. Everywhere I enjoyed the utmost hospitality and my present friendly host is Mr. David Archer, who owns sheep stations here. He is from Norway, where his father lives, who, however, is a Scotsman. I have encountered many young men who speak German and who, almost without exception, come from good families and are well-educated, although the lonely life in the bush has made some of them forget their good manners. Houses are commonly rough-hewn shacks covered with tree bark. A number of forest trees are easily split and their bark peels off in large sheets (6' long, 6' wide), so that the two utmost necessities for the construction of dwellings are at hand everywhere, or just about everywhere. — I will return to Sydney in 8 days and am currently in the best of health. One of my mares had a foal; my pointer bitch had 2 young pups. Convey my greetings to dear mother, to Adolph and my new sister-in-law, to the Barths and to those friends in Cottbus who remember me. Greetings to Fetzchen and your children from your loving brother-in-law,  
Ludwig Leichhardt

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

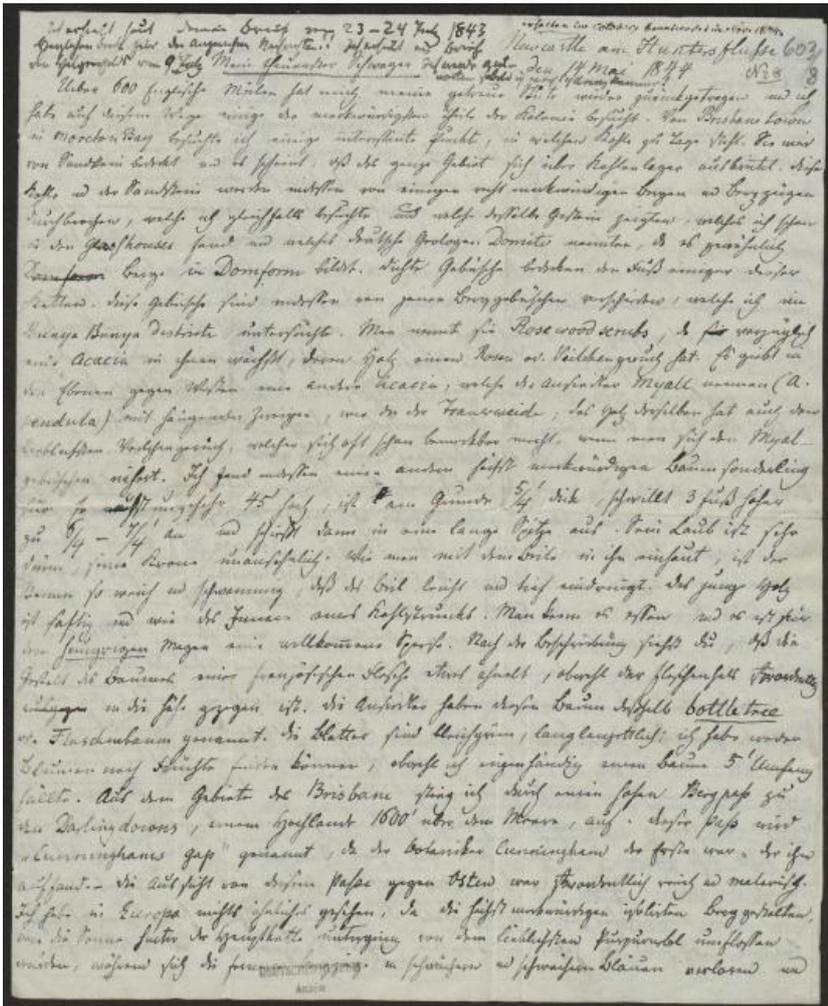
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Newcastle (14 May 1844)



Newcastle on the Hunter River, 14 May 1844

My dearest brother-in-law,

My trusted mare has carried me back for over 600 English miles and I toured some of the strangest parts of the colony on my way. From Brisbane town in Moreton Bay I went to see several interesting spots that hold visible coal depots. They are covered by sandstone rock and it appears that the entire area extends over coal depots. However, the coal and sandstone are broken in various places by several rather curious mountains and mountain ranges, which I also visited, and which contain the same rock that I had already found in the Glasshouses and which German geologists have named domite, since it usually forms mountains resembling domes. Thick shrubbery covers the foot of some of these ridges. These thickets differ from the mountain thickets that I examined in the Bunya Bunya district, however. They are called rosewood scrubs, since an acacia whose wood has a rose- or violet-like odor grows so well there. There is a different type of acacia in the westerly plains, which the settlers call "myall" (*A. pendula*), that has hanging branches like a weeping willow; its wood also emits the loveliest violet-like odor, which is frequently noticeable when one approaches the myall shrubs. I, however, discovered a different, rather peculiar type of tree here. It grows to a height of about 45', is 5/4' thick at its base, three feet up swells to a width of 6/4-7/4', and then shoots up into an elongated tip. Its foliage is very light, its crown unsightly. When attacked with an axe, it turns out that its trunk is so soft and spongy that the axe easily and deeply penetrates it. The young wood is as juicy as a cabbage core. It is edible and makes for a complete meal for a hungry stomach. As you can tell from my description, the shape of the tree somewhat resembles a French bottle, although the bottleneck is extremely elongated. The settlers therefore named this tree bottle tree. Its leaves are pale green, long, and lanceolate. I have failed to find either flowers or fruits, although I myself cut down a tree that had a circumference of

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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Newcastle (14 May 1844)

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5'. From the area of the Brisbane I climbed through a high mountain pass to the Darling Downs, a high plain 1600' above sea level. This pass is called "Cunningham's Gap," since the botanist Cunningham was the first to discover it. — The view from this pass toward the east was extremely varied and picturesque. I never saw anything like it in Europe, with isolated mountains in remarkable formations bathed in the loveliest crimson fog as the sun was setting behind the main range, while the far-off mountain ranges were lost in fainter and

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contains two very long, horizontally arranged front teeth and four very large molars, each with two transverse ridges and a kind of heel. None of the large animals of the known continents display this dentition, especially when it comes to the front teeth; yet many of the indigenous animals have similar formations. — I found the teeth of 3 other true kangaroos, and those bones

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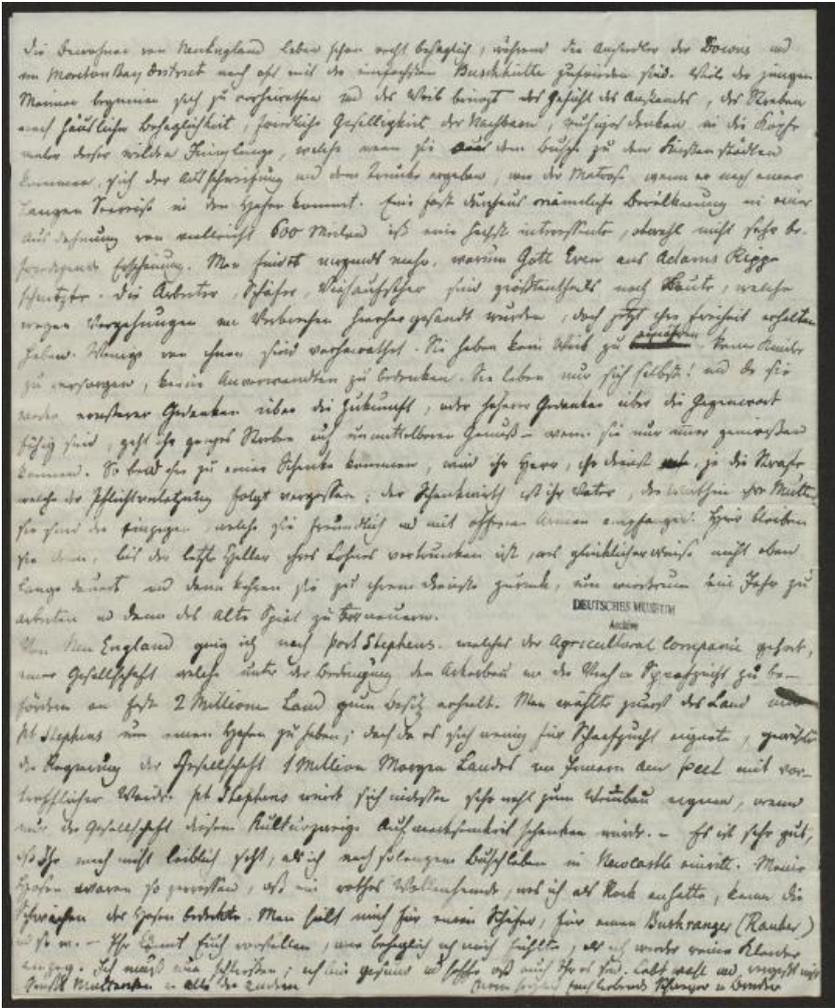
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of the public inns of newly founded cities. If it is impossible to civilize these black children of nature or even to familiarize them with the basic tenets of civilization, then I am too much a friend of my own race and would prefer a well-populated, well-governed country of whites to a great aimless mass of blacks squandering their lives. In the predominance of Caucasians we see the same law of nature that determines that the doe will follow the strongest buck.



The inhabitants of New England live quite comfortably, whereas the settlers in the Downs and around the Moreton Bay District are still satisfied with the simplest wooden shacks. Many of the young men are beginning to marry, and womenfolk introduce a feeling of respectability, pursuit of domesticity and peaceful neighborly relations, and calm reasoning into the minds of many of these youngsters, who indulge in debauchery and drinking when they return to the coastal towns from the bush, much like sailors who return to port after a long journey at sea. An almost exclusively male population in an expanse of perhaps 600 miles is a highly interesting but not very satisfactory state of affairs. Nowhere else is it as evident why God carved Eve out of Adam’s rib. The laborers, shepherds, and herdsmen are still for the most part people who were sent here on account of their misdeeds and crimes but have since been granted their freedom. Few of them are married. They have no wife to feed, no children to provide for, no relatives to consider. They only live for themselves! And since they are neither given to serious thoughts about the future nor higher thoughts about the present, their energy is dedicated to pursuing immediate pleasure—whenever they can indulge in pleasures. As soon as they arrive at an inn they forget about their master, their work, even the very punishment they will incur for neglecting their duties; they regard the innkeeper as their father, his wife as their mother, those two are the only ones that welcome them with kindness and open arms. Thus they stay here until they have spent the last cent of their wages on drink, which fortunately does not take that long, and then they return to their duties to work yet again for another

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year, only to repeat the cycle.

From New England I went to Port Stephens, which belongs to the Agricultural Company, a company that obtained 2 million morgen of land on the condition that it would promote agriculture and cattle and sheep farming. At first it selected the land surrounding Port Stephens, so as to have access to a harbor, yet because it proved little suitable to sheep farming the government granted the company 1 million morgen of land in the interior, on the Peel, where there are excellent pasture lands. However, Port Stephens would be highly suitable for wine-growing, if only the company were to pay attention to this branch of cultivation. — It is for the best that you did not behold me in the flesh when I rode into Newcastle after having lived in the bush for so long. My trousers were so torn that a red woolen shirt which I was wearing as a frock hardly masked the trousers' weak spots. People took me for a shepherd, a bushranger (robber) and so forth. — You can imagine how pleasant it felt to once again put on clean clothes. But I must end this letter now; I am healthy and hope that you are as well. Farewell and do not forget

your affectionate and loving brother-in-law and brother

[No signature.]

P.S.S. [bottom of last page:] Convey my greetings to dear mother and all the others.

[top of first page:] Today I received your letter of 23–24 July 1843. Thank you very much for the pleasant news!! I received a letter from the Hilgenfelds dated 9 July. I will answer as soon as I arrive in Sydney!!

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

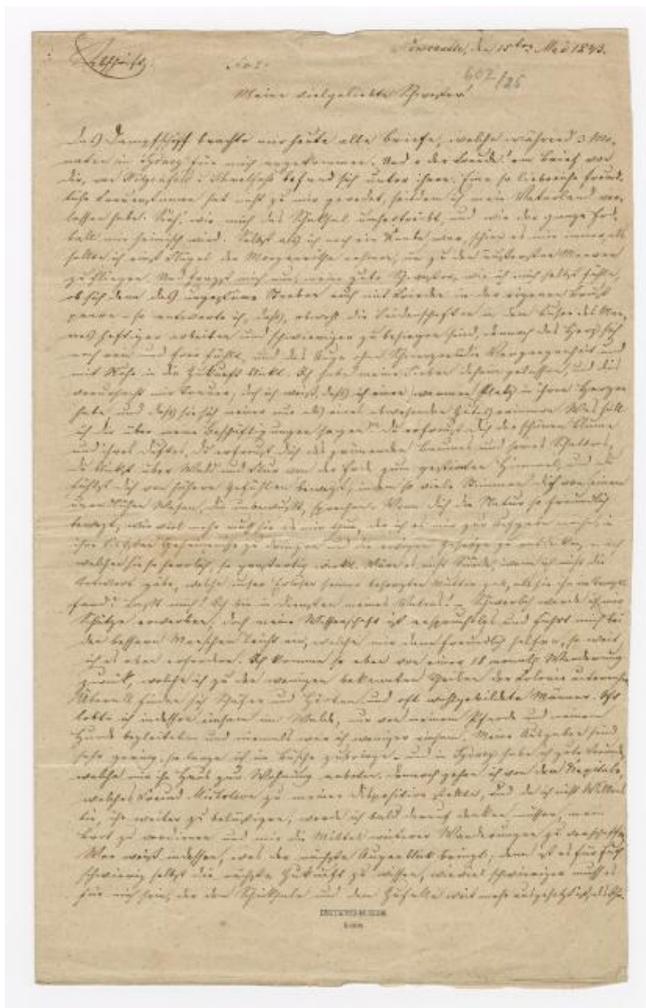
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## Letter to his sister Auguste L. Hilgenfeld, Newcastle (15 May 1844)



Newcastle, 15 May 1843 [*sic*, for 1844]

My beloved sister,

Today the steamer brought me all the letters that had arrived for me in Sydney during the last 3 months. Oh, what a delight! A letter from you, from Hilgenfeld, and Schmalfuß were among them. I have not heard such a dear woman's voice since I left my fatherland. See how far my fate has sent me, and how I am becoming at home in the entire world. Even as a boy, it seemed to me that I might borrow the wings of the dawn in order to fly to the farthest seas. And you ask me, my dear sister, how I feel, whether peace also accompanies the tumultuous striving in my breast—my answer is that, although the passions in a man's bosom act more fiercely upon him and are more difficult to master, his heart can still remain pure and free, and his eye can contemplate the past without pain and look calmly towards the future. I have left those dear to me at home, and this causes me sorrow; but I know that I have a warm place in their hearts, and that they think of me as a blessing which is absent. What should I tell you about my activities? You take delight in lovely flowers and their scents, you rejoice in the greening tree and the shade it casts, you look out beyond the earth and forest to the starry heavens, and you are moved deeply by so many voices that speak to you of an eternal being hidden from you. If Nature moves you to such affection, just think how it must move me as I make it my task to uncover her deepest secrets and reveal the laws which make her so majestic, so glorious. Would it not be a sin, if I were not to give the answer which our Savior gave to his worried mother when she found him in the temple: "Let me be. Do you not wish that I should serve my Father?" — I am not likely to gain any great amount of riches, but my science does not require much, and it brings me into contact with the best circles, where I receive the most friendly assistance with whatever I might require. I have just returned from an 18-month journey to the lesser-known parts of the colony. Everywhere one meets shepherds and herdsmen, and frequently well-

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**Chapter:** Letter to his sister Auguste L. Hilgenfeld, Newcastle (15 May 1844)

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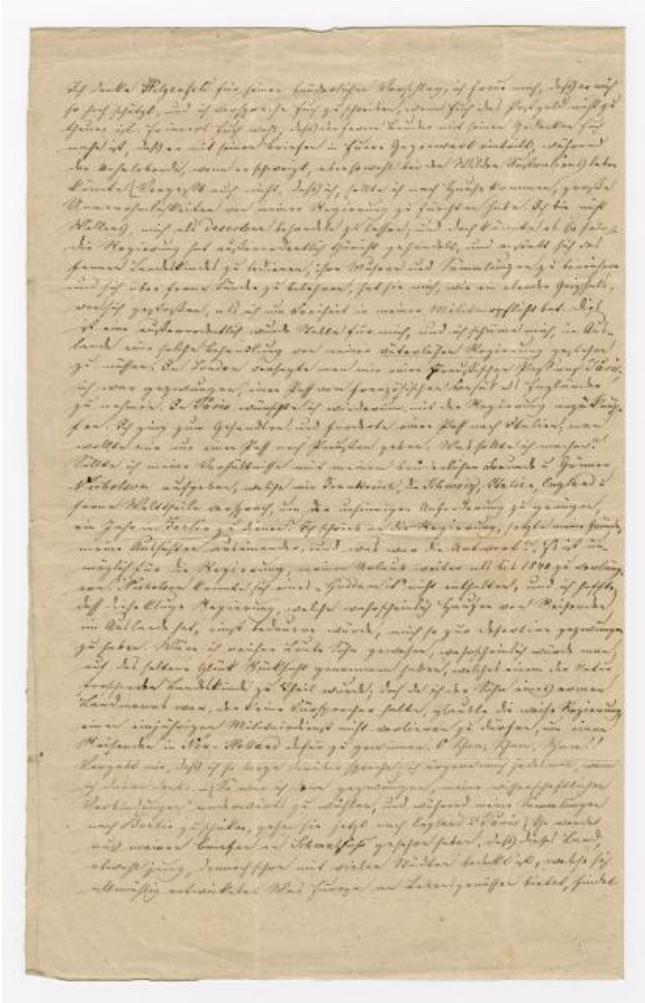
educated men. However, I often lived alone in the woods, in the company of only my horse and my dog—and yet I have never been less lonely. My expenses are very little so long as I am living in the bush—and in Sydney I have good friends who allow me to reside in their houses. Even so, I am living on the funds that my friend Nicholson has placed at my disposal, and since I do not wish to impose upon him any further, I will soon have to think about how to earn my bread myself and obtain the money necessary for additional journeys. Who knows what the next moment will bring; if you two have difficulty foreseeing the immediate future, how much harder it is for me, as I am so much more at the mercy of fate and chance than you.

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**Chapter:** Letter to his sister Auguste L. Hilgenfeld, Newcastle (15 May 1844)

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My thanks to Hilgenfeld for his brotherly suggestion; I am delighted that he thinks so highly of me, and I promise to write as long as the postage is not too expensive for you. Know that your faraway brother is close to you in his thoughts, that he is in your presence through his letters, while a neighbor, as long as he remains silent, might just as well be living in the wilds of Australia! Do not forget that, were I to return home, I would be in danger of facing a great deal of unpleasantness from the government. I am not willing to let myself be treated as a deserter—and yet precisely this is likely to be the case. The government has acted in a most foolish manner. Rather than taking advantage of what its native son can offer from abroad, enriching its museums and collections and gathering knowledge about far-off lands, it cast me off, like some wretched miser, when I asked to be freed from my military duty. This is a very sore point for me, and I am ashamed when I must admit here abroad how my womanish government has treated me. In London I was refused a Prussian travel pass to Paris; I was forced to accept a pass from the French consul which listed me as an Englishman. In Paris I attempted to get in contact with the government again. I went to the ambassador and requested a pass to Italy: instead all they wanted to give me was one to Prussia! What could I do? Should I have given up my connection to my brotherly friend and patron Nicholson, which promised me Switzerland, Italy, England, and the far reaches of the world—merely in order to comply with the senseless demand that I serve for a year in Berlin? I wrote to the government, explained my reasons and prospects, and what was the response? “It is impossible for the government to extend your leave beyond 1840.” Nicholson could not suppress a “Goddamn it,” and I hoped that such a sensible government, which in all likelihood has any number of travelers abroad, would come to regret having forced me to become a deserter. Had I been the son of a rich family, they would probably have accommodated this rare opportunity offered to one of the fatherland’s own naturalists. But since I was just the child of a poor farmer, without anyone to advocate for me, the government in its wisdom decided that it could not dispense with a year of

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military service in order to benefit from a traveler in New Holland. Oh the shame, the shame, the shame! Forgive me for dwelling on the subject for so long; I am angry again whenever I think about it. — Thus I was obliged to seek out scientific connections elsewhere, and [instead] of sending my collections to Berlin, they are now going to England and Paris. You will have learned from my letters to Schmalfluss that this country, although young, is already dotted with numerous towns which are gradually developing. The pleasures of life that Europe has to offer are also available here.

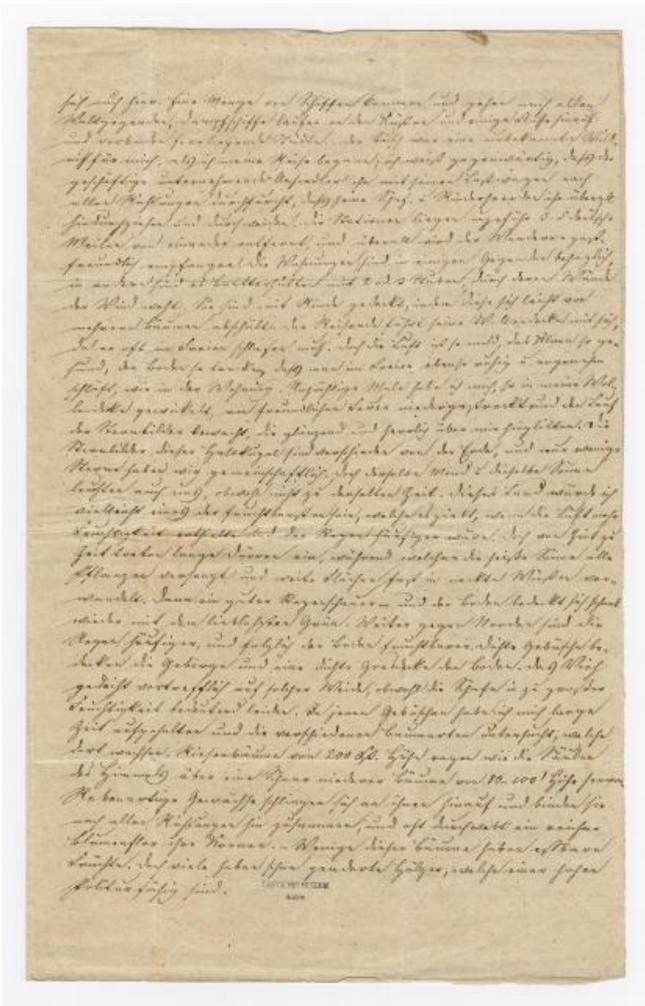
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Many ships arrive and depart for all corners of the world, steamers travel along the coasts and several of the rivers and connect distant towns with each other. — To me, the bush seemed to be an uncharted wilderness when I began my journey; now I know that the busy, enterprising settlers are making tracks with their wagons in all directions, that herds of sheep and cattle cross through and pasture in it. The stations are about 3–5 German miles apart, and travelers are received with much hospitality everywhere. In some areas the dwellings are quite cozy, while in others they are mere huts made of boards with 2 or 3 rooms with the wind blowing through the cracks in the walls. They are roofed with bark, which can be stripped easily from a number of tree species. A traveler carries his own woolen blanket with him, for often he must sleep outdoors. But the air is so mild, the climate so healthy, and the ground so dry, that one sleeps just as peacefully and comfortably outside as one does under shelter. On countless occasions I have stretched out beside a pleasant fire, wrapped in my woolen blanket, and watched the movement of the stars as they passed shining and splendid above me. The constellations in this hemisphere are not the same as in [yours], and we share only a very few stars. But the same moon and the same sun shine upon us all, although not at the same time. This land might be one of the most fertile in the world, if the air were more humid and the rain more frequent. But from time to time there are long droughts, during which the sun sears all plant life and nearly turns broad swaths of land into deserts. And then comes a rainstorm—and the earth is quickly covered again with the most lovely green. Further to the north rain is more frequent, and the earth thus is more fertile. The mountains are covered with thick bushes and the ground is thick with grass. Livestock thrives most wonderfully on such pastures, although the sheep suffer notably when there is too much moisture. In these bushes I spent a substantial period of time investigating the various types of trees which grow there. Giant trees 200 feet tall loom like the pillars of heaven above a flock of shorter trees of 80–100' in height. Vine-like plants wrap around them and bind them together in all directions, and frequently

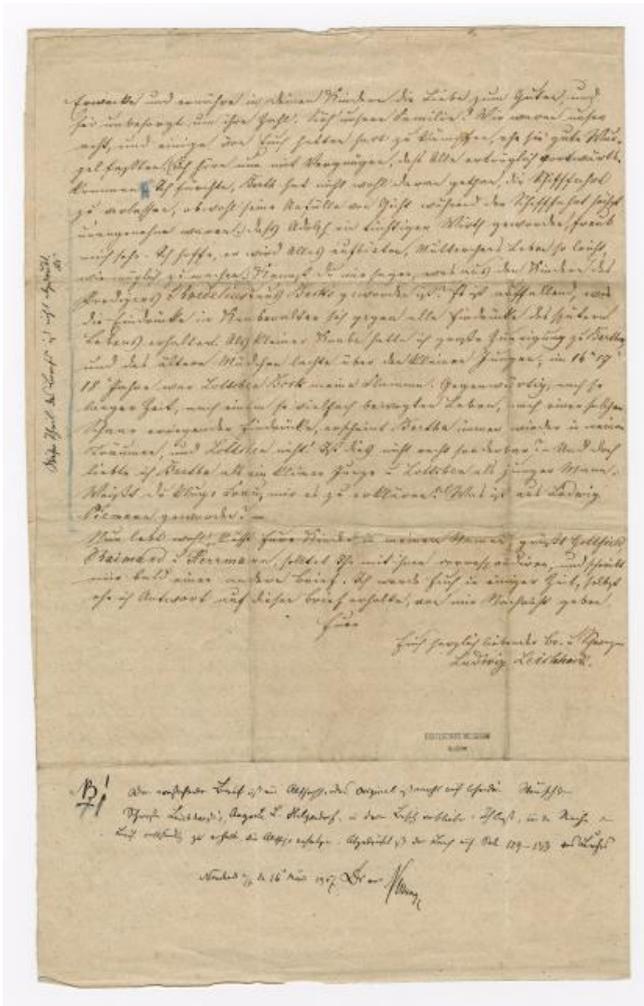
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their crowns are woven with a rich festoon of blossoms. — Few of these trees have edible fruits. But many have beautifully grained wood that can be polished to a high gleam.



Awaken and nourish in your children a love for what is good, and do not worry about how many they are. Look at our family! There were eight of us, and some among you faced a difficult struggle before you could set down roots. I fear that Barth made a poor decision when he gave up seafaring, even though his attacks of gout during the sea journeys were very unpleasant. I am delighted to hear that Adolph has become a capable farmer. I hope that he will make the utmost effort to make dear mother's life as easy as possible. Can you tell me what has become of the children of Pastor Roedelius, and of the Bocks? It is remarkable how impressions from one's boyhood remain in spite of all that might come after. As a young boy I was greatly devoted to Bertha, and the older girl laughed at the small boy; at 16, 17, and 18 Lottchen Bock was my great flame. At present, after so long, and after a life stirred in so many ways, after so many inspiring impressions, Bertha still appears to me again and again in my dreams, and Lottchen does not! Is this not quite strange? — And yet I loved Bertha as a young boy and Lottchen as a young man. You are a wise woman, can you explain this to me? What has become of Ludwig Riemann? — Now adieu, give your children a kiss in my name, greet Gottfried, Raimund, Herrmann, if you should happen to correspond with them, and write to me soon. I will give you news in a short while, even before I receive a response to this letter.

Most affectionately,  
Your brother and brother-in-law  
Ludwig Leichhardt

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English translation by Brenda Black.

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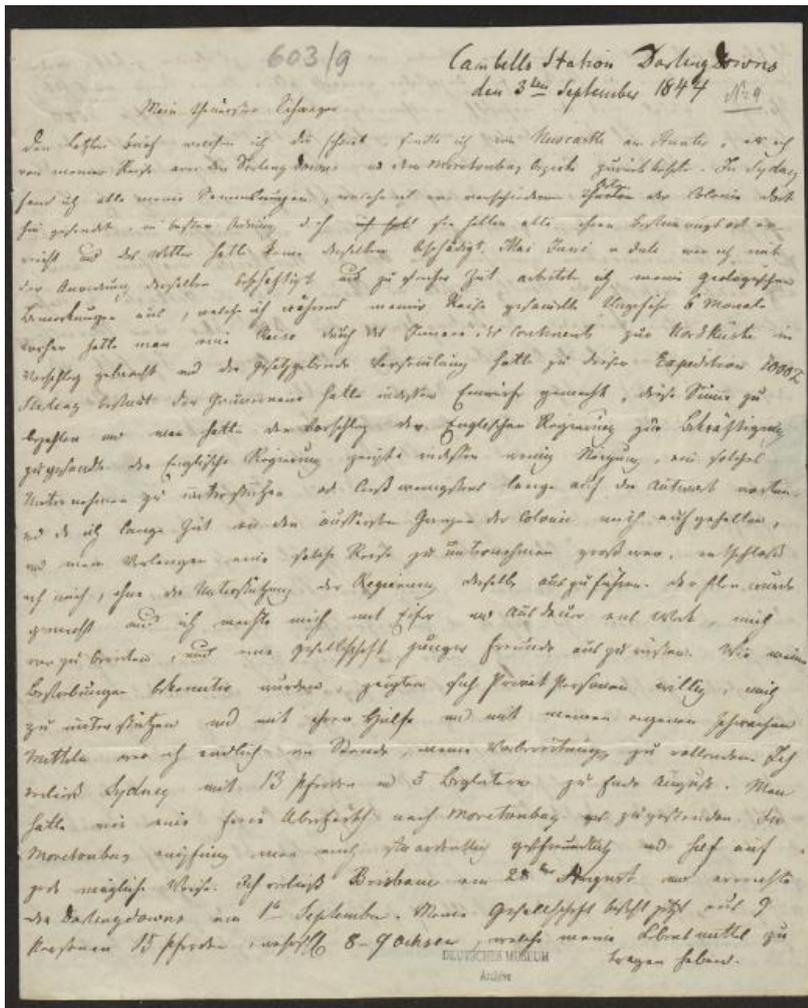
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Cambell's Station, Darling Downs  
(3 September 1844)



Cambell's Station, Darling Downs, 3 September 1844  
My dearest brother-in-law,

I sent the last letter that I wrote to you from Newcastle on the Hunter, after I had returned from my journey to the Darling Downs and the Moreton Bay District. In Sydney I found all of my collections, which I had sent there from different places in the colony, in the best of order; that is, they had all reached their destination and none of them had suffered any weather damage. In May, June, and July I kept busy with classifying them and at the same time wrote up the geological notes that I had amassed during my travels. Approximately 6 months ago an expedition through the continent's interior to the north coast had been proposed and the governing assembly had allocated £1000 sterling for this expedition. However, the governor had objected to paying this sum, and the proposal was sent to the English government for sanction. The English government, meanwhile, showed little inclination for supporting such a venture, or at the very least waited a long time to reply. Because I had spent a long time at the outer edges of the colony and because my desire to undertake such an expedition was great I decided to carry it out without government support. The plan was made and with eagerness and persistence I began to prepare myself and to outfit a party of young friends. As my efforts became more widely known, private individuals signaled their willingness to support me and I was finally able to finish my preparations with their help on top of my own meager resources. I left Sydney with 13 horses and 5 companions toward the end of August. I was granted free passage to Moreton Bay. In Moreton Bay I received a very hospitable welcome and assistance of every conceivable kind. I left Brisbane on 28 August and reached the Darling Downs on 1 September. My party now consists of 9 people, 15 horses, and perhaps 8–9 bullocks, which are to carry my provisions. So far I have had to suffer unfavorable winds and persistent rain,

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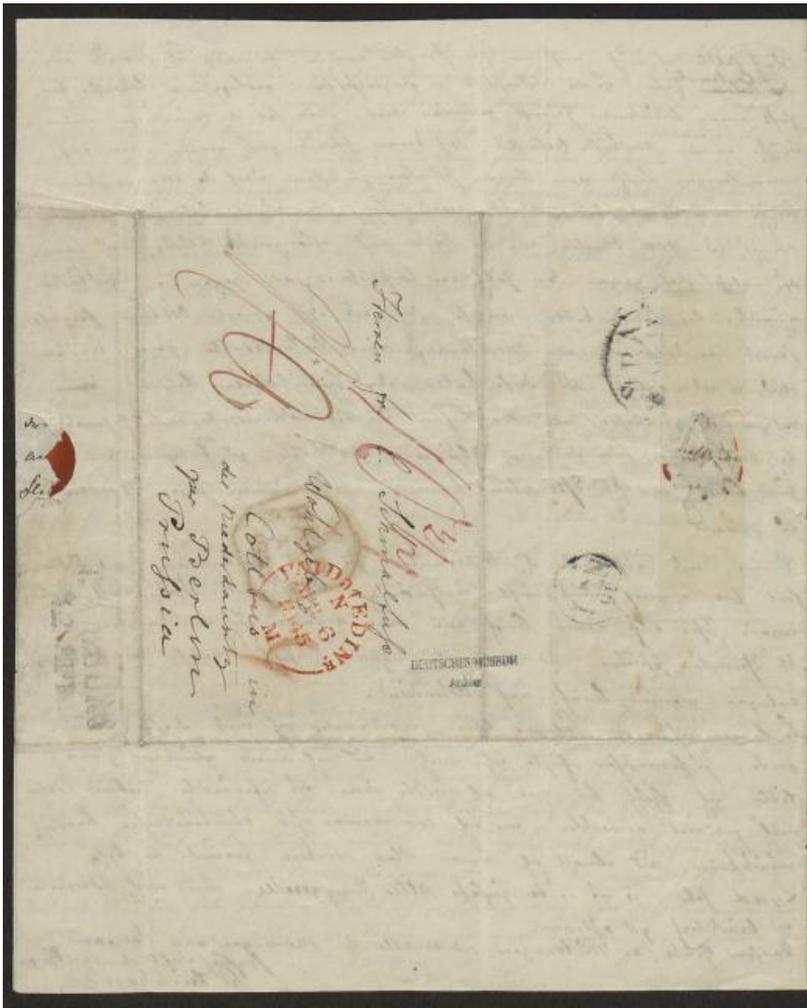
**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Cambell's Station, Darling Downs (3 September 1844)

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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, 3 September 1844 (p.4)  
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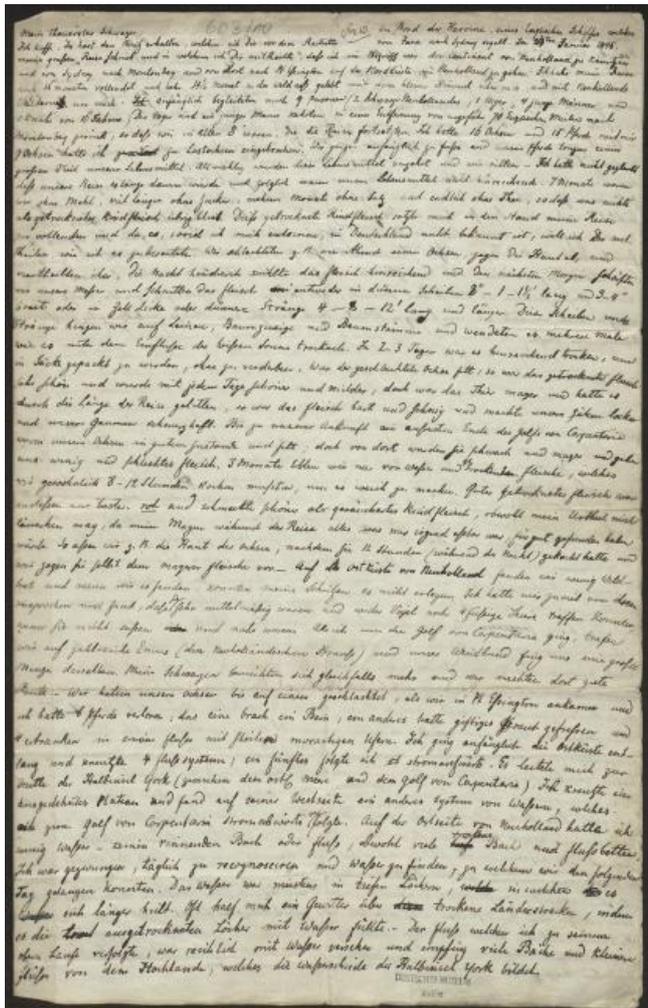
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, written aboard the ship *Heroine* (24 January 1846)



On board of the *Heroine*, an English ship sailing from Java to Sydney, 24 January 1845 [sic, for 1846]

My dearest brother-in-law,

I hope that you have received the letter that I wrote to you before embarking on my great expedition and in which I told you that I was about to cross the continent of New Holland and to travel from Sydney to Moreton Bay and from there to Port Essington on the north coast of New Holland. After 16 months, I have completed my journey and spent 14½ months in the wilderness with the blue sky above me and the forests of New Holland around me. Initially 9 people accompanied me (2 black New Hollanders, 1 negro, 4 young men and 1 16 year-old youth). The negro und one young man returned to Moreton Bay after about 70 English miles, so that those of us who continued on the journey totaled 8 in number. I had brought 16 bullocks and 15 horses with me; 9 of the bullocks I had broken in to serve as pack animals. Initially we traveled on foot and our horses carried the majority of our provisions. We gradually consumed these provisions and took to the saddle. — I had not thought that our expedition would take so long and consequently our provisions proved insufficient. We went without flour for 7 months, even longer without sugar, several months without salt, and eventually ran out of tea, so that we had nothing left but dried beef. This dried beef allowed me to complete my expedition, and since it is unknown in Germany, if I remember correctly, I want to tell you how I prepared it. In the evening, say, we would slaughter a bullock, strip off its hide, and quarter it. Overnight the meat cooled sufficiently and the following morning we sharpened our knives and cut the meat either into thin slices 8”–1–1½” long and 3–4” wide or into strips an inch or less thick and 4–8–12’ long or longer. We hung these slices and strips from ropes, tree branches, or tree trunks and turned them over several times as they dried beneath the hot sun. Within 2–3 days they had dried enough

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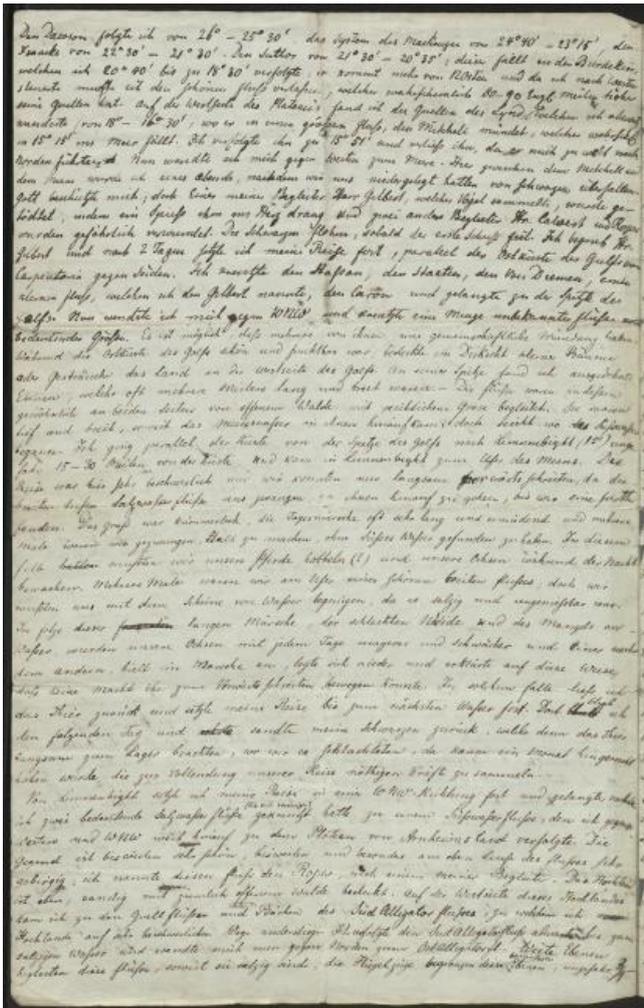
to be packed away into bags without running the risk of them spoiling. If the butchered bullock had been fat, the dried meat was very nice and became better and tenderer by the day; yet if the animal was lean and if it had suffered on account of the long duration of the expedition, the meat was very tough and stringy and loosened our teeth and made our gums ache. Our bullocks were in good condition and remained fat until we reached the outer edge of the Gulf of Carpentaria; yet after that point they became weak and gaunt and provided us with little meat, and that poor. For 3 months we subsisted on water and dried meat alone, which we usually had to cook for 8–12 hours to tenderize it. Good dried meat is best consumed raw, however, and tastes better than cured beef, although my assessment may perhaps not be trusted since my stomach would have declared everything that was at all edible to be tasty during the expedition. For example, we ate the bullock skin after it had stewed for 12 hours (overnight) and we even preferred it to the lean meat. — We encountered little game on the east coast of New Holland and if we saw any my marksmen were unable to bring it down. The hope I had placed in them turned to have been too high and I found them to be very mediocre and unable to hit either birds or quadruped animals if these were not resting or at close range. As I made my way around the Gulf of Carpentaria, we came across numerous emus (the New Holland ostrich) and our greyhound caught a great number of them for us. My blacks also began to make more of an effort and we came away from there with considerable booty. — When we arrived at Port Essington we had slaughtered all but one of our bullocks, and I had lost 6 horses: one had broken its leg, another had eaten poisonous weeds and 4 had drowned in a river with steep, muddy banks. I had initially traveled along the east coast and crossed 4 river systems; I followed a fifth one upstream. It led me to the middle of the York peninsula (between the eastern ocean and the Gulf of Carpentaria). I crossed a vast plateau and found a different water system on its west side, which I followed downstream toward the Gulf of Carpentaria. I found very little water on the east side of New Holland — no flowing streams or rivers, although there were many dry streams and riverbeds. Every day I was forced to go on reconnaissance missions to find sources of water that we would be able to reach the following day. More often than not, the water was in holes deep enough to retain it for a considerable amount of time. Thunderstorms frequently helped me survive dry stretches of land by filling the dried-up holes with water. — The river that I followed to its headwaters carried an abundance of water and absorbed a lot of streams and smaller rivers coming from the plateau that forms the watershed of the York peninsula.

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I followed the Dawson starting at  $16^{\circ}-25^{\circ} 30'$ , the system of the Mackenzie from  $24^{\circ} 40'-23^{\circ} 15'$ , the Isaacks from  $22^{\circ} 30'-21^{\circ} 30'$ , and the Suttor from  $21^{\circ} 30'-20^{\circ} 35'$ ; the latter merges with the Burdekin, which I followed from  $20^{\circ} 40'$  up to  $18^{\circ} 30'$ ; it comes from more of a north-eastern direction and since I was headed west I had to leave this beautiful river, which probably has its source 80–90 English miles higher up. I found the headwaters of the Lynd on the west side of the plateau, which I followed downstream (from  $18^{\circ}-16^{\circ} 30'$ ) where it ends in a bigger river, the Mitchell, which probably flows into the ocean at  $15^{\circ} 15'$ . I followed it to  $15^{\circ} 51'$ , and then left it since it led me too far north. I now turned west toward the ocean. Here between the Mitchell and the ocean I was attacked by blacks one evening after we had gone to sleep. God saved me, yet one of my companions, Mr. Gilbert, a bird collector, was killed by a spear piercing his heart, and two of my other companions, Mr. Calvert and Mr. Roper, were critically wounded. The blacks fled as soon as we fired a shot. I buried Mr. Gilbert and continued my travels after two days, heading south parallel to the east coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria. I crossed the Nassau, the Staaten, the Van Diemen, a smaller river that I named the Gilbert, and the Caron, and reached the head of the Gulf. I now turned toward WNW and crossed a good number of unknown rivers of significant size. It is possible that several of them share a common estuary. Whereas the east coast of the Gulf was beautiful and fertile, thickets of small trees or shrubs covered the country on the west side of the Gulf. At its head, I discovered extensive plains, which were frequently several miles long and broad. — The rivers, meanwhile, were surrounded by open forests and abundant grasslands on both sides. They were deep and broad as long as the tidewater flowed into them, yet shallow where the fresh water began. From the head of the Gulf I headed parallel to the coast toward Limmen Bight ( $15^{\circ}$ ), about fifteen to thirty miles from the coast, and reached the shores of the ocean at Limmen Bight. Our travels were very cumbersome here and

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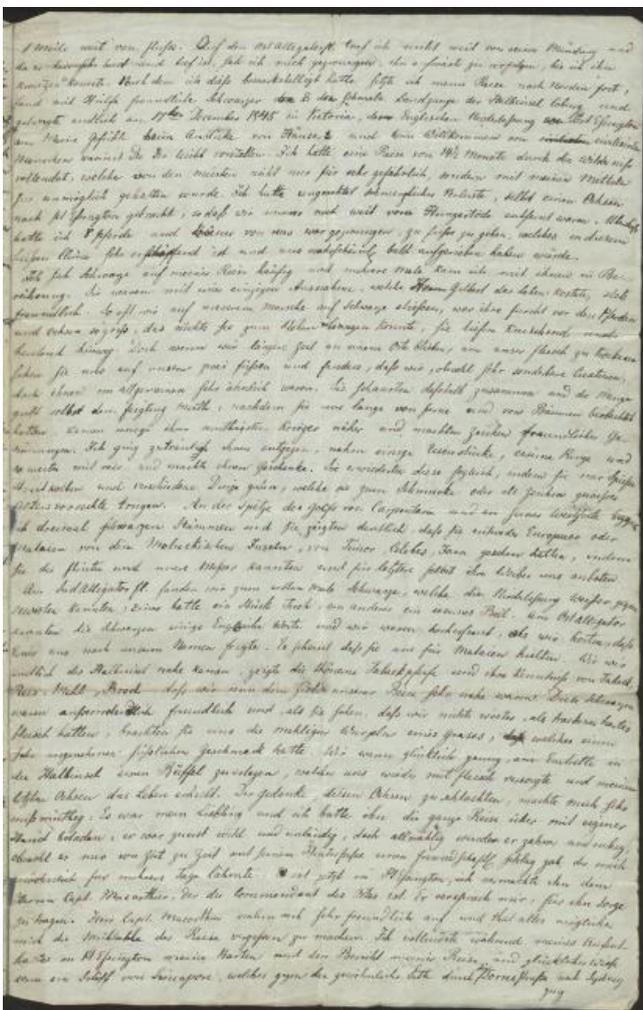
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our progress was very slow since the broad salt water rivers forced us to travel upstream until we found a place to ford them. The grass was meager, our daily marches often long and tiring, and we were forced to make camp several times without having found any sources of fresh water. On these occasions we had to hobble our horses and keep watch over our bullocks at night. Several times we found ourselves on the banks of a beautiful, wide river yet we had to content ourselves with the reflection of the water since it was salty and brackish. As a consequence of the long marches, bad pasture, and lack of water our bullocks grew thinner and weaker with every passing day, and one after the other they stopped walking, lay down, and thus declared that nothing whatsoever could induce it to take one more step. In such instances I left the animal behind and continued my travels until we reached water. I remained there the following day and sent my blacks back, who then slowly coaxed the animal toward the camp, where we slaughtered it — a month would have been hardly enough for it to regain the strength necessary to complete our journey. —

From Limmen Bight I continued my journey in a WNW direction and, after having crossed two mighty salt water rivers (which unite), I reached a freshwater river which I followed far upstream towards the west and WNW to the plateau of Arnheim's Land. In places this area is very beautiful, in places, especially around the upper course of the river, very mountainous; I named this river the Roper, in honor of my companion. The plateau is flat, sandy, and covered by fairly open forest. On the plateau's west side I happened upon the springs and headwaters of the South Alligator River, to which I descended from the plateau along a very difficult path. I followed the South Alligator River downstream until its waters became salty and then turned northward toward the East Alligator River. — Vast plains surround these rivers for as long as they carry salt water; rolling hills border these treeless plains at a distance of about 3/4-



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1 mile from the river. I reached the East Alligator River not far from its mouth, and since it is very wide and deep here I was forced to follow it upstream until I was able to cross it. After I accomplished this I continued my travels northward, found the narrow tongue of land of the Coburg peninsula with the help of some friendly blacks, and finally reached the English settlement of Port Essington in Victoria on 17 December 1845. You can easily imagine how I felt upon seeing houses and being welcomed by civilized people. I had concluded a 14½ month expedition through the wilderness, which was deemed by most to be not only highly dangerous but impossible given my resources. In spite of painful losses, I had managed to bring one bullock to Port Essington, so death by starvation had still been a good way off. Moreover, I still had eight horses and none of us had been forced to walk, which is very exhausting in this climate and most likely would have worn us out quickly.

I saw blacks frequently during my travel and interacted with them several times. With one exception, which cost Mr. Gilbert his life, they were always friendly. Whenever we happened upon blacks during our journey their fear of the horses and bullocks was so great that nothing could induce them to stay, they always ran off screaming and crying. Yet when we remained in the same spot for a longer amount of time to dry our meat, they saw us standing on our own two feet and concluded that we, although rather strange creatures, were in general very similar to them. Hence they gathered together and a crowd makes even a coward brave: after they had observed us at length from a distance and from atop the trees, some of their bravest warriors came closer and made signs conveying friendly intentions. I trustingly went to meet them, took several pieces of iron, metal rings, and so forth with me, and offered them as presents. They reciprocated instantly by giving me spears, clubs, and various other things that they wore as jewelry or as a sign of certain rights of seniority. At the head of the Gulf of Carpentaria and on its west side I thrice encountered black clans and they made clear that they had either seen Europeans or Malays from the Moluccas, Timor, Celebes, or Java before, since they knew our guns and our knives and even offered us their women for the latter.

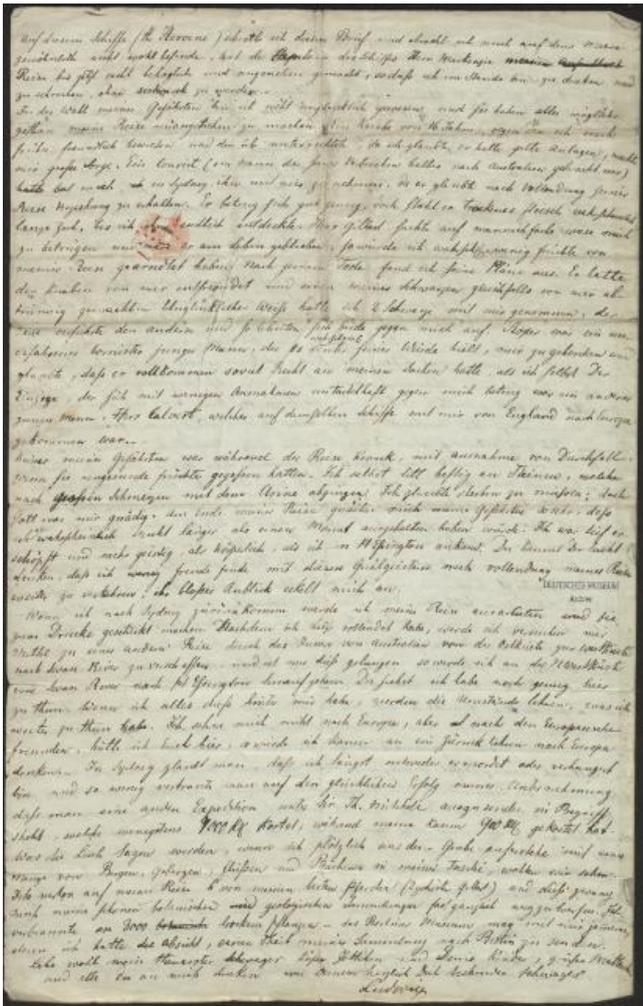
On the South Alligator River we encountered for the first time blacks who knew of the settlement of whites in the Northwest. One had a piece of cloth, another an iron axe. On the East Alligator the blacks knew a few English words and we were delighted as we heard that one of them asked to learn our names. It appears that they thought us to be Malays. As we finally approached the peninsula, their clay pipes and knowledge of tobacco, rice, flour, and bread indicated that we were close to reaching our journey's destination. These blacks were extremely friendly, and upon seeing that we had nothing to eat but tough dried meat, they brought us the mealy roots of a grass which had a very pleasant, sweet taste. We were fortunate enough to shoot down a buffalo at the neck of the peninsula, which provided us with meat again and saved the life of my last bullock. The thought of slaughtering this bullock made me quite out-of-sorts: it was my favorite and I had loaded it with my own hands throughout the entire expedition; it had been wild and fractious at first, yet became gradually tame and calm, although from time to time it hit gave me a friendly kick with its hind foot, which usually rendered me lame for several days. It now lives in Port Essington; I gave it as a present to Captain Macarthur, who is the commander of the outpost. He promised to take care of it. Captain Macarthur welcomed me very cordially and did everything in his power to make me forget all about the hardships of my journey. I completed my maps and my report on the expedition during my stay in Port Essington and luckily a ship from Singapore arrived, which contrary to custom was headed for Sydney by way of the Torres Strait.

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I am composing this letter aboard this ship (the Heroine) and although I usually feel ill at ease on the ocean, the captain of the ship, Mr. Mackenzie, has rendered my journey a pleasant and enjoyable one thus far, so that I am able to think and to write without becoming seasick.

I was rather unfortunate in my choice of companions and they did everything imaginable to render my travels unpleasant. A sixteen-year-old boy, to whom I had shown kindness in the past and whom I had taught since I believed that he had aptitude, proved a great worry to me. A convict (a man who had been sent to Australia on account of his crimes) asked me in Sydney to take him along, since he believed he would receive a pardon after completing the journey. He behaved well enough, yet he most likely stole dried meat for a long time before I finally caught him. Mr. Gilbert sought to cheat me in manifold ways and I would probably not have been able to enjoy many of the fruits of my labor during this expedition had he remained alive. I found out about his plans after his death. He had turned the boy against me, and had done likewise with one of my blacks. — Unfortunately I had taken 2 blacks along, the one led the other astray, and in the end both rebelled against me. Roper was an inexperienced, small-minded young man, who probably thought it beneath his dignity to obey me and believed that he had as much right to my belongings as I did myself. The only one whose behavior toward me, with a few exceptions, was beyond reproach was another young man, Mr. Calvert, who had crossed with me from England to Europe [sic, for New Holland] on the same ship.

None of my companions fell ill during the expedition, with the exception of diarrhea after they had eaten bad fruit. I myself suffered greatly from gall stones, which I, in great pain, passed with my urine. I thought I would die, yet God had mercy on me. Toward the end of

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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, written aboard the ship *Heroine* (24 January 1846)

**Source URL:** <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6589>

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my journey my companions tortured me so much that I probably would not have been able to stand it for much more than a month. I was completely exhausted, more mentally than physically, when I arrived at Port Essington. You can easily imagine that I find little joy in interacting with my tormentors after completing the expedition; the mere sight of them sickens me.

Upon my return to Sydney I will write an account of my expedition and prepare it to go to print. After completing this task, I will try to raise money for a different expedition through Australia's interior, from the east to the west coast to Swan River. If I accomplish this, then I will travel along the northwest coast from Swan River to Port Essington. As you can see, I still have enough left to do here. When all of this is behind me, then my circumstances will guide me as to what more I shall do. I do not long for Europe, but I do for my European friends. If you were here I would hardly consider returning to Europe. — In Sydney it is believed that I have long since been killed or have starved to death, and so little did they trust in the happy success of my endeavor that they are about to launch another expedition headed by Sir Th. Mitchell, which will cost at least 7000 Rtl., whereas mine cost barely 900 Rtl. We shall see what the people say when I suddenly emerge from the grave with my pockets full of mountains, mountain ranges, rivers, and streams. I lost 6 of my best horses during my journey (2 belonged to Gilbert) and this forced me to throw away my beautiful botanical and geological collections almost entirely. I burned about 3000 dried plants—the Berlin Museum may join in my lamentations because I had intended to send a part of my collection to Berlin.

Farewell my dearest brother-in-law. Kiss Fettchen and your children, convey my greetings to dear mother and all who keep me in their thoughts,

Most affectionately,

your loving brother-in-law

Ludwig

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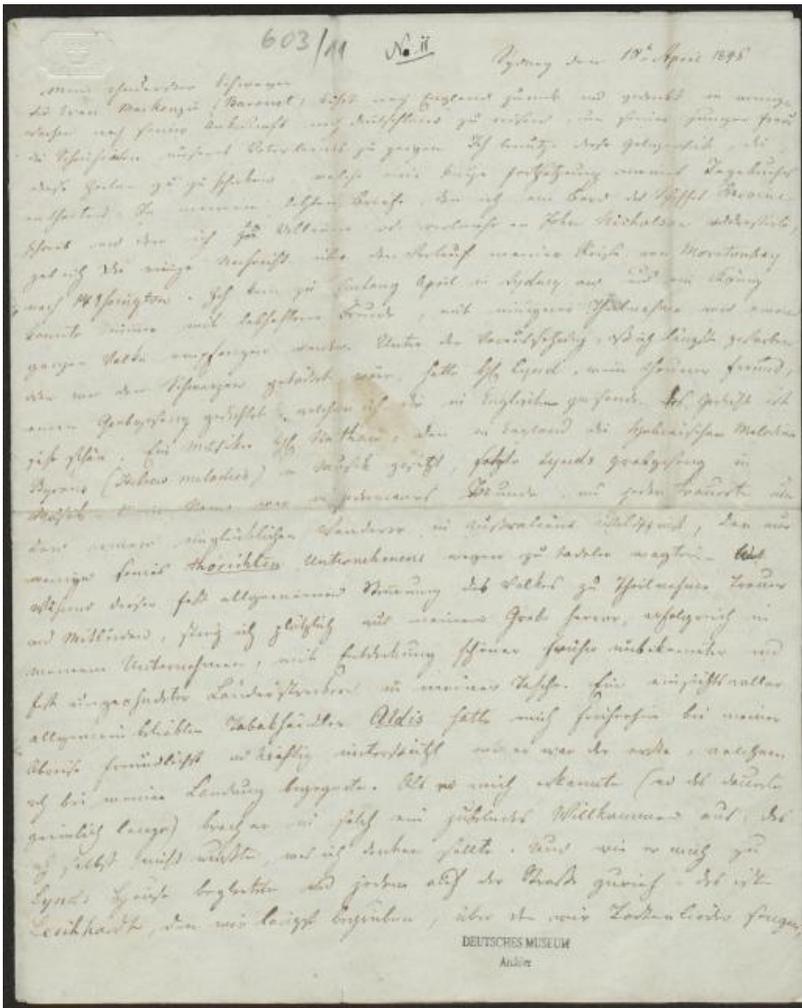
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (18 April 1846)



Sydney, 18 April 1846

My dearest brother-in-law,

Sir Evan Mackenzie (Baronet) is returning to England and plans on traveling to Germany a few weeks after his arrival, so as to show his young wife the beauties of our fatherland. I am seizing this opportunity to send you these lines, which contain a brief continuation of my journal. In my last letter, which I composed aboard the ship Heroine and which I addressed to William, or rather John Nicholson, I gave you an account of the course of my journey from Moreton Bay to Port Essington. I arrived in Sydney at the beginning of April, and a king could not have been welcomed with more animated joy, more heartfelt interest shown by an entire people. Supposing that I had long since died or been killed by blacks, Mr. Lynd, my dear friend, had composed a dirge, which I am sending you in English. The poem is very nice. A musician, Mr. Nathan, who set Byron's Hebrew Melodies to music in England, set Lynd's dirge to music. — My name was on everyone's lips and everyone grieved the poor, unfortunate traveler through Australia's wilderness, who only a few dared to criticize for his foolhardy endeavor. — While people shared in this almost universal feeling of concern, grief, and sympathy, I suddenly emerged out of my grave, successful in my endeavor, with discoveries of beautiful, previously unknown and barely imagined stretches of land in my pocket. A kind, universally liked tobacco trader named Aldis had strongly supported me with all kindness earlier, before my departure, and he was the first person I encountered after landing. When he recognized me (which took a long while) he welcomed me with such exultation that

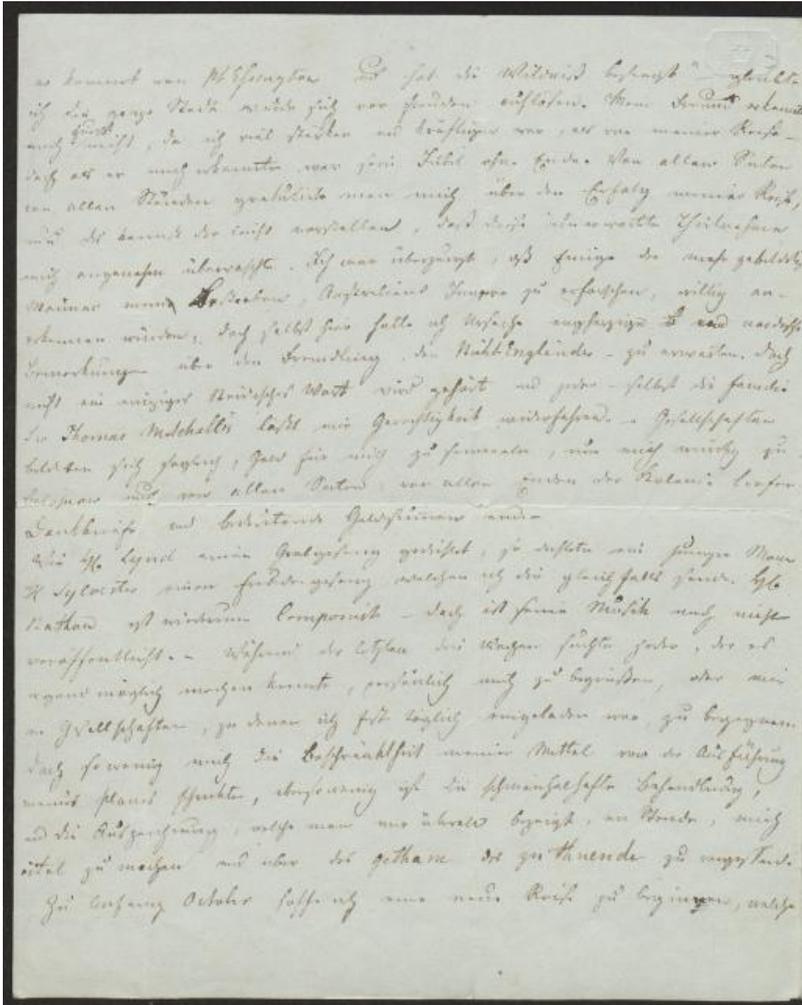
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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (18 April 1846)

**Source URL:** <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6604>

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I did not know what to make of it. And as he accompanied me to Lynd's house and shouted to everyone in the street "this is Leichhardt, who we've long since buried,



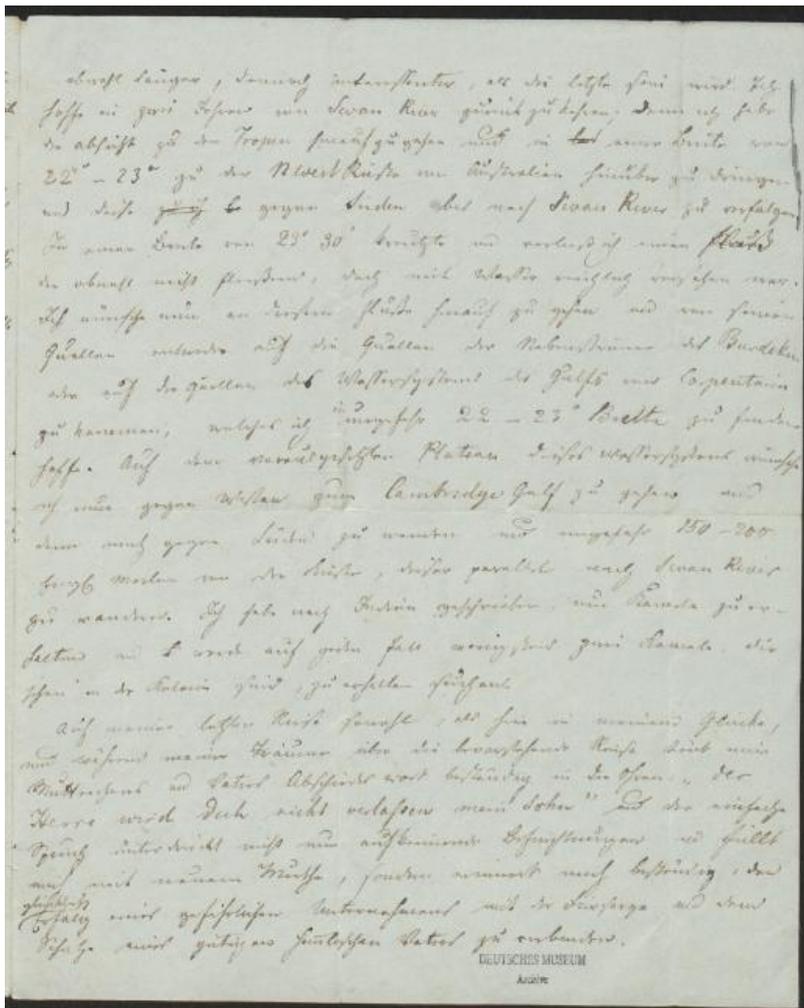
for whom we sang dirges, he comes from Port Essington and has conquered the wilderness” — I thought the entire city would dissolve into joy. My friend at first did not recognize me, since I was much bigger and stronger than I had been before my journey—yet when he recognized me his rejoicing knew no end. I received congratulations on the success of my journey from all sides and all quarters of society, and you can easily imagine that this unexpected interest pleasantly surprised me. I had been certain that some of the more educated men would favorably regard my endeavor to explore Australia's interior; yet even in these circles I had occasion to anticipate narrow-minded and jealous remarks about the stranger, the non-Englishman. Yet I have not heard a single word of jealousy and even the family of Sir Thomas Mitchell treats me justly. — Societies were formed at once to raise money on my behalf so as to bestow a fitting reward upon me, and letters of thanks and substantial sums of money arrived from all sides, from all corners of the colony. — Much as Mr. Lynd had composed a dirge, a young man, Mr. Sylvester, composed a hymn of joy, which I am also sending you. Mr. Nathan once again is setting it to music—yet his music has not been published yet. — Over the course of the last three weeks everyone who could manage it sought to pay their personal respects or sought my company at social functions, to which I am invited almost on a daily basis. Yet just as my meager resources failed to deter me from carrying out my plan, the flattering treatment and the accolades that I am everywhere accorded will not cause me to become vain and forget what remains to be done in light of what has been done already. I hope to embark on a new expedition at the beginning of October, which,

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although longer, should nevertheless be more interesting than the last one. I hope to return from Swan River in two years, because I intend to travel up to the tropics, to press toward the north-west coast of Australia at  $22^{\circ}$ – $23^{\circ}$  latitude, and to follow it southward to Swan River. At  $23^{\circ}$   $30'$  latitude I crossed and left a river which, although not flowing, contained an ample amount of water. I now wish to follow this river upstream and at its source hope to discover the origins of the tributaries of the Burdekin or the origins of the river system of the Gulf of Carpentaria, which I am hoping to find at about  $22^{\circ}$ – $23^{\circ}$  latitude. On the plateau which I postulate for this water system I then want to head westward to the Cambridge Gulf and then to turn southward and to travel to Swan River about 150–200 English miles inland, parallel to the coast. I sent letters to India to obtain camels and will at the very least try to obtain the two camels that are already in the colony.

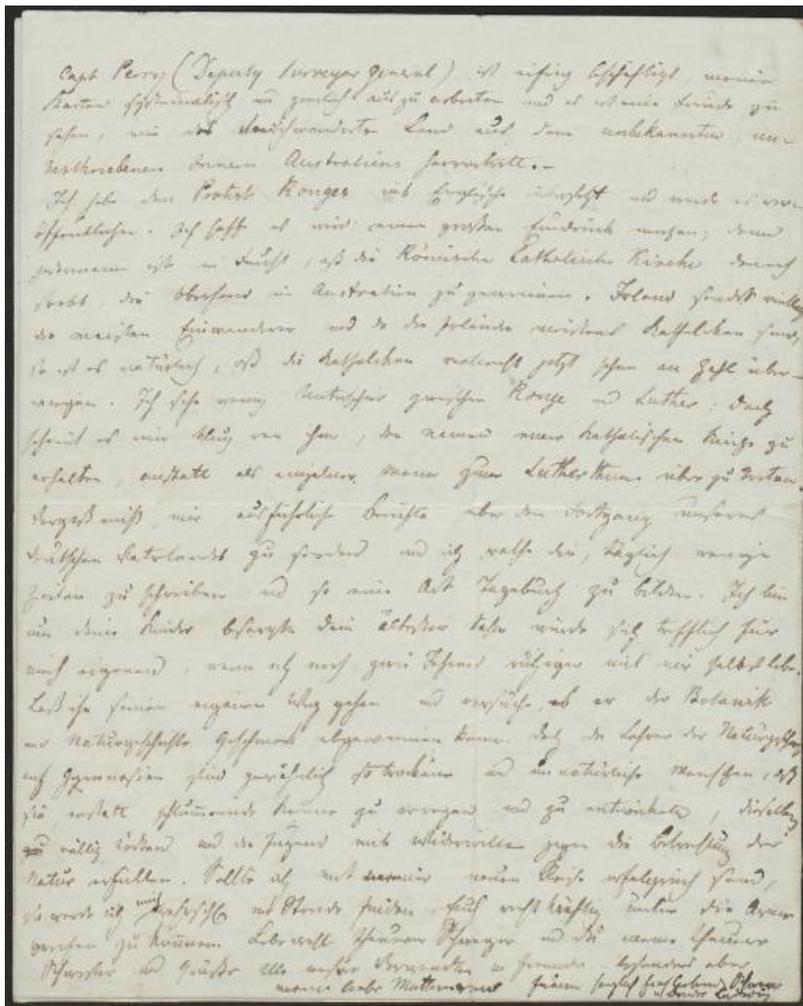
During my last journey, as well as in my present happy circumstances, and in my dreams of the impending expedition I constantly hear dear mother and father's words of farewell in my ears: "The Lord will not leave you, my son." This simple saying not only calms budding fears and fills me with renewed courage, but also serves as a constant reminder to associate the happy success of a dangerous venture with the ministrations and protection of a benevolent heavenly Father.

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Captain Perry (Deputy Surveyor General) is very busy preparing systematic and elegant renderings of my maps, and it is a joy to observe how the land I wandered through emerges out of Australia's unknown, blank interior. —

I have translated Ronge's protest into English and will publish it. I hope it will have a great impact, because everyone fears that the Roman Catholic Church aspires to gain the upper hand in Australia. Ireland probably sends the most immigrants and since the majority of the Irish are Catholic it is only natural that Catholics probably already dominate in numbers. I see little difference between Ronge and Luther; yet I think it is prudent on his part to uphold the Catholic Church in name instead of converting to Lutheranism as an individual. Do not forget to send me detailed reports about the developments in our dear Germany and I recommend that you write a few lines every day so as to keep a sort of journal. I am thinking about your children. Your eldest son would suit me admirably, provided I am more at peace with myself within two years. Let him forge his own path and see whether he has any interest in botany and natural history. Yet teachers of natural history in the secondary schools are usually such stiff and boring people that they completely kill the dormant seeds instead of waking and nurturing them, and they instill in youth distaste for observing nature. Should my new expedition be met with success, I will most likely be in a position to give you a hand financially.

Farewell dearest brother-in-law, and you, my dear sister, and convey my greetings to all of our relatives and friends—but especially to my beloved mother, from your affectionate and loving brother-in-law and brother

Ludwig

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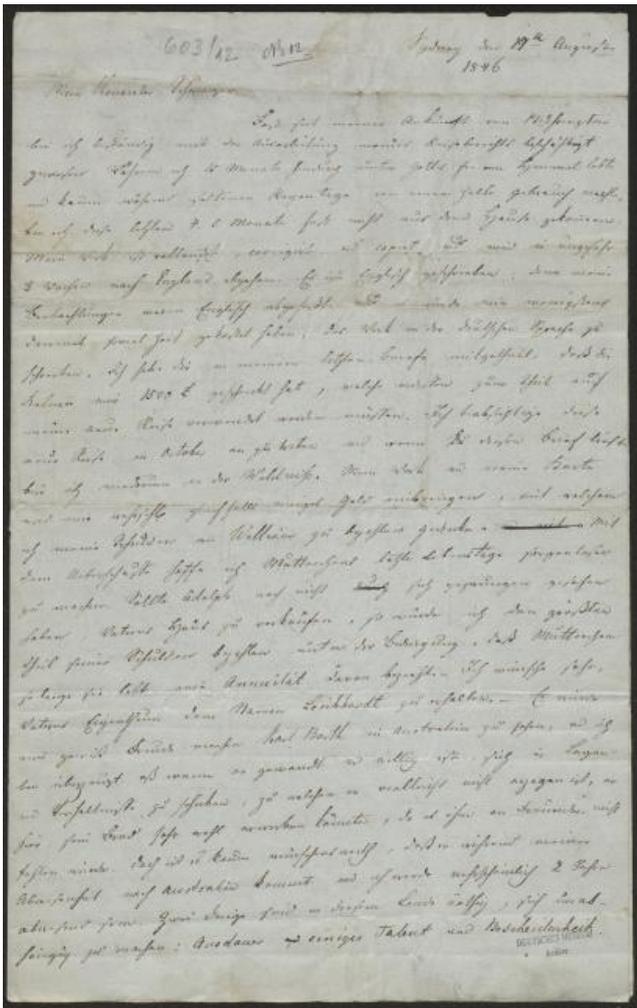
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## Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (19 August 1846)



Sydney, 19 August 1846

My dearest brother-in-law,

Since my arrival from Port Essington I have been kept busy nearly constantly with composing the report on my expedition. Whereas I lived beneath God's open sky for 15 months straight and almost never used a tent even on the occasional rainy day, I have hardly left the house for the last 4–5 months. My work is complete, has been proofed and copied, and will be sent to England in approximately 3 weeks. It is written in English, because I noted my observations in English and it would have taken me at least three times as long to write the work in German. I told you in my last letter that the colony gave me a gift of £1500, part of which, however, I will have to use for my new expedition. I intend to set out on this new journey in October, and when you read this letter I will once again be in the wilderness. I will probably derive some income from my work and my map as well, with which I intend to repay my debts to William. I hope to use the surplus to render dear mother's last living days free of worries. Should Adolph not yet have been forced to sell father's house, then I would pay the majority of his debts under the condition that dear mother derives an annuity from it for as long as she lives. — I dearly wish that father's property continues to be associated with the Leichhardt family name. — I would certainly be glad to welcome Karl Barth in Australia; and I am certain that he could very well earn his bread here and make many friends, provided he is able and willing to accept conditions and circumstances for which his upbringing might perhaps not have prepared him. Yet it is hardly desirable that he arrives in

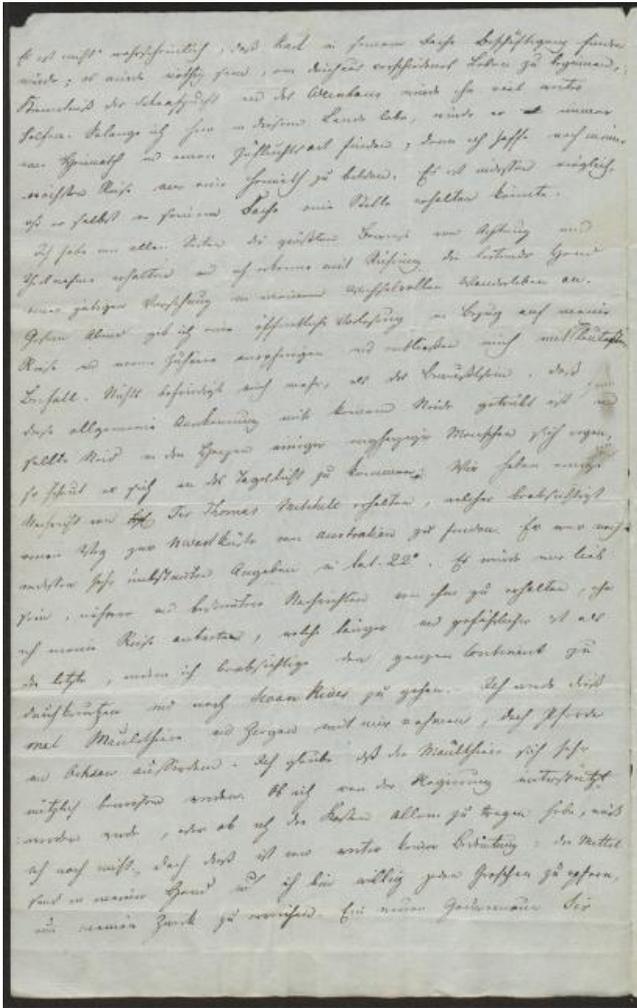
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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (19 August 1846)

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Australia during my absence, and I will most likely be gone for 2 years. Two things are necessary to achieve independence in this country: persistence and some talent and humility.



It is unlikely that Karl will find work in his trade; it will be necessary to begin a completely different life. Knowledge of sheep farming and wine-growing would help him tremendously. For as long as I live in this country he would always have a home and a sanctuary, for I hope to make a home for myself after my next expedition. It is however possible that he might even obtain a position in his trade.

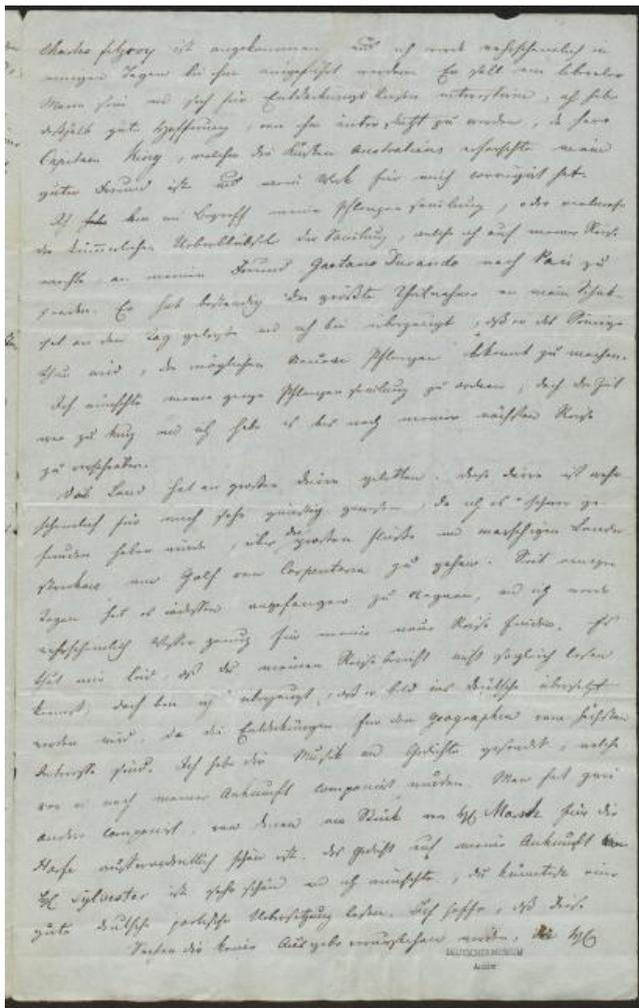
I have received demonstrations of utmost respect and consideration from all sides, and I am deeply moved to find the guiding hand of a benevolent Providence in this ever-changing life of wandering. Last night I gave a public lecture on my expedition and my audience granted me the loudest applause both before and after. Nothing gratifies me more than the knowledge that this general appreciation is not at all marred by jealousy, and even if jealousy should stir in the hearts of a few small-minded people, it is afraid to show itself in the light of day. We received some news about Sir Thomas Mitchell, who intends to find a way to the northwest coast of Australia. According to rather vague information he is at 22° latitude. I would like to receive more specific and more particular news from him before I embark on my expedition, which is longer and more dangerous than the last one because I intend to cross the entire continent on my way to Swan River. — This time I will take along mules and goats in addition to horses and bullocks. I think that the mules will prove to be very useful. I do not yet know whether I will receive government support or whether I will have to bear all costs myself. Yet this is rather irrelevant: I have the necessary resources and am willing to sacrifice my last cent to reach my goal. A new governor, Sir

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Charles Fitzroy, has arrived, and I will almost certainly be introduced to him in a few days. He is said to be a liberal man and to have an interest in expeditions; I am therefore very hopeful to gain his support, since Captain King, who explored Australia's coasts, is a good friend of mine and has proofed my work for me.

I am about to send my plant collection—or rather the pitiful remainder of the collection that I accumulated on my expedition—to my friend Gaetano Durando in Paris. He has continually displayed the greatest interest in my fate and I am certain that he will do whatever he can to make known any possibly new plants. I wish I could have organized my entire plant collection, yet I ran out of time and have to postpone doing so until after my next expedition.

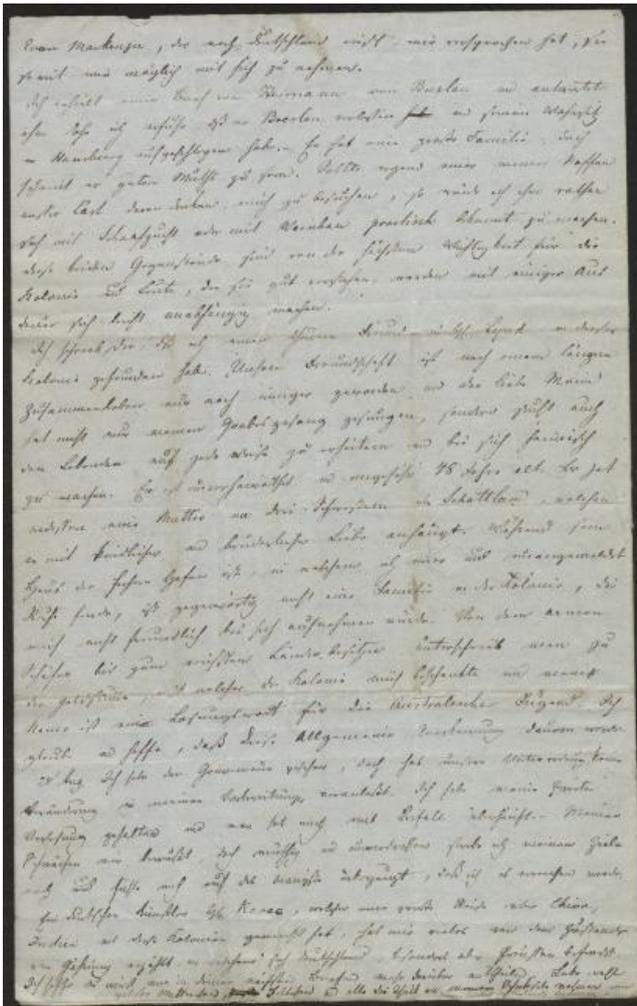
The country has suffered from severe drought. This drought almost certainly proved rather beneficial to me, since I would have found it difficult to cross the big rivers and marshy areas on the Gulf of Carpentaria. However, it started to rain a few days ago, and I will most likely find enough water on my new journey. I am sorry that you will not be able to read the report on my expedition straight away, yet I am certain that it will be translated into German soon, since the discoveries will prove of the highest interest to geographers. I have sent you music and poetry that had been composed before and after my arrival. Two further pieces have been composed, of which a piece for harp by Mr. Marsh is exceptionally beautiful. Mr. Sylvester's poem on my arrival is very nice and I wish that you could read a good and poetic German rendering. I hope that these items will not cause you any expenditures,

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since Mr. Evan Mackenzie, who is traveling to Germany, has promised me to carry them as far as possible.

I received a letter from Hermann in Breslau and answered him before I learned that he had left Breslau and taken up residence in Hamburg. — He has a big family, yet appears to be in good spirits. Should any of my nephews aside from Carl wish to visit me I would advise them to gain some practical knowledge of sheep farming or wine-growing. These two matters are of the highest importance to the colony and people who know them well will, with a bit of persistence, easily attain independence.

I wrote to you that I have found a dear friend in Mr. Lynd in this colony. Our friendship has become an even closer one after living together for a while, and the lovely man not only sang my dirge, but also seeks to amuse the living man and make him feel at home in his house. He is unwed and approximately 48 years of age. He does, however, have a mother and three sisters in Scotland, to whom he is devoted with a childlike, brotherly love. While his house is the safe haven where I always find rest, even if dropping by unannounced, there is at present not one family in the colony that would not welcome me with open arms. Everyone, from the poor shepherd to the wealthy land owner, added their name to the sum of money with which the colony presented me, and my name is a watchword among Australia's youth. I believe and hope that this general recognition will last.

28 August. I went to see the governor, but our talk did not cause me to change my preparations. I held my second lecture and was bathed in lavish applause. — Though aware of my weaknesses, I remain brave and undaunted in pursuit of my goal, and I am deeply convinced that I will accomplish it.

A German artist, Mr. Ravac, who was on a great journey across China, India, and these colonies, has told me a great deal about the state of fermenting unrest in which Germany, and especially Prussia, finds itself. I hope that you will tell me more about it in your next letters.

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Farewell, convey my greetings to dear mother, Fettehen, and all who share an interest in my fate,  
Most affectionately,  
yours  
Ludwig

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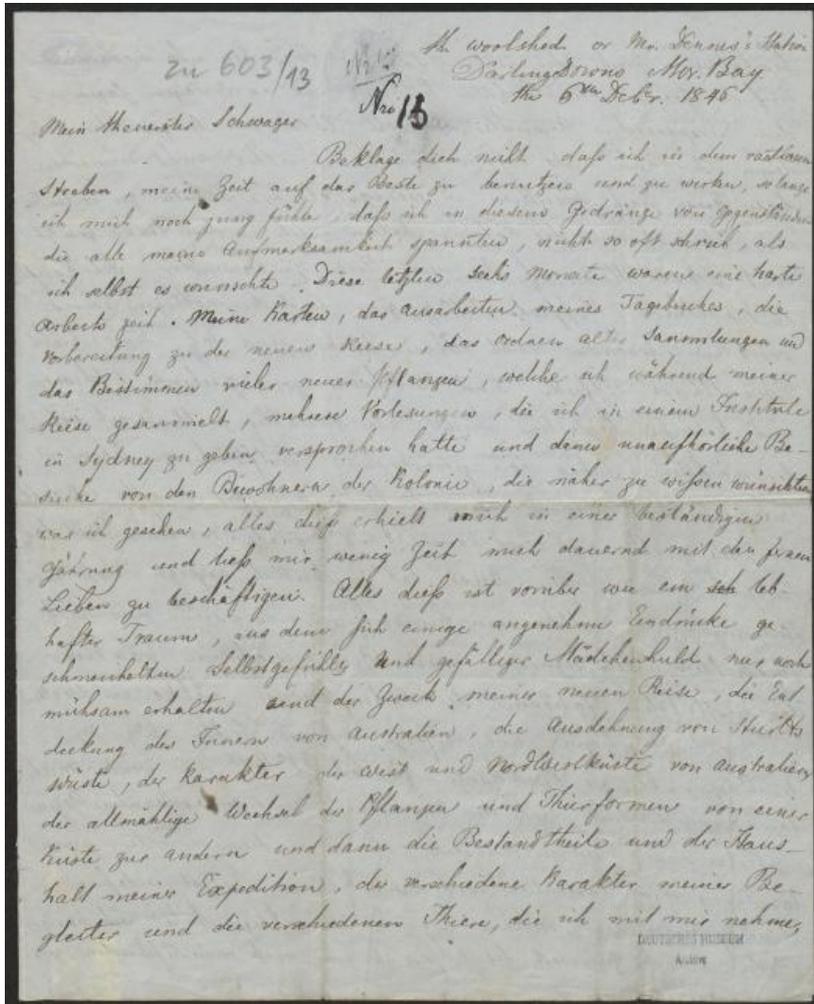
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, The Woolshed, or Mr. Dennis' Station, Darling Downs (6 December 1846)



The Woolshed, or Mr. Dennis's Station, Darling Downs, 6 December 1846

My dearest brother-in-law,

Do not complain that I do not write as often as I myself wish to, occupied as I am with my restless quest to fully utilize and make the best of my time as long as I still feel young, with the crush of subjects that demand all of my attention. These last six months were a time of hard work. My maps, writing up my journal, preparations for the new expedition, organizing old collections, classifying the many new plants that I had collected on my travels, several lectures, which I had promised to give at an institute in Sydney, and then the unceasing visits by colony residents, who wished to learn more specific details about what I had seen—all of this has kept me in a state of perpetual unrest and left me with little time to devote myself more consistently to loved ones faraway. All of this has passed like a vivid dream, of which only a few pleasant impressions of flattered pride and agreeable maidenly grace barely manage to remain, and I spend all day

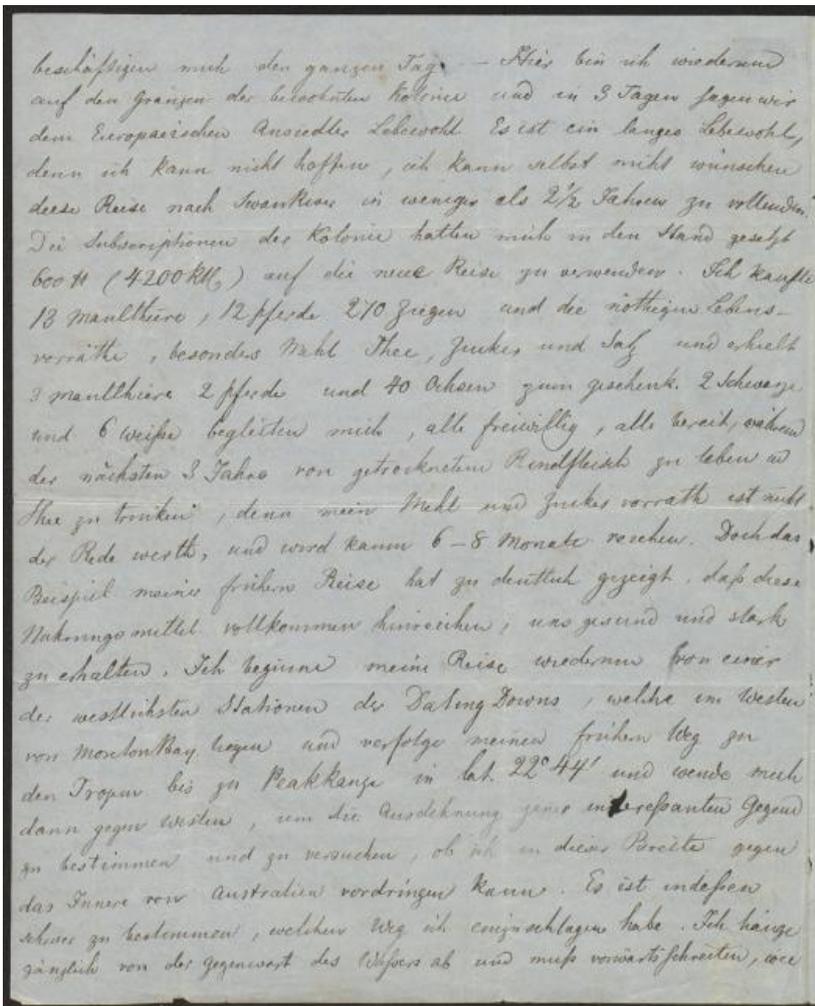
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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, The Woolshed, or Mr. Dennis' Station, Darling Downs (6 December 1846)

**Source URL:** <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/6599>

**Print date:** 01 February 2021 11:07:48

preoccupied with the goals of my new expedition, the exploration of Australia's interior, the extensiveness of Sturt's desert, the character of Australia's west and northwest coast, the gradual changes in flora and fauna from one coast to the other, as well as the equipment and budgeting of my expedition, the various personalities of my companions and the diverse kinds of animals which I am taking with me.



beschäftigen mich den ganzen Tag. — Hier bin ich wieder und  
auf den Grenzen der besetzten Kolonie und in 3 Tagen sagen wir  
dem Europäischen Abschied. Lebewohl. Es ist ein langes Abschied,  
denn ich kann nicht hoffen, ich kann selbst nicht wünschen  
diese Reise nach Swan River in weniger als 2½ Jahren zu vollenden.  
Die Subscriptionsen der Kolonie hatten mich in den Stand gesetzt  
600  $\text{fl}$  (4200  $\text{Rtl}$ ) auf die neue Reise zu verwenden. Ich kaufte  
13 Maulthiere, 12 Pferde, 270 Ziegen und die nöthigen Lebens-  
vorräthe, besonders Mehl, Thee, Zucker und Salz und erhielt  
3 Maulthiere, 2 Pferde und 40 Ochsen zum Geschenk. 2 Schwarze  
und 6 Weiße begleiten mich, alle freiwillig, alle bereit, während  
des nächsten 3 Jahres von getrocknetem Rindfleisch zu leben und  
Thee zu trinken, denn mein Mehl und Zucker vorrath ist nicht  
der Rede werth, und wird kaum 6–8 Monate reichen. Doch das  
Beispiel meiner frühern Reise hat zu deutlich gezeigt, daß diese  
Nahrungsmittel vollkommen hinreichen, was gesund und stark  
zu erhalten. Ich beginne meine Reise wiederum von einer  
der westlichsten Stationen der Darling Downs, welche im Westen  
von Moreton Bay liegen und verfolge meinen frühern Weg zur  
den Tropen bis zu Peak Range in lat.  $22^{\circ} 44'$  und werde mich  
dann gegen Westen, um die Ausdehnung jener interessanten Gegend  
zu bestimmen und zu versuchen, ob ich in dieser Breite gegen  
das Innere von Australien vordringen kann. Es ist indefinit  
schon zu bestimmen, welchen Weg ich einschlagen habe. Ich habe  
gänzlich von der Gegenwart des Wassers ab und muß vorwärtschreiten, wie

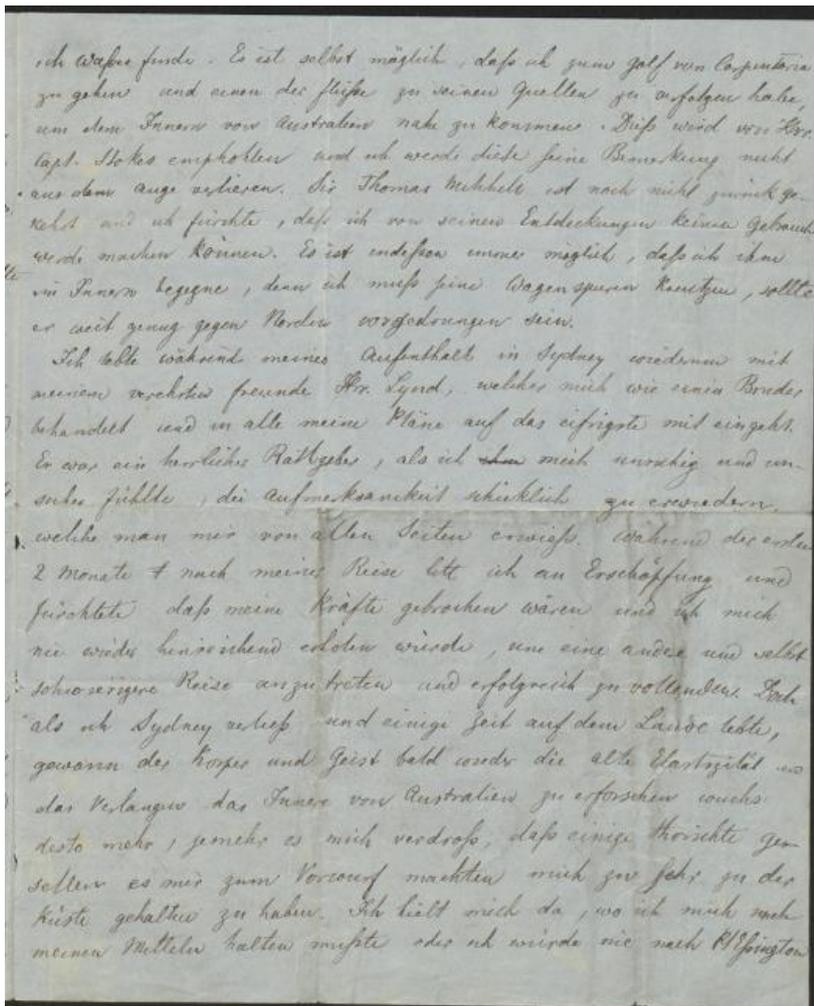
Once again I find myself on the edges of the inhabited colony and in 3 days we shall bid farewell to the European settlers. It will be a long farewell because I cannot hope, I cannot even wish to complete the journey to Swan River in less than 2½ years. The colony's subscriptions enabled me to spend £600 (4200 Rtl) on this new expedition. I bought 13 mules, 12 horses, 270 goats, and the necessary provisions, especially flour, tea, sugar, and salt, and I received 3 mules, 3 horses, and 40 bullocks as a gift. 2 blacks and 6 whites are accompanying me, all volunteers, all ready to live on dried beef and tea, since my rations of flour and sugar are not worth speaking of and will hardly last 6–8 months. Yet the example of my earlier expedition has made it abundantly clear that this food entirely suffices to keep us strong and in good health. Once more I am setting out on my journey from one of the western stations in the Darling Downs, which are situated in the west of Moreton Bay, and will follow my earlier path to the tropics as far as Peak Range at  $22^{\circ} 44'$  latitude, and will then turn westward to determine the expansiveness of that interesting region and to attempt to penetrate Australia's interior at this latitude. However, it is difficult to determine which path I should take. I am completely dependent on the presence of water, and have to move ahead

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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, The Woolshed, or Mr. Dennis' Station, Darling Downs (6 December 1846)

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**Print date:** 01 February 2021 11:07:48



ich wieder finde. Es ist selbst möglich, daß ich zum Golf von Carpentaria  
zu gehn und einen der Flüsse zu seinem Quellen zu verfolgen habe,  
um dem Innern von Australien nahe zu kommen. Dief wird von Cap-  
t. Stokes empfohlen und ich werde diese seine Bemerkung nicht  
aus dem Auge verlieren. Sir Thomas Mitchell ist noch nicht zurück ge-  
kehrt und ich fürchte, daß ich von seinen Entdeckungen keinen Gebrauch  
werden machen können. Es ist indessen immer möglich, daß ich eben  
im Innern begegne, dann ich muß eine Wagenspur Kunstgrube, sollte  
es weit genug gegen Norden vorgedrungen sein.

Ich lebte während meines Aufenthalt in Sydney wiederum mit  
meinem wahren Freunde Mr. Lynd, welcher mich wie einen Bruder  
behandelt und in alle meine Pläne auf das eifrigste mit eingiht.  
Es war ein herrliches Rathgeber, als ich ihm mich unruhig und un-  
sicher fühlte, die Aufmerksamkeit schicklich zu erwidern,  
welche man mir von allen Seiten erwies. Während des ersten  
2 Monate & nach meiner Reise litt ich an Erschöpfung und  
fürchtete daß meine Kräfte gebrochen wären und ich mich  
nie wieder hinreichend erholen würde, um eine andre und selbst  
schwierigere Reise anzutreten und erfolgreich zu vollenden. Ich  
als ich Sydney verließ und einige Zeit auf dem Lande lebte,  
ganzem des Körper und Geist bald wieder die alte Elastizität und  
das Verlangen das Innere von Australien zu erforschen wurde  
desto mehr, je mehr es mich verdros, daß einige Thoreichte ge-  
sollten es mir zum Vorwurf machten mich zu sehr zu der  
küste gehalten zu haben. Ich hielt mich da, wo ich mich nach  
meinen Mitteln halten mußte oder ich würde nie nach Wollongong

according to where I find it. It is even possible that I will have to travel to the Gulf of Carpentaria and from there follow a river to its source in order to approach Australia's interior. Captain Stokes recommends this strategy and I will keep his remarks in mind. Sir Thomas Mitchell has not yet returned and I am afraid that I will not be able to make use of his discoveries. Then again, it is always a possibility that I will meet him in the interior since I will surely cross his tracks should he have advanced far enough north.

During my stay in Sydney, I once again lived with my dear friend Mr. Lynd, who treats me like a brother and takes a keen interest in all of my plans. He was a wonderful mentor when I felt anxious and uncertain about how to properly respond to the attention that I was accorded from all sides. I suffered from exhaustion for the first two months after my expedition and feared that my strength was gone and that I would never recover adequately enough to undertake and successfully complete another and even more difficult journey. Yet when I left Sydney and lived in the countryside for a while, my body and my mind soon recovered their old resilience, and the more annoyed I became that a few foolish fellows criticized me for having stayed too close to the coast, the more my desire to explore the interior of Australia grew again. I stayed where I had to stay on account of my supplies or I would have never reached Port Essington,

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gekommen, wir über fast 3000 Meilen gewandert sind. - Gegenwärtig  
 habe ich eine große Zahl von Thieren (Ziegen, Schaf, Ochsen) und kann  
 folglich sorgfältiger reconnoitren, ohne zu fürchten, meine Lebensmittel  
 zu erschöpfen. Auf meiner früheren Reise hatte ich nur 16 Ochsen, welche  
 ich indess als Lastthiere zu sparen wünschte. Gegenwärtig habe ich  
 Maulthiere als Lastthiere.  
 Ich schrieb Dir, daß ich viel Anzeig mit meinen früheren Begleitern  
 hatte. Nach allem, was ich von meinen gegenwärtigen Begleitern ge-  
 sehen habe, verspreche ich mir in dieser Beziehung eine sehr an-  
 genehme Reise. Es sind junge Leute, einige recht wohl erzogen,  
 deren Charakter mir entweder seit einiger Zeit bekannt war, oder  
 die mir auf das Beste empfohlen worden. Ein junger Tanner-  
 gesell Boecking ist vom Rheine aus, gleich ein Landsmann.  
 Herr Mann ist surveyor (conducteur) Hr. Bunce botanischer  
 Sammler, Hr. Hely Sohn eines anständigen Familien in der  
 Colonie, Hr. Turnbull der überseher des Pferde und Maulthier-  
 gestütes der Australischen Ackerbau-Gesellschaft und J. Perry ein  
 junger Sattlergesell, alle in schon verschiedenen fähren sehr  
 nützlich für meine Reise.  
 Ich hoffe daß mein liebe Mutterchen, deren Geburtstag ich sehr  
 beyinge, als ich allein gebe eine der weiten Ebenen der Darling Downs will,  
 sich noch einigermaßen Gesundheit erfreut. Oft wenn ich mich plötzlich aus  
 meinen gegenwärtigen so verschiedenen Lebensverhältnissen in die Heimath ver-  
 setze und dann mir vorstelle, wie sie sich ihres armen wandernden  
 Ludwig erinnert, wie sie ihn doch noch einmal lebend wieder zu

would have never been able to journey across almost 3000 miles. — This time I have a larger number of animals (goats, sheep, bullocks) and can therefore more thoroughly reconnoiter without fear of exhausting my supplies. During my earlier expedition I only had 16 bullocks, which moreover, I sought to spare as pack animals. This time I have mules for pack animals.

I wrote to you that I had a lot of trouble with my earlier companions. After all that I have seen of my present companions, I have high hopes for a very pleasant journey in this regard. These are young people, some of them very well-educated, whose character I have either known for some time, or who came highly recommended. A young tanner's apprentice, Boecking, is from the Rhine region and hence a compatriot. Mr. Mann is a surveyor, Mr. Bunce a botanical collector, Mr. Hely the son of one of the colony's upstanding families, Mr. Turnbull the overseer of the Australian Agricultural Society's horse and mule stud, and J. Perry a young saddler's apprentice, and their various specializations are very useful for my expedition.

In my will I have stipulated the necessary provisions should it be God's will that I not see the end of this expedition. It is in the hands of Mr. Lynd. Should this come to pass then I want dear mother to make the same arrangements in her will as I have made in mine. I sent my journal to Dr. Nicholson and I only hope that it will at least make enough money to pay the debt that I owe him. Should this not come to pass then I hope to still be able to correct a mistake I made when making my will.

I hope that my dear beloved mother, whose birthday I silently observed on 9 November as I was riding in solitude across a vast plain in the Darling Downs, is still enjoying good health. Often, when I suddenly imagine myself at home, away from my present, so very different circumstances, and then imagine how she thinks back on her poor, wandering Ludwig, how much she wishes

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sehen wünscht, ruinen mir die Thränen über die Backen und  
ich wende mich betend für sie und für mich und für uns alle,  
zu unserem himmlischen Vater, der bis jetzt so gütig für uns sorgte.  
Nach Vollendung dieser Reise werde ich nach Europa zurückkehren  
und werde Euch besuchen; doch dauernd werde ich wahrscheinlich wieder  
in Deutschland oder selbst in Europa leben. Ich muß zurück zum  
Land meiner Wanderjahre, zu dem schönen, zu dem herrlichen  
Himmel Australiens!

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Lebt wohl Schwager, Schwester! Grüßt Mutterchen, grüßt  
alle meine Angehörigen und Freunde von Euren herzlich Euch  
liebenden Ludwig.

she could see him alive one more time, tears stream down my face and I turn to our heavenly Father, who has so far so kindly provided for us, in prayer for her, for myself, and for all of us. After concluding this expedition I will return to Europe and pay you a visit; yet I would find it difficult to live in Germany or even Europe for good. I must return to the country of my traveling years, return to the beautiful, magnificent skies of Australia!

Farewell, brother-in-law, sister! Convey greetings to dear mother, convey greetings to all of my relatives and friends from your affectionate and loving

Ludwig

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

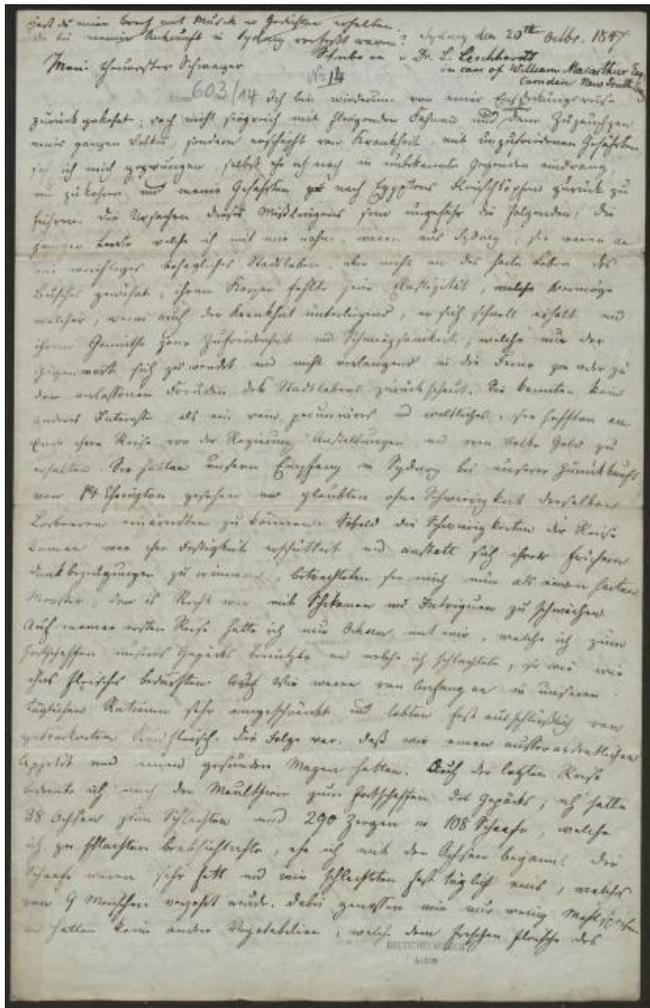
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## Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Camden/Sydney (20 October 1847)



Camden/Sydney, 20 October 1847

At the house of William Macarthur

My dearest brother-in-law,

I have once more returned from my expedition, yet not victorious with flying banners, bathing in the jubilations of the people, but on account of exhaustion from disease and due to malcontent companions I was forced to return and to lead my companions back to the fleshpots of Egypt before I ever even had the chance to penetrate unknown areas. The reasons for this failure are more or less as follows: the young men that I had taken along with me were from Sydney; they were used to a soft, comfortable city existence but not the hard life in the bush; their bodies lacked the elasticity that allows someone to recover quickly even after having fallen ill, and their minds lacked the contentedness and flexibility that allows one to focus entirely on the present instead looking longingly into the future or back to the lost pleasures of city life. They were interested in nothing but purely pecuniary and mundane considerations: they hoped to receive government posts and obtain money from the people after completing the expedition. They had witnessed the welcome that we had received upon our return from Port Essington and thought they would be able to win similar laurels without difficulty. As soon as the hardships of the journey became apparent, their conviction was shaken, and instead of remembering their former words of gratitude they

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came to see me as a harsh master who they had a right to weaken by way of harassment and intrigues.

On my first expedition I brought along only bullocks, which I used for carrying our baggage and which I slaughtered whenever we were in need of meat. From the start we had to make do with very limited daily rations and subsisted almost exclusively on dried beef. We consequently developed a big appetite and our stomachs remained healthy. On my latest expedition I used mules for carrying our packs; for purposes of slaughtering I brought along 38 bullocks as well as 290 goats and 108 sheep, which I intended to slaughter ahead of the bullocks. The sheep were very fat and we slaughtered one almost every day, which was shared among 9 men. Moreover, we ate few flour-based dishes and had no vegetables that could have balanced out the fresh meat.

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gleichgewicht fallen konnten. In Folge dieser fetten Speisung  
war, daß unter mirigen Speisung an Unwohlsein griffen und daß meine  
Brüder trüben mich bekümmert, nichtig war, als ich bei Regenzeit  
antrat, ab mir lang und an überstimmten Speisung zu gehen,  
mit möglich auf den feinsten Boden schliefen und nachher durch einen  
niedrigen Stand, der von zu kommen fallen, gegangenen waren,  
die diesen lang an einem Ort zu bleiben. Nicht aus bei den gungen,  
daß ich die große Colonie mit Besorgtheit nach und die den größten feier  
genugte sich an Leben, was ich fürchte fast nie bemerkt worden war. Das  
war nicht nur die Mühen der Mühen sondern falls die Besorgtheit  
meiner Gefährten sorgfältig, daß von drei dieser Läger von einem  
Lager zu bleiben fallen, bei ich möglich mit Gewalt einen Haltstelle er-  
reichte so nicht möglich 70 Meilen weiter brachte. Nicht genug sich  
Mühen zu gehen unter meinen Gefährten, sie wollten nicht die Besorgtheit  
auszuweichen wegen der mich und meine neuen Erfahrungen zu  
überstehen, aber wenn sie es sollten, sollten sie es selbst und Besorgtheit  
meine, all sie möglich. So verlor ich den einen meiner Gungen, während  
dieser mit möglich gab ich mich meine Mühen zu gehen und  
die einzige Rettung war ein schneller Rückzug. Ich sollte nicht sein  
von jeder Gefahr, daß kein zuvorkommendes nicht ich von feinsten  
Körpern in den feinsten Stunden, stillen, Rücken und Rücken  
bezugnehmend zu sein so falsch, daß ich kann von Speisung auf und  
abstehen konnte. Ich ich nicht mich möglich 14 Tage auf die  
Kampfe haben in Darling Downs zuvorkommend fallen, fröhe ich mich  
möglichst stark, von einem Kurs, von möglich 5-600 meilen  
Meilen zu gehen, von den über den mit Hilfe (de Condamine)  
zu bestimmen und die Gung zu gehen meine in die Thomas Mitchell's  
möglich zu unterstützen. Ich vollendete den Kurs in möglich 6 Wochen  
und gewann auf diesem meine Gesundheit vollkommen wieder,  
meine in die letzten Reizezeit anstellte und den Besorgtheit  
Kampfe der letzten Stunden Speisung, die ich nicht von mich  
stark und nicht die feinsten Erfahrungen, die ich selbst bei der letzten  
Erregung empfand. Nicht heißt ich mich Sydney zurück, von der  
nützigen Rückführung für meine neue Kurs zu machen. Ich ich

As a consequence of this diet of fresh, fat meat, our stomachs were frequently upset and our bodies more prone to infection. When the rainy season started, we traveled alongside flooded river banks for long stretches of time, slept on damp grounds every night, and a swollen river that we needed to cross finally forced us to remain in one spot for three weeks. Over the past year the entire colony has been abnormally wet and tertian fever occurred in places where it had hardly ever been known before. When we were finally able to cross the Mackenzie this disease had weakened my companions to such an extent that we had to rest on the opposite bank for another three weeks, until I finally tried to push onwards forcibly, which resulted in us covering a further distance of about 70 miles. My companions now became disgruntled; they were unwilling to exert even the smallest effort to assist me and one of my blacks, or, if they did anything at all, they did it badly and did more damage than good. Thus we lost our goats, our bullocks, and in the end even some of our mules and horses, and a hasty retreat was our only salvation. The fever had not caused me much suffering, yet on the return journey I was seized by rheumatism in my fingers, hands, elbow, back, and knees, and was so helpless that I was scarcely able to mount and dismount my horse. However, after I had spent about 14 days resting at Mr. Russel's station in the Darling Downs, I felt strong enough to attempt a different expedition of about 5–600 miles, in order to determine the course of a river (the Condamine), and to explore the area that lay between my own path and Sir Thomas Mitchell's. It took me about six weeks to complete this expedition and I completely recovered my health during it by exposing my ailing limbs to the burning rays of the Australian sun; these acted like a blistering plaster and alleviated the acute pains that even the slightest movement had heretofore caused me. I then returned to Sydney to make the necessary preparations for my new expedition.

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all oceans over the past 12 years, who is quite a well-educated young man, and who has suffered enough hardship so as to be sufficiently prepared for an expedition such as mine.

Mr. Lynd, my amiable host, has received orders to leave Sydney and to proceed to New Zealand, where the aborigines are making a large military presence necessary. I therefore have to look for another home, and although I can everywhere find hospitable accommodations for myself, I do require a safe place for my ever-increasing collections, where they will not only be sheltered from insects and the elements, but also easily accessible for whenever I have time to study them.

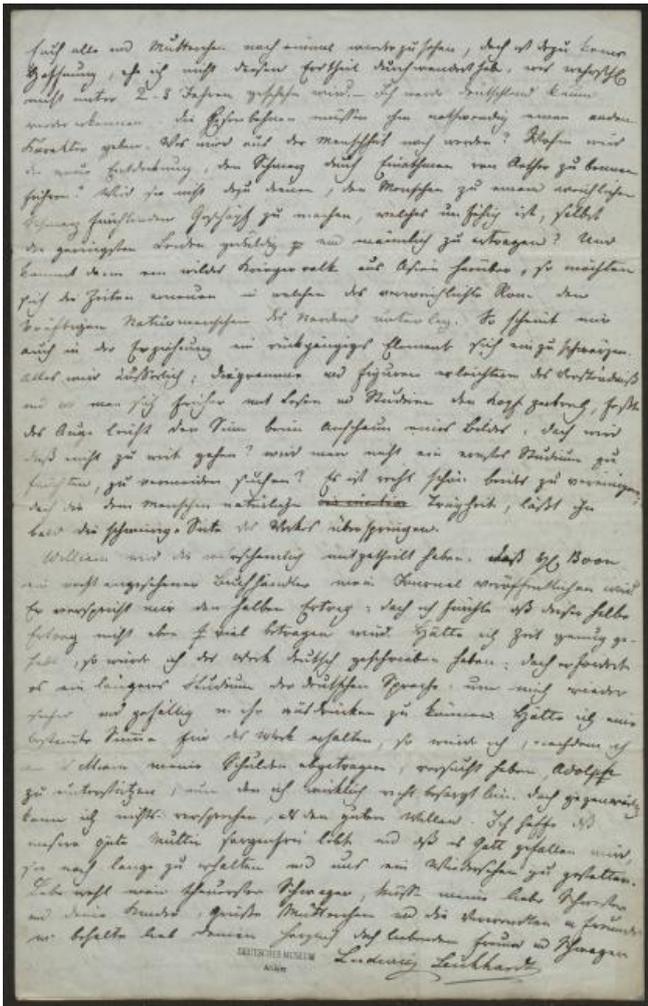
What you told me with regard to the intercession made by the gracious Princess Pückler is quite good and pleasing. I would very gladly be at peace with my native country and not run the risk of being incarcerated upon my return.

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I wish I could see all of you and dear mother one more time, but there is no hope for that as long as I have not crossed this continent, which will most likely take two to three years. — I shall hardly be able to recognize Germany. The railroad will surely have given it a different character. Where will the new discovery of averting pain by inhaling ether lead? Will it not serve to transform men into soft, pain-shy creatures unable to endure even the slightest affliction with patience and manliness? And then, if a savage warrior people should invade from Asia, the times when effete Rome succumbed to the strong primitives from the north will be upon us once again. From my perspective, a regressive element seems to have entered educational practices as well. Everything is becoming outwardly-oriented; diagrams and figures facilitate comprehension, and whereas we racked our brains by reading and studying in the past, the eye now easily grasps meaning when beholding a picture. Yet is this not taking it a step too far? Will students not fear and try to avoid serious courses of study? It is admirable to combine both avenues of learning, yet man's inherent idleness will soon induce him to skip the harder aspect of the work.

William has probably told you that Mr. Boon, a well-respected bookseller, will publish my journal. He has promised me half of the proceeds, yet I am afraid that this half of the profits will not amount to very much. If I had had the time, I would have composed the work in German but I would have to take some time to reacquaint myself with the German language before I could once more express myself in it with confidence and ease. Had I received a lump sum for the work I would have tried to help out Adolph, since I am truly worried, after paying off the debt I owe to William. Yet at present I cannot give any concrete assurances, aside from those of my good will. I hope that our dear mother is enjoying a worry-free life and that it pleases God to keep her for a long time yet and to allow us to see each other again.

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Farewell, my dearest brother-in-law, give a kiss to my dear sister and your children, convey my greetings to dear mother and my relatives and friends, and keep me in your heart

Most affectionately, your loving friend and brother-in-law

Ludwig Leichhardt

[Post scripta at head of first page:] Did you receive my letter containing the music and poems that were composed upon my arrival in Sydney? Address your letters to

Dr. L. Leichhardt

in care of William Macarthur

Camden New South Wales

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

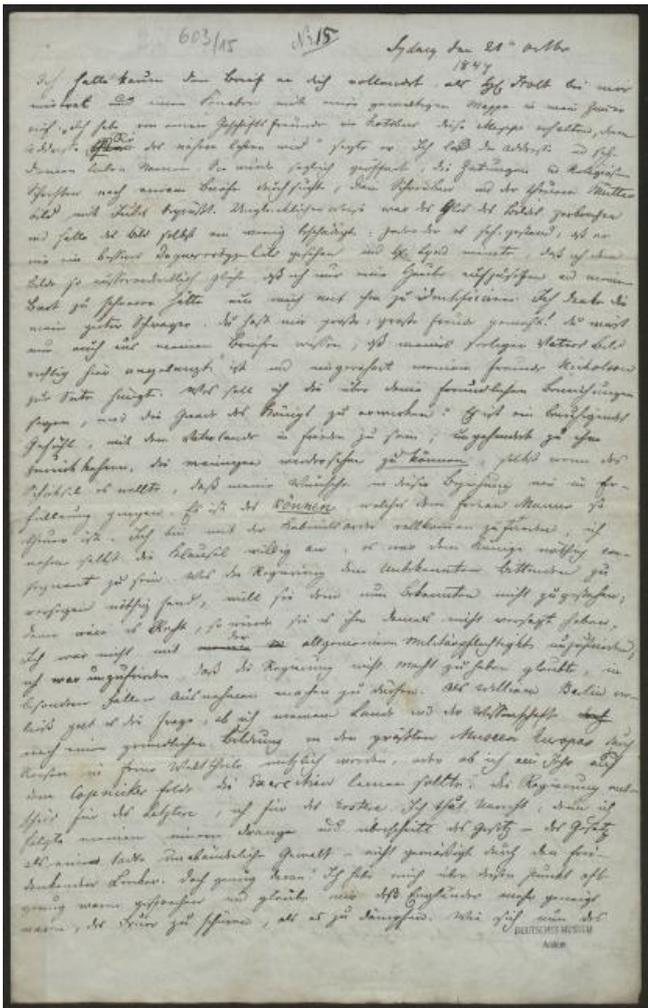
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (21 October 1847)



Sydney, 21 October 1847

I had scarcely finished my letter when Mr. Holt arrived and called a boy carrying an enormous portfolio into my room. He said: "I received this portfolio from a business partner in Cottbus, whose address will tell you the rest." I read the address and recognized your dear name. I opened it at once, searched for a letter among the newspapers and religious literature, and rejoiced at seeing your letter and the picture of dear mother. Unfortunately the glass of the picture frame had shattered and damaged the picture itself a little. Everyone who beheld it said they had never seen a better daguerreotype, and Mr. Lynd opined I only had to don a bonnet and shave my beard and I would resemble it completely. I thank you, my dear brother-in-law. You have given me great, great pleasure! You will by now also have learned from my letters that the picture of my blessed father arrived here in one piece, was framed, and is hanging beside the one of my friend Nicholson. What can I tell you with regards to your gracious efforts to secure the king's clemency on my behalf? It is a comforting feeling to be at peace with my native country, to be able return to it without impediments, to be able to see my family again, even if fate had decided that my wishes in this regard will never come true. This possibility is what a free man values so dearly. I am completely satisfied with the cabinet's decree; I even willingly accede to the stipulation; it was necessary for the king to uphold the appearance of consistency. What the government deemed necessary to deny the unknown petitioner it now does not want to grant the newly famous man; because if the request had been right, [the government] would not have denied him it originally. I was not displeased with the institution of universal military service; I was displeased that the government did not think it had the power to grant exceptions in special cases. When William left Berlin the question arose whether I was to best serve my country and to serve science by receiving a thorough education in Europe's biggest museums and by traveling to faraway corners of the globe, or whether I should spend a year learning how to

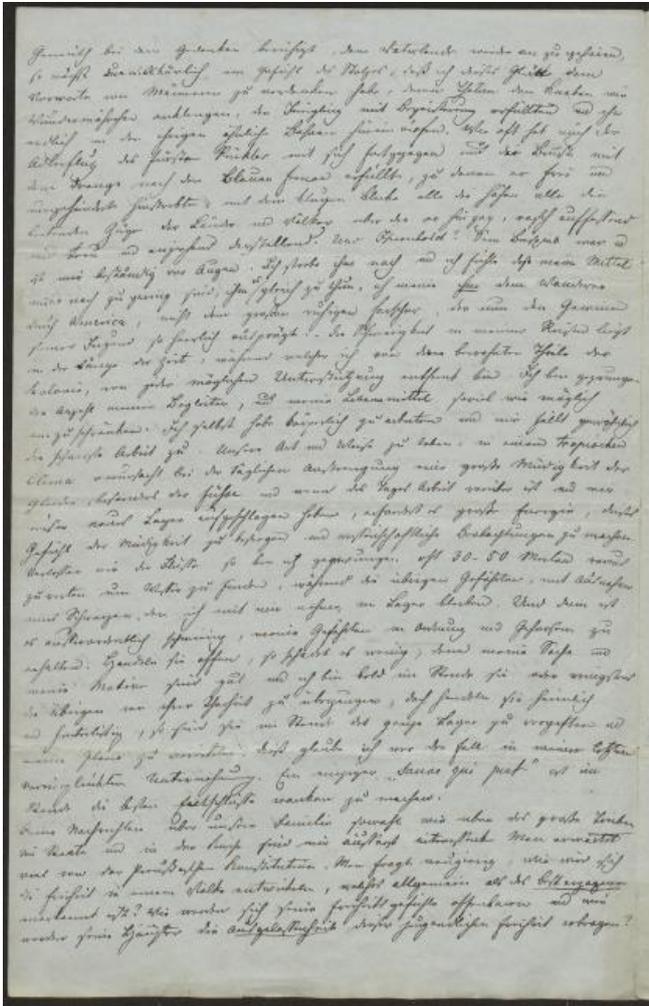
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**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (21 October 1847)

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exercise on the Köpenick parade grounds. The government decided on the latter, I on the former. I was in the wrong, because I followed my calling and violated the law—a law that is a dead, unchangeable power—not law moderated by a free-thinking ruler. But enough about that! I have often enough worked myself into a rage speaking on this topic and believe me when I tell you that the English were more inclined toward fanning the flame than extinguishing it. As the thought of



once again belonging to my native country calms my mind, an unbidden feeling of pride arises about the fact that I owe my happiness to the example of men whose deeds appeared like fairy tales to the boy, filled the youth with enthusiasm, and finally called on him to pursue a similar path. How often did the soaring adventures of Prince Pückler sweep me away and fill my breast with longing for blue faraway lands, which he sought out free and unhampered, quickly grasping and truthfully and pleasantly rendering all of the highlights and important characteristics of the lands and peoples he encountered. And Humboldt? His example will always serve as my guiding principle. I strive to be like him, but I feel that my means are still too limited to truly emulate him. By him I mean the wanderer through America, not the great, serene researcher who is now so admirably managing the success of his youth. — The difficulties I have on my expeditions are due to the amount of time that I spend away from the inhabited part of the colony, away from any possible support. I am forced to limit the number of my companions, as well as my provisions, as much as possible. I myself have to do physical labor and usually the hard work falls to me. In a tropical climate, our way of doing things causes our limbs, especially our feet, to grow very tired, and when the day’s work has been accomplished and we have made camp it requires a great deal of energy to overcome this tiredness and to make scientific observations. Whenever we stray from the vicinity of the rivers, I am forced to ride 30–50 miles ahead to find water, while the rest of the group, with the exception of one black man, who I take along, remains at camp. Then it is also extremely difficult to ensure order and

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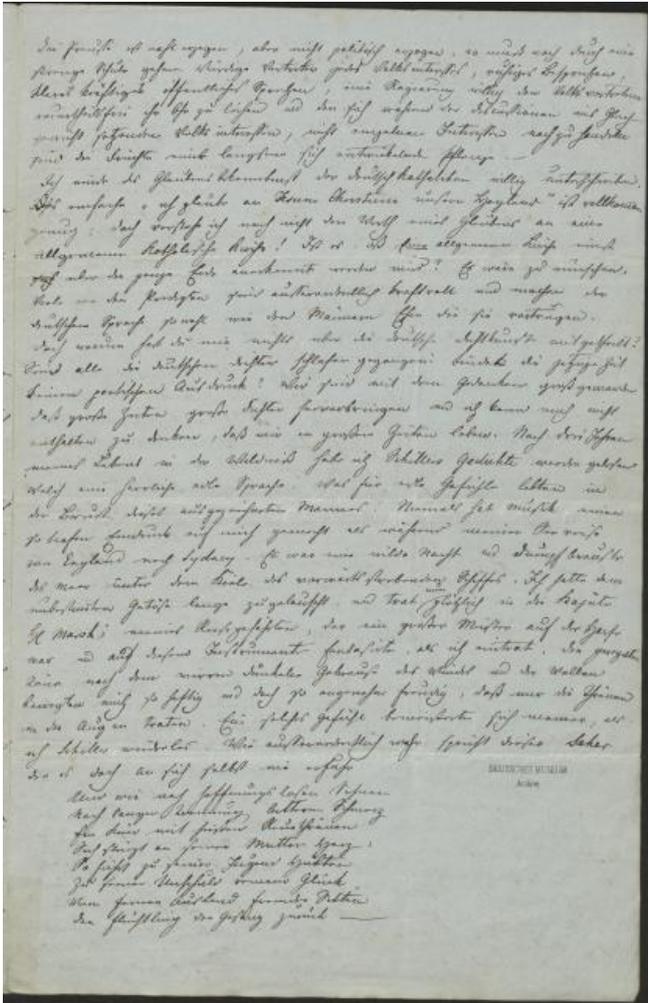
**Chapter:** Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (21 October 1847)

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obedience among my companions. Open defiance causes little harm, since my cause and my motives are just, and I am soon able to convince them, or at least the others, of their folly. Yet if they act secretly and insidiously, they are able to poison the entire camp and to frustrate all of my plans. I believe this to have been the case during my last, failed endeavor. A single “Sauve qui peut” is able to cause even those with a strong determination to falter.

I read your news about our family and about the vital happenings in state and church with the greatest interest. Much is expected of the Prussian constitution. Everyone is curious to see how freedom will develop among a people that is generally acknowledged to be the best-educated one. How will its ideas of liberty manifest themselves and how will its heads-of-state respond to the exuberance of this youthful freedom?



The Prussian is well-educated, but not in political matters; he still has much hard learning before him. Worthy representatives of the people’s interests, calm discussions, clear, powerful public speeches, a government willing to listen to the people’s representatives without prejudice, and preparedness to act according to the emergent will of the people rather than pursuing the interests of the few—these are all fruits of a plant that matures only slowly. —

I would willingly sign the profession of faith proposed by the German Catholics. The simple “I believe in Jesus Christ our Savior” utterly suffices; but I do not yet understand the value of believing in a universal Catholic Church! Is it that one sole universal church will be recognized across the entire globe? This would be desirable. Many of the sermons are extremely powerful and are a credit to both the German language and to the men who deliver them.

Yet why did you not tell me anything about the state of German poetry? Have all the German poets gone to sleep? Does the present time

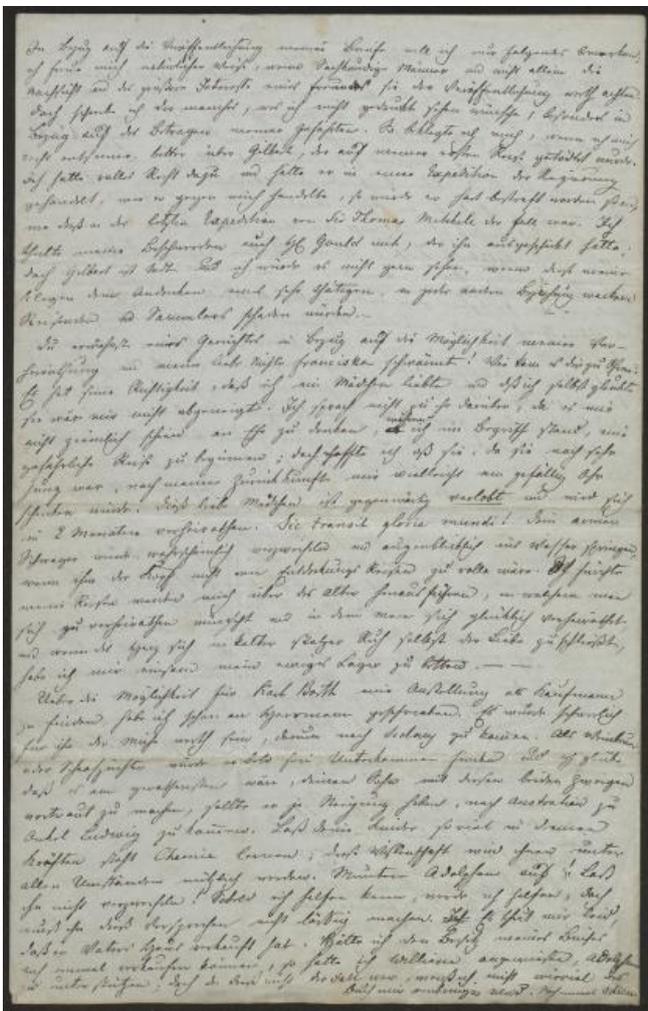
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not lend itself to poetic expression? We were brought up on the idea that great times bring forth great poets and I cannot help but think that we live during great times. After three years of living in the wilderness I have re-read Schiller's poems. What a magnificent, noble language! What noble feelings lived in the breast of this marvelous man! Music has never left as deep an impression on me as it did during my sea voyage from England to Sydney. It was a fierce night and the sea was quietly roaring beneath the keel of the steadily advancing ship. I had been listening to the muddled din for a long time when I suddenly got up and went to the cabin of my travel companion, Mr. Marsh, who was a great master harpist and who was improvising on this instrument when I entered. The orderly sounds, after the chaotic, dark roar of the wind and the waves, were so intense and pleasurable that they brought tears to my eyes. A similar feeling overcame me when I read Schiller again. How exceedingly true are the words of this visionary even though he himself never experienced this situation: And as, after heartbreaking pain  
 And separation's bitter smart  
 The child repentant seeks again  
 Upon his mother's breast relief:  
 So to the thoughts of early days  
 When innocence was yet unstained  
 From foreign lands and foreign ways  
 Song brings the wanderer home, regained —



As regards the publication of my letters I only wish to tell you the following: I am of course pleased that educated men, not just the

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consideration and greater interest of a friend, deem them worthy of publication. Yet there are things I write to which I would not wish to see appear in print, especially as concerns the behavior of my travel companions. If I remember correctly, I complained bitterly about Gilbert, who was killed in my first expedition. I was completely justified in so doing, and if he had behaved as he did toward me as part of an official government-sponsored expedition, then he would have incurred severe punishment, as the example of Sir Thomas Mitchell's latest expedition shows. I also shared my complaints with Mr. Gould, who had sent him; but Gilbert is dead and it would not please me if my complaints were to harm the memory of a very energetic traveler and collector who behaved valiantly in all other respects. —

You mentioned some nonsense about the possibility of me getting married, and that my dear niece Franciska is very excited about it! How did you hear of this? It is true that I loved a girl and that I even believed that she was not disinclined toward me. I did not talk to her about this matter, since I deemed it unsuitable to think of marriage when I was about to embark on a dangerous journey; yet I hoped that she, since she was still very young, would perhaps be willing to receive me after my return. This lovely girl is presently engaged and will be married in 2 months. Sic transit gloria mundi! Your poor brother-in-law would most likely despair and drown himself at once if thoughts of expeditions would not so completely fill his mind. I am afraid that my travels will take me beyond the age at which one wishes to marry and at which happy marriages are forged, and if my heart, in cold, proud composure closes itself off to love, then I shall have to face eternity alone. — —

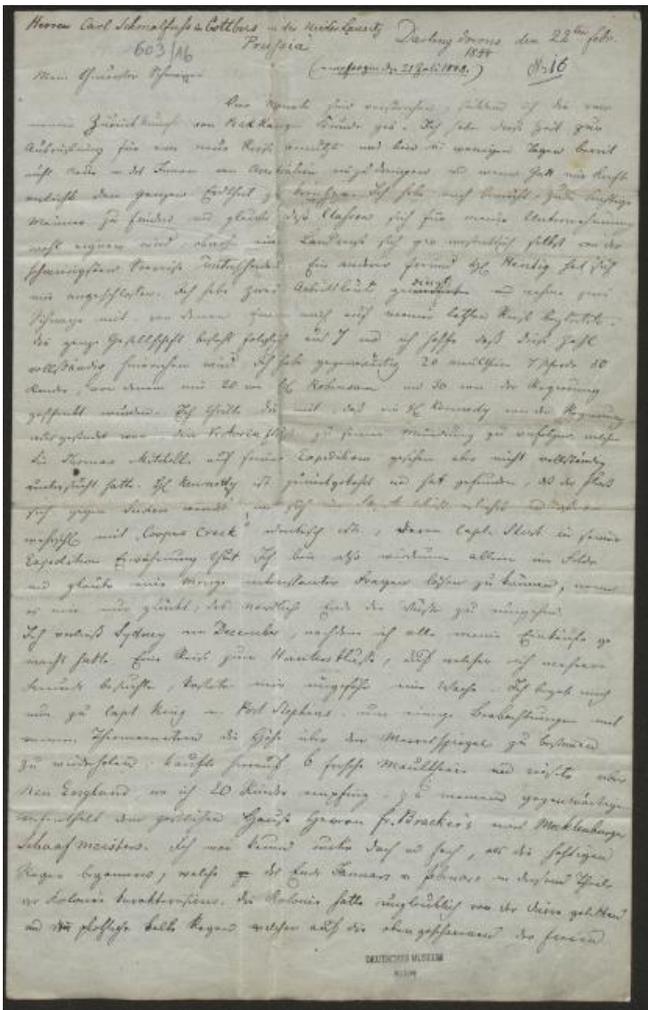
written to Hermann about the possibility of finding a position in business for Karl Barth here. It would hardly be worth the trouble for him to come to Sydney for this. As a vintner or sheep farmer he would soon enough find a place and I believe that it would be most advisable to familiarize your son with these two branches should he ever feel the inclination to come live with his Uncle Ludwig in Australia. If it is at all in your power, make your children study chemistry; this science will prove useful to them under any circumstance. Cheer up Adolph! Don't let him despair! As soon as I can be of assistance, I will help out, yet this promise does not mean that he can take it easy. I am sorry to hear that he has sold father's house. Had I been able to sell the rights to my book for a lump sum, then I would have instructed William to assist Adolph; yet because this was not the case I do not know how much income I will derive from the book.

Once again, adieu.

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

**Last letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Darling Downs (22 February 1848)**



Darling Downs, 22 February 1848

My dearest brother-in-law,

Four months have passed since I informed you about my return from Peak Range. I have used this time to make preparations for a new expedition, and in a few days will be once more ready to penetrate Australia's interior, and, if God grants me the strength, to cross the entire continent. I have made an effort to find good, valiant men and believe that Classen will be well-suited to my endeavor, although a land expedition differs significantly from even the most trying of sea voyages. Another friend, Mr. Hentig, has also joined me. I have hired two workmen and will take two blacks along, one of whom accompanied me on my last journey. The entire company is thus comprised of 7 men and I hope that this number will prove entirely sufficient. At present I am in possession of 20 mules, 7 horses, and 50 bullocks, 20 of which were a gift from Mr. Robinson and 30 of which were gifted to me by the government. I told you that a Mr. Kennedy had been sent by the government to follow the Victoria River to its mouth, which Sir Thomas Mitchell had seen but not completely explored on his expedition. Mr. Kennedy has returned and has determined that the river turns southward and loses itself in Sturt's desert, and that it is probably identical with "Coopers Creek," which Captain Sturt mentions in his expedition [account]. I am therefore once again alone in

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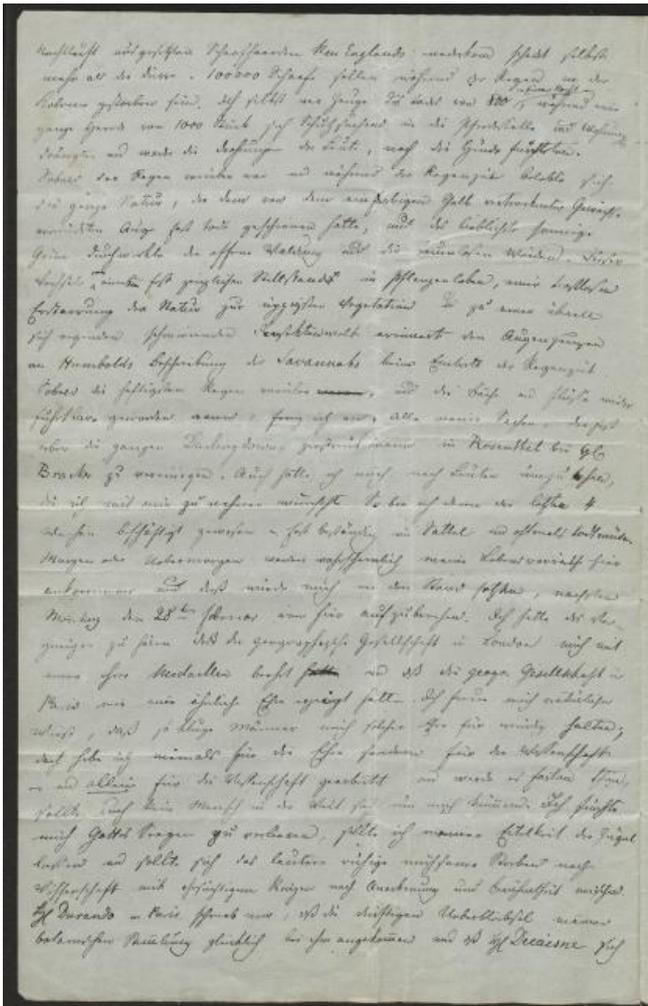
the field and think that I can solve a great number of interesting questions if I only succeed in bypassing the northern tip of the desert. I left Sydney in December, after I had made all my purchases. A trip to the Hunter River, where I went to visit several friends, delayed me by about a week. I then traveled to Captain King in Port Stephens in order to repeat a few earlier observations using my thermometer to determine the elevation above sea level; after that I bought 6 fresh mules and traveled through New England, where I picked up 20 bullocks, to my present location, the hospitable abode of Mr. Fr. Bracker, a master sheep farmer from Mecklenburg. I had scarcely gotten under shelter when the heavy rains commenced that are characteristic in this part of the colony from the end of January and through February. The colony had been suffering immensely from drought, and the sudden cold showers,

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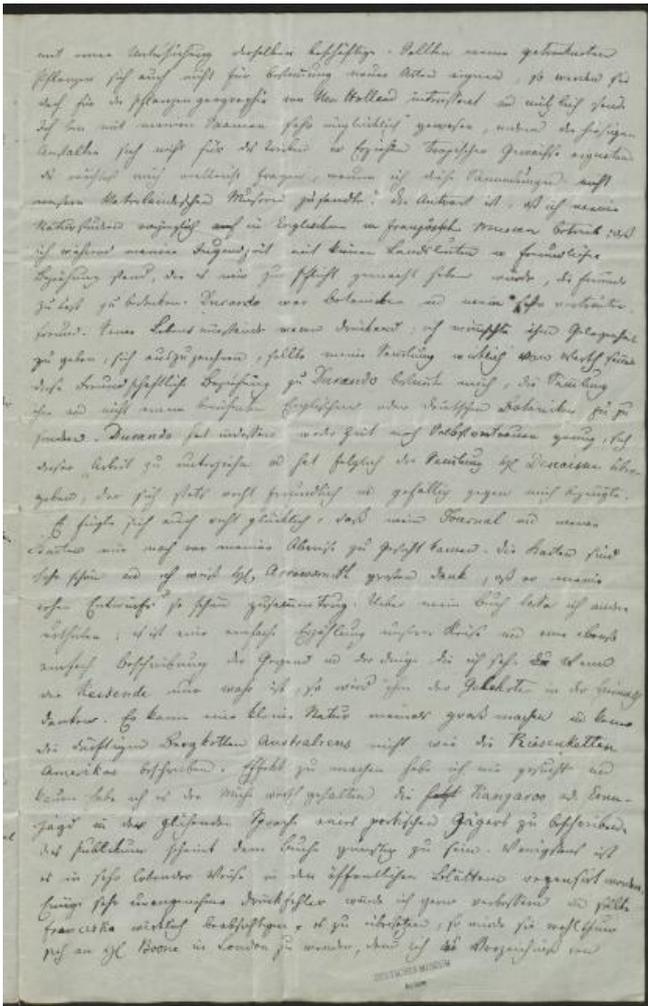
which rained down on New England's freshly shorn flocks of sheep, standing utterly exposed to the night air, caused more damage than even the drought had. 100,000 sheep are said to have perished across the colony while the rains lasted. I myself witnessed the death of 800 in one night, when an entire flock of 1000 head sought shelter in stables and houses and feared neither the threats of people nor the dogs. As soon as the rain ended, and during the rains as well, all of nature, which had appeared almost dead to our eyes, tired of the monotonous yellow of withered vegetation, came to life, and the loveliest, sunny green enveloped the open forests and treeless pasture lands. This switch from an almost complete cessation of plant growth, from a desolate paralysis of nature, to the most luscious vegetation and an omnipresent, teeming world of insects reminds the eyewitness of Humboldt's description of savannahs at the beginning of the rainy season.

As soon as the heaviest rains had passed and streams and rivers had become passable again I began to consolidate all of my possessions, which had been scattered almost across the entire Darling Downs, at Mr. Bracker's in Rosenthal. I also had to look for such people as I wanted to take along with me. This is how I have spent my time for the last four weeks—almost constantly in the saddle and frequently dead tired. My provisions are likely to arrive here tomorrow or the day after, and this would allow me to set out next Monday, 28 February. I have had the pleasure to learn that the geographical society in London has awarded me one of their medals and that the geographical society in Paris has bestowed a similar honor upon me. I am of course delighted that such astute men deem me worthy of such an honor, yet I have never striven for honor but rather worked on behalf of science and science alone, and will continue to do so even if not one person in the world were to pay any attention to me. I am afraid to lose God's blessing should I let my vanity take over and should the sincere, calm, painstaking quest for scientific knowledge become mixed up with ambitious striving for fame and recognition. Mr. Durando of Paris writes that he has successfully received the scanty remains of my botanical collection and that Mr. Decaisne is

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busy examining it. Even if my dried plants should not be suitable for determining new species, they should nevertheless prove interesting and useful for the botanical geography of New Holland. I have been very unfortunate with regard to my seeds, since none of the local institutions are suitable for growing and raising tropical plants. You might perhaps wonder why I did not send these collections to one of our German museums? The answer is that I conducted my studies of natural history primarily in English and French museums, and that I did not cultivate friendly relations with any of my compatriots during my youth, which would have obliged me to consider my friends first. Durando was a botanist and a very dear friend of mine. His circumstances were dire; I wanted to provide him with an opportunity to distinguish himself should my collection actually be of some value. This friendly tie to Durando compelled me to send the collection to him instead of sending it to a famous English or German botanist. Durando, however, has neither time nor confidence enough to undertake this project and has therefore given the collection to Mr. Descaisne [sic], who was always quite cordial and accommodating in his behavior toward me.

It was also quite a happy coincidence that I got to see my journal and my maps before departing. The maps are very nice and I am deeply indebted to Mr. Arrowsmith for transforming my rough sketches so beautifully. I will let others pass judgment on my book; it is a simple tale about our expedition and an equally simple description of the areas and things that I saw. If only the traveler is truthful, the scholar at home will thank him. He can never render a minor natural environment impressive and cannot describe the moderate mountain ranges of Australia as though they were the monumental ranges of America. I did not write intending to evoke maximum effect, and hardly thought it worth my while to employ the glowing language of a poetic huntsman to describe hunting kangaroos or emus. The public appears

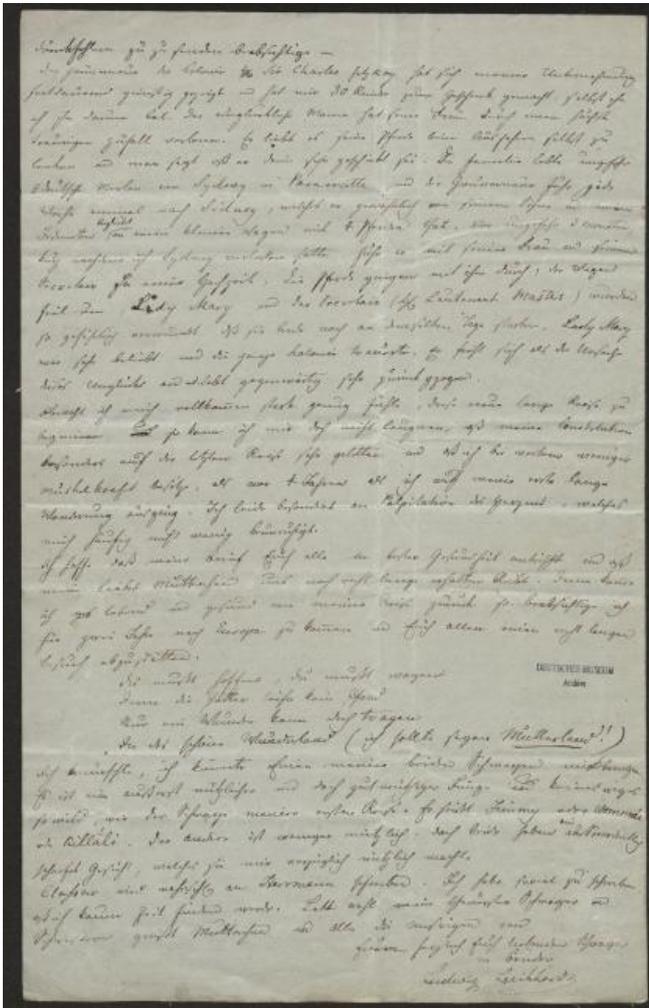
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favorably inclined toward the book. At least it has been favorably reviewed in the papers. I would very much like to correct several very unfortunate typographical errors, and should Franciska truly intend to translate it, she would do well to contact Mr. Boone in London, to whom I intend to send



a list of these errors. —

The governor of the colony, Sir Charles FitzRoy, has always been favorably inclined toward my endeavor, and made me a present of 30 bullocks without me even requesting them. The unhappy man lost his wife through a most heartbreaking accident. He loves to take the reins of his horses when going out for a drive and it is said that he is very skilled. The family lived in Paramatta, about 3 German miles from Sydney, and the governor used to come to Sydney once a week, which he usually did in a small coach drawn by 4 horses, accompanied by his son and one servant. About 3 months ago, shortly after I had left Sydney, he drove to a wedding, along with his wife and secretary. The horses bolted on him, the coach tipped over, and Lady Mary and the secretary (Lieutenant Masters) sustained such severe injuries that both died the very same day. Lady Mary was very popular and the entire colony was in mourning. He blames himself for causing this tragedy and at present lives a very secluded life.

Although I most certainly feel strong enough to embark on this new, long expedition, I cannot, however, deny that my constitution has been seriously weakened, particularly on my latest expedition, and that I now have much less muscle strength than I did 4 years ago, when I embarked on my first long journey. In particular, I am suffering from heart palpitations, which frequently cause me quite a bit of worry. I hope that my letter finds you all in the best of health and that my dear, beloved mother will stay with us for quite a long time yet. For if I

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return from my expedition alive and in good health, I intend to come to Europe for two years and to pay all of you a very long visit.

Faith thou needest, and must dare

Or the gods withhold their hand

Nought but miracle can bear

Man into the wonderland (I should say rather mother land!)

I wish I could take one of my two blacks home with me. He is a most useful and yet docile lad and not at all as wild as the black who came along on my first expedition. He is called Jimmy or Wommaï or Kilalli. The other one is less useful. Yet both possess extremely sharp eyesight, which makes them of excellent use to me.

Claßen will probably write to Herrmann. I have so much yet to write that I will scarcely find time to do so myself. Farewell, my dearest brother-in-law and my sister, convey my greetings to dear mother and our entire family,

Most affectionately, your loving brother-in-law and brother

Ludwig Leichhardt

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English translation by Nadine Zimmerli.

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## Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline

Even before he departed for Australia, Ludwig Leichhardt kept in touch with his family via letters written during his travels. Between 23 March 1842 and 22 February 1848, he sent 17 letters back home from Australia; these letters document the period from his arrival on the continent until the disappearance of his final expedition. Leichhardt's letters are an important source of information about his experiences, plans, and everyday concerns, as well as securing his reputation as a scientist. Like Leichhardt's correspondence with important scholars of the time, some of his letters to his family have also reached a wide audience: they have been published in academic journals including *The London Journal of Botany*, *Monatsberichte über die Verhandlungen der Gesellschaft für Erdkunde zu Berlin*, and *Fortschritte der Geographie und Naturgeschichte*. In 1907 the geophysicist Georg von Neumayer gave the collection of letters to the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich.

The digital exhibition contains an interactive timeline that allows the user to scroll through key letters and events in Leichhardt's life. While the timeline contains images of the letters, this PDF simply links to the full letter within this archival document.

### Screenshot of the Timeline

The screenshot displays a digital timeline interface. On the left, a date marker for February 14, 1842, indicates Ludwig Leichhardt's arrival in Sydney on the ship Edward Paget. The main focus is a large image of a handwritten letter dated March 23, 1842, titled "Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Sydney". The letter's text describes Leichhardt's voyage, his arrival in Sydney, and his reflections on the harbor, the settlement's history as a penal colony, and his scientific aspirations. A link below the letter reads "Click here to read the full letter." To the right, a date marker for September 6, 1842, indicates a letter to his mother from Sydney. Below the letter image is a horizontal timeline from 1842 to 1843, with a blue vertical line highlighting the date of the letter. Other events on the timeline include "Trip to Sydney", "From Newcastle to New England", "Letter to his mother from Newcastle", "Letter to his mother from Sydney", and "Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Glendon".

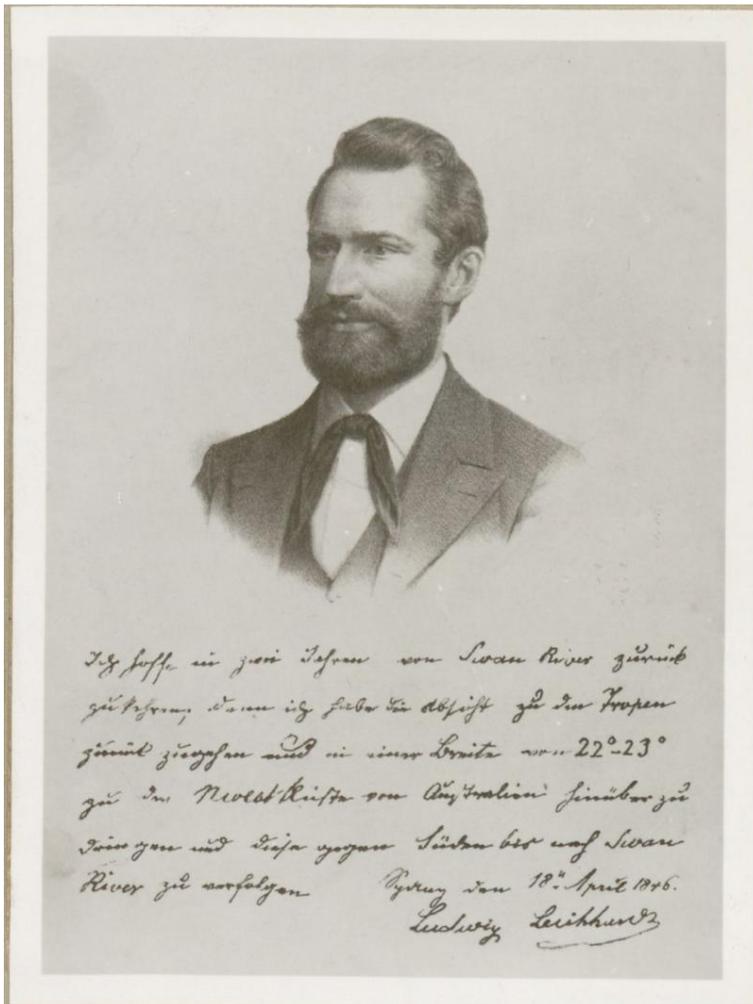
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**Chapter:** Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline  
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**PDF created on:** 27 January 2021 12:38:15

## Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline

### 1842 - 1848

Between March 1842 and February 1848, Ludwig Leichhardt sent 17 letters back home from Australia. His letters document the period from his arrival on the continent until the disappearance of his final expedition; they are an important source of information about his experiences, plans, and everyday concerns, as well as securing his reputation as a scientist. Like Leichhardt's correspondence with important scholars of the time, some of his letters to his family have also reached a wide audience. In 1907 the geophysicist Georg von Neumayer gave the collection of letters to the archive of the Deutsches Museum in Munich.



Portrait of Ludwig Leichhardt, designed as the frontispiece of *Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt's Briefe an seine Angehörigen*, edited by Georg von Neumayer and Otto Leichhardt, Hamburg, 1881.

Courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz.

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Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline

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## Timeline Events

### 14 February 1842

Ludwig Leichhardt travels to Sydney on the ship Edward Paget

### 23 March 1842

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Sydney (23 March 1842).

Leichhardt describes his voyage and his arrival in Sydney. He reflects upon daily life in the city, the significance of the harbor, the settlement's past as a penal colony, and the type of society that grew out of it. He tells how he was welcomed into Sydney society, emphasizes his scientific aspirations and his desire to partake in an expedition into the interior of the continent.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### September 1842

Letter to his mother, Charlotte Sophie Leichhardt, Sydney (6 September 1842).

Leichhardt describes his infrequent encounters with the indigenous people, who had been forced inland, away from the colony on the coast. He discusses the accomplishments of the colony such as printing presses and steamships as well as its economic troubles. He has successfully begun to collect natural history specimens and mentions his desire to travel to Newcastle.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### 19 September 1842

From Newcastle to New England.

Ludwig is invited by settlers to travel towards Newcastle along the Hunter River north of Sydney, and further along the stretch of land known as New England.

### 10 November 1842

Letter to his mother from Newcastle (10 November 1842).

Leichhardt becomes acquainted with the farming and livestock breeding in the vicinity of Newcastle, as well as the meager existence of the herdsmen, who lease and manage small parcels of land.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### 16 January 1843

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Glendon (16 January 1843).

After a number of weeks in Newcastle, Leichhardt sets out alone on horseback into the backlands. He describes his daily life and the natural world around him, as well as farming and working conditions in the immigrant society.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### June 1843 - July 1843

Moreton Bay.

Leichhardt has continued his journey across the Darling Downs to the region of Moreton Bay. Here he lives for several months at Zion's Hill, a German mission, and on the Archer family's Durundur Station.

### 27 June 1843

Letter to his mother from Moreton Bay (27 June 1843).

Leichhardt finds lodging at a German mission in Moreton Bay. He describes his often isolated existence in the wilds while he collects specimens for his natural history collections. He reports on cattle and sheep ranching and on the conflicts between colonists and the indigenous population.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

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Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline

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### **27 August 1843**

Letter to his mother from Moreton Bay (27 August 1843).

Leichhardt lives at Durundur Station, run by the Archer brothers, and visits the Bunya Bunya district. The indigenous people have gathered here for generations when the bunya nuts become ripe, and Leichhardt provides a detailed description of these gatherings and the conditions in the colonies, based on both his own observations and reports of missionaries and settlers.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### **2 February 1844**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Moreton Bay (2 February 1844).

Prevented from returning to Sydney due to heavy rains, Leichhardt describes a comet, the climatic conditions, peculiarities of fruit and vegetable cultivation, and the bush fires that occur in the region. He reports on his progress in collecting local wood, a commission from the natural history museum in Paris, and that his hopes of taking part in a government-sponsored expedition have fallen through.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### **14 May 1844**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Newcastle (14 May 1844).

Leichhardt stops in Newcastle during his return trip to Sydney. He describes the coal deposits near Brisbane, the unusual bottle tree, and sheep herding on the Darling Downs. He is concerned with taxonomic questions posed by fossil bones he has found, and reflects upon the situation of the indigenous population.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### **15 May 1844**

Letter to Auguste L. Hilgenfeld from Glendon (15 May 1844).

Leichhardt writes to his sister with enthusiastic passages on nature and his calling to be a naturalist. He explains his troubled relationship with his Prussian homeland, where he has been proclaimed a deserter because of his failure to fulfill his military service.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

### **29 May 1844**

Sydney.

Leichhardt returns to Sydney in order to prepare for his overland expedition from the east coast to the trading post Port Essington on the northern coast.

### **13 August 1844**

Overland expedition.

Leichhardt sets out on his overland expedition; he travels the first leg of the journey by ship along the eastern coast and completes his final preparations in Darling Downs.

### **3 September 1844**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Darling Downs (3 September 1844).

While still in Sydney Leichhardt had organized his natural history collections and written a geological treatise before preparing for his overland expedition. Leichhardt describes his plans, the expedition party and equipment, as well as his deliberations over their route.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

Hartmann, Heike. "Ludwig Leichhardt: A German Explorer's Letters Home from Australia." Commentaries translated by Brenda Black. Environment & Society Portal, *Virtual Exhibitions* 2015, no. 1. Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society.

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Leichhardt's letters from Australia: A Timeline

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**1 October 1844**

Leaving Jimbour Station, Darling Downs.

Leichhardt's expedition leaves Jimbour Station in the Darling Downs. Their destination is Port Essington.

**17 December 1845**

Arrival at Port Essington.

Leichhardt's expedition arrives at Port Essington. A month later Leichhardt begins the journey back to Sydney on the ship *Heroine*.

**24 January 1846**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß, written aboard the ship *Heroine* (24 January 1846).

While on the ship back to Sydney, Leichhardt writes his brother-in-law with a detailed report of his journey, including the regions he traveled through, daily life on the expedition, provisioning, and incidents that happened along the way.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

**25 March 1846**

Back in Sydney, the successful return of Leichhardt's expedition is greeted with praise and rejoicing.

**18 April 1846**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Sydney (18 April 1846).

Back in Sydney, Leichhardt reports on the great honors that he has received, including music composed for him and a financial award, which he intends to use for his next expedition. Together with the cartographer Perry he works on creating a map of his journey.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

**19 August 1846**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Sydney (19 August 1846).

Leichhardt reports on the honor shown to him and on the manuscript of his travelogue, which he composed in English. He intends to send his botanical specimens to a friend in Paris before setting off again on a new journey: this time with the intent of crossing the continent from the east coast to Swan River Colony on the west coast.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

**1 October 1846**

Transcontinental expedition.

Leichhardt leaves Sydney for a transcontinental expedition from Moreton Bay to Swan River.

**6 December 1846**

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Darling Downs (6 December 1846).

Leichhardt is nearly ready to depart on his transcontinental expedition. He describes his equipment, his companions, and his intended route, which he expects will take at least two-and-a-half years.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

## 10 December 1846

Peak Range and the Maranoa River.

Leichhardt and his companions depart from Stevens Station with the goal of reaching Swan River. Six months later, he makes the decision to turn back at Peak Range. With several of his companions, Leichhardt investigates the Maranoa River.

## 9 October 1847

Return to Sydney.

After the failure of the expedition, Leichhardt returns to Sydney and begins preparations for a second attempt to cross the continent from east to west.

## 20 October 1847

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Camden (20 October 1847).

Leichhardt voices his disappointment about the course of the last expedition. He describes the difficult weather conditions, sicknesses, and the loss of their pack animals. He blames his traveling companions for the failure of the expedition. His travelogue of the Port Essington expedition awaits printing in England.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

## 21 October 1847

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Sydney (21 October 1847).

Leichhardt expresses his relief at the news that the Prussian government has pardoned him after treating him as a deserter on account of his failure to fulfill his military service. He writes about how Alexander von Humboldt and Prince Hermann von Pückler-Muskau have served as role models for him. He hopes to begin his expedition soon.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

## 4 December 1847

Trip to Darling Downs.

Leichhardt travels from Sydney to Darling Downs, the point of departure for his expedition.

## 22 February 1848

Letter to F. A. Schmalfuß from Darling Downs (22 February 1848).

Leichhardt is staying in Darling Downs; from there he plans to start his transcontinental expedition. He reports on the preparations that have been made and the most recent knowledge about the conditions of the interior. His botanical collections have arrived in Paris. Before his departure, he receives news of honors bestowed upon him, as well as a copy of the travelogue and the cartographic material of his Port Essington Expedition.

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

## 4 April 1848

Last letters.

At Macpherson's Station, Leichhardt writes his last letters before departing into the interior of the continent. After this date there are no more traces of him or his expedition.

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This nameplate from one of Leichhardt's weapons is the only undisputed relic of the missing 1848 expedition.

Photo by Dragi Markovic. Courtesy of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra.

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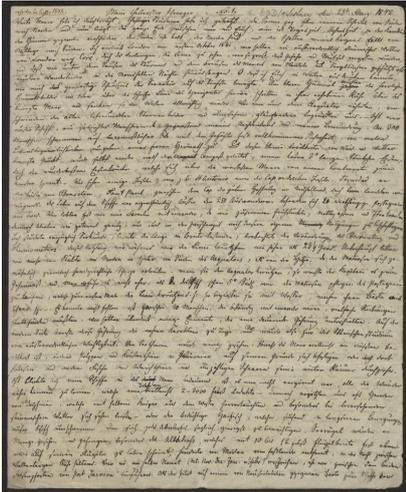
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Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (23 March 1842)

Letter to his brother-in-law, Friedrich August Schmalfuß, Sydney (23 March 1842)

1842 L. Leichhardt. Courtesy of the Deutsches Museum, Munich, Archives, HS 603/1.

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Leichhardt's letters



Portrait of Dr. Leichhardt, the explorer. Illustration by William Nicholas (1807–1854), in: *Heads of the People: An Illustrated Journal of Literature, Whims and Oddities*, Sydney, 1847.

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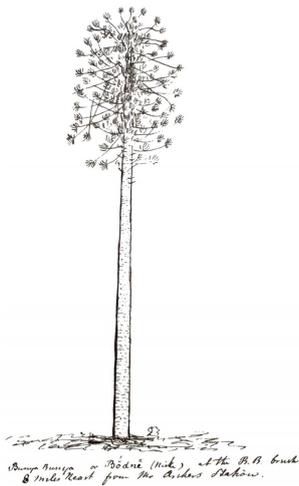
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Drawing of a bunya pine in Leichhardt's field notebook  
Under his drawing Leichhardt noted the name "bunya bunya" as well as an indigenous name, "Bodné," which he had learned from one of his informants.

Drawing by Ludwig Leichhardt in Moreton Bay, 1842.  
Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Indigenous knowledge



Specimen of an Australian fig tree, *Ficus stephanocarpa*, collected by Ludwig Leichhardt the British colony of New South Wales, 1842.  
Röpert D. (ed.) 2000+ [continuously updated]: Digital specimen images at the Herbarium Berlinense.

[View image source](#).

Courtesy of the Botanischer Garten / Botanisches Museum Berlin.

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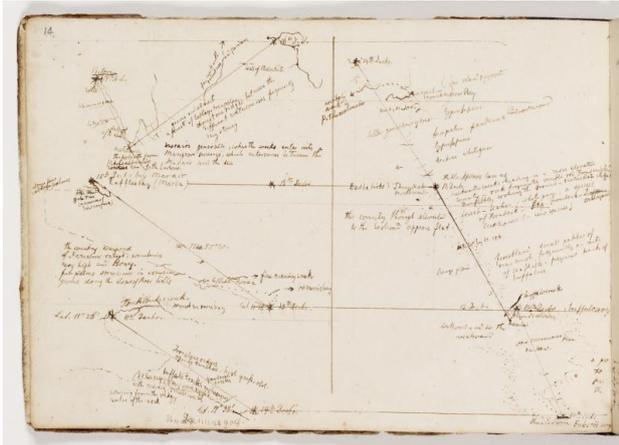
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The journey of the letters

Hand-drawn map in Leichhardt's field notebook by Ludwig Leichhardt, 1845.

Courtesy of The State Library of New South Wales, Sydney.

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Leichhardt's legacy in northern Australia

Map of the Port Essington Expedition by Samuel Augustus Perry. W. Baker Hibernian Printing Office, Sydney, 1846.

Courtesy of National Library of Australia, Canberra, MAP F 517.

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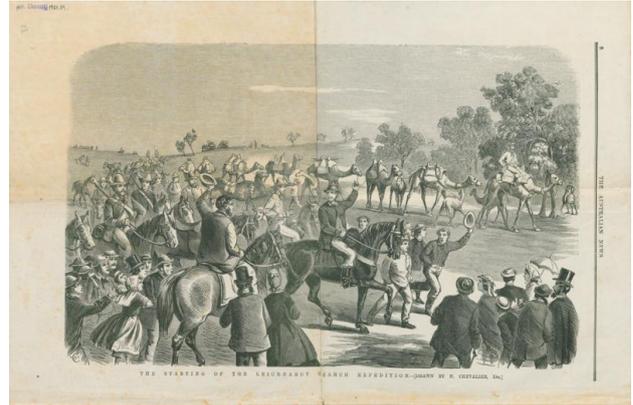
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Ornithological specimens from the Port Essington Expedition, 1944-45.

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Zoological collections



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