



The Sentinel Pine of Jackson's Creek.

Murray Pines (*Callitris glauca*) at Jackson's Creek.

Photos: W. H. Nicholls.

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THE LONE PINES OF JACKSON'S CREEK

By W. H. NICHOLLS, Melbourne.

The pine trees on the Jackson's Creek, beyond Sydenham town, in Victoria, are botanically known as *Callitris glauca*. Commonly these trees are called "Murray pines," which signifies their Murray River habitats where *Callitris* (several species) are frequently met with. The scientific title is in reference to the genus (family) and to the specific characteristics. The former is derived from the Greek *Kalos* (meaning beautiful), and the latter applies to the attractive foliage of this particular species.

The present Jackson's Creek pines (there are approximately half-a-dozen) are the sole survivors of a colony and the only remaining naturally-grown example of *Callitris* in close proximity to Melbourne—not forgetting those few trees which occur on the Lerderderg and Werribee Rivers near Bacchus Marsh.

A grand old warrior, symmetrical still, but having now only a crown of foliage, stands, sentinel-like, overlooking the precipitous river valley. Etched against a greying sky, it looks a fairy tree.

In a sheltered nook immediately below the level of the plains a batch of pines stand, picturesque with their spreading branches, a few still well-clothed in the velvet green of their lovely foliage. A near view, however, reveals the decrepit condition of all these conifers. Their glory days must have been also the days of the earliest colonists. These pines now cannot resist for long the rigours of these windswept and sunbaked areas, since much of their natural protective undergrowth has gone in a place where cattle, sheep, and brer rabbit roam at will. Hence, no younger trees exist and no seeds can ever germinate to survive for long; and, be it noted, but few of the pines here bear fruit at all. It will be a thousand pities if, to the next generation of Australians, these picturesque pine trees are but a record.

Some interesting and extremely hardy shrubs still persist hereabouts, but in ever-decreasing numbers: namely, the Desert Cassia (*C. eremophila*), a very attractive golden-flowered shrub like a *Boronia*; the Desert *Myoporum* (*M. desertii*); the *Dodonaea* (hop-bush); the *Correa* (Native Fuchsia), and a few Eucalypts and Acacias. But the lone pines (despite their comparatively small size) still dominate the landscape hereabouts. They appear to belong to these rugged places—are really wanderers from more northern climes—and to the extensive grass-coloured plains.

Some day we must miss these "lone pines on the Jackson's"; and when the very last tree falls to its rest we will recall them in all their beauty and will retell the tales of our happy excursions across the plains to see them, and where so many other floral treasures have been found—and lost.