

What is known as the lake area is a district north of Spencer Gulf covered with several expanses of brackish water that contract or expand as the season is one of drought or of rain. In seasons of drought they are hardly more than swamps or mud-flats, which for a time may become grassy plains, or desolate shores encrusted with salt; in the wet season they receive the waters of a vast extent of country, including streams from Western Queensland.

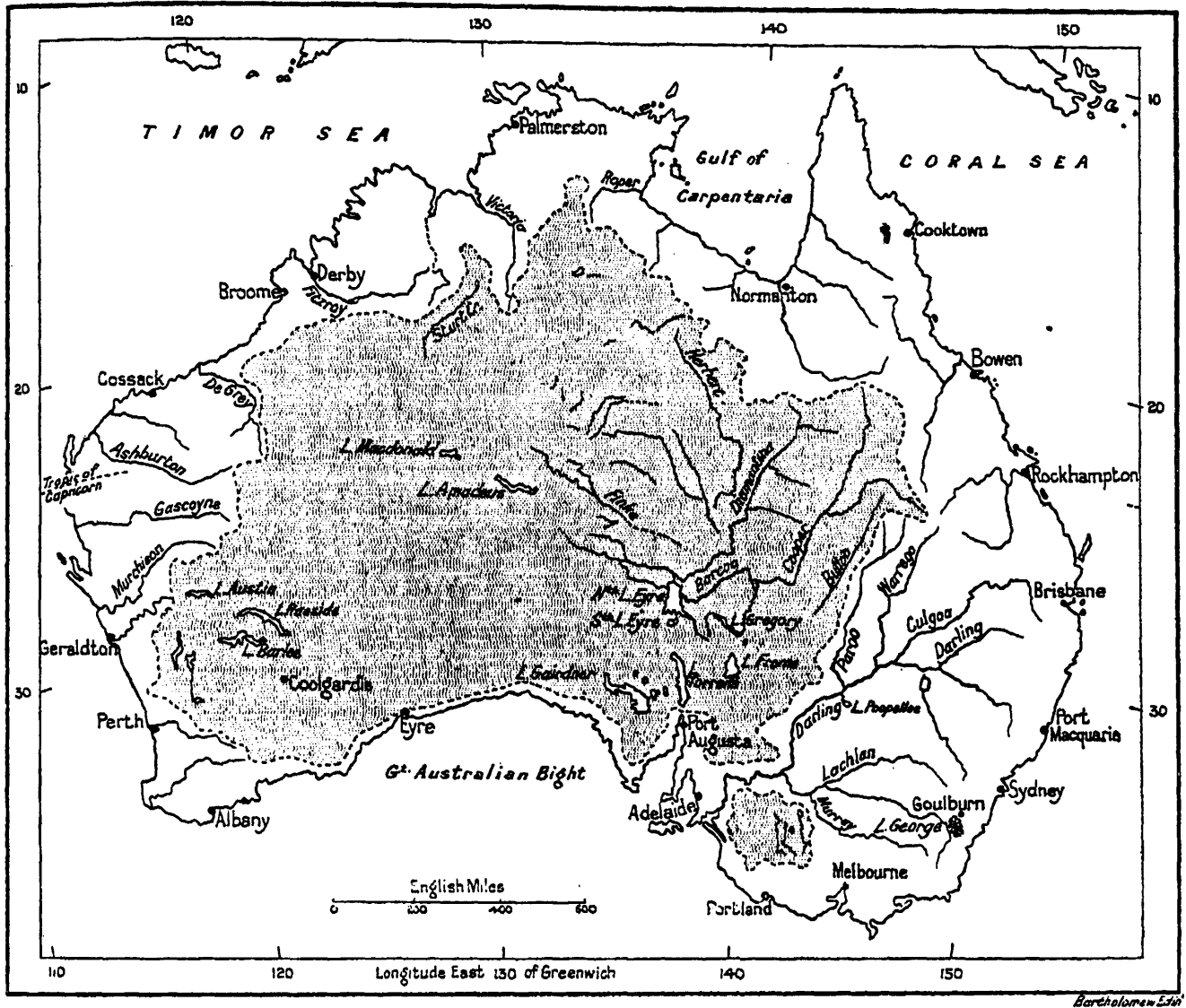


FIG. 67.—Inland drainage areas of Australia.
[The inland drainage areas are stippled.]

The rainfall being very irregular, sometimes the rivers rush down in flood, carrying torrents of water to the lakes, while at other times they are dry for months. Many of the rivers draining inland lose themselves in the interior; they carve out valleys, dissolve limestone, and spread out their deposits over the plain, when the waters become too sluggish to bear the burden further.

Lake Eyre and Lake Torrens.—North of Spencer Gulf lies Lake Torrens, sometimes 100 miles in length, and north of that again stretches Lake Eyre, 80 miles long by 40 miles broad, covering an area of about 3200 square miles. The two lakes are divided by