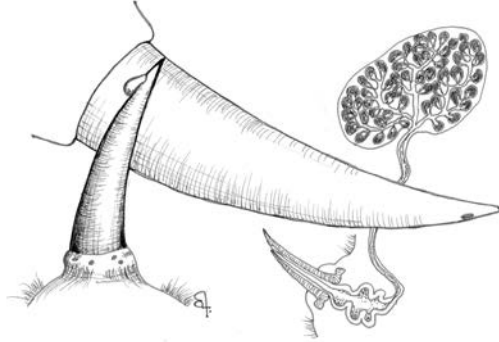


### 3

## SPURS AND VENOM GLANDS



*'I wounded one with small shot; and on my overseer's taking it out of the water it stuck its spurs into the palm and back of his right hand with such force, and retained them in with such strength, that they could not be withdrawn until it was killed. The hand instantly swelled to a prodigious bulk; and the inflammation having rapidly extended to his shoulder, he was in a few minutes threatened with locked-jaw, and exhibited all the symptoms of a person bitten by a venomous snake. The pain from the first was insupportable, and cold sweats and sickness of the stomach took place so alarmingly, that I found it necessary, besides the external application of oil and vinegar, to administer large quantities of the volatile alkali with opium, which I really think preserved his life. He was obliged to keep his bed for several days, and did not recover the perfect use of his hand for nine weeks.'*

SIR JOHN JAMISON (1818)

In May 1991, while Keith Payne was fishing in the hinterland of Mackay in northern Queensland he noticed a platypus perched on a log beside the stream. When he approached more closely the animal did not move. Assuming it was probably injured or sick, he picked it up. Supporting it by one hand under the belly, he attempted to place it into the water. The animal suddenly wrapped its rear legs around his hand, driving one spur into the top of the hand and the other into the side of the middle finger.