

DELVING FOR OPAL.

INCIDENTS AT STUART'S RANGE.

Life on the Stuart's Range opal field has its share of romance, according to interesting sidelights related by Mr. George Burford (secretary of the Stuart's Range Opal Field Association), who is now visiting Adelaide. He has now been appointed a justice of the peace on the field. About three years ago Mr. Burford discarded city life for the charms of the outback country, went out to Stuart's Range with two returned soldiers, and took up an opal claim, which they have since held and worked. They journeyed from William Creek on camels, and lived for three months on flour, split peas, and tea in a tent and a wurley (bush shelter). On one occasion Mr. Burford rode in two days from Kingoonya, on the East-West line, to the field on a light motor cycle—a distance of 220 miles over bush tracks. He had been over the track only once before on the way down. In the early days of the field he said that men often rode to William Creek on ordinary bicycles. Now it is possible to go from either Kingoonya or William Creek by a weekly motor car service. With regard to the water supply, he reported that they had struck good water on a bore 15 miles from the field, and that the Mines Department were now working on one in the centre of the settlement. Hitherto they had had to cart water for 40 miles, and for a further distance as the various supplies were exhausted in the holes. Last year there were 350 men on the field, and a large quantity of valuable opal has been obtained. Many men live in dugouts in the side of the hills, and the natives now call the field Cooby Pedy, which was an aboriginal term meaning "White man living in a hole." Owing to the heat of the day most of the opal mining was done from 4 a.m. to 7 a.m. and from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. The intervening time was spent in the shelter of the dugout.

—A Missing Bushman.—

William Telford, one of the oldest and most experienced bushman in the north-west country, Mr. Burford continued, had been missing since last December, and the police were now searching for him. They had failed so far to locate him, although his camels had been found. "The average rainfall in that country is 2.50 to 4.00 in.," he added. "This year I was informed that at Mount Eba they have had 15.00 since last June, and the country is in the pink of condition. The mail started out from Mount Eba in June, and it has been delayed about six times on account of the floods. A rain gauge has been sent up to the field, and we hope to send weekly records down to Adelaide. This should be helpful to people who intend to go up there. The opal-bearing country extends

helpful to people who intend to go up there. The opal-bearing country extends over an area of 40 miles, and many men have told me that when White Cliffs was booming more than £1,000,000 worth of the precious stone was taken up, and it was nothing in size as compared with Stuart's Range. Furthermore, White Cliffs was supposed to have sent out opal, which exceeded the value of any alluvial goldfield in Australia. There is every indication that this field will be better than White Cliffs, which is now worked out." When questioned concerning the disposal of the opal, Mr. Burford said buyers were now operating in Adelaide. Mr. M. Schlank, of this city, had also been given an honorary commission to enquire into the precious stones market in England and Europe, and his report on his return was awaited with interest. Mr. Burford will return to Stuart's Range after Easter. He added that the men on the field would welcome the receipt of reading matter from this end.