



1855

# Land, Labour, and Gold; or, Two Years in Victoria, Vol II

William Howitt

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## TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA.

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Triumph of the Diggers on the License Question. — Irritating Answer of Government.—License Defaulters released at Waranga on Demand of Diggers. — Contradictory Proclamations. — Un-English state of Things on the Diggings. — Set of Officers there. — Man-hunting. — Influx of Convicts. — Robberies, Murders, and Drunkenness. — An ingenious Barricade. — Police Conduct. — “Get a License from the old Mare!”—A modern Wat Tyler. — Petty Oppressions. — Scandalous Bribery. — Unfortunate Carpenter at M'Ivor. — Man chained down at Seymour. — Newspapers starting on the Diggings.

Bendigo, the White Hills, September 27th, 1853.

So the diggers have triumphed, and the Government has recorded against itself a fresh act of folly and imbecility in its struggle with them. Perhaps in all the histories of Governments, whether imperial or colonial, there is nothing more humiliating than this last affair.

The meeting which I attended did not, as I stated, seem to make any great impression. I myself came away more conscious of the ludicrous features, than calculating on the importance of its results. But the newspapers arriving with a detailed report of the interview of the delegates with the Governor, at once roused the indignation of the whole body of diggers everywhere. There were in that report no Red Republicans calling on Englishmen, who were merely seeking redress of grievances by constitutional means, “to follow them to blood and vic-

tory." There was no Mr. Dexter in the foreground, lauding these fiery foreigners, and defaming his own country. There was merely a simple but strong picture of a set of gentlemen, calmly, but firmly, putting before the Governor a statement of the outrages and insults suffered by the gold-digging public from his ill-selected authorities, and the sober reasons why the license-fee should be moderated; and in strange and startling opposition, stood in the same picture the Governor, telling these gentlemen, in the most blunt and uncourteous manner, that he did not believe them. With the whole population of the diggings everywhere as familiar with these outrages and arbitrary usages of the gold Commissioners and police, as they were with the daily rising of the sun, the Governor flatly asserted that no such mal-administration existed. That he knew better, and was well satisfied with the state of things, and, as to the license-fee, it required no reduction, and should have none. Since the days of Rehoboam, there perhaps never has been so injudicious and astounding an answer to the delegates of public grievances as this. But as if this were not sufficient, at the same moment a letter of His Excellency's was published in the newspapers, addressed to Sir Charles Fitzroy, the Governor of New South Wales. This letter stated that His Excellency perceived that the Government of New South Wales was proposing to abolish or reduce the license-fee, and, therefore, he proceeded to state to that Government the strongest possible reasons why the license-fee should neither be abolished nor reduced, and to urge the Sydney Government to refrain from any such reduction, as it would compel Victoria to follow the example.

This put the climax to the public wrath. When the Governor of the colony showed himself so thoroughly ignorant of the real condition of its population, it was time for that population to make such a demonstration as

should compel both inquiry and redress. On the 27th of the month, a meeting was again held on the same spot, close to the Government camp, and though the day was an excessively rainy one, the spirit of the diggers now showed itself heated beyond any regard to the weather, and the newspapers stated the numbers assembled to be 10,000. As I was not there, I cannot speak from my own knowledge, but the procession from the White Hills was considerably increased and enlivened by the addition of two bagpipes.

At this meeting the diggers resolved that they would pay 10s. a-month for license, and no more; and that on the 1st of the coming month, they would present themselves at the camp, before the Commissioners, and offer that sum; and if that were refused, they would tell the authorities that they would pay no more, and that they might take them into custody if they pleased. They also agreed to mount a red ribbon in their hats, as a sign that those who wore it were pledged no longer to pay the old license-fee; and the appearance of these ribbons became very general. Still further, many of the diggers and storekeepers put up large placards on their tents of — “NO LICENSE TAKEN HERE.” You saw dogs going about with red ribbons round their necks; and horses with them attached to their blinkers, as anti-licensers.

The Governor was reported in the newspapers to have said gratuitously to the delegates, that if he did not concede their demands, he “supposed the cannon would roar, but that he did not mind that; he was not to be intimidated, but was prepared to do his duty,” &c. And in pursuance of this resolve, a number of soldiers and cannon were sent up to the camp at Bendigo. The diggers, however, maintained a strictly constitutional demeanour. They were firm and resolved, but used no idle threats, or military parade. At Waranga, the Goulburn Diggings, however, the Commissioners very foolishly attempted to

compel the payment of the old license-fee, in face of this strong popular demonstration. They took up a number of men for the refusal to pay the fee; but the diggers marched up in a body, fully armed, and demanded their instant liberation, declaring that if it were not accorded, they would take them out of custody by force. The terrified Commissioners complied with all speed, and would have shown only common sense, if, with a knowledge that they had no power against an armed and incensed public, they had refrained from the attempt.

But what the Waranga Commissioners did in little, the Melbourne Government did in large. No sooner did the Governor, who had spoken so stoutly to the delegates, see the account of this Waranga demonstration, than with his rash declarations to the delegates, and his letter to Sir Charles Fitzroy, staring him in the face, he hurried into the Legislative Council, and in a speech replete with indications of terror, proposed at once to abandon the license-fee altogether, and replace the amount thus sacrificed to the revenue by some other tax!

Still worse, and showing what was the alarm of the Government, and the total want of concert in its heads, there appeared placarded all over the gold-fields, two proclamations, dated the very same day, but ordering diametrically opposite proceedings. I myself read these conflicting proclamations with inconceivable wonder. Proceeding from my own tent towards the Government camp, on the great high road, and chief street of Bendigo, I came to a tree, on which was affixed a large placard, bearing the royal initials V. R. This proclamation was from the Governor, Mr. La Trobe, stating that as a new law was before the Legislature regarding the gold license-fee, the diggers need not trouble themselves to pay the fee then due for the month of September.

Scarcely had I passed a hundred yards further, than I beheld another proclamation, also headed V. R., but having



something in its aspect different to the last, which induced me to examine it, and to my inexpressible astonishment, I found this issued by Mr. Wright, the Chief Commissioner of all the gold-fields of Victoria, dated the same day, the 1st of September; and stating that although a new law was before the Legislative Assembly, yet the last law was still in force, and that the diggers must come up and pay the license-fee as usual!!!

Never was there such a pitiable exhibition of Government imbecility and disorganisation! The diggers were confounded, and did not know what to expect; but the Committee of the Anti-License movement went at once to the Bendigo camp, and requested to know what course the Commissioners meant to pursue. However, having a salutary fear of the same humiliation that the Waranga Commissioners had brought down upon themselves, they declared that they should not attempt to collect the fee till a new law was passed.

The diggers, satisfied with this assurance, returned peaceably to their labours; and the Committee of the Movement, alarmed at the idea of the utter abolition of the fee, as announced by the panic-stricken Government, hastened down to Melbourne, and protested against the thorough repeal of it, showing the mischiefs that would arise on the diggings from the want of some Government license and inspection, and recommending a monthly one of 10s.

This was readily caught at by the Government, and adopted; but the quiet which this satisfactory arrangement immediately produced all over the diggings, immediately encouraged this pusillanimous Government, so singularly exemplifying Shelley's character of—

“The tyrant to the weak, and coward to the strong,”

to make an advance; and instead of 10s. a month, or 6l. a year, it enacted that the fee should be 1l. a month, or 2l.

for three months, or 8*l.* a year. And to regain something of what this yielded in a direct form to the digger, they laid on tax in another shape, namely, a 50*l.* license on all storekeepers, including in this butchers and greengrocers, so that a cabbage cart could not traverse the diggings without a license of 50*l.* per annum! All this, of course, was laid with interest on the diggers.

This, however, was near enough for the diggers at present. The gold-fields are become calm again; and the Commissioners, who for a while were meek and humble, are once more raising their heads, and proceeding to the gradual return of their old arbitrary courses.\*

Before dismissing this subject, I shall add a few more particulars of this un-English state of things in the diggings, which the confident denial of their existence by the Governor caused to come up in general conversation.

First and foremost is the wonder expressed at the character of the persons selected as Commissioners of these gold-fields, and the numbers of them who are crowded upon them at high salaries. The greater part of these are young men who do not appear to have been practically educated in any profession, and not at all in any which can bear on the management of gold-fields or mining. In Germany, no man can be employed as an officer of mines who has not been expressly educated in the sciences requisite for that department: in engineer-

\* While copying out this statement for publication in February 1855, I am unavoidably struck with the same specific characteristics of government exhibited at home in the management of the affairs in the Crimea, where a magnificent army has been sacrificed, and a monster scene of misery created by the same official incapacity, want of co-operative harmony, and frigid inertia of routine. Surely it is high time that we should make a rigorous inspection of our governmental machinery, not only as it respects that particular case, but as it extends itself, in numberless ramifications, to the most remote extremities of our empire.

ing, mineralogy, geometry, chemistry, &c. None in the capacity of magistrates on them who have not had a legal education; none as managers of their financial affairs who have not been regularly trained to that service. But here, without any specific professional qualification at all, young men are sent up to fill any office of any kind; and the only qualifications seem to be those of being able to wear a gold-laced cap and coat, to ride a horse fed on Government hay of 100*l.* or 150*l.* a ton, and oats one shilling a pound, followed everywhere by a trooper whose horse is fed on the same golden aliment. To be able also to smoke a cigar, gamble, drink a tolerable share of wine, and patronise horse-racing.

From the autobiographies with which these young "*fruges consumere nati*" occasionally favour you, it appears that almost any one who at home can get to the elbow of a member of Parliament, manages to bore Government through that medium till it sends out a lazy, gentlemanly young fellow of no particular taste or pursuit, except those I have enumerated, as a fit and proper person to govern diggers, and vegetate on a few hundred pounds per annum of the colonial revenue. Hence the scenes which everywhere characterise the Government camps at the diggings; hence the utter negligence of everything but "man-hunting" and collection of revenue; hence the almost universal absence of human sympathies with the population, and the frightful disregard of human life to which I shall have to call attention. If the celebrated Chancellor Oxenstiern, who on his death-bed told his son how wonderfully small were the quantity of brains necessary to govern a nation, had been here, he would have found that a digging was evidently thought by Government not to require any at all.

The awful state of demoralisation on these diggings, and insecurity of life and property, are in a great measure owing undoubtedly to the dreadful preponderance of con-

vict felony in the population. On this head a recent return of the Government of Van Diemen's Land throws a great light. It states that in 1852 no less than 5180 felons who had been convicts had come over to Victoria; and 2097 who had been conditionally pardoned,—making a total of these vermin in one year of 7277. The latter number have passed over in defiance of an Act of the Victoria Legislature, which not only prohibits their coming, but orders them to be arrested and carried back again. Within the first six months of the present year, 1315 more freed by servitude have come over, and 431 who are only conditionally pardoned,—making a total in eighteen months of the arrival of 9023 Van Diemen's Land felons. Well may the people of Victoria protest against the continuance of Van Diemen's Land as a convict colony; from whence, so long as it continues such, it will be invaded by this awful influx of felony, attracted by its gold.

But now, to put a climax to the nuisance, there has arrived an order, issued under the late Derby and D'Israeli ministry, for all the convicts to be removed from Norfolk Island to Van Diemen's Land; so that Victoria will now get these,—the devils of devils, the most hardened and diabolical wretches who curse the earth. They are the vilest of the vile, the incorrigible, the refuse of the mass of convict scoundrelism, who are sent thither from Sydney or Van Diemen's Land to work in chains, whence Norfolk Island is styled the Ocean Hell. Never, surely, was there so atrocious a piece of—not statesmanship but governmental callousness. These hardened villains could scarcely have perpetrated anything more infamous themselves. Well may the diggings and the bush swarm with ferocious scoundrels, and robbery and murder be rife as the gum-tree itself. Anon I shall give you a perfect picture of what these Norfolk Islanders are and do: but before that I shall give a few lesser traits of the same kind.

I have been left alone a great deal lately in my tent on

the White Hills, while Alfred and Charlton have been away in one quarter or another, prospecting and digging. They have only been at home on Sundays; and, except on Saturday and Sunday nights, I have slept alone there. Scarcely a night has passed without the most awful cries of murder; and robberies are as certain as the night. There is generally one within a few hundred yards of my tent heard of every morning. The tent of a surgeon was "shook," as they style it,—that is, robbed, during his absence in the daytime, the other day, his money and a gold watch being taken amongst other things.

On Sunday week, as I returned from the Government Camp, where I had been for letters, I came down the green valley, beyond the Creek, as most pleasant. I had not long passed there, when three fellows rode up to a tent, and robbed the man of what he had. It was about one o'clock in the day. The man, who was a shrewd fellow, took it very quietly; and when the villains had sacked his gold, he asked them if they would not take a glass of grog. This was too great a temptation. He fetched out a bottle of rum. They knocked the neck off, in their way of a short cut to things, and regaled themselves, the man keeping one eye on them, and another up and down the valley, as they sat on horseback in front of his tent. By a stroke of good fortune, a party of mounted police came riding up the valley. He hailed them; and, though the fellows spurred away as fast as they could, the troopers gave chase, and caught two of them, though one of those fired at the trooper who seized him. The third escaped; but the money was found on one of those captured.

Again, last Sunday morning, two men, in Long Gulley, not far from here, were found in their tent with their throats cut. Another man was found in the Back Creek a day or two ago murdered. On September 8., an Italian, in the same creek, stabbed another digger, in a dispute

about a claim. He did not do it at once, but the next day, having brooded over it (Italian fashion), and sharpened his knife for the purpose. I saw a young man who was present, and who secured the assassin, and afterwards prevented the diggers from Lynching him till the police came. These are every-day occurrences; and you never go out without hearing something of the kind. Certainly, coupling this state of things with the terrific language that you hear, the diggings are no places for decent people.

But the perfect apathy of the Commissioners, and the unnoticed prevalence of grog-shops, are at the bottom of much of this. As there are such hosts of convicts abroad on the diggings, the vigilance of the police should be, at least, as conspicuous in guarding the public from their outrages as they are in collecting licenses. But their utter inattention to these grog-shops, and the grog-shop brawls that are heard every night, is something wonderful. A very respectable storekeeper, who lives near me, came up to my tent the other day, and calling me out to the front, he directed my attention to a group of men, some on horseback, others on foot, collected round a hut near his store. They were in a high state of intoxication, and were quarrelling with pistols in their hands. Every moment they appeared on the verge of a regular deadly *mêlée*.

“Now,” said this tradesman, “the man who keeps that hut is a regular grog-seller. To my knowledge, he does not sell less than sixty gallons of rum and brandy per week, the well-known profits of which are at least 6*l.* per gallon. Thus he clears weekly 400*l.* or more. The police have been repeatedly advised of this fact, but take no notice of it, for the best of reasons, that they are literally bribed. I assure you that I live in nightly fear of the characters who constantly resort there, and never lie down and sleep but with a revolver at my pillow. You

see the men on horseback. There is not one of them who is not a notorious thief; most of them are old lags (convicts), and every horse they sit upon is a stolen one. I have done all that I dare to get this nest of robbers broken up; I can do no more except to proceed publicly against them, and the certain consequence would be a few shots fired through my tent the first night, and myself or some of my family killed. But you are farther off; you know the officers at the camp, and your representations might be effectual."

At the risk of a bullet or two through my tent, I made this representation, seeing both the Chief Commissioner and the Head of the Police, and a week afterwards I asked the storekeeper what had been the effect. "Precisely," he replied, "that which followed my own statements. A file of police marched down, with muskets on their shoulders, made a circuit round the hut, and marched off again. No one entered the hut, no one spoke to the keeper of it; and the whole thing was, no doubt, a measure, not for detecting or capturing the villains and the grog, but for warning the parties that there had been some complaint of them, and that they must be more cautious. And, in truth, they have taken the hint, and are stiller in their proceedings, but are there just as much as ever."

For myself, I have been continually visited in the night by fellows, either drunk or pretending to be so. They would come up, shake the tent, bawling, "Hillo, there! are you awake? Wake up, old fellow, there!" And go on thus till you gave an answer, when they would proceed: "Well! where am I now? I want to know where I am." I would tell them. "Now, are you looking towards me as you talk, or are you not?" "No matter," I would say; "if you want such a place, go such a way." But in vain; they would still remain, asking questions, and all the time feeling about the tent, as if to find a way

in; and my only mode of getting rid of them was to promise them the speedy contents of a couple of revolvers, which generally proved persuasive.

I always lay with plenty of firearms within reach, and my door barricaded with a heap of tins and kettles, which would make a tremendous rattle on any one attempting to come in. This mode of barricade I learned from an old friend in the Bush near the diggings. I asked him how he dared to live there, while such bloody deeds were nightly doing in such isolated spots. "Look here," said the stout old gentleman, and pulled out two five-barrelled revolvers. "But," I said, "suppose they caught you asleep?"

"Ay!" replied he, laughing, "'catch a weazel asleep, and shave his eyebrows!' See here." And he piled a great heap of tins, kettles, and pans up in the doorway. "That would make a most confounded clangour, if any one got stumbling over them, and I would bang at them without stopping to ask who they were. There came," added he to me, "three fellows lounging about one night, and I watched them off; but after I was gone to bed, the dog began to bark, and I got up and went out. There were the three fellows again, skulking behind the fire that I had burning outside, and evidently aiming at a horse that I had tied up close by it. I banged off one barrel at them, and cried out, 'Now you scamps, fire at me as hard as you like, for I have got plenty here for you,' and I kept blazing away at them as fast as I could; but the rogues showed as nimble heels as any vagabonds in the colony, and never came again to thank me."

Amongst the things which had greatly excited the minds of the diggers before the outbreak, first and foremost was that system of man-hunting as it is called, that is, daily scouring the diggings to discover those who had not taken licenses. The spirit which has grown up under this system, is such that every man who can elude pay-



ment, does. Where a party consists of several, only part of them take licenses, and those have them for the day who are exposed to the visits of police. The parties on the surface have them, and those at work under ground dispense with them. When these come up and the others go down, they exchange them. Police are not very fond of descending deep holes after diggers, because they are soon bewildered in the subterraneous tunnels, and are exposed to the diggers above throwing a mass of earth in upon them, and burying them. The surface and broad daylight are safest for them. Thousands, again, working at out-sides, and in secluded spots, wont take licenses. If they see the police coming they hide in the scrub, and nothing is more amusing than to see a policeman appear in some such rarely visited quarter, and the diggers running in all directions to cover.

On one occasion a digger, who was cradling, was surprised by the sight of a policeman within a few yards of him; and as it was impossible to escape, and he had no license, he suddenly plunged his arms up to the shoulders in his puddling tub, or tub in which his washing stuff was soaking, and drew them out dripping with yellow clay mud. "Have you a license, digger?" asked the police. "Oh, yes," replied the man, "but it is in my waistcoat pocket; would you be so good as to put in your hand and take it?" With this he held up his arms, reeking with yellow slush, and the policeman, looking at him with ineffable disgust, said, "No, thank you," and passed on with a clean uniform.

The foot police, who generally are the man-hunters, or bloodhounds, are clad in a blue blouse with a black belt round the waist, the shirt-collars turned down like school-boys, and they have a schoolboy-looking cloth cap on their heads, and a wooden baton in their hands. They are, as I can testify, frequently most insolent. "Here, fellow," I heard one say to a gentlemanly-looking youth, "have

you a license?" "I am no fellow," replied the youth, reddening with anger. "What may you be then, eh?" "A gentleman, sir, and that is what you never were," retorted the youth, handing the license. "Mind what you say, man," responded the police, "or I'll walk you off to camp." "Do," said the youth; "come; here I am," beginning to throw on his coat. "The Commissioner is my cousin; we'll soon see who is the fellow." This was rather unexpected news; and the bloodhound walked on. Presently we saw a well-dressed, though a colonial-looking man, ride by on horseback; and, soon after, he was coming back, in custody of this policeman and another.

"Eh!" shouted the diggers, all stopping their work, "what have they got you for?" "Because," said the man, indignantly, "I would not show them my license. What have they to do with my license, or whether I have a license or not, when I am travelling on the high road? I am not digging!"

"All right, mate," said the diggers; "it is cursed impertinent. Is nobody to travel without a license?"

"But I happened to have one," resumed the man; "for I am a storekeeper going to Melbourne to buy goods, and I did at last show it them."

"What do they want now, then?" asked the diggers.

"Why, because I gave them a bit of my mind," said the man, "then they wanted to see the receipt for my horse. They complimented me by saying my horse looked too good to belong to me, and I must show how I came by him. Now this riled me; and I bade them go to the devil, and so they are taking me to the camp."

The diggers stood in indignant amaze. "Is this a Christian country?" asked one. "Is this an English colony?" asked another. "No," said a third; "it's Rooshia." But, cried out a fourth, at a distance, "Now, mate, if you bred that horse, I reckon you'll be obliged to go to the old mare for a receipt."

At this there was one general burst of laughter. "Bravo!" cried the diggers. "Bravo! old boy. Take the man to the old mare, and ask her for a line just to satisfy how he came by that there horse. Bravo! to the old mare! to the old mare!" Far and wide the jest was bandied and echoed, and followed by fresh peals of laughter, which were too much even for the bloodhounds, who gradually relaxed their hold of the man's rein, and told him he might go.

A blacksmith close by my tent, a very busy man, whose hammer is clinking from five in the morning to ten at night, and who is making, I dare say, 50*l.* a-week, was the other day asked for his license; for all tradesmen on the diggings, as well as diggers, must take a license. He told them that, if they wanted to see his license, they might go into the tent, as his wife would show it to them. This was too much for the dignity of the police; they said their time was too valuable to run after licenses. He replied that his time was much more valuable than their's; that there it was, and if they did not choose to go in and see it, they might let it alone. On this they seized him for insolent conduct. But this modern Wat Tyler knocked them down, and his wife joined in the attack, and dragged away the police when attempting to fly upon him again. By this time the diggers came running from the neighbouring places, and declared that the smith should not be molested; and the police were obliged to let him alone.

But many a poor fellow has not escaped as the smith did. Many a one has been seized by those officials in the act of delivering his license, because he did not do it in a very humble and deferential manner. It has been a very common practice of a party of these man-hunters to set out for a day's raid through the diggings, and seizing some poor fellow who had not his license on him near the camp at setting off, instead of taking him there at once before the magistrate, they have made him accompany

them in their whole round, thus losing him a valuable day, independent of the indignity of the proceeding.

There was a case of a young man who had attended two days to get his license, and had not been able on account of the crowds at the license-tent, where I never saw more than one clerk engaged in delivering licenses, though every man on the diggings is expected to take out his license on or before the first of every month; and though there is a Commissioner, whose special duty it is to disperse the licenses, and who might surely attend at the end or commencement of a month, knowing that the diggers may be seized for want of them on the second of each month. Well, this young man, having stood two whole days in the vast crowd which surrounded the license-tent in vain, was on his way the *third* day to get his license, when he was met by the police, who asked him if he had got one. He stated the facts simply as I have related them, but instead of any sympathy for the waste of his valuable time, he was immediately taken off to the magistrate by this man, who, without allowing him to utter a word of explanation, fined him 5*l.* Thus he had now lost half his working week in trying to get a license, and was fined 5*l.* for not getting it. Now, whether the license Commissioner, the policeman, (probably an old lag, as many of them are,) or the magistrate were most to blame, I leave the reader to decide.

No wonder that such things constantly occurring have made the diggers very sore, and were at the bottom of the late agitation far more than the rate of the license fee itself. Two most respectable young men, gentlemen, one of them the cousin of Mr. Palmer, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, were digging at the Ovens when we were there. They had taken out their licenses regularly for two months. On the third, they had just got down to their washing-stuff as the month commenced. Anxious to get this out and have it safe, they did not go

up to the camp on the first, but were intending to go up on the second of the month, when a policeman appeared at their hole; and though they told him they were going that very day for a license, and showed him their previous licenses all regularly to the day taken out, it was of no avail. He took them off to the camp, where the magistrate, without allowing them any word of explanation, fined them 3*l.* each. It was in vain that they represented to him that the license cheque book would show that they had always most punctually taken out their licenses—the only answer was, that if they did not instantly pay the fine, he would fine them also for contempt of court. That same day *one hundred people* were taken up and fined in the same summary way.

A trifling incident occurring to myself at Bendigo, showed how hopeless it was for diggers to get justice in such cases. Taking out four licenses, I wanted from the clerk 10*s.* out of the sovereigns I laid before him. He took the whole, and said it was right. It was useless endeavouring to extract the change from him. I went, therefore, directly to Mr. Barnard, the Commissioner of that department, and stated the case. He saw it at once, and said he was busy, but would take care and get it rectified for me against I came next to the camp. Mentioning the fact of the clerk's barefaced dishonesty to several people on the diggings, they laughed, and said, "You will never get that half-sovereign." I replied, "Oh yes; Mr. Barnard has promised to pay it me the next time I go up." "That may be," said they, "but, nevertheless, you will never see the money: they never do at that camp disgorge any such balances."

I could not, and would not believe it; but it was too true. I never got the money. When I mentioned it to Mr. Barnard, he said, "Oh! I have sent that young man adrift—he was a great rogue and drunkard." "Well," said I, "but that does not repay me. I have paid that

overcharge into your office, and it is to you that I look." "Ah, well," said he, "I have no balance in hand now; when I have, I will pay you."

When I mentioned this on the diggings, they laughed still more, and said, "Depend upon it Mr. Barnard never will have that balance, — you will never see the money." And I never did. Yet Mr. Barnard, afterwards meeting my nephew in Melbourne, said, "I owe your uncle 10s." "You can pay it me," said my nephew. Mr. Barnard very quickly turned the subject; and I have to congratulate myself that I was "chiselled," as the phrase there is, out of only 10s., and not 10*l*.

The corruption and peculation on the gold fields are declared by the diggers to be as rank and rife as the summary injustice. Many of the Commissioners are so totally ignorant of everything relating to manual labour, that when they are called to decide disputes between diggers respecting claims, show that they do not even know the difference between "sinking" and "driving," and excite the deepest contempt of the miners. But they generally conclude by fining one party heavily, often as much as 20*l*.; and as they go alone over the field for these purposes, the widest door possible is open to bribery and peculation. I have heard diggers declare that they have seen a 5*l*. note repeatedly, and with very little care for concealment, put into the hands of a Commissioner when called to settle a dispute regarding a claim; and the dispute as certainly decided in favour of the 5*l*. note!

I have heard a gentleman, the son of a cavalry officer, who had been reduced to the condition of a policeman, also declare that the money taken in bribes before him, and taken from the pockets of the persons committed to the lock-up till called up before the magistrate, or for remand, during a long time of his service, was something frightful. A man would be brought in drunk, who had been taken up for making a disturbance; the next day

he would say, "I had so much money in my pocket when I was seized" — 50*l.*, or 100*l.*, or several hundreds; for it is amazing what sums these diggers will carelessly carry about them for days and weeks. The turnkey knows nothing of it, but suggests that, no doubt, he had his pockets cleared out while he was drunk, before he was taken up. But whether before or after, it is all one to the sufferer — he never hears any more of it.

Now in all cases where prisoners are brought in and searched, that should not be done by a solitary turnkey, but in the presence of a magistrate; and most Commissioners are magistrates, and therefore some of them always may, or ought to be, found in the camp.

On the other hand, there are few prisoners who keep possession of their money who do not very easily find a way to escape. While the police, in numerous instances, are themselves old convicts, this is not to be wondered at,— a good bribe and "a fellow feeling make them wondrous kind." We shall have occasion to note some particular cases of this kind.

A very disgraceful instance of camp corruption was stated the other day in the *Argus*, by its correspondent, Mr. Bryce Ross, at M'Ivor. It was that a carpenter, of the name of Young, had done work for the camp, and presented his bill for payment. He was desired to come again, and again, and again, a habit of the Victoria Government universally known. At length, the man declaring that he would not continue to run about after his bill in this manner, he was immediately seized and shut up. The clerk declared that he had paid his demand, 45*l.*, though the carpenter had still his receipt in his pocket, to deliver when he *was* paid. On showing this it was taken away from him, and he then found it impossible to get either his money or redress for his false imprisonment. I have carefully looked in every succeeding *Argus* for any contradiction of this statement made by its "own corre-

spondent," with his name in full, but I have never seen any.

But enough of these strange facts. They will surprise you in England, yet they only confirm what Cobbet used to say, that going out of England into a colony was like a mouse running from under the cat's stomach to under her paws. If, however, there wants reform generally in the colony, there want enormous reforms in the gold fields. The whole of the government in them is a pseudo-military system, and most repulsive to an English eye. The Commissioners sport a semi-military uniform. They have each a regular trooper riding after them on all occasions. The mounted police are in reality regular armed troopers. The magistrates are the judges, and decide everything without a jury, in the style of a court-martial. Numbers of horse police and foot police are constantly scouring the gold fields and the roads, man-hunting, and are constantly marching poor wretches up to the camp for lack of licenses. That is their great business. While they keep one eye shut to grog-shops, for which they are notoriously paid, they have the other always open to catch any poor devil without a license. You may undermine the roads in quest of gold, sell grog, or break the laws in any sort of way, but you must furnish revenue; and you hear every day of atrocities perpetrated in enforcement of it, which, were they done in Hungary or Russia, would rouse the indignation of all Europe. The diggings would be a strange sight at home, if they could be, by some Arabian Night's magic, suddenly set down before you; and not the diggings only, but other parts of this colony.

The newspapers are now full of a case which occurred last week at Seymour, on the Goulburn. A man there was taken up on a charge of robbery, and was kept for above five days and nights handcuffed to a staple driven into a post at a short distance from the ground in a room



at the police station. While thus chained, he was necessitated to lie on his back or right side only, or to sit, it being perfectly impossible for him to stand erect. And why was he thus obliged to undergo this torture for upwards of five nights and days? Because, forsooth, they have no lock-up sufficient for the reception of prisoners at Seymour; this Seymour being a township of considerable standing on the great mail road to Sydney, and being the very same town where the Government, till the other day, was allowing the publican to monopolise the ferry over the river at a profit of 100*l.* per diem. Had the profits of this ferry been appropriated by Government itself, how many public improvements they might have effected, besides a proper lock-up! After all, in this flagrant case, no proof could be brought against the man, and he was discharged.

The diggers on Bendigo, Balarat, and Forest Creek, worn out by these unexampled exhibitions of tyranny and misgovernment, are starting newspapers to publish their own grievances, and advocate their own cause. They are conducted by the same parties who have so ably managed the late triumphant agitation, and they will, no doubt, do much to put a check on the exercise of a despotism perhaps amongst the most extraordinary that the world has ever seen.

## LETTER XXIV.

**Murderous Adventures of Two Convicts.**—Norfolk Island Convict Depôt broken up.—The Convicts sent to Van Diemen's Land.—Robbers of Escort executed.—Captain Melville, the Bushranger, makes a fine Speech.—Wilson, the Escort Robber, the Scout who visited us.—Agreeable Characteristics of the Diggings.—Musical Diggers.—Good Fortune of a Smith.—Decamping with loaded Bullock Drays.—A Fortune out of an old Bucket.—Visit to Fenton's Station.—800*l.* a-Year out of surplus Cabbages.—5000*l.* a-Year by Diggers' Horses.—Prin's Adventure with the Sheep and the Brandy Keg.—Strange Names of Places on Diggings.—Odd Advertisements on Trees.—Child's Notion of a Preacher.—Eggs! Eggs! Eggs!—Joy and Sorrow over a Pig.—Mouse Nuisance.—Bendigo Gaieties.—Adventures in going out to dine.—Changes of Temperature.—“Don't believe in the Climate!”—Beauty of the Flowering Woods.—Singular Quartz Hill.

White Hills, Bendigo, October 10th, 1853.

IN my last I stated that by a Government return of Van Diemen's land it was shown that upwards of 9,000 of the convict population of that island had made their way over to Victoria, largely originating those effects of robbery, murder, and demoralisation which I described. I promised you at the same time a striking example of the character and doings of escaped Norfolk Islanders on this colony; and here it is. I do little more than cut out the strange narrative as it stands in the Launceston and Melbourne papers:—

“THE MURDERERS BRADLEY AND O'CONNOR.—The *Launceston Examiner* gives the following detail of the dreadful doings of these murderers prior to their escape from Circular Head:—‘Henry Bradley and — O'Connor, passholders, the former in the service of Mr. George Kay, and the latter in the service of James Gibson, Esq., and receiving high wages, without any cause whatever left their employment on

Tuesday night, the 14th September, and proceeded to the hut of Mr. Jonathan House, and having tied up the two men, took a double-barrelled gun. They then visited the residence of Mr. John Spinks, tied up the whole family, and possessed themselves of another double-barrelled gun. After this they left for the farm of Mr. Staines, about five miles off in the forest, and after tying Mr. Staines and another man together, compelled a servant of the name of Smith to accompany them, saying they were going to Mr. John House's — the adjoining farm. On arriving there they took a man servant of Mr. House's with Smith, and proceeded to the cottage; a little boy, son of Mr. House, opened the door, when the ruffians spoke in a sharp manner, saying they would shoot him; this brought out of his bedroom Mr. Alfred Phillips, a relative of Mr. House. The runaways demanded Mr. House, and to be shown into his bedroom. They tied Mr. Phillips and the man servant together by the legs, necks, and hands, and forced them into the bedroom of the daughters. Mr. House, on hearing what was going on, escaped out of the window, and ran off to the next farm for assistance. Bradley ran round and fired two shots, which fortunately neither took effect. Bradley came back again, saying the — fellow had got off. O'Connor then replied that they would not be disappointed, and immediately discharged both barrels at Mr. Phillips, through the neck, causing instant death; and this dreadful deed in the bedroom, and in the presence of Mr. House's daughters. It is believed these men originally went with the view of taking Mr. House's life, considering they would possess themselves of a large sum of money — in which they were mistaken, only getting about 5*l.*: Mr. House having made it a rule not to keep a large sum in the house. Shortly after committing this sad act of violence on a most respectable, unoffending young man, in the prime of life, and throwing a highly respectable family into the greatest alarm (and which has since caused them to break up their comfortable home and to come into the township to reside), they started off and called at the farm of Mr. Atkins, near the Black River. Only Mrs. Atkins being at home, they ordered breakfast, and told her they had taken to the bush, which she would not believe, having several times seen the man Bradley — O'Connor only having been a few weeks here, and in no other service but Mr. Gibson's. They then crossed the river, and called at the hut of Mr. William Medwin: on this occasion only Mrs. Medwin was at home; they took another gun and a small quantity of provisions, and proceeded towards Table

Cape. Near this place they suddenly met a constable and another man, coming from Emu Bay to Circular Head with the mail from the schooner *Ariel*, wrecked at Emu Bay. The constable endeavoured to ascertain some particulars of these men, when they both fired and shot the constable through the arm; the night being dark, the constable and his companion managed to get off through the scrub, notwithstanding several shots were fired at them.

“The *Cornwall Chronicle* adds to the above narrative:—  
‘Both these murderers are from the Ocean Hell.’”

These devils incarnate having reached Circular Head, Van Diemen’s Land, we next have the account of the mate of the schooner *Sophia*, which was lying in the river *Inglis* then, and of the manner of their taking possession of that vessel, and compelling the master to carry them over to Victoria. The narrative reads like some of the simple details from the log-books of vessels which fell in with pirates in former days:—

“Schooner *Sophia*, River *Inglis*, Port of Circular Head,  
“Thursday, 15th September, 1853.

“1 P.M.—Whilst the crew were all at dinner, the schooner was hailed from the other side of the river by a gentleman named *Wigmore*, requesting a passage across. There were six other men along with him. The schooner’s boat had frequently given him a passage over before. The master, rather than disturb the men at dinner, asked *Mr. Jones*, the supercargo, to go in the boat with him across for *Mr. Wigmore*. The boat returned, bringing all the seven men in her. By this time the crew had finished dinner, and came on deck, a little astonished at the appearance of things there. One man stood aft, by the entrance to the cabin, with a double-barrelled gun in his hand; another stood by the main hatch, with a rifle in his hand; five men stood by the mainmast, among whom was *Mr. Wigmore*, with their hands tied together (by way of being handcuffed). One of the sailors asked what was the meaning of all this, and he with the rifle said, ‘we should see directly.’ Shortly after, he with the double-barrel looked over the quarter, and gave orders for the master’s hands to be untied, which was done by *Mr. Jones*, who, with the master, was still in the boat alongside. He was then told to come on deck, when he with the double-barrel told him that he and his mate were two ‘lifers,’

and all that they wanted was liberty, and that they were determined to have, at whatever price they bought it, as their lives were already forfeited. He also told the ship's crew that on the very first appearance of treachery towards them on the part of any one, the 'master's life' was to be the first forfeit. He then asked which was the master's cabin, and what firearms were on board; on being told, he then ransacked the cabin, taking possession of a six-barrelled revolver, three pocket pistols, all the ammunition, and about eighteen or twenty inches of lead pipe which lay in one of the lockers. He then told the master he might go where he pleased about the ship, and that the crew were to go about their duties in getting all ready to start from the river as soon as possible. He also allowed Mr. Wigmore, and the other four men who were handcuffed, to be untied and go below, the weather being bitter cold at the time. About 4 p.m., whilst a boat with three carpenters, who were employed at a wreck on the other side of the river, was passing our stern, they were told by him with the double-barrel (who kept sentry on the quarter-deck, whilst he with the rifle performed the same duties forward), that the captain wanted them. One of them replied that they had no time at present, but that they would call on their return. He levelled his gun at them, and told them that they must come now. They came on board, he telling them that it was war time, and that he pressed all who came in his way. Previous to this, whilst the master was still in the boat alongside, handcuffed, there had come to the beach, close alongside, Mr. and Mrs. King (the farmer from whom the cargo was taken), and another female, who looked astonished at seeing two men on board with guns in their hands, and Mr. Wigmore and the others standing by the mainmast. He with the rifle tried to persuade them to come on board, but they soon went away. About six, p.m., he with the double-barrel said, 'he would try a bit of a game,' and called Mr. Wigmore out of the cabin and ordered him to write a note to the Rev. Mr. —, who lived with Mr. King, stating how matters stood with regard to himself; also stating, that if there was any attempt made in the morning to detain the schooner, it would be taken for granted that the news had spread through Mr. and Mrs. King, and that he (Mr. Wigmore) would be shot before their eyes in the morning. The note was written, and despatched by the cook, who was given to understand that if he did not return in half-an-hour, the master was to be shot dead at the expiry of that time. The cook returned within that time, bringing a verbal answer, to the effect 'that

there would be no measures employed against them from that side the river.' Previous to those below going to sleep, they were warned by him with the rifle, not to come nearer him during the night than the length of his piece, in case they got the contents of it. He also told them, that if they heard any firing of arms in the course of the night, they were by no means to come on deck.

"*Friday, 16th September, 1853.*—The wind having changed from N.E. to S.W. About 8 o'clock A.M., he with the double barrel called the master to the gangway, and told him that he now believed it was a fair wind, and that the schooner would be off as soon as the tide made. The master pointed to him the heavy sea that was setting in from the N.E., and the great surf on the bar, and gave it as his opinion that it was almost impossible to start that tide at least; to which he replied, cocking his piece, that he would have no humbugging, but that if there was the least possibility it was to be attempted, at whatever risk, 'or,' said he, 'I won't say what I will do.' About 10 A.M., partly unmoored, making ready for starting, I, James Jarvie, told him with the rifle that we must replenish our stock of water before we started; to which he replied, that all the extra hands were to be landed as soon as we got clear of the river. I still reasoned with him, and told him that there was not enough to start with. He asked how much was on board. I pointed to him the small cask, telling him it was barely half-full, and told him, in a jocular manner, that we might as well be shot beforehand as start without water, and perish for want of it. He replied, he would speak to his mate about it, which he did. After a good deal of 'confab' to and fro, I proffered to go with him to a small creek of fresh water almost opposite, but he and one of the seamen went, and got a supply.

"About 10 A.M., he with the double barrel still insisting on the master to start that tide, against all his persuasions to the contrary unmoored, set sail, got as far as the bar, got into the surf, bumped, lost steerage-way, became unmanageable, and stranded. Got out anchors to keep her in midchannel, but the heavy sea setting in from N.E. dragged the anchors, and laid her almost broadside on to the east shore. Shortly after, he with the double barrel called the cook on deck, tied his hands behind him, and fixed him to the larboard main swifter shroud. At the same time, Mr. Wigmore stood close aft on the starboard side. (Whether placed there by them or not, I can't say.) He with the double barrel stood with his piece loaded and full-cocked by the larboard fore-topmast backstay; and he

with the rifle, also loaded and cocked, between the main-hatch and starboard gangway. The cook was then ordered to report what was said and done on his embassy on shore to Mr. King's the night previous. He made the same statement, I believe, —almost word for word—that he had done when he came on board; upon which he was unfastened. Had he deviated materially from his first story, he was to have been shot by the double barrel, and Mr. Wigmore was to have fallen by the rifle, as he with the double barrel told the master that he had been of opinion that the stranding of the schooner had been a pre-concerted plan between Mr. King and him, through the cook carrying a private message and answer to and fro, along with the note; but that now he was partly inclined to think that nothing of the kind had happened. He, however, ordered the master to get the cargo thrown overboard, and to use his own skill in getting the schooner off next tide, 'or he would not say what he would do!' Turned to, and hove the greater part of the cargo overboard, during which time people began to flock in numbers about the beach. Towards noon (on average), there were not less than forty to sixty (including both sides of the river), who kept up pretty smart firing, with little intermission, until sunset, when the tide drove them from the covert of the rocks, and a wreck which had served them all day as a battery. About 11 P.M., after much trouble, got the schooner into midchannel, warped out abreast of Table Cape, sent Mr. Wigmore and four others on shore in the carpenter's boat, one of whom was to fetch her back for the remaining three. Waited two or three hours; master proposed sending the schooner's boat on shore with them, and the two sailors to bring her back. He with the double barrel would not allow it, but allowed half-an hour longer to wait the return of the other boat. Half-hour expired—no return; weighed anchor, proceeded towards Port Phillip, one or other, or both, continually prowling about the decks, with the remaining three pressed men on board. Monday, 19th. Sent them on shore—the two bushrangers, with the two seamen belonging to the schooner—near Cape Schanck, in the afternoon. Tuesday, 27th. No account of the boat and the two men belonging to the schooner.

“ JAMES JARVIE, Mate, schooner *Sophia*.”

The most amazing thing in this statement is the arrant cowardice of the master and men, nine in number, if cowardice it were. That this number of people should

allow two fellows, one only armed with a double-barrelled gun, and the other with a rifle, to tie them up and keep them in subjection from Thursday at noon till the following Monday, is one of the most extraordinary things in the whole history of rogues and dastards.

The Mayor of Melbourne, before whom the master of the schooner was brought, on the charge of conveying over these fellows into the colony contrary to law, most severely and most properly upbraided him with this cowardice. It appeared that on one occasion one of the convicts slept a whole day, and therefore there was only one for the whole crew to deal with; yet they dared not attempt it. Moreover, one of them went on shore, and the other was left in the hands of the whole crew, except the one who accompanied his comrade on shore; yet even then they dared not move. The fellow told them that he could shoot fourteen men without re-loading; and they were so frightened as to believe it, or pretended to be so. For, after all, one cannot avoid believing that there must be something more than cowardice in the affair, and that the scoundrels had bribed them with the plundered money to carry them over; for it is well known that such a trade goes on.

Being put on shore, they soon made their appearance at the station of Mr. Balcombe, whose family fortunately escaped injury from them. Soon after they arrived at Brighton, and went to the house of a Mr. King; tied him fast, and made his eldest boy go with them to show them where their horses were, on which they wanted to make their escape. They were at plough in a field near. On coming up they told the ploughman to take them out. The man thinking they were in joke, seeing his master's son with them, told them to come again at dinner-time. Without more ceremony they shot the man, leaving him, as appeared, mortally wounded. When the man felt himself shot, he asked them what they had shot him for.



They only replied, "There's one less!" mounted the horses and rode off. The Melbourne *Argus* thus continues the narrative:—

"It is with infinite gratification and satisfaction that we announce to our readers the capture, after a severe struggle, of the two ruffians who have, since their escape from Van Diemen's Land, been committing murder and robbery to an extent quite appalling. To proceed at once to give a history of the capture of these bloodthirsty wretches, it will be necessary to state that since the assassins attacked the unfortunate man at Brighton, the whole police force of the city, the detectives as well as the mounted troopers, have been indefatigable in their endeavours to bring to justice these daring and hardened Vandemonians. A party of five troopers on Saturday received information that two men, mounted on horseback, answering the description of the bushrangers, had travelled in the direction of the Deep Creek. They were traced by this courageous band as far as Wright's public-house, but had turned on their steps and re-traced the road, proceeding the same night as far as Jackson's Creek. On the Sunday morning they reached Gisborne, where those in pursuit met Mr. Nicholson and Cadet Thompson, who joined the party and went to the Black Forest Inn, having received information that the men had gone in that direction. The landlord, Mr. Hunter, had observed them to pass about two hours before those in pursuit arrived, and they scoured the forest for some five or six miles round, but without success. They then rode on to Carlsruhe, and reached Mr. Dunsford's station on the following morning. Here they received more intelligence, and pushed on as far as the Five Mile Creek, where they were disappointed, and discovered they had lost the track of the men they were so anxious to secure. Returning to Dunsford's Station for horses, but being unable to procure any, they went to Kilmore, to Kane's Station."

Here they met with another party of police from Kilmore, who had been at Mr. Clarke's station, where you will recollect that we called. Here the villains had been, and asked him if he wanted two shepherds. He said, "No!" and was turning to re-enter his house, when they fired at him in the same reckless way, and put a bullet through his hat. His gardener, at work near the house, rushed up to his assistance, and the bushrangers shot him

through the chest. Mr. Clarke had six shots fired at him, but none actually hit him. Then they went to one of the huts, "stuck-up" seven men, and cast a quantity of bullets with some lead that they found.

"The police thus arriving at Kane's station, and going to the door, and inquiring whether they had retired to rest, were answered that all the inmates had been tied up by two bushrangers. The door was burst open, and eleven men were found tied up. The bushrangers had been some hours accomplishing this daring deed, and had slept in a shepherd's hut, which they had bored with port-holes for their defence in case of being attacked. As they were being unbound, one of the inmates cried out, 'There are the bushrangers!' and immediately shots were fired by two men who were some thirty yards from the door. Other shots followed, and Cadet Thompson was shot in the left breast; the ball, passing through his body, lodged in the wall behind him. Trooper Ostler, who was one of the most active in the pursuit, then saw a large and a small man, and he immediately fired his pistol at the tall one, whose shot had taken so fatal an effect on Cadet Thompson. He then fired at the shorter man, who was taking away his horse; and the other man cried out to his comrade, 'Come on, come on.' Ostler then ran out, and said, 'Let us take the devils,' and the bushrangers rode off. The horses belonging to the other troopers had broken away, so that they were without means of pursuit. They then gave the alarm at Kilmore station; and at twelve o'clock the same night Sergeant Nolan, three constables, Dr. Pearce, and Ostler went on to Mr. Cairn's, where they procured horses, and there learned that the bushrangers had robbed a tent close at hand, taking away with them all the provisions they could lay their hands on. In a short time the party came upon four men, two on horseback, the others being on foot. Two of these turned out to be the bushrangers, one of the men being mounted on Ostler's horse. The party then rode on as fast as they could, and succeeded in overtaking the two villains about three miles up the road. They instantly turned, and fired. The shots took the skin off Mr. Nicholson's cheek, and wounded his horse in the neck. The pursuers fired a volley, but without effect; and Sergeant Nolan struck O'Connor (the bushranger) with his sword, which he adroitly managed to receive on his gun. O'Connor was then knocked down, Mr. Nicholson endeavouring to secure him; Ostler in the meantime succeeding, with

the assistance of his comrades, in securing Henry Bradley and another, whom he did not know. This man Bradley turned out to be the other bushranger who had made his escape from Van Diemen's Land with O'Connor. In the *mêlée*, before the capture was accomplished, a good deal of firing took place between the parties; and no less than four pistols were found upon Bradley, who resisted with much determination, till Ostler threatened to blow his brains out if he did not surrender. They were then taken by their captors to Cairn's station, and on their way confessed that they had shot five or six persons in Van Diemen's Land before they had visited this colony. On their voyage to Port Phillip, they said that their schooner had run ashore, and the police had attempted to board them, but they had beaten them off, and made their escape. They added, that they had bailed up twenty-eight men at one time, since they had landed in this colony, and that Bradley had shot one of them through the body; that he had shot King's servant man at Brighton, as well as the gardener at Clarke's; and that O'Connor had shot Mr. Clarke through the hat. Thus, then, ends a faint description of this courageous capture of two most bloody-minded and black-hearted villains that have fallen into the hands of justice. We are sorry to add, that the unfortunate Cadet Thompson lies without any hopes being held out of his recovery."

Now there, I think, you have an account of as completely demoralised a couple of scoundrels as the annals of crime can furnish; and having read it, what must be your opinion of the Ministers of England who, with a full knowledge of such things, not only continue to send over the hardened convicts of the mother country to Van Diemen's Land, whence they pass over at the rate of 9000 in eighteen months to Victoria, but have actually ordered the Ocean Hell of Norfolk Island—that place of horror, to which the most diabolical and incorrigible monsters in human form, those who are too villanous for the ordinary chain-gangs of Sydney and Tasmania, have been sent—to be broken up, and this pestilence of incarnate devils to be carried to Van Diemen's Land!—Have not only determined it, but have already partly carried it out; for no less than 303 of these monsters were shipped to

Tasmania in 1852, and there are 313 more remaining who are to follow.

All the murders which these malignant and blood-thirsty wretches will assuredly commit in this colony will be justly chargeable on those Ministers. Surely the account of these two Norfolk Island marauders will startle them from the completion of this project; if not, it is to be hoped that the people of Tasmania will follow the brave example of the people of the Cape of Good Hope, and refuse to receive them.

I am glad to see that three of the bushrangers who robbed the escort are sentenced to be hanged; and I sincerely hope that they will hang them all, as of course they will these two Norfolk Islanders. Since I have come out here and seen the *quality* of the scoundrelism which abounds here—that which has passed through the *annealing* process of home correction and transportation—I begin to grow Carlylish, and to think, “once a scoundrel, a scoundrel for ever,” and that the only thing is to squash them as we do snakes and scorpions. As for condemning these fellows, with hearts of the nether millstone, to the roads, as has been the practice here, that is only to make them thoroughly reckless, for they make themselves certain that they shall escape one day or other—and they do escape too.

The so-called Captain Melville, one of this gang, has escaped several times. And now he makes a fine speech to the judge, and tells him “that he dies an innocent and injured man,”—this, too, while his own accomplice gave evidence against him, and while his share of the booty is found upon him!

One of these escort robbers, named Wilson, who was identified by one of the police as the man who fired at him, appears by the description to be, without doubt, our friend the scout. Here he turned up again, the same middle-sized fellow, in the blue shirt, corduroy

trousers, and scarlet comforter round his head. You don't often see people with a scarlet comforter round their heads. But here is this man in the very same costume, just on the same road, belonging to the same gang—visiting our tent over night, and assisting to rob two ladies and their man servant the next morning on the same spot; and in a few days afterwards figuring as one of the most daring rascals of the escort assailants. It is some comfort to know him hanged at last. From the murderous character of this man, and the sight I had of the one taken and brought to Bendigo—a huge, desperate-looking villain—and the ferocity they displayed in attacking the escort, it is to me a miracle and a perfect act of Providence that we escaped a deadly contest with them.

From these annals of highwaymen, let us turn to a few miscellaneous and more agreeable characteristics of the diggings.

Amongst these should not be omitted the musical tendencies of the diggers. The accordion seems their favourite instrument; and every evening as it grows dark, the sound of these instruments is heard from tents more or less remote. Here one tones out slow, wild, and dreary; there strikes up another, brisk and joyous: one seems inspired by solitary remembrances of home and past friends—the other of present success. There are all sorts of degrees of skill; and occasionally the flute, the fiddle, and the bagpipe vary the concert, and tell of different nationalities, and even fortunes.

One instance of fortune I may state which, however, certainly did not reach me through music:—

Many years ago I knew a most worthy and upright man, a member of the Society of Friends in Derbyshire, named John Chambers. One of the last times that I recollect seeing him, there was with him a sturdy little boy, his son, and bearing the same name, then about eight years of age. Being rather boisterous and self-

willed about something, a person present said that "naughty boys would be sent to a naughty place." The answer which the little fellow gave I never forgot, as it was indicative of a bold and independent character: "Very well; and if you send me there, I will kick the door down."

This high-spirited boy grew up, and went away to Australia. How he had fared I did not know; but he had been true to his word, and had kicked down all the opposing doors and bars to fortune. He had settled at Adelaide as a smith and wheelwright, and married a very excellent wife. He was doing well when the wonderful news of the gold discoveries of Victoria reached him. At once he set out, reached Bendigo at the very commencement of its golden wonders, and taking up his abode near Golden Gully, had been labouring away in his vocation. I found him a substantial man, with a shop full of work people, still retaining the peculiarities of the Society of Friends, and highly esteemed by all who knew him. After two years' business on the gold fields he talks of retiring; and it is said with at least 12,000*l.* as the fruit of it. He was more than satisfied, and seemed anxious to get away before his children could be contaminated with the demoralising influence and example of a digging.

He told me, that on one occasion he sent a man with a dray and a team down to Melbourne for iron, and the man sold iron, team and dray, altogether, and went away; that he had since met with the man, but had never prosecuted him. Another time, getting up one morning, he found one of his men and the housemaid missing, and with them a box containing his money and some papers. Amongst other things were 100*l.* in sovereigns, and 1000*l.* in bank notes. While he was standing in his first surprise at the circumstance, a neighbour came in and said, there must have been a robbery somewhere, for there was a box lying in the road, with a quantity of papers

and parcels lying all about it. He ran out to the place, and found not only the box and papers, but the parcel of bank notes, which the thieves had not discovered to be money. They had only taken the 100 sovereigns!

This walking off with loaded drays and teams is by no means uncommon. The squatters, where our horses are, had precisely such an occurrence; and the other day a storekeeper at Adelaide Gully lost a loaded dray of goods, taken away from his door in the night, and nine horses at the same time; the store having, moreover, been broken into, and its most valuable property stolen, amounting altogether to 6000*l*. The family must have been unrivalled for sleeping, for no one of them heard anything during the transaction. In neither of these cases were the thieves ever heard of again.

Amongst the many curious modes of making money here, none, I think, surpasses the following:—A surgeon told me that he went one day into the tent of a brother medicus, on the Bendigo, just as a patient was going out.

“I have been stopping a tooth,” said the surgeon.

“Do you get good cement here?” inquired my friend.

“Admirable!” replied the surgeon. “I saw an old gutta-percha bucket selling in a lot of old tools one day at an auction. I bought the lot for the sake of the bucket, which cost me five shillings. I have already stopped some hundreds of teeth with the gutta-percha at a guinea each, and shall, no doubt, stop some thousands with it before the old bucket is used up. It is a fortune to me. My name is up for an unrivalled dentist, and they come to me far and near.”

Charlton and I the other day had rather an amusing adventure with a brandy-keg. We went to Mr. Fenton's station to see how our horses were going on. It was a fourteen miles walk on the Melbourne road. It was a fine day, and we enjoyed our walk extremely. For seven miles at least our way lay through the diggings; but

once clear of them, the country was pleasant. The people coming and going on the road, some walking with their swags, some with carts and bullock-drays, and others camping in the Bush with their great fires, reminded us of our own travelling days. We passed over the saddle of a steep hill some five or six miles on this side of the station, and were at once in a new sort of a country. Here the gravel, and quartz, and clay-slate suddenly ceased, and a granite district commenced. The granite rocks stood out of the ground here and there; but the country was beautiful with hills and slopes clear of rock, and as green as in an English spring. The piping-crows, the laughing-jackasses, the odd leatherheads, and the coach-wheel birds, all gave us their old music, and brought back pleasant memories of travel.

The station at which our horses are is an agreeable one, situated on a clear stream, and these green hills and woods. It is a prosperous one, too, for its vicinity to the diggings affords it a fine market for all its produce. Its mutton and beef produce as much as they would in England; while the whole station is held at a mere nominal sum—10*l.* or 20*l.* a-year. What an odd state of things—but what a very agreeable one for those who possess the advantage of it,—that as fine an estate as that of an English nobleman is held for that sum, while the very superfluous vegetables of the garden bring in about 800*l.* a-year! I have seen a man from this station going through the diggings with a horse and cart, the cart piled with cabbages, and a cabbage stuck on a broomstick as a sign that they were for sale; while diggers were running, as for the dear life, from all sides, to get a cabbage at the small price of 3*s.* 6*d.*!

Mr. Fenton has generally at least 200 horses grazing on his station, at 10*s.* per horse per week; yielding 100*l.* a week, or upwards of 5,000*l.* a-year, which cost him nothing but a man to watch them. And all this inde-



pendent of the regular profit of his sheep and cattle. Truly the squatter's lines have fallen in pleasant places, and they have substantial cause to endeavour to preserve and perpetuate their unrivalled advantages.

Yet the last holder of this station, and from whom it retains the name of Gibson's Station, made a miserable end. He used to drink three bottles of brandy by day and one by night, that being his regular quantity. He came on a visit there a few weeks before he died, and ran up a bill of 25*l.* for brandy at the Porcupine Inn near, and so finished himself off in a very *spirited* manner, and lies buried in the paddock.

On returning and crossing the ridge I spoke of, there were a set of men at work cutting a road through the ridge. They had a couple of sheep, which they had brought from a station for killing, tethered by a rope to a tree stump just by the roadside. At the sight of Prin, the sheep gave a sudden jump, snapped the rope, and began to make off. One of the men rushed up the cutting and very nimbly seized the rope attached to one of the sheep, but the other went off like a wild stag up the hill. Half-a-dozen men were soon in chase of it, and not very well pleased with Prin for frightening the sheep. But they soon had cause to thank him, for passing behind some bushes, they suddenly descried a keg of brandy, of four or five gallons. They lifted it up, smelt at it, said "It's grog, and no mistake!" and forthwith carried it off with them. This was a prize which at once put them into the best imaginable humour. It was, no doubt, intended for the so-called coffee-shop at the bottom of the hill, which, like most of these places, is in reality a sly grog-shop. And this was what they called a plant,—that is, the spirit was left there by the spirit-dealer for the people to fetch away when it was dark. The grog-carts—light spring carts—travel by night, and you can often hear

them passing at night when you camp near the road. The men were vastly delighted, not only with the brandy, but with the idea of the blank surprise of the grog-sellers when they came for the keg.

In our walk through the diggings we could not help noting the names of places and signs as indications of the character of mind of the people who give such names—Jackass Flat, Donkey Gully, Dead-horse Gully, Sheeps-head Gully, Tinpot Gully, Job's Gully, Poverty Gully, and Piccaninny Gullies without end. These, however, are not quite so bad as Murderer's Flat, and Chokem Gully.

There is a lending library close to the camp, with this emblazonment in great letters all along its side—"Baker's gold-diggers' Go-a-head Library and Registration Office for New Chums." It must be American.

The orthography of the notices which the diggers stick on trees by the roadsides is often curious, as,—“if This Meets the I of James Crakinton, He Will ear of His Frend Tomass fawks at mistre Snars Opposit The guvermint camp.”

“this Notice—if shold met the eey af george fremland or geo Terry, they Will find there frend Hennery grovener at Mr. Cordenes Coffee-Hause nere the Cammishaneres Camp, sine of the French Felag.”

Still more curious ones abound, but I have neglected to copy them. The other day Dr. Roche told me that he asked a digger, who came before him as coroner, what persuasion he was of. He replied, “A labourer.” “Yes, but what religion are you of?” The man said he did not know. “What was your father's persuasion?” “A labourer like me.” That was all he could get out of him. These are the men who give such beautiful names to places here, such as we have just quoted, and such as “New Chum's Gully,” and “Fiddlers' Gully,” which they say is forty miles beyond Hell, where all sailors and

fiddlers go; and this wit arises from the fact that "Sailors' Gully" here lies beyond "Beelzebub's Gully."

A funny little boy is watching me writing. It is little Tommy Fulton from Islington. He says he never heard of "Cock Robin;" nor does he know what a robin is, nor a sparrow. He is, perhaps, five years old. He never heard of "Little Red Riding Hood," nor of the "Babes in the Wood," nor anything of that kind. He told me one day that he had been to chapel. I asked him what for. He said he did not know. I asked him what they did there. He said they read and sung. "Did they not preach?" "Yes; a man got up slap at the back of the tent and preached." "What did he preach about?" "Oh! he did'nt know — he preached to God." As the schoolmaster is said to be abroad, it is to be hoped that he will take a fancy to visit the diggings.

Amongst the placards which attracted our eyes on this walk was one with immense letters, "EGGS! EGGS! EGGS! *Immense Reduction in Eggs!* EGGS now only ONE SHILLING EACH!" They were a few days ago two shillings each; and as I was talking with a gentleman in front of his tent lately, he suddenly exclaimed, "There! I have lost two shillings!" and he showed me that one of his hens had just laid an egg without a shell; a very common thing here, because they cannot procure lime, the whole neighbourhood being pulverised quartz and slate.

Pork is almost as precious as eggs. The scarcity of pigs has made it any price that people please to ask. A Jew of the name of Lazarus, at the Ovens, was tempted by it to begin feeding pigs; but being taunted for it by a drunken fellow, one day when Charlton was by, he snatched up a whole litter of young ones, and in a rage flung them without any care, and consequently with a terrific screaming, into a warehouse, where I suppose they would be kept close till they could be snugly dis-

posed of. An old lady near here sold two little ones for 8*l.*, and was congratulating herself on her good bargain when the butcher came back and said, "Ah! Ma'am, I've made a very foolish bargain—I've sold the pigs for 15*l.*; and if I had kept them only an hour longer I could have had 20*l.*" The poor old lady was so struck by *her own* folly that she was very near taking to her bed, and lamented to us grievously her ill luck.

One of the great nuisances at the diggings are the mice. These are English mice. They swarm on the diggings; and we find it one of the most difficult things in the world to catch them. I have made a great round amongst the stores, to purchase a few of those old-fashioned traps, consisting of a little log of wood with a hole in it, and a spring-bar to hang them; but neither these nor any other traps were to be had. I have, therefore, tried sundry improved traps, and tricks recommended, but without the slightest success. They destroy everything you have. They have torn up "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and made a mouse-nest of it. The other day I removed everything out of the tent, but in vain. The few mice that I could see scampered up the canvass, and went out at the eaves. At night there they were all again, as merry as ever, running over my hands and face, and waking me! I made up my mind to set up a cat; and cats here are 2*l.* 10*s.* apiece! When, lo! a lucky discovery!—the mention of which may be of service to others on the diggings—removing a bucket from a corner, into which had fallen a woollen jumper, I detected within it a whole tribe of mice! The hint was sufficient. Every morning we carried out the bucket, and let the dogs kill the mice so long as there were any left. We are now wholly free; and by this simple remedy so may everybody be, only letting the bucket-trap have something lying outside up which the mice may easily ascend.

Bendigo has been very gay lately with balls and fes-

tivals. The Anti-gold-license Association gave a festival in celebration of their victory over the Government; and I saw a large placard displayed in front of their office, with a broad mourning border, and the words, "OLD LICENSE IS DEAD!" The diggers have had two balls in aid of a hospital which they have lately built here by subscription. The large tent in which the ball was held was, it is said, tastefully decorated with foliage of trees and native flowers, and all went off very well. The tickets were two guineas, including admission for a lady. They had an excellent supper, and plenty of champagne. The band of the 40th regiment attended; and there was a complete medley of commissioners, doctors, storekeepers, and diggers, with their ladies, the latter of whom are said to have been very well dressed. Diggers in blouses were admitted; and their red and blue jumpers contrasted curiously with the military uniforms of officers and commissioners. They kept it up till six o'clock in the morning; a very prudent measure if they meant to get home without disappearing in the innumerable holes with which the whole place is honey-combed, as well as to escape what are called Bendigo Faugh-a-ballahs, the same class of mortals as M'Ivor Stickers-up and Balarat All-serenes,—in plain English, thieves. These thieves are the more bold from that easy escape which I mentioned just now—through bribery. They had a fellow here the other day, a notorious forger, who had committed endless frauds of that kind; but he escaped during the time he was out airing in the prison yard, under the surveillance of the police. There could be but one solution of the affair. And last week four desperate thieves escaped from the strong new prison at M'Ivor, no doubt by means of the same golden key.

Speaking of Bendigo festivities reminds me of our own adventures, in attempting to break our own rule of not going out to dine in the evening. We set out to a six

o'clock dinner at the camp: but as our horses were out in the Bush, and we were obliged to foot it, we soon found ourselves mid-leg in mud, and returned, and sent our apology to the commissioners in the morning. But yesterday Dr. Roche pressed us to dine with him, to celebrate Father Matthews' birthday. It was two miles; but as it was daylight at the dinner hour, and we were promised a moon to return by, we went. When we set out the evening was fine; but while there it began to rain, and rained furiously and incessantly till one o'clock at night. It then ceased, and we set out; but what a walk! The waters were out everywhere; and as the ground is like that over which Bunyan's Christian went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, full of pitfalls and slime-pits, many of which were now totally hidden by the water, it was a most perilous progress. The moon had long gone down: it was pitch dark; and it was impossible to move a step without feeling beforehand with my stick whether all was sound. Thus we threaded and stumbled our way between deep holes, and over heaps of muddy clay and stones, ever and anon wading to the waist in water along the high road. When we came to a bridge over the creek, we had to climb along some posts and rails to get at it, for all the approaches to it were under water. We did not calculate on travelling by *rail* quite so soon in this country.

After wading on thus, and losing ourselves in a wood, and then regaining our way, we arrived within five minutes' walk of our tent, and found ourselves cut off, beyond all hope, by the flood rushing along in a furious torrent where, as we went, we crossed without difficulty. So we had to retrace our steps to a bridge a mile back again. Our road here was worse than ever, for we were amongst pits innumerable; and we could hear them falling in all around us, their undermined sides plunging with a

most ominous sound down into the water. But, after all, we reached home at half-past-two safe and sound, after many a long wade, many a slip and slide, many a climb and leap; and have come to the conclusion that no one has a right to ask people to dine on the diggings, unless he engages to see them safe back again in a good stout dray and sixteen bullocks.

We have had violent changes of weather. We had sharp frosts in the nights, and on the 2nd of this month it froze the coffee as it stood within our fireplace. Last week, on the other hand, it became suddenly so hot that it was almost unbearable. The thermometer one morning at half-past-seven was at 92°. On another day it was 98° at noon in the sun, and this in a month which is the April of this latitude! All at once we had a thunderstorm, and the weather again was as cold as winter, the south-west wind blowing, and still continuing to blow, as cold as Christmas at home. These are the changes that try people. There is a very general feeling that the climate, however fine, is very trying to health. A very clever doctor here says that his wife, quite a young woman, has become ten years older in constitution in two years; and I met a very intelligent man lately, limping along on two sticks from the effects of rheumatism. As he lives in a good house, I was surprised, and expressed my surprise at the prevalence of rheumatism generally in this dry climate. "Oh!" said he, "I don't believe in the climate. I have been here ten years, and came over with a great number of people who looked far likelier to live than I did—and where are they?" He pointed to a cemetery near, and, with a significant nod, limped away.

I am very thankful to say that we all continue well; and certainly all nature now looks charming. It is spring. The woods are very gay now with flowers. There are

numerous species of acacias, from shrubs of a few inches high (*Acacia sertiformis*), to large trees loaded with bloom. Many of these are quite as handsome as the acacias we grow in our conservatories in England, and as sweet; and I have no doubt that I can this summer collect their seeds, as they have all pods. As they come out in succession they keep the woods constantly beautiful. The golden wattle and the common black wattle are now nearly over; but there is a smaller golden wattle with leaves like those of the oleander, just now coming out (*Acacia retinoides*); and in a few days the bushes of it along the creek will be complete masses of gold. It has a sweet but somewhat medicinal smell.

In the wet and most barren parts of the woods there is a shrub now in blossom with white starry flowers. It has scarcely any leaves, and looks like a slender sloe-tree covered with bloom, and vast extents of the woods are perfectly white with it. Besides these, there are thousands of buttercups in the grassy places, and yellow bachelor's buttons. There is a sort of heath, but not a true heath. It is the *Tetrathera ciliata*; yet to the eye it greatly resembles our *Erica tetralix*, and carpets the stony woods with crimson; and various orchideous plants very delicate and singular. This year we shall see the whole progress of the spring, and shall collect specimens of the plants in flower as far as we can.

While strolling yesterday through the woods, I climbed that very striking quartz hill that I mentioned before. It is certainly an extraordinary scene. The enormous mass of quartz has been heaved, by some subterraneous force, out of the ground, and lies actually on its surface, running along the top of the hill for about 200 yards, and about 20 yards wide. It is one solid mass as of white marble, and stands up in places in pillars of twelve feet high, and four and five square. That it lies



on the surface is shown by a hole which the diggers have sunk under it into the sand rock. But there are more of these wonderful snowy ridges behind in the woods; and ere long I shall visit and give you a more particular account of them. They all belong to those ridges which run from north to south through this country.

## LETTER XXV.

Tomming out White Hill Stuff. — Amazing Clearing made by the Diggers in one Year. — Total Disregard of Life by the Officials. — Pits in the Highways Eighty Feet deep! — Fearful State of the Melbourne Road at Bendigo. — Author gets it repaired, and what comes of it. — Experiences of a Coroner. — Corpse thrown by Officials into Catholic Chapel. — Drownings of Drunken Men. — Liabilities of a Dinner-party. — The System of Government on the Diggings a Mistake. — Practical Bailiffs better than impractical Commissioners. — Cost of this gold-lace Commission. — Government lets a whole Station for 10*l.* a-Year, and hires out of it a single Paddock at 500*l.* a-year! — Oats 1*s.* per lb., Hay 120*l.* a Ton for Commissioners' Horses. — Expenditure on permanent Buildings at the Diggings.

Bendigo, October 30th, 1853.

DURING the period included in my last two letters, a new phase of these diggings was showing itself, and growing into a prominent feature. There had been for some time a number of people digging the surface from some of the slopes about these White Hills; for this to six inches, and in some cases to a foot deep, showed considerable quantities of gold in it. Huge piles of this reddish earth, chiefly a mixture of small quartz and burnt slate, had been carted down to the creek; and men were busy washing it through toms, races being cut from the creek, and streams of water conveyed through the toms. One party had been collecting their pile all the last summer, amounting to some thousands of tons; and this winter they have been as busy washing it out. It is said that their aggregate proceeds will not be less than 4000*l.*

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that their profit has been considerable, though they have had to pay 10*s.* a load for its carting. The surface stuff, however, was

growing scarce, when suddenly the attention of the diggers became turned to the mountains of white, snowy-looking stuff thrown out of the deep sinkings on the White Hills. On testing it, some of it was found to yield from a quarter to half an ounce a load, and that ten loads might be put through in a day. It was calculated that, in parties of four or five, 5*l.* per man per diem might be made. Very soon the whole creek for miles was occupied by parties washing out this stuff; and their mates were very busy carting it down.

As we had both cart and horses, we therefore proposed to two gentlemen of the late Maclaran party to join us at a trial of this White-Hill stuff. We found a capital bend of the creek unoccupied about a mile lower down. We soon struck our tent, glad to quit the bald and noisy situation where we had been so long, for a quiet one in a green valley, and on the verge of the woods once more. We were on the other side of the creek, and near the iron-bark forest, and also near the fine, fertile, woodland plains down the creek. Here we could again keep our horses, at least in the day; and we soon built a bark stable for them at night. Our tent stood on a pleasant mount, with agreeable views up and down the valley—the White Hills before us, and the dark iron-bark ranges behind.

A woman, living in a tent near us, said, “We were the second party encamped here last year; and all within view, including the Seven White Hills, where the mines are sixty and eighty feet deep, and the strata through which you dig as hard as adamant, was one unbroken forest.” This may give you an idea of the rapidity of operations on these diggings, and how necessary it is, if a man means to get anything, to pitch head-foremost into the scramble at the first movement.

Little more than a year ago, the whole of this valley on the Bendigo Creek, seven miles long by one and a half

wide, was an unbroken wood! It is now perfectly bare of trees, and the whole of it riddled with holes of from ten to eighty feet deep—all one huge chaos of clay, gravel, stones, and pipe-clay, thrown up out of the bowels of the earth! So much has been done on this one forest in one year; and not only so much, but a dozen other valleys as large. Well might His Excellency express himself astonished, on his late visit, at what had been done in twelve months. I suppose there had not been less than 100,000 men at work on the field; and Golden Gully, Eagle-Hawk Gully, Iron-Bark Gully, and other gullies, had been rifled of their riches.

It is thus that a few months sees the most wonderful metamorphosis of the country where gold is. It is thus that one of those tremendous rushes, which takes place whenever there is the least rumour of success anywhere, brings tens and tens of thousands speedily together, like a flight of locusts, who tear up and leave the earth desert in a few weeks. You must certainly seize Time by his "padlock" in a digging, or he is gone. One glance over this immense valley from our tent-door,—this vast extent denuded of bush and tree, and exhibiting only rows of tents and confused heaps of yellow gravel—gives you an almost awful idea of the velocity with which a whole country may be stripped of its gold.

We soon made a tom, and threw a dam across the creek, supplying ourselves with a fine rush of water, and only wondered that no one had pounced on so fine a situation before us. We were successfully working away here, when a circumstance occurred which at once altered our plans, and deserves a detailed notice, because it affords a striking example of the manner in which the Commissioners discharge their duty on these fields, and the danger there is of by any means disturbing their apathic negligence.

I have alluded, a little while ago, to the strange dis-

regard of human life exhibited by these Commissioners, almost universally. On every digger's license there stands the strict prohibition of sinking holes upon any road, or of cutting up the roads through the diggings in any manner. This precaution is not only necessary for the preservation of the roads, but far more so for that of human life. But the regulation is almost totally disregarded, and wherever gold is to be got, the diggers cut up the roads without the slightest regard to either the convenience of the public, or its safety. You see the roads through the diggings entirely undermined, cut up, and obstructed, and the unfortunate draymen, and all who have to travel through them, seeking in bewilderment to find a passage over the heaps and hollows.

In innumerable places, in all the diggings, there are pits along the sides of the roads, and in the roads, of various depths, of from 10 to 150 feet, gaping, without the slightest protection, for any traveller in the dark to plunge into. And many a one, without doubt, has met a horrible fate there; many a corpse and skeleton lie at the bottom of these dreadful man-traps, whose fate remains, and will for ever remain, a mystery.

Yet all this is witnessed by the Commissioners, police, and magistrates, with the most perpetual and uninterrupted serenity. No effort is made to curb the deadly nuisance, no precautions are used to fence off or close up these open gulfs in the most public ways. The apathy appears to pervade the whole of the gold-fields, and the whole body of authorities; human life is a thing that they do not seem to attach the slightest value to; and I do not recollect a single exception to this singular insensibility, save in the person of Mr. Hood, at the Nine Mile Creek, Ovens Diggings. I there beheld, and beheld with wonder, stern denunciations of the practice, and menaces of the most rigid punishment of it, placarded everywhere by that gentleman.

The most flagrant instances of this culpable neglect, however, appeared to me those at Ballarat and Creswick's Creek, because the holes there ranged from 80 to 160 feet deep; and numbers of these holes, when deserted, stood gaping without any defence, to receive any one who passed. I shall not soon forget the manner in which we had to fight our way through Ballarat, amongst these holes, and over monstrous heaps of clay, the main road being thoroughly cut up for miles.

But still more frightful were the pits in the highway through that side of Creswick's Creek leading out towards Ballarat. In that highway there were numbers of holes, 80 feet deep, totally unprotected even by the ordinary heap of clay and gravel round them. This dirt had been shovelled to the side of the road, so that along the edges of the highways, on the part where foot-passengers generally walk, stood these gaping gulfs, one after another, with nothing in the world to give warning of them in the dark, or to prevent strangers plunging into them. They were deserted, and there can be no doubt, that if they were now descended into, bodies would be found in them, if they do not lie there buried under heaps of earth that have fallen from the sides as they caved in.

The slightest thing done might have guarded against such horrible catastrophes as must inevitably occur, and may yet never be heard of. If it were too much trouble to prevent their being made, or, having been made, to fence them off with post and rail, a huge branch thrust into the mouths of these pits, would suffice to make them palpable to approachers; as it is I have never seen in any other country on the face of the earth, such awful man-traps in the public highway, nor could have supposed such possible, and yet I was brought up in a country of mines and coal pits.

As we came last through Creswick's Creek, it was evening as we passed out, and when it was dark we met

a party of diggers approaching, quite strangers there. I should have felt myself guilty of their blood if I had not warned them of the succession of 80 feet deep pits in the road before them, which they could only escape by keeping carefully in the middle of the way.

So much for the general care. I shall now select a particular case, which will not only show the inconceivable neglect and apathy in this respect, but the result of attempting to remedy it.

As we took our horses out to Gibson's station, within about a quarter of a mile of the Government camp, we came to a portion of the great road from Bendigo to Melbourne, in a state which made us suddenly halt. About a furlong of it had been undermined in all directions; the tunnels made had been ten feet deep, and had now in a multitude of places fallen in, and these gulfs stood half full of water. It was impossible for any carriage to pass over it without tumbling into these abyesses, and their horses or bullocks being in danger of life and limb; you could not look on it without feeling that it menaced the most frightful accidents. The road was the direct high-road from Melbourne into the diggings, and though the people there knew well enough the state of the road, and had made a circuitous one amongst the heaps and holes of the dug-up gold-fields, from Golden Gully to near the camp, yet those coming fresh from Melbourne could know nothing of this, but were in daily danger of running into it in the dark, before they were aware. Not a single post or rail was put across at either end, to prevent the occurrence of such accidents.

We found, on inquiry, that this part of the road had lain thus for six months at least. That many representations had been made to the Chief Commissioner without eliciting the slightest attention. That the undermining of this road in this extraordinary manner had been the work of nine months. Golden Gully had been one of

the very richest parts of Bendigo, and the flat through which this road ran thence to the camp had been found so rich too that it had been dug up everywhere close to the very road itself. Now this circumstance, the richness of the ground, the avidity with which the field on both sides of this piece of road had been dug up, would have awakened the vigilance of any set of officers fit to manage a gold-field. No men regularly educated to the superintendence of mining operations could have sat nine months with their hands before them within a quarter of a mile of the scene, without taking, ever and anon, a close survey of this road to see that there were no subterranean encroachments upon it. But here were some half dozen commissioners receiving their 400*l.*, their 500*l.*, and 600*l.* a year, a superintendent of police well mounted, with a set of troopers well mounted, and a foot force excessively vigilant in collecting license-money: there was a surveyor of highways, and a camp surveyor,—and yet none of these gentlemen knew anything whatever of this active subterranean work, which all the world besides was fully aware of! What is more, they actually, more or less of them, every day rode over this very ground. Yet they could see nothing suspicious going on. The numbers of men crowding about the edges of the road; the unusually large heaps of earth that were thrown out along them, never attracted their attention, nor did the hollow sound of their horses' hoofs on the tunnels beneath them, some of which rose to within half a yard of the surface, ever strike their ears!

In gold-laced caps, and gold-laced uniforms, with white riding gloves and silver-mounted riding whips, and each with his trooper riding behind him, did these dainty young men caracol from day to day over this busy scene of subterranean labour, till the excavated ground actually tumbled in beneath them!

Can anything more strikingly demonstrate the utter inat-



tention of these young men to what is actually going on under their charge in the fields? At that period, too, the prohibition on the diggers' licenses was not merely that they should not dig up or undermine the roads, but that they should not dig within ten feet of each side. These young men did not even perceive that the tabooed ten feet on each side were gone! Some of the diggers who excavated this road told me with much fun and ridicule of these butterfly Commissioners, that they for nine months worked almost day and night under it, lest they should be detected and stopped, but that at last they saw that they could have undermined the camp where their tents stood, if necessary, and that they would never have found it out till their beds tumbled into the tunnels! Would they have been able to deceive a Sopwith or a Stevenson so? would they ever have attempted it? The find, they said, had been wonderfully rich, and that was evident by the way they had worked it, for large portions of the road were completely excavated and only propped with wood!

Feeling that it was absolutely necessary this huge man-trap should be removed before some terrible accident occurred, I took the first opportunity to mention it to Mr. Panton, the Chief Commissioner there. He said he was quite aware of it, and that it would have to be dug up entirely and re-made. I urged, the sooner the better. He replied that as soon as he got the consent of Government it should be done, and that the diggers, he did not doubt, would undertake it, if it were divided into separate claims, for the chance of what they might still find under it. I told him that I certainly would take a claim for one. He replied, "Very well, there were already fourteen claims for parties of four men each, applied for and promised." I desired him to put me down then for the fifteenth for a party of four. He did so.

Every week when I went up to the camp, I inquired what progress he was making, and he continued for some

time to say that he was pushing the matter forward. But two months went on, and there the road still lay in its frightful condition: and during these months I had seen enough of Mr. Panton to regard him as a most inert young man. He was represented to be only twenty-two years of age, and as having been an overseer in the bush on the station of his uncle, by whose influence as a member of the Legislative Council, he was said to be placed in this most important and responsible post of ruler of a population of 40,000 people, and manager of one of the largest gold-fields in the colony.

What I had seen, therefore, induced me to believe that nothing in the world was really doing in this affair. I, accordingly, urged the matter in stronger terms, representing the inconvenience that it was every day occasioning to the public, and the damage to person and property that it might occasion. He now took fresh ground, and said, that the obstruction did not reside with him, but with a Mr. Wilks, the Surveyor of the Highways, who resided at a station twenty miles off, and whose sanction it must receive before it could be done. That he had sent to him repeatedly, but could not get him to move.

This continued the story for another month, and on my again urging the matter, Mr. Panton very coolly said—“Ah, well! I have washed my hands of it; and I am quite happy to have nothing to do with it. I have reported it to the Chief Commissioner, and there I leave it.”

I then said to him, “Mr. Panton, the thing must not remain so. You will have somebody killed; and if you cannot get this little matter done, I am quite sure that I can. I am certain that if Mr. La Trobe knew the state of the case he would not allow it to remain thus. Shall I write to him?”

He said, “I wish you would.”

“Shall I tell him just what you say? That you have done all that you can, and that it rests with the Surveyor

of Highways? I would not wish to say anything that might implicate or prove disagreeable to you."

He replied again, "I wish you would do just that."

Accordingly, supposing that I was acting in full unity with him, I wrote a note to this effect to the Governor. By return of a few posts came this reply:—

"Melbourne, Oct. 10th, 1853.

"My dear Sir,—I thank you for your note of the other day. I am always glad to receive a hint of any public want which I can assist in remedying. I at once called for the report of the Chief Commissioner of Gold Fields, and the Chief Commissioner of Roads, and believe that orders have at once been given to do whatever is necessary.

"Believe me, my dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"C. J. LA TROBE.

"WILLIAM HOWITT, Esq."

I received this note at Mr. Panton's tent; showed it to him, and asked when he would proceed to set out the claims. He said, "To-day." I then reminded him that my claim was the 15th; and he said, "Yes, for a party of four." I remarked that that was quite right, and that as he knew the particulars, I thought I need not attend to see the claim marked out. He replied, to my infinite astonishment, "Well, I don't know that I would favour any one."

"What!" I exclaimed, "favour, Mr. Panton! I ask no favour! I ask only to be taken in my routine; but if it be necessary, I will attend to see it done. When shall it be?"

"This afternoon."

I and Alfred, my son, went, and waited the whole afternoon—no one appeared on the ground. I then went again to Mr. Panton: he excused himself on the plea of pressing business; but said, "At seven o'clock to-morrow morning, I will be on the spot with the Camp Surveyor to set out the claims."

At seven o'clock, accordingly, I and my son attended ; but what was our astonishment to see that already there was a large crowd collected about the Commissioners, Panton and Barnard, and that they had dispatched three-fourths of the business ! In fact, on going up to these gentlemen, Mr. Panton turned towards us very coolly, and said, " You are too late: the claims are all gone ! "

In the utmost astonishment I replied, " Mr. Panton, that is impossible. You cannot surely have given my claim away, when it was engaged three months ago. If you meant to give the claims away only on the spot, and to the applicants as they applied there, as a gentleman you should have said so. But even now, I am here at your time, seven o'clock, and you must have been at work long before seven. "

" I can only say, " he replied with cold hauteur, " that the claims are all gone. "

" Very well then, " I observed, " there is something about this proceeding that I do not understand ; but when you had so often confessed that you could not get this business done, and I have been obliged to get it done for you, I had a right to expect, if not preference, at least courtesy. "

Mr. Panton then assured me that the road was thrown open not in consequence of anything that I had done, but that he had resolved to do it himself.

I said, " What ! *had* you then the authority to do this ? And have you for three months declared repeatedly that you had no authority ? Did you all this time wrongfully lay the neglect on Mr. Wilks, the Surveyor ? Then your responsibility is far greater than I thought. But, at least, it shall be made plain here, who *did* get this road done. "

I took out His Excellency's letter, and read it to the assembled crowd. The looks of astonishment that arose were universal ; and while the Commissioner stood in

speechless confusion, I added,—“And now I will send an express to His Excellency, with a fair statement of the matter.”

On this, to my unbounded astonishment, Mr. Panton exclaimed—“Oh! you can have a claim, there are several yet!”

Such a display of utter disregard to truth I had never, at any time, or in any place, witnessed. But it turned out that the whole piece of road was divided into forty claims, and that five yet remained unappropriated! I took one, though that part of the road was well known to be so completely excavated, that it was but a matter of form. Even here Mr. Barnard, with the coolest insolence, endeavoured to shut me out of any one of those remaining, by offering them to the by-standers. However, I set my foot on the 38th, and said, “This, Mr. Barnard, is mine.” He said “Very well,” and went away.

But the strangest disclosures yet remained behind. When Messrs. Panton and Barnard were gone, an officer remaining on the ground, begged to look at His Excellency's letter, and said the whole affair was very curious. That the obstruction had never lain with Mr. Wilks, the Surveyor of Roads, who had nothing to do with it; that they always transacted any affair of this kind on the gold fields themselves, and that Mr. Smythe, the Camp Surveyor, then doing the work, was the person always employed.

I learnt also that while Mr. Panton had stated to me seven o'clock in the morning as the hour for giving away the claims, he had ordered the surveyor to be there at five o'clock, and was himself there at that time, and began giving away the claims as fast as possible. Still further, that the fourteen claims before mine were promised to Polish and Hungarian officers. That Mr. Panton had the day before ridden over to Beesring, eight miles off, where they were working, to desire them to be on

the spot at five o'clock, and then and there called over their names and gave them excellent claims; but that my name, the next on the list, was never called over. Still further, a Mr. Baker, a young man who went out in the same ship with us, informed us that that day, by accident, hearing of the distribution of the claims, he went to the camp *at twelve o'clock*, and asked Mr. Panton if they were all gone. To which he replied, "Oh no; there are several yet, there is No. 3., a very good claim you can have if you like." He took it and got 8 lbs. weight of gold out of it.

We found ours, as we expected, almost wholly undermined; but the original richness of the ground was shown by one small patch which was left, yielding about eight ounces. The rest being entirely ransacked, we abandoned the claim. The claim which we should have had in our due routine was calculated to be worth 500*l.*, which, therefore, was the sum which we paid for endeavouring to get this nuisance removed. 'Twas a striking proof, if any such proof had been wanting, of the truth of the universal opinion on the gold-fields, that no one could attempt to rouse the officials to the discharge of the most urgent duty, in any case, with impunity. To me it was a sufficient warning whilst I continued on the diggings; and "What," asked many of those who saw this case, "can you suppose is the treatment of the unfriended digger at the hands of these officials, if gentlemen who carry letters of recommendation from the Governor himself meet with this reception?" But these are every-day affairs: I only give this because, happening to myself, I can vouch for its truth.

While this little affair had been going on, Dr. Roche, the coroner, was striving manfully to disencumber his department of the weight of official ignorance and wrong-headedness which greatly embarrassed his labours: and, to the satisfaction of the whole digging public, with

success. While every ordinary trooper had a horse to ride, and every petty assistant commissioner had the keep of one and a man-servant allowed, with very little actual business but cigar-smoking, the coroner, with his almost incessant and arduous duties calling him to various distant points on the same day, was allowed neither horse nor man. No assistance at the inquests was allowed him, not even, on many occasions, the attendance of the necessary police. To bring the matter to a crisis, finding his representations unavailing, he determined, as he was placed in the position of a pedestrian, to perform the duties of his office as a pedestrian. Excessive as was the labour, he yet walked to every place to which he was called, and as there were frequently three or four cases of sudden death in a day in widely distant quarters, delay was the necessary consequence, and the consequence of delay—complaint. The answer to all these complaints was the same. The want of a horse. Instead of supporting him in his reasonable demand, the Commissioners and Inspector of Police seemed to take part against him; and there soon appeared now a greater chance that he would lose his office than gain his point, when a singular occurrence, and very illustrative of gold-field officialism, turned the scale the right way.

While the doctor was holding an inquest in Long-Gully, a man was found murdered on the Back-Creek. The inspector of police sent word to the doctor's tent of the fact. A gentleman, a guest there, told the messenger of the coroner's then engagement, but that he would inform him the moment he came in. The inspector, with a strange ignorance of the law and of his duty in the case, without waiting for the coroner to visit the corpse on the spot, and there collect the evidence regarding or illustrating the cause of his death, sent a cart and a horse, fetched away the body, about three miles, and shot it down like a sack of coals in the open front of the Catholic chapel close to the coroner's abode.

The Catholics, a large body there, were greatly incensed at the desecration of their chapel, and the priest rolled out the corpse himself. Such was the situation of affairs when the coroner came home. He made an effective representation of these facts to the Colonial Government, and the result was the dismissal of the inspector of police, and the grant of horse and man to himself: a triumph which gave the highest satisfaction to the public, there being on the field no officer more active or courteous than Dr. Roche.

Two or three drunken fellows will walk into deserted holes, and get drowned in a week. A great proportion of the sudden deaths here are through drunkenness, and these cases will continue; for I see that by the estimates, the Government is this year calculating on making a revenue of 900,000*l.* on the duty on import and sale of spirits! Nearly a million a-year duty on spirits for a population of 250,000 people! This exceeds everything in the world; and the *Argus* says truly that the population of this colony is the most drunken on the face of the earth, and on this system it is not likely to be any better. You cannot expect a government with such a temptation, being really earnest in suppressing drinking, especially on the diggings, the scene of the chief consumption of alcohol. Yesterday, a storekeeper of California Gully, in the absence of his wife, who was gone down to Melbourne for goods, was brought to the camp in a state of *delirium tremens*, from drinking. His friends gave him into the charge of the Commissioners for the safety of his person. But his person was so little thought of, that a considerable quantity of gold and money having been taken from him, and lodged in the Gold Office, he was suffered to walk away, and was soon after found drowned in a digger's deserted hole.

These are not very attractive features of the camp and diggings of Bendigo. In fact, in my letter to Mr. La Trobe, I told him candidly that, with the exceptions



which I named a short time ago, and to whom we may add Dr. Roche and Dr. Macrea, the colonial surgeon here, I did not believe that if he put the whole official body into an hydraulic press, he would be able to squeeze one tolerable soul out of them — a soul having that serious moral feeling in which duty could take root. Yet those who were here in Hermsprong's time say that it is even now far superior to what it was then. Then the informer had half the fine on the convictions for grog-selling, and even for the possession of wine and brandy in the house; and they were as keen as Australian flies after anybody who was not paying black mail. No gentleman could have a dinner party, but a policeman might look in at the opening of his tent, and, if he saw decanters on the table, presto! came a posse of these fellows, and carried off bottles, furniture, tent, and everything. The system of espionage, insult, and official outrage, fining, and dragging off in handcuffs was then in full bloom.

And, in fact, notwithstanding the mitigation which the late rebellion has produced, the more I see of the machinery of the diggings in these colonies, the more I am convinced that it is altogether raised on a false basis. It is a military despotism — and a military despotism of the very worst description, because administered for the most part by men who know nothing of military affairs. The mounted police are, to all intents and purposes, a body of cavalry. They are armed, dressed, and disciplined as soldiers; and are equivalent to our yeoman cavalry at home, except that they are on permanent duty.

The whole thing is a mistake, and a very mischievous one. The executive system of the gold-fields ought to have been a civil one — *civil* in two senses. Had there never been heard at home the grand sounding words — “The Chief Commissioner of all the Gold-fields,” like the Autocrat of all the Russias; “the Chief Commissioner of Bendigo, of Ballarat, &c. ;” “the Commissioner in Charge,

&c.;" but, instead of these, "the Chief Bailiff of the Gold-fields," "the Bailiff of Bendigo, of Ballarat, or elsewhere," there would have been a totally different class of men applying for and entering the service — men accustomed to mining or coal-fields, engineers and persons educated in practical business. Instead of a swarm of young popinjays in military costume, with gold-laced caps and coats, and galloping about with troopers at their heels — young ignorant fellows, who are much too fine and delicate to do anything; who dare not go where they ought to go, and that daily, lest they should dirty their coats, their gloves, or their fingers — we should have had plain men in plain clothes, well instructed in their departments, ready to make themselves useful amongst the holes and heaps of the diggings — to descend shafts, proceed along tunnels, and see and know what was going on. Those young coxcombs who have made such a piece of work of it here would have shrunk with horror from the names of bailiffs and under bailiffs, and would have found their way into some lazy, useless, official life or other, where they could not have insulted and irritated to outbreak a large, busy, and sturdy population.

One bailiff, one magistrate, a proper number of clerks, and a few police, under a good civil system, would do ten times the business and produce ten times the satisfaction of all this cumbrous and expensive array of people who do little except dress, lounge, smoke cigars, and pocket their salaries.

Take a glance at the cost and machinery of the diggings on the present plan, as published by the Government in its estimates: —

## CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF THE GOLD-FIELDS.

	Salaries.			Allowance for House Rent, &c.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Chief Commissioner -	1200	0	0	500	0	0
Assistant - - -	600	0	0	300	0	0
Chief Clerk - - -	500	0	0	250	0	0
Eight clerks, two at 300 <i>l.</i> one at 250 <i>l.</i> four at 200 <i>l.</i> and one at 150 <i>l.</i> - -						
	800	0	0	900	0	0
Accountant - - -	600	0	0	300	0	0
Three clerks, one at 300 <i>l.</i> , one at 250 <i>l.</i> , and one at 150 <i>l.</i> - - - -						
	700	0	0	350	0	0
Messenger - - -	200	0	0			
Allowance to the Chief Com- missioner in lieu of forage and travelling expenses -						
				500	0	0
<hr/>						
House rent, &c. - - -	-	-	-	-	-	3,100 0 0
Salaries - - - - -	-	-	-	-	-	4,600 0 0
<hr/>						
Total Chief Commissioner - - -	-	-	-	-	-	7,700 0 0

## ESTABLISHMENTS AT THE GOLD-FIELDS.

	£	s.	d.
Six resident Commissioners, at 700 <i>l.</i> -	4,200	0	0
Twenty-six senior Commissioners at 500 <i>l.</i> each - - - - -	13,000	0	0
Twenty-five junior assistant Commis- sioners, at 400 <i>l.</i> each - - -	10,000	0	0
Sixty clerks—six at 350 <i>l.</i> , six at 300 <i>l.</i> , twelve at 250 <i>l.</i> sixteen at 200 <i>l.</i> , and twenty at 150 <i>l.</i> - - - -	3,100	0	0
Six camp inspectors, at 300 <i>l.</i> each -	1,800	0	0
Seventy tent-keepers, at 8 <i>s.</i> per diem -	10,220	0	0
Thirty-one labourers, at 8 <i>s.</i> per diem -	4,526	0	0
Ten pack-horse keepers, at 8 <i>s.</i> per diem -	1,460	0	0
Fifteen drivers, at 12 <i>s.</i> per diem -	3,285	0	0
<hr/>			
Totals - - - - -	-	-	51,591 0 0

NOTE. — All officers and servants at the Gold-Fields are allowed tentage or quarters.

## INSPECTORS UNDER THE SLAUGHTERING ACT.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Six inspectors at the Gold-Fields, ranking as sub-inspectors of police, at 300 <i>l.</i> each per annum	-	-	-	1,800	0	0
Salaries on Gold Fields as above	-	-	-	51,591	0	0
Ditto of slaughter-house inspectors	-	-	-	1,800	0	0

## GOLD-FIELD POST OFFICES.

CASTLEMAINE.						
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Postmaster	-	-	-	300	0	0
Three clerks—Two at 200 <i>l.</i> and one at 150 <i>l.</i>	-	-	-	550	0	0
Tent-keeper, at 8 <i>s.</i> per diem	148	0	0			
Total	-	-	-	998	0	0
SANDHURST.						
The same as for Castlemaine	-	-	-	998	0	0
BEECHWORTH.						
Postmaster	-	-	-	250	0	0
Clerk	-	-	-	200	0	0
Tent-keeper at 8 <i>s.</i> per diem	146	0	0			
Total	-	-	-	596	0	0
BALLARAT.						
The same as for Beechworth	-	-	-	596	0	0
HEATHCOTE.						
The same as for Beechworth	-	-	-	596	0	0
WARANGA.						
The same	-	-	-	596	0	0
Gold-Field Post-offices,—total	-	-	-	4,380	0	0

## GOLD ESCORT SERVICE.

Two sub-inspectors, at 300 <i>l.</i> each per ann.	600	0	0			
Four lieutenants, at 250 <i>l.</i> each per ann.	-	1000	0	0		
Eight drivers, at 5 <i>l.</i> each per week	-	-	2080	0	0	
Thirty grooms, at 8 <i>s.</i> each per diem	-	-	4380	0	0	
Wheelwright, at 6 <i>l.</i> per week	-	-	312	0	0	
Total	-	-	-	8,372	0	0
Gold-Field expenses at per estimates, 1853	-	-	-	66,143	0	0

But this is not all, for we have, besides, a Judicial Service for the Gold-Fields, as follows: —

## DEPUTY SHERIFF, CASTLEMAINE.

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Deputy Sheriff - - -	500	0	0			
Clerk - - -	200	0	0			
Bailiff - - -	300	0	0			
Two Tentkeepers, at 8s. each per diem - - -	292	0	0			
<b>Total - - -</b>				<b>1,292</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## DEPUTY SHERIFF, SANDHURST.

Deputy Sheriff - - -	400	0	0			
Clerk - - -	200	0	0			
Bailiff - - -	300	0	0			
Two Tentkeepers, at 8s. each per diem - - -	292	0	0			
<b>Total - - -</b>				<b>1,192</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## DEPUTY SHERIFF, HEATHCOTE.

The same as for Sandhurst - - -				1,192	0	0
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## DEPUTY SHERIFF, BEECHWORTH.

The same as for Sandhurst - - -				1,192	0	0
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## CASTLEMAINE.

Clerk of the Peace, &c. -	350	0	0
Bailiff - - -	50	0	0
Tentkeeper, at 8s. per diem	146	0	0

## SANDHURST.

Clerk of the Peace, &c. -	350	0	0
Bailiff - - -	150	0	0
Tentkeeper - - -	146	0	0

## HEATHCOTE.

The same as for Sandhurst	646	0	0
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## BEECHWORTH.

The same as for Sandhurst	646	0	0
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<b>Total - - -</b>				<b>2,484</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total for Judicial Service</b>				<b>£7,352</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Still, we have no mention of Ballarat or Waranga, which must be charged under some other head, if set down at all. And, what is more, we have no account of the charge for police, which must be very heavy, the police for the colony being set down altogether at 327,099*l*.

One-half of these, at least, are employed on the diggings, or for them; and still, besides these, we have no account of the cost of forage for the horses employed in this service, which cannot be less than 20,000*l*. on an average for each digging. This may seem a large sum; but, from data which I shall have occasion hereafter to give, I am quite persuaded that it is not too much, when we recollect that the hay used costs from 60*l*. to 120*l*. per ton, and the oats often 1*s*. per lb., or 25 per cent. dearer than sugar. In fact, I know various station-masters whose quota each year of hay furnished to one individual digging is 6000*l*. or 7000*l*. each, being only one supplier out of many. And this, again, is independent of grass, which may be thought cheap in a new and unenclosed country. But one fact may show the fallacy of this idea, and the extraordinary mode which the Victoria Government has of doing business. A Mr. Simpson, on Charlotte Plains, holds a station from Government, on the usual terms of from 10*l*. to 20*l*. *for the whole*, and *relets a single paddock of it* to Government, to turn the horses of commissioners and troopers from Bendigo into, for the pretty little sum of 500*l*. per annum! That the reader may not misunderstand the affair, I repeat that the whole station is let for, at most, 20*l*. a year, and a single paddock retaken by the same party (the Government) for 500*l*. per annum. And all this time, be it remembered, that the Government could, if it pleased, take the whole station into its own hands, or enclose a paddock upon it, the enclosure being only of post and rail, the forest furnishing plenty of wood at hand. This, I imagine, is a transaction which stands, *sui generis* in the history of the world.

But, when the day of inquiry arrives,—as it must and will arrive, — when the present unboundedly lavish and reckless system here has scotched the wheels of Government, and public debt and deficit take their inevitable turn,—when committees of inquiry succeed unparalleled commissions of abuse,—then will this colony unfold such a tale of extravagance, outrage, insult to the people, and plunder of the public, as will stand unrivalled and alone.

For the present, mentioning only one other item of expense, that of permanent buildings on the ever moveable diggings, which are stated at from 30,000*l.* to 40,000*l.* on the average for each digging, we may sum up the chief heads of expense as follows :—

	£	s.	d.
Expenses of Commissioners and their Staffs, including			
Post Offices and Escort - - - - -	66,143	0	0
Judicial Establishment - - - - -	7,352	0	0
Police, 327,099 <i>l.</i> : say half for diggings - - -	163,549	10	0
Interest on 130,000 <i>l.</i> for permanent buildings at four gold-fields—Balarat, Bendigo, Castlemaine, and Ovens -	6,500	0	0
Hay, corn, &c. on six gold-fields, at 20,000 each - -	120,000	0	0
<b>Total - - - - -</b>	<b>£363,544</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>

So far from this being an exaggerated statement, I am convinced that numbers of miscellaneous expenses in this department will raise the total outlay in reality to the amount of the whole sum received from gold licences and escort fees, namely about 600,000*l.*; and that, if a fair balance were struck, the Government would find itself minus by the whole concern, as it is conducted.

The Government is committing a gross absurdity in raising permanent buildings on the diggings at the present enormous cost of labour. The diggings are moveable affairs; nothing can make them stationary; for one field is soon exhausted, and the diggers move off to new ones. The nature of a digging being, therefore, locomotive, the Camp, abodes, and offices should be merely temporary, and removeable at a short notice. It is not the diggings,

however, that the Commissioners are thinking of, but their own luxury and convenience; and as fast as they get up their houses, they find the diggings themselves are gone away. This is especially the case at Castlemaine, Bendigo, and the Ovens. You have all round the Government Camps these vast and worn-out diggings, the diggers having moved off to new spots; and the consequence is, that the Commissioners and police are cooped up in a camp from which the diggings have departed; and the grand area of these immense gold-fields is left, for the most part, to thieves, grogsellers, and murderers, to do their pleasure in. In a good civil system, which adapted itself to the obvious nature of the diggings, the Commissioners and Staff would locate themselves in the most populous quarters for the time being, and the police would be dispersed over the field in local stations, and have their several beats defined, and occupy every portion of it, as the police are diffused at home. Here, however, they are cooped up in a heap where they are not wanted, and are absent when there is most need.

There is one item in the above accounts which has particularly surprised me: that setting forth the existence of six inspectors of butcher's shops and slaughter-yards, with salaries of 300*l.* a-year each.

I certainly never suspected the fact; and the offals, garbage, &c., lying about and festering in the sun, as well as whole streams of putrifying gore, and mountains of bullocks' heads at the slaughter-yards, which send their fœtid gases on the breeze far and wide; would truly never cause you to dream of 1800*l.* a year being paid on the gold-fields for the prevention of such nuisances.



## LETTER XXVI.

Project another Visit to the Ovens Country. — Strange Quartz Rocks. Singular North and South Ridges. — Torment of Sand-flies. — Curlews. — Native Companion. — Pleasantness of the Bush. — Meet an old Acquaintance. — Horrible Language of Diggers. — Horse-stealing. — Theories on the Geology and Vegetation of Australia. — Vast Capabilities of very varied Products from this Country.

The Bush, near Bendigo, Nov. 2nd, 1853.

OUR curious experience of official management and *noli me tangere* temperament on the old road being terminated, we held a council as to our next movement. Our splendid dam on the creek was now occupied by others; and, indeed, the water was fast failing on the Bendigo, so that all operations on the creek must, of necessity, cease in a few weeks. What was still more admonitory of a move, was the warning voice of the medical men, who predicted the general prevalence of fever and dysentery on the Bendigo field during the summer months, and especially in November. The water during the heat of this month rapidly dries up; the vast space now cleared of every bush and tree, lays the whole surface open to the sun, which, striking on the bare heaps of gravel, makes the whole like one great oven. There is scarcely any water to be procured for household use, much less for washing gold; and, therefore, the diggers, at the approach of this season, hurry away to other diggings, where water is more plentiful; and it is already curious to see that where crowds of tents stood the other day, there now stand only solitary chimneys and the poles and blocks of trees over which the tents were stretched. The place looks like a destroyed

village, with only a few fragments of the abodes remaining.

We had planned, at this season, to make an exploring expedition in a north-westerly direction towards the rivers Loddon and Avoca. It was clear that the country in that direction was a gold country. All the new diggings and gullies at Bendigo tended more and more towards that quarter. We proposed to take sufficient provisions to make us quite independent of stores and even stations, for a couple of months at least, and so to advance leisurely through the bush, examining the creeks and gullies carefully as we went. There is no doubt that this would have been not only a very pleasant, but a very successful expedition; but so much had been said of the extension of the Ovens Diggings, and that they would prove the great summer diggings, that we had a curiosity to see them once more, and ascertain the truth. We knew that, at all events, we should find a healthy country, and abundance of cool, fresh water during the summer heats. There were creeks beyond that on which we had so successfully worked, that we had not thoroughly prospected; and we finally concluded to make one more visit thither.

Before, however, quitting our camping ground by the old road, we made a more accurate examination of the scenes around, or rather behind us. We first mounted once more to the huge quartz ridge on the hill above us. Afterwards we ascended the gully behind us, in the direction of Iron-Bark Gully, and came to other and still huger ridges of quartz. These stood up in rocks of at least twenty or thirty feet high. They were overgrown with a grey lichen, and, instead of the snowy lustre of the one spoken of, they resembled in hue limestone rocks. These quartz rocks, moreover, descended deep into the earth, and the diggers had dug down by their sides to a depth of twenty feet, or more, and had evidently found gold in their crevices. One party was resolved to get

beneath the mass, and had sunk a pit of seventy-five feet deep, but had not yet reached the base of the quartz rock.

No inconsiderable quantities of gold had been found in the interstices of these quartz rocks. Many rich specimens had been got from them; and there is no doubt that, ere long, when good quartz-crushing machines are introduced, all these vast masses of quartz rock will be pulverised, and a great supply of gold extracted from them. Near Eagle-Hawk we found other large quartz rocks running in a ridge over a hill, thence called Specimen Hill; so much gold having been found in these rocks, that they had been greatly knocked to pieces for specimens of gold in quartz. At the time of our visit, however, Government had resolved to let this ridge to a company, and had prohibited individual or promiscuous interference with it.

As I have said, these quartz ridges form portions of those singular ridges of rock which run from north to south over the hills of the gold regions here. A great portion of these ridges consists of clay-slate, or ferruginous sandstone, the strata being all perpendicular. It would seem as though some subterranean force, acting in this direction, had burst up the strata in these long north and south lines, and left them standing edgeways. They have a most singular appearance in the rocky woods, crossing the summits of the hills, and extending down the slopes, but disappearing in the valleys, being there buried by the alluvial soil. In the creeks, where the bare rock appears, you again perceive these ridges. They are always true to this one direction, and are nearly as good as a compass where they prevail; and you may trace them for twenty or thirty miles at a stretch, and, no doubt, they extend right across the colony. There are many of these ridges parallel to each other, and sometimes several of them occur within a short distance.

There are traces of fire, more or less, about them

everywhere; but, in some places, these appearances are much more intense than in others, and show the action of excessive heat. The quartz and ironstone are burnt of a deep red, and much of the burnt quartz is very friable. Some of the ironstone is very rich; and Mr. Chambers, the smith, told me that he had tried some lumps of hematite, so nearly pure iron that he could weld it out on his anvil. The quartz, the slate, the iron, and sandstone in these ridges, are in some places quite separate; in others, running side by side; and in others, again, fused and run into one another. I have specimens from these spots, exhibiting them in these various states.

We observed, with astonishment, as we went on, how the diggers had followed the traces of gold up the very hill sides, over the hills; sometimes cutting deep openings, which must have cost enormous labour, and following them down again into the open valley, where all was dug and thrown up in the wildest manner. Hill after hill, and gully after gully, we passed over, everywhere the trees felled, the ground turned topsy-turvy, deep pits and huge openwork delvings, as if they had been making reservoirs, with strange, rude machinery and dams for washing out gold. Everywhere, amongst the ravaged and desolated woods, tents and nondescript huts, and people leading a rude, wild sort of life, which no one can realise to himself without seeing it. At length we reached Adelaide Gully, where Alfred and Charlton had worked a good while; and most admirably have they behaved through the whole of our expedition, showing themselves firm, clear-headed, and industrious. It used to be quite affecting to me to see them during the winter starting off for this gully, five miles from our tent, loaded like two regular diggers with their swags, often very heavy ones. But the water here was drying up, and the diggers moving off towards the Loddon.

In our ride through the iron-bark woods here, our

horses were tormented with one of the greatest nuisances of the colony, the sand-flies. These flies are a kind of midge — small, filmy things, like the midges at home; but they are not only extremely keen, but excessively venomous. They are as numerous as the grains of sand in the sterile Iron-Bark ranges. They cover the whole ground in spring; and, as you advance, they rise up, and cover your horses' legs and chests, and puncture them in such a manner, that their legs are totally covered, in a very few minutes, with blood. The horses, of course, become quite frantic with them, not being able to stand still for a moment; so that it is no trivial matter to go into a wood with them at this season. As the summer proceeds, I expect the birds eat them up; but in spring they are countless. Their effect on men is much worse than on horses. Wherever they bite the part swells excessively, and becomes a great, livid boil, as large as a walnut. I was bitten on the wrist last summer, in riding on the Sydney border, by one. The next day my hand was enormously swelled; and then the swelling settled into one of these boils, which are very sluggish and difficult to cure. This took more than a month, and would not heal till treated with caustic. Another, this spring, has bitten the other hand; and the venomous bite has gone exactly through the same process; and they have left two livid scars, which will no doubt remain for life.

But where do all the flies hide themselves in winter? The Entomologists say they all die, and those which appear at spring are hatched from the eggs they leave. This is difficult to believe, especially that the great fat beef-flies, which come out on any suddenly warm day, are just hatched. Yet, if they only hide and sleep, the mystery is quite as great; for none of us have been able to get a single glimpse of them in their winter retreats. We find all other insects in hollow trees, and under the bark of trees, in winter; spiders, beetles, ants, centipedes, and all

sorts of things, but not a single fly, though there are such myriads in summer.

There is a bird here which is almost as great a mystery to us, and that is the stone curlew. These birds abound all along the creeks and water sides, and during the night make the loudest and most extraordinary cries. They begin solo fashion at first; one bird crying at slow and measured intervals,—“Curlew! curlew!”—then going on more rapidly,—“Curlewu! curlewu! curlewu!”—and then the others join in, till the whole flock is clamouring together, apparently in a thoroughly frantic condition. They then are silent for a short time, only to renew, ever and anon, their singular chorus, which they keep up all night, often close at hand, but are scarcely ever to be seen. Even in the very heart of the diggings, where there was neither tree nor bush, and where the ground was all turned up, and the water converted to a mass of yellow mud, they would come and give us these nightly serenades; though in the daytime not one was ever seen there. They came from the woods at night, attracted by some food or charm that was invisible to us.

Another singular bird, which deserves a mention here, is the native companion, a species of stork, standing about a yard high; some, I believe, are more. It something resembles the adjutant, has a very stately walk, and seems to wear a little crimson cap at the back of its head. It is very sociable, and takes strong attachments, whence probably its name. There was one on the Bendigo at a store, and running about on the diggings, often apparently in imminent jeopardy from the huge dogs who pursued it; but still it was there when we left. There was a very large one also at a station in the neighbourhood, which had taken a very strong attachment to the stockman; it followed him about in his rounds in the woods. When he came out in a morning, it began to leap and flap its wings, and run round him, making the most extraordinary cries; it would

then take great lofty leaps, as high as the man's head, cutting the oddest figure with its long legs, its flapping wings, and its gaping beak. The stockman would then say,—"Come along, mate, let us go to the horses;" when he would leave off his capering and noise, and walk soberly along by his side. When the man went up to his horse on one side, the bird would go up to him on the other to stop him, but if the horse offered to come towards him, he hopped off very nimbly, and sought protection by the man; wherever the man went, there he was stalking along at his side.

You will recollect that, in hunting after our dog Buff, I oddly enough stumbled on Mr. Berkeley, a friend of Mr. Andrew Cross's. He was camped in the bush about a couple of miles below Bendigo, on the way to the Goulburn. A young man of the name of Duncan, who was engaged in collecting the sheep-skins from the butchers on the diggings, on account of the wool,—a profitable speculation,—was his only neighbour. Since then we have seen a good deal of these gentlemen, and found them good neighbours; it was an agreeable walk and visit to them occasionally in the bush. They had pitched their tents near the Bendigo Creek, on the great woodland plain that I have more than once mentioned, and the situation was a very agreeable contrast to the bare and slovenly diggings. The creek here winds about in irregular sweeps; the banks covered with the acacia, at this time in full flower, for it is a late species; the grass is of the richest green, and the trees fresh, and beautifully scattered. You would not expect much of the picturesque in a thoroughly level plain; but, in truth, the place is so green, and still, and flowery, that it is very pleasant; and we have removed hither for a few days to prepare for our journey.

It is truly delightful to get once more out of the bald, noisy, hot, and vulgar diggings, into the freshness and sweetness of nature. Here we look out on the green champaign,

tall and beautiful trees, running waters, and hear again around us the voices of our old friends, the warbling crow, the laughing-jackass, and the whip-bird, whose sharp wiry notes, even, are far more agreeable than the barking of dogs and the swearing of diggers. The language of the diggings is something inconceivable in its vileness, and every sentence almost is ornamented with the word bloody. That word they seem to think the perfection of phraseology; it is the keystone and topstone of all their eloquence; it occurs generally in every second or third sentence; and, when they get excited, they lard every sentence with it profusely. It is language not to be repeated, and, therefore, the abomination of it not to be conceived, except by those who have lived amongst it. Perhaps one sentence selected from their simplest and least ornamental style, may be ventured upon. Two diggers passing our tent one day, saw the thermometer hanging on the post:—“What d—d, blasted, bloody thing is that, now?” said one to the other. “Why I’m blowed if it aint a d—d, blasted, bloody old weather-glass,” replied his mate.

Well, here our ears are exempt from the infliction of a language which is actually measled with vileness and vulgarity. We hear only the pure breathing of the wind, the call of the wattle-bird, and the lively voices of parrots by day, and the lonely monotone of the Morepork at night, succeeded by the shriek of the flying squirrel and the snoring tone of the opossum. The very dogs scamper about, and show how much they enjoy the change. Like us, I have no doubt, they again anticipate the pleasures of our woodland rambling, our daily observations of Nature and her wild tribes as we walk along; our evening fire blazing in the wood, and our sleep undisturbed by cries of murder and by drunken brawls.

Yet, as long as we are here, our horses are not safe. Mr. Berkeley has had no less than five stolen from him here; and, as the diggers are now moving off in great



numbers to other diggings, where they hope to find water, they are constantly ranging round to press any horses they can lay hands on. The other morning, a favourite pony of Mr. Berkeley's came at six o'clock, that is, in broad daylight, and put his nose in through the opening of the tent; and while Mr. Berkeley was speaking to him, he suddenly drew back his head, and trotted away as if startled. He went out to see what was the matter, and could no longer see the pony, and never has seen him since. Mr. Duncan mounted his horse, and scoured the bush round far and wide; but could get no sight of him. He returned, breakfasted; and then concluding that the horse must have been caught and taken off, he went to the diggings to post up bills about him there. On his way, he learned from some people at a tent by the road-side that a noted horse-stealer passed the tent just before six o'clock with a halter in his hand, going towards Mr. Berkeley's. This quickened Mr. Duncan's motions; and arriving at their blacksmith's, the smith said at once, "Well, I see you have sold your pony!" "Why so?" asked Mr. Duncan. "Because he went past this morning, tied to the tail of a dray. I was half inclined to ask if they had bought him; but, of course, they would have said they had."

Mr. Duncan galloped on for ten miles on the Melbourne road; but could see no trace of the pony, nor have they heard a word further of it.

Mr. Berkeley says that he is connected with a patent of Mr. Cross's for transferring metals, that is, for separating them from the ore and stones by galvanic action; and that he is seeking to introduce it into the colony, particularly for extracting the gold from the quartz. He proposes to give lectures on the diggings. Of course, electricity is the universal agent in the production of metals with him. He attributes the production of gold to it; and contends that what appears to have been the action of fire on the

quartz is the action of electricity. He also contends that the huge boulders scattered over the crab-hole plains are not basaltic, but ironstone acted on by electricity; and that their shape is only that of their crystallisation. But whatever electricity has had to do with these phenomena, — and no doubt it has much to do in all the internal processes and disruptions of the earth, — fire, ordinary fire, and a fierce and continued application of it, however kindled, has had more. The basaltic masses do contain a certain portion of iron; but in other respects resemble any other basalt which has cooled down into its own determinate figure. I have pointed out to Mr. Berkeley the existence of numbers of extinct volcanoes in these colonies, especially the one which I ascended near Kilmore, and of Wingen, in New South Wales, which is yet burning. In fact, the whole of this country carries on its face the marks of its volcanic action.

But I like to talk to such men, even when I do not wholly agree with them. It is a rarity here to meet with any one whose mind wanders a jot beyond gold or gain in some shape. I met the other day a Swede, who, hearing that I was here, came to talk of Miss Bremer, of her works translated into English, and of literature in general. To meet a man, he said, who knows and can talk of intellectual subjects, is like coming on a fountain in the wilderness. He declared that this country was an intellectual desert; that he was famishing for spiritual aliment, and for discourse on matters beyond mere nuggets, prospectings, and the price of gold. He said he had made money in California, but not here, and must be off home.

Mr. Berkeley has travelled a great deal; been in Egypt, I think in India, and South American; and he says that on the Deltas of all those countries, especially of the Mississippi and the Amazon, grow trees very much resembling the eucalypti of this continent. He would infer, therefore, that trees of this kind are the first production of a new soil; and

that the singular fact of the predominance of the gum-tree all over this great island-continent is indicative of its comparatively recent origin. He supposes that these trees will gradually decrease with the age and cultivation of the country, and give place to another class, which he imagines will be the acacias; that these abound, but have not yet advanced to the full stature of trees.

There are many things against this theory, and first and foremost the short-lived nature of this class of trees. The common wattles of this country seldom live above eighteen years, though they grow in the richest spots and make a very hard, heavy, tough wood. Yet there are some curious characteristics of these trees, which he was not before aware of:—the lightwood, an acacia, grows to a much greater age, and to the size of a large tree, the wood being used for naves of wheels; that the seeds of wattles, or acacias, require to be put into boiling water, or to be roasted to a certain degree, before being planted; that the seeds, immersed in boiling water, and left in the water for a few days, germinate rapidly, and are then planted; and that it is, perhaps, from this cause that, when bush-fires destroy the gum-trees, wattles are sure to spring up, and take their place.

I was glad also to see that Mr. Berkeley had noted how many natural productions there are here, which, when labour becomes cheap, will form articles of commerce. The wattle-bark, before the discovery of gold, was exported to some extent (in 1844, no less than 2816 tons); and it has fetched 14*l.* a ton in London. Immense quantities of gum-arabic—not white like Turkey gum, but more resembling gum-senegal, and of an excellent quality for all purposes of stiffening manufactures—may be collected from the millions of these trees, which, especially the golden wattle, grow on the very barrenest lands of the colony; the gum-kino, which exudes from most of the gum-trees, and may be procured to any amount, being almost pure tannin. The

universal growth of natural flax shows the adaptation of the soil and climate to the flax of commerce. The free growth and abundant produce of the vine indicate a wine country to any extent that its inhabitants choose to make it so. To say nothing of its mineral productions, coal, copper, iron, and gold.

Yesterday was one of the most glorious days ever seen. It was bright and sunny, yet fresh; the thermometer stood at 82° in the sun at noon, and the whole country looked green as England's greenest valleys.

## LETTER XXVII.

On our Journey—New Fellow-Traveller, Lignum, the Irish Giant—His Costume and Character.—Banks of the Campaspe.—Passage sold by Government and stopped.—Obliging Squatter.—Prairies splendid with golden Flowers.—Hospitable Squatters.—Meet an old Friend.—Lakes and Wild-fowl.—Natives Ovens.—The Goulburn Diggings.—A Tornado.—Heat.—Crossing the Goulburn River.—Jem, the Sexton.—Ferry a Government Disgrace.—Record of a Man drowned.—Luxuriant Plains.—Lignum's Anecdotes.—Larking in Madeira.—The old Priest.—A good Father.—The Irish Soldier and his Heart.—American Mode of improving a Loss.—Squatter Encroachments on "Water Privileges."—Grass Trees.

The Upper Yackandanda, Ovens, Nov. 28th, 1853.

WE struck our tent soon after the date of my last, quitted the banks of the Bendigo, and advanced once more on our journey to the Ovens. Mr. Berkeley and Mr. Duncan thought they should follow us in about six weeks, when the wool was all packed and despatched. Meantime a huge Irishman unexpectedly became the associate of our journey. This gentleman we met with at the tent of a highly respected friend of ours, who introduced him, stating that he was travelling in the colony, was anxious to go farther up the country, and would be glad to accompany us; that he had a horse, and would arrange with us for accommodation in our tent, and carriage of his trunk as far as the Ovens. Though averse to admitting any stranger into our tent and party, even as a mere fellow-traveller, from sufficient observation of the inconveniences arising from such associations in others, yet, to oblige our friend, we consented.

The new companion of our travels we shall call Lig-  
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num, the Irish Giant, for reasons that are sufficient, as the sequel may suggest. Lignum was, in fact, a gigantic fellow. He stood upwards of six feet three, and was largely and heavily built; so heavily, that he seemed to have considerable labour in lifting his ponderous body along by means of his elephantine legs. He was not a bad-looking fellow, though his features were large, the nose, chin, and cheeks of that rounded form which often belongs to massive men. His huge round cannon-ball head was bristled with strong black hair, kept cropped rather closely; while a bushy black beard, covering the lower half of his face, was allowed more freedom of growth. He rode a white horse, powdered all over with small red spots, as if it had been sprinkled with some red liquid out of a sprinkling-brush; and the back-bone of this unfortunate animal excited very keenly my sympathy, as I saw the giant seated for three or four hours together leisurely lolling along with his heavy carcase, rather than riding. Yet, in his full costume, and thus mounted, especially when he put Jack in motion, and rode on at a rapid trot or canter, he presented a most formidable appearance, and added, no doubt, immensely to the security of our party.

He wore a huge pair of jack-boots and formidable spurs, white cord breeches, a white waistcoat, over which was buttoned across the breast a scarlet jacket, with gold basket buttons. A large white cabbage-tree hat, mounted with a bright blue veil, contrasted strongly with the sun-burnt features and black hair and beard. On his back was slung a rifle, in his belt glittered a revolver, and a heavy silver-mounted whip was grasped in his giant hand. Certainly his whole appearance was most bandit-like, and calculated, as he galloped ahead on the road, to strike terror into the hearts of diggers and bullockians.

Nor was Lignum's appearance a whit less formidable at dinner-time. No sooner had he dismounted and turned

loose his horse, than he was ready to commence operations as soon as the frying-pan would permit him. Already he had seated himself on the grass, where the plates and other apparatus indicated the spot for dining, and drew with a solemn earnestness from a leathern case, which he also wore at his belt, a carving-knife and fork, as his ordinary prandial weapons, and a dessert-spoon as his tea-spoon, and therewith displayed a vigour and activity worthy Major Dugald Dalgetty, or of the Giant King Brian Boreen himself. But, as in the case of Homer's heroes after their attacks on those famous chins which he delighted to set before them, —

“ When now the rage of hunger was appeased,” —

Lignum broke out like the sun from a cloud, and showed himself a right merry fellow. He carried in his jacket pocket a wicker-guarded flask of a full quart, which was always well replenished with potent cogniac, and which, like Sairey Gamp's gin-bottle, he just touched his lips with some half-a-dozen times an hour as he rode along. But after dinner, and before withdrawing to rest, he poured himself out a good stiff nobbler, and was radiant with his day's roasting, with brandy, and jest. He had a peculiarly luxuriating chuckle in his laugh, drawing his breath inwards, and seeming to swallow it, in the delight which the contemplation of some famous practical joke excited.

With such a *preux chevalier* as our advanced guard, we proceeded on our journey, thankful that our horses were spared us, for almost every one had been stolen from around us during our short stay near Mr. Berkeley's tent; indeed, ours had been missing on one occasion for nearly a whole day, occasioning us a good fright and an immense perambulation through the woods. In the night, before setting out, we heard some one galloping rapidly past, and said, “ There goes another horse of somebody's.”

Scarcely was it light in the morning, and while we were preparing for our start, when a man came full canter down from a tent above, and asked if we had seen any horse going that way. We replied that we had heard one; on which the man began examining the dust in the road, and exclaimed, "Yes! that is my horse; I see the mark of a broken shoe that he has." He then told us that his two horses had been tied up to his tent during the night for safety; but on going out this morning he missed one, and found, lying on the ground by the other, a good saddle and bridle, showing that it was the intention to have taken both his horses; but, from some unaccountable cause, they had only carried off one.

He then went in full chase after the thief; but being two or three hours behind, and a stern chase being proverbially a long chase, we had little expectation that he would overtake the rogue. That night, encamping near a shepherd's hut, we learned that both the pursued and pursuer had called there and got some breakfast, the one being only half an hour after the other; so that the thief must have got off the track in the night, and have lost some time. The pursuer, swallowing hastily a mouthful of bread and tea, had gone again in chase towards the Goulburn Diggings; but that was the last that we heard of him.

On Sunday, the 19th of November, we camped in the bush near the Goulburn Diggings. Our way, for the most part, to the Campaspe lay over level ground and through monotonous woods. Our load was light, and we made easy stages for the sake of our horses; for the heat was intense, being from  $100^{\circ}$  to  $126^{\circ}$  each day in the sun at noon, and sometimes as high as  $105^{\circ}$  in the shade,—that is, remember, in the early part of the month equivalent to our May.

It was a real pleasure to get out of the woods into the valley of the Campaspe, a small river, but never dry,



running through a fine valley of green meadows and upland slopes, only thinly scattered with trees, till they reached the dense mass of the forest on the heights on each side. The banks of the Campaspe were clothed with magnificent grass, and our horses luxuriated in it; and not less so ourselves, for we stretched ourselves in it under some large trees near the river, and there dined and made a long siesta. There were a number of natives fishing here, who had caught a good quantity of the river cod, and had learned to ask a good price for it; another consequence of the diggings.

We passed the Campaspe at a Mr. Robertson's Station, a very ugly crossing, but the best, and almost the only one, for many miles. Three miles higher up the river we meant to have crossed, at Mr. Line's Station, but found that we could only do that by unloading, and having our goods carried over in a little kickling boat at several times, our horses swum over, and our cart also, buoyed up by a raft of barrels; the river there, instead of presenting a ford, being particularly deep. Yet that is the place where the diggers travelling between Bendigo and Waranga, the Goulburn Diggings, are obliged to cross; for the Government has sold Mr. Robertson his square mile, the ford falling in the centre of it, and the surveyor, with the usual inattention to these matters, has allowed Mr. Robertson to cut off the ford by fencing in a large paddock there! No one, therefore, can cross the river here, except upon sufferance; and on approaching the place, we were told that we could not possibly cross there, for Mr. Robertson invariably refused, being determined to break the public of the habit of coming that way.

We have continually found ourselves in this case on our travels. The obstruction must, in the first instance, proceed from the supineness or corruption of the district surveyors, who ought not to suffer the right of the public

thus to be thrown away. But if the Government of the colony were not equally supine, these gentlemen would soon receive a reprimand, and the public be restored to its convenience; for the Government reserves a right to make any roads anywhere across the lands sold. We know, however, that we have had the trouble of going miles round, on different occasions, from these stoppages of the squatters.

We determined to win a passage here, however, if possible; and therefore went to Mr. Robertson and told him that we were travelling to give an account of the colony, and should be glad to have to record an act of courtesy on his part in allowing us to cross. He not only did so, but went and pointed out the best part of the ford, regretting that we must, however, go about a mile round his paddock. He did more; he gave us directions, by which we could take a short cut across the bush, and save five miles of the next fifteen of our journey. With due thanks for this politeness, we took our way through a track of very wild woods, and at length emerged from them on a height overlooking the immense plains lying between the Murray, the Goulburn, and the Loddon. We had now a view which, our giant said, extremely resembled the prairies of America, in which he had travelled. Vast plains, surrounded by the forests, clear of trees and radiant with flowers. In fact, the plains, of many miles in extent, appeared vast sheets of gold, from the uniform colour of the flowers,—of which anon. Over the woods, in various directions, soared the tops of distant mountains; and to our left, at some miles distance, we saw what we supposed must be some optical delusion, for it was an appearance perfectly un-Australian. There appeared to be a long line of perpendicular cliffs, as of chalk, white as snow, and of lofty caverns in them, and lofty pillars by places, as if bearing on high some grand marble aqueduct. We could see dark but thinly-scattered trees standing up

before these cliffs. The whole was explained the next day.

We descended into the plain, and proceeded across towards a station that we saw on the skirts of the forest, at some three miles distance. In passing this plain, we were attracted by the singularity of the ground and of its vegetation. The ground was thrown up in hummocks, as in all the volcanic plains of this country; and, in places, ran in ridges as if ploughed up, and hence denominated here ploughed lands. On these mounds no grass appeared as though it would grow. They were clear of it as if they were regular garden beds kept clear of weeds, and reserved only for flowers; the grass, however, growing freely between the mounds. The flowers were almost all of three or four kinds. The chief were a species of large, sweet-scented hawkweed (*Podolepis acuminata*); and a sort of bachelors' buttons, or golden balls, different to the ordinary ones of this colony. These balls were round and firm as if of solid gold, and covered with little points. They terminated tall, clear, leafless stems, of from two to three feet high,—some score or so proceeding from one root,—and resembled miniature Morgensterns of gold. They are the *Pycnosorus globosus*, and would look splendid in our conservatories. These are the two plants which cover the plains with their brilliant deluge of gold; and amongst them grow two kinds of *Swainsonia*, or crimson vetches of delicious scent; one of them, the *Swainsonia bissexifolia*, having the odour of vanilla or sweet-pea.

In other places grew immense expanses of the golden everlasting of the two kinds that we see in our gardens, and again we came, near the Cornella Creek, upon wild expanses of white everlasting, which, spite of its dryness, diffused a delicate honied fragrance. Besides these, there was a small golden everlasting, about the size of a single

floret of tansey, and which might be called the golden stud (*Leptorrhynchus squamatus*).

As we descended into the plain, a gentleman rode past us, and said we had better go on to their creek,—that was at the station that we saw on the edge of the forest,—as we should not get any good water sooner. Our giant rode on with our friendly adviser, and in conversation mentioned who we were; so that on our arrival at the station, who should come up to us but Mr. Bernhard Smith. This was the station of a friend of his, Mr. Looker, and where he had been staying a good while. Mr. Looker was not at home, but Mrs. Looker most hospitably invited us to take up our quarters at the house. Mrs. Looker is a very amiable woman, and has several nice children. Besides these, there were two intelligent young gentlemen, Mr. Reid, the brother of Mrs. Looker, and Mr. Braithwaite, the superintendent. With this amiable family we spent nearly two days. Mr. Smith took us up the hills to get a more complete view of the country; and certainly the prospect was immense. In one direction we saw the rounded top of Swan Hill on the Murray, and the smoke of the steamer, then for the first time navigating that river.

Beyond the vast forests, at hundreds of miles from each other, we could discern the tops of the mountains which bound these vast plains:—Mount Korong, Mount Alexander, the Plenty Ranges, and the Buffalo Mountains. On one side of the hill lay the dense unbroken forest; on the other stretched away these golden prairies to other forest regions. The hill on which we stood, called Pur-rumbeet, was only dotted here and there with a few casuarinas. But the most unusual sight was that of several large lakes lying at some distance on the plains. They were the first lakes that we had seen in Australia, and they were, therefore, an attractive feature. We could count five or six lying one beyond another. The nearest

is called Pabeen Boelock, and is about six miles long by three wide. Beyond that, Bongubine, I believe, is still larger. There are, also, Coragcorag, Carngule, and others.

These lakes contain no fish except crawfish, or, rather, lobsters, for they are liable to be dried up in seasons of long drought. Wild fowl abound upon them. There are black swans, ducks and geese in thousands; shags, pelicans, ibises, teal, divers, and other species of water-fowl.

We went to the borders of Pabeen Boelock, and found that its waters were white as milk, from the suspension of pipeclay. It was this white appearance, combined with the background of dry white sandbanks, which, by the help of a mirage, had the evening before presented us with the magnificent spectacle of white cliffs, caverns, columns, and aqueducts. A thin fringe of gum-trees grows along its banks, and at this time they stand in the very water.

The plains around abound with wild turkeys; but they truly were wild, for a gathering of various tribes of natives had lately been there, and they had been hunting them; and though Alfred and Lignum pursued them with unwearied artifice and diligence, they could not succeed in killing a single one. Emus are sometimes seen in considerable numbers; but they had fled before the natives. The ducks flew in flocks of thousands; but as there was no cover on the banks of the lake, they would not allow you to come within shot of them, and we were obliged to content ourselves with a teal and diver or two.

We saw here what we have seen nowhere else in this colony,—heaps of wood ashes, partly overgrown with grass, and resembling the barrows of the ancient Britons. They are called native ovens; but I imagine they were the common fire-places of the tribe, so long as it stayed in a particular spot. They contain many waggon-loads of

ashes, and are found all about this neighbourhood, especially near the creeks. It is curious that the tribes just hereabouts used to have this custom, different to the blacks in general; but have now abandoned it, and have their own separate fires like the rest of their race.

After being plentifully supplied with mutton, milk, butter, and vegetables by this hospitable family, we advanced over these enormous plains, level as a house-floor, through a burning day. We passed only two large creeks of mud, rather than water, resting by one of them, the Wanalta, at noon; and at evening we encamped near a shepherd's hut, where a passenger of the "Kent" was hut-keeper. He said that he had been here nearly ever since he landed, and that we were the first of his fellow-passengers that he had seen. He professed to like this monotonous, solitary life, being fond of reading, and having a large stock of books with him, which he had purchased for sixpence a volume at the old bookstalls in London. They were books of the last century, chiefly, Dampier's Voyages, Prior, Goldsmith, Don Quevedo's Visions, Cowley, &c. The most modern were Crabbe's Borough and Knickerbocker. He congratulated himself on finding very few interruptions to his studies there.

I wonder at that, for the place was certainly infested with the most terrible swarms of mosquitoes, and of the very fiercest kind, that we ever met with. There are swamps in the neighbourhood, and they are legion. In the evening they surrounded us by myriads, and seemed determined to drink every drop of our blood. They bit me to such a degree through my thin summer dress, that I was for some days only one congeries of lumps and bumps; and all day long the little black-devil flies were at us furiously. This curse — and it is a real one — is again in full force, and we shall have an incessant fight with them for the next six months.

The next day Alfred and I rode through the woods, about four miles, to the Goulburn Diggings. The heat was intolerable,  $115^{\circ}$  in the sun, and  $105^{\circ}$  in the shade, so that neither the giant nor Charlton would move. We rode from gully to gully for a great many miles, as far as Paramatta Gully, when we turned back, satisfied that they are by far the most miserable diggings that we have seen.

The diggers declared that there were not above 600 diggers on the whole field. The diggings lie in some slight hollows, gullies they are not, between some low, iron-bark ranges. The whole place is the driest, the hottest, and the most uncomfortable that you can imagine. They have very little water there in winter, and have to cart their washing-stuff six miles to a lagoon to wash it. At this period they have no water fit to drink, and in a few weeks the diggers must hurry away, or they will all perish of drought. We have seen a thousand places in the iron-bark ranges of this colony which appear far more likely to produce gold. The valleys are covered with what they call the whipstick scrub; a scrub of dwarf gum-trees, which run about twelve feet high or so, growing densely, side by side, and so locked together with cord-like runners, that it is impossible to penetrate them. The diggers have to burn this scrub down before they can sink their shafts. Those that we conversed with said that they only got from two to three pennyweights of gold to a tub; and when we consider that this must be carted six miles at, I dare say, 2*l.* the load, there cannot be much profit. They say, too, that everything there is at such a price, that if they get a little gold, it is directly absorbed.

The Commissioners there have wisely fixed their camp on the border of the lagoon, or I do not see how they could exist. We were glad to make a speedy escape out of this hot, dusty and smothery region. We were back at our tent in time to receive the full benefit of the evening mosqui-

toes; and while we sat at tea we saw a thunder-cloud of a most extraordinary purple hue coming up along the plain.

This strange purple and crimson cloud was the dwelling-place of a tornado. Up it came in a moment, roaring and raging along like thunder. The trees bent before it, and our tent would have been blown away in an instant, if we had not each of us seized one of the corner poles, and held on with all our might. As it was, we had a regular battle with the hurricane for about a quarter of an hour. It seemed determined to tear the tent out of our hands, and we were as determined to hold fast. Then came heavy dashes of rain and thunder. Then a lull and a close smothering heat, followed by fresh peals of thunder, and these by a second tornado. After that we went to-bed; but soon had to start up again and hold the tent down by the poles, against a fresh hurricane. The next morning it was dull, and cooler than it had been for a week.

These violent convulsions of the weather would astonish people at home. The whole day previous to the tempest, not only did the mosquitoes and flies rage, but the dogs were strangely affected. They were constantly sick, and could not keep any meat on their stomachs if they took it. A litter of pups belonging to the colly which we call Susan or Mrs. Whitehead, yelped all day till Charlton dipped them in water, when they became instantly silent, and dropped asleep, and slept the day through. By the bye, these pups have a little cave made for them in the loading of the cart, where they ride gaily along on our journey, and can be taken out at once when we stop; and the old mother evidently knows all about it, and approves; of the arrangement, running and hunting opossums without any care as we go on. We have now *only nine dogs!*

*Sunday, Nov. 26th.*—Bush near Benalla, on the Broken River. We have progressed thus for 124 miles very easily. The roads, for the most part, level as a house-



floor, have been dry and good; and the weather has been fine, but intensely hot. I see that the thermometer has stood this last week in the sun, Sunday, 116°; Monday, 81°; Tuesday, 82°; Wednesday, 105°; Thursday, 125°; Friday, 90°; and Saturday, 81°. At ten o'clock on Sunday morning it was 90°; and at a quarter-past seven o'clock on Thursday morning, it was 102°. This is only the beginning of summer; and this is the climate in which all writers on the colony have stated that the thermometer rarely exceeds 95° in the hot weather, and only sometimes reaches 110° in hot winds. There never was so much romance indulged in as about this colony. My thermometer this summer, I expect, will make sad work with the romance of "the climate of Devonshire." You may imagine that it has been warmish work, walking along the roads from day to day in this heat, and eternally tormented by the indefatigable flies; yet we have done fifteen miles a day, and have only sixty miles more to go, and the road well known to us.

The country through which we have passed is one great plain. Since we left the hills at Mr. Looker's Station we have not encountered a single hill, though we have occasionally seen the top of one over the forests. The country, therefore, can make no claims to the picturesque; but it is one of the finest pastoral countries in the world. Plain after plain, of many miles in extent, here opened before us, clear of trees, and luxuriant with the finest grass. Much of this grass was higher than our knees, and in the swampy hollows near the rivers up to the horses' shoulders. There is grass enough in this extensive country to furnish hay for the whole colony, if it were cut; but it will stand till the sun or bush fires scorch it up. The whole way from the Cornella Creek, Mr. Looker's Station, to this place, we have only seen two herds of cattle. They tell us that they get back into the woods. It may be so; but my opinion is that the country

is not stocked one-tenth part in proportion to its capabilities, making all allowances for the rapid burning up of the pasture in summer.

As we approached the River Goulburn the swampy scenery was striking. These swamps are extensive, and continued to enlarge and widen as we approached the river.

You could see where they were before you reached them, by the bluish-white look of the boles of the trees; the superior size, and greater density of those trees. When we came into full view of them, they reminded us of what we had heard of the swamps in Demarara and similar countries. The water stood glittering amongst the green water-grass and succulent water-plants. The frogs made a croaking like the creaking of a thousand pairs of bellows; and the large and lofty columns of the trees, growing everywhere in the water, with their bluish bark, had a solemn, strange look. These swamp-gums are the very largest trees in the colony, and many of their stems at the root are many yards in diameter, and their roots extend over a surprising space. All beneath and around them was greenness and rampant vegetation. Thick masses of wattles marked the course of the river; and both they and the gum-trees cast a solemnity of shade that is unusual in this country.

The marks on the trees showed that the ground on which we were treading was often eight feet under water. When we at length came upon the river, it was running in sombre sweeps twenty feet below its banks, dark and strong; and vast masses of the dense green wattles obstructed the view into the swampy regions beyond it. As usual in Australian rivers, huge trunks and branches of trees encumbered the stream and the banks; and out of these precipitous and crumbly banks grow closely ranged groups of gum-trees. There was a silence, a shadowiness, and a feeling of the wild force of the river in flood time, induced by the prostrate, gigantic trunks in the gullies,

water-holes, lagoons, and grassy islands about the river, that made it very impressive.

We encamped about a mile short of Macguire's Punt, because it bears rather a notorious character as the occasional rendezvous of horse-stealers. There was an old stockyard near us, where a good many men appeared to have taken up their quarters, amongst a dense wilderness of trees; but we tethered our horses in a bend of the river behind our tent, and did not trouble ourselves about them. When it was nearly dark, a young man rode up on a good horse, and said that he was glad to see us camped there, for there were some well-known fellows down at the punt, who said they meant to come hither to camp to-night, and he had ridden on, intending to move further away; but as our party was encamped so near the stockyard where he was, he would remain. He particularly mentioned Jem the Sexton, and another well-known character, who was always inquiring after lost horses, as a means of reconnoitring yours. He was scarcely gone when up rode Jem the Sexton, on a grey mare, with a foal running by it. We at once recognised him. Jem was a down-looking fellow, with a black, ill-kept beard, and rusty-black clothes, whence possibly his pleasant cognomen. He was one of two men who had passed us at noon as we were at dinner, and had ridden up, inquiring after lost horses.

As we did not aspire to any nearer acquaintance with him, we quietly let loose our dogs, and they rushed out fiercely towards him. Pincher, a surly, savage bulldog, made directly for the foal; and I shouted out, "Beware of the bulldog. If he pins the foal, you will have to cut its throat before you get him off." Lignum at the same time coolly observing, "That dog will eat somebody yet before he has done."

This was quite enough. Jem the Sexton quickly retreated, and I was quite satisfied that he would make

such a report of us, with our giant and our dogs, that we should have no visit during the night; though three capital horses, in full condition, and worth at least a couple of hundred pounds, are rather tempting to men of the Sexton's tastes.

The next morning we found the crossing-place at the punt of a considerable width, and said to be eighty fathoms deep. Over this stream we had to take our cart on a punt of a most ricketty smallness. It was so small and ricketty, that it could not take a loaded cart over. We had, therefore, to unload our things, and have them conveyed over at several times. Our horses had to be swum over, or they would have stove in the ricketty punt bottom; and for swimming the horses over we paid 2s. 6d. each, or 1l. 10s. 6d. for the transit of cart and horses, besides the labour and delay of this clumsy business and the loss of a valuable coil of rope. We were sure to lose something, for there are always plenty of very adroit fellows about, who have had the most finished education that England can furnish; and in the hurry of the transit, with some of your luggage lying on one bank of the river, and some on another, it requires a sharp look-out to prevent disappearance of sundries. We missed a new tether strap which had just cost half a guinea; a very tempting article to horse-dealers; but on hunting about, found it snugly secreted in a thicket. Jem the Sexton contrived to be at the passage.

Here we had another striking instance of the care which has been taken of the digger's interest by the Government of this pattern colony. Two years have elapsed since the diggings commenced, and not a single thing has been done to assist the digger, or to protect him from extortion on this great thoroughfare from Bendigo, Mount Alexander, and Waranga, to the Ovens. Not a thought has been expended on the two difficult crossings of the rivers, the Campaspe and the Goulburn, though a good profit might

have been made on the necessary outlay at each place. The crossing of the Campaspe has been allowed to be usurped and fenced off by a squatter; and this of the Goulburn has been left to the tender mercies of one of those cormorants called publicans, who always squat themselves down at such spots, and prey on the public at their pleasure.

When the Government was compelled last summer, by the public outcry and private remonstrance, to take in hand and regulate the ferries over the Ovens and the Goulburn at Seymour, the same stroke of the pen, in the hand of a vigorous government, would have been sufficient to settle all the punts in the colony. This would have indicated that there was a government, and not a mere puppetry in the country. None but the merest tyros in government, or the merest barbers' blocks, would do these most necessary things piecemeal, and one at a time.

But, in fact, it is the disgrace of this Government, that nothing whatever has ever been done for the digger community, except what the late rebellion forced out of their fears. The squatter interest and the trading interest are attended to, because they are fully, and more than fully, represented in the Legislative Council, and will be heard. The diggers are, at least, with wives and children, 80,000 people, and they are totally unrepresented, though they produce an annual income of 800,000*l.* During the late excitement, the Government insulted them, by offering them *one representative* in the Council! They rejected the offer with proper scorn.

During the more than year that I have now been in the colony, I have never seen any activity on the part of the Government with regard to the diggers, except that displayed in extorting revenue from them. That is the great, obvious, and incessant idea! That constitutes the whole science of governing in this country. The diggers are regarded as sponges, out of which to press revenue;

and the whole business of Government is, as we have seen, to hunt up, drag off, and punish, unlucky defaulters in a style which has no parallel, except amongst the Austrians or Russians. It is true that they are now voting large sums for roads; but these are spent on making entirely new macadamised ones near Melbourne, at 6000*l.* per mile; and before they will reach the diggings, they will most likely have crossed the Murray into the Sydney district. What is wanted, is that the roads to the diggings be made *passable*. There is a talk too, now, of giving a vote to every digger who takes out an annual license of 8*l.* If so, thanks to the late rebellion.

On a tree at the crossing of the Goulburn was nailed a little tin plate, with this inscription:—"To the memory of John Stone, of Plymouth, Devonshire, who accidentally perished in crossing the Goulburn, January 22nd, 1853." It appears that this young man attempted to swim his horse over during a flood, when the stream, of course, was running furiously. He did it out of bravado, and in spite of remonstrance. Numbers of people on the banks kept shouting to him to desist; but he went on till his horse sunk in the headlong torrent, and came up without him. Perhaps his friends, from this slight memento, may learn his fate,—a circumstance rare as it regards those who die in the bush, or on the diggings of this country. It is not once in a thousand times that you see the slightest mention of the names of those who lie buried there. Their graves are nameless; and thus a score of acquaintances may wander by, and never know that any one that they have cognisance of lies there; and thus the relatives at home never hear anything whatever of them.

Our road from the Goulburn to this place has run all the way near the Broken River. Ever and anon, it has wound away and left us; but in awhile, again, we have found ourselves at one of its bends. The same richly-grassed plains have continued; sometimes bare of trees,

sometimes wooded, but still full of grass. Near any station, or shepherd's hut, we found the vegetation always excessively rank, from the nightly camping of the sheep upon it, with extensive patches of trefoil, mallow, and shepherds' purse. Lady Franklin, in a journey across the colony, is said to have sown trefoil at every station where they stopped, and perhaps that set the example; but all across this plain it appears universal. The worst of it is, that it has a bur; but not a tenth part so bad as the regular bur plant.

Well might Sir Thomas Mitchell, in his route across this colony at this season of the year, describe it as a splendidly grassed country. We crossed his track, still called the Major's Line, a short time ago. Everything at this season of the year is fat; and our horses, spite of the heat and their work, get fatter every day, although we now give them not a grain of corn.

The worst of this grassy country, however, is, that it abounds all the way with the abominable stench-plaut (*Hydrocotyle densiflora*); and, during the heat of the day, the whole country smells as if dressed with night-soil. There are people who doubt whether Australian flowers have any scent. I wish they could smell this.

The Broken River, as the name imports, is broken here and there into a variety of channels, having also a number of channels only filled at flood times, and lagoons bordering them. The river, like all other rivers here, runs deep between its banks, encumbered, ever and anon, with heaps of drift-wood; and around are hollows and swells full of deep grass, and dark, dense thickets of acacias. Occasionally, you come on parts of the river where it is running clear and bright amongst grassy islands, tall trees, and dense masses of thickets; so that you might imagine it some Indian stream, and expect to see the natives skimming to and fro in their light canoes. But the only things that you encounter are little fleets of ducks,—some

of which we managed to shoot,—and herons, and Nankin birds; or a wild mob of cattle, which rush off at the moment that they perceive you.

Some parts of the neighbourhood of the river are so dense with mimosas, and the woods around with an undergrowth of golden mimosa, like large and lofty Portugal laurels, that it gives you a feeling of a country in which, once lost, you would not easily find yourselves again. We found, in coming along, new flowers, new birds, and one new tree, a calitris, I suppose the Murray pine, but large and lofty, and much handsomer than the calitris of the granite rocks in the Ovens country.

On Friday, going to a station to get some beef, we found, to our agreeable surprise, that our old friends the Turnbulls, from Faithful's Creek, had purchased the next station on our way, and were just come there. Of course we called, and stayed the night. They were, as they always are, very kind and hospitable. They seem to have here a finer station, though not so naturally picturesque as their old one; but it is rich land, and much larger, and more calculated to exercise the energies of their active sons. It was sheep-shearing time, and they were, of course, very busy; but we had a deal of pleasant talk with Mrs. Turnbull and her sister, Miss Stuart, two very intelligent ladies.

Lignum, our Brobdignag fellow-traveller, has, so far, proved himself a good-natured and amusing fellow. He has travelled a good deal in America, and gives us some very amusing stories of his adventures. In coming out here they put into Rio Janeiro, and stayed some time in Madeira and at the Cape. They were detained in Madeira a fortnight for repairs needed to the ship, and they made an excursion through the island during that time. A large party of them set out, including some sailors, and made a very jolly time of it. They were loaded with all sorts of provisions, and were full of all sorts of pranks.



One of them went up to a sentinel standing before a fortification, and caught the man and his musket fast in his arms; but the sentinel took it in good part, only saying, "Ah! Inglesé! Inglesé!"

But the most amusing account was that of their taking unceremonious possession of a priest's house and chapel. Somewhere up the country, one windy evening, they found the soil so loose and sandy, that they could not make their tent stand. They, therefore, went to the house of the priest, who lived near, and endeavoured to make him understand that they wanted lodging. The poor man appeared alarmed at so formidable a party, all armed, and whose language he did not understand; but they marched up stairs, and possessed themselves of a room. They mustered Portuguese enough to call for hot water; and they emptied four kettles for tea and spirits. They were very merry, and sang songs till it was growing late, the old priest taking sly, timid peeps at them occasionally from behind a curtain in an adjoining room, and, no doubt, wished them far enough.

At length, they began to think of sleeping; but the room was not half big enough for them; so out they went, and marched into the chapel, which they found a pretty spacious place, with a good boarded floor, and clean swept. They, therefore, fetched their rugs and blankets, and made their beds on the floor. As it was now dark, they took one of the tall candles from the altar, in its fine gilt stick, the candle itself about four feet long. At this some of the sailors were very much alarmed, saying it was sacrilege, and expecting all sorts of punishment from the authorities. But the party said, "Oh, nonsense; we mean to pay for it." So they went with this tall candle in the hands of one of them to demand the price of it, and the priest sold it them for eighteen pence. I suppose he dared do no other. With this they lighted themselves to bed, and left it burning, supposing that it would be

burning when they awoke; but the wind in the night had so wasted it down, that it had burned most part of the candlestick, which, though finely gilt, and looking like solid gold, was only of wood. Before taking their leave, they asked what they had to pay; and the wonderful bill for lodgings, hot water, candle, candlestick, noise, fright, and all, amounted to—ten shillings!

Amongst his Irish anecdotes was one of a good father. This affectionate father had, on one occasion, no food in the house for his children, so he asked them whether they had rather have their suppers or a penny each to buy lollipops. They all said the penny. Having got their pennies, they went to bed with them in their hands; and as soon as they were asleep, he went and took away their pennies. The next morning he asked them what they had done with their pennies. They were forced to say that they had lost them; so he whipped them for losing them, and sent them to school without their breakfasts; and thus this *good* father got over the want of bread for them.

Another anecdote was new to me, and may be to others. An Irish soldier being ordered on foreign service, got a little steel-plate, and went to the tailor, and desired him to stitch it into the inside of his clothes just over where his heart lay: but as he did not know exactly where it did lie, he left it to the tailor, who stitched it into the seat of his trousers. The soldier thought it rather an odd place for his heart, but he let it remain; and one day being in a retreat, a French soldier struck his bayonet against the plate, and pitched him head-foremost to the ground. When the pursuers were gone by, he rose up, and finding himself safe and sound, he said—“Arrah! but the tailor was a clever fellow; he knew very well where my heart lay after all!”

One more anecdote, an American one, we may add. Many of the American stores, it seems, keep long running accounts with the farmers in their neighbourhood,

who bring in fruit, butter, eggs, &c., and take back groceries, draperies, &c. At one of these general stores, on taking stock, they found a deficiency of half-a-dozen saddles. To correct this error, the storekeeper ordered the clerk to put a saddle into every account sent out. Many of these surreptitious entries were objected to, and were cancelled without hesitation; but as many other accounts had been running so long that the persons against whom they stood did not really recollect what they had had, these left the saddles standing, and thus the storekeeper, instead of being six saddles minus, was thirty saddles the gainer.

*Sunday, Nov. 27th.*—Here we are once more in the pleasant Yackandanda woods. We have had a splendid though very hot journey, and only been bogged once. All the way up, so far as the roads, gullies, creeks, and rivers are concerned, there might be no government in the country. Not a thing has been done to facilitate the passage of the diggers, or the transit of their goods, except the commencement of a sort of bridge over the gullies of the Ovens at Wangaratta; and I am sorry to say that, though this is certainly a large undertaking, and must incur an enormous expense, it appears likely to prove a large abortion. It is laid on the level of the lower side of the river, which is under water during floods, and is only its own thickness above the ground; so that during floods it will be under water, if not carried away by them. It runs across the widest part of the flat, and must, if ever finished, be a mile or more in length. Gentlemen well acquainted with the neighbourhood say that they could have shown the engineer where he might have thrown a bridge over the river, and come upon a line of ground at once high and dry the year through, instead of having his wooden causeway under water just when it is most wanted; but that he consulted with nobody. There is a dreadful want of good engineers in the colony.

Another instance of the strange and utter neglect of the

public interests by the Government in the distant parts of the colony, struck us in an extraordinary new inclosure made by the hospitable Dr. Mackay. He has fenced off from two to three miles of the rich land along the river Ovens, running all the way along the road-side; so that, for that distance, the numerous travellers, carriers, and their cattle, on this greatly frequented road to the diggings, are, in this droughty region, totally cut off from access to water. This is bad enough, but this is not all. These inclosures are but a first step towards purchase, though it is done on pretence of accommodating the diggers with a safe paddock for their horses. But when the purchase of part of a station is made at the upset price of 17. per acre, the squatter being entitled to his square mile, a claim is always put in for including what they call their improvements. The squatters near the diggings are alarmed at the new townships laid out in these vicinities, and have been actively buying up their sections. Now, if Mackay have not already purchased this inclosure, as a matter of course he means to do it. Imagine, then, the squatters being allowed to inclose whole miles each of river frontage. Why, all the rest of the country will be utterly worthless; and they may have it, and, no doubt, calculate upon having it for nothing. As there is only a limited quantity of water frontage allowed by law, any surveyor who connives at misdemeanors of this kind ought to be impeached of high treason, and have his head cut off; for there can be possibly no higher treason against the state in a country so wanting in water as this.

The hospitable Doctor, since we were here, had built a shop before his gate for the sale of mutton, milk, and cabbages. We went up and got some milk, now reduced to one shilling a pint. I there recognised the young Irish woman who last summer, on occasion of my funny recollection. said "She had nothing to do with it; she was by the day!" I reminded her of it, and of all

the family bolting from dinner, and pretending to be ill. She evidently well remembered it.

Not far from there we saw the grass-trees, but only the dwarf ones, splendidly in flower. The flower is on a rod of two or three feet high, which rises perpendicularly from the centre of the grass-tree, and surrounds some half a yard of it in the manner of the flower of the club-rush, but white, and the florets resembling those of the water tussilago.

Spring Creek we found nearly deserted. Yet they have built a township upon it, with various stores and inns, while the diggings have migrated to Nine-mile Creek near us, and to the Buffalo. But of the wonderful changes here in my next.

## LETTER XXVIII.

Beautiful Birds and Flowers.— Battles of severed Bulldog Ants.— Australian Porcupine.— Enormous Amount of Digging since last Year.— Diggers grown very calculating.— Summaries of *Argus* for England.— Don't want *Intellectual Men* here.— Suffering of Immigrants from want of Land.— United States growing on our Folly.— HISTORY OF THE LAND QUESTION.— Grog Monopoly in Sydney, and Expulsion of Governor Bligh.— Fresh Land Regulations from 1823 to 1847.— Squatting System completed by Orders in Council of 1847.— Lord John Russell's Town-allotment Regulations.— Consequent speculative Mania and general Ruin in 1842.— Present Position of the Land Question.— Effects of Influx of 200,000 People where no Land was to be had.— Draft of the New Constitution.— What Victoria would be with Land.

Upper Yackandanda, December 18th, 1853.

THIS country is certainly a splendid field for the naturalist. The animals are most curious; the birds are almost endless in variety, singular in habits, and the notes of many of them are peculiarly musical. We find fresh ones in every new part of the country that we visit. The Blue Mountain parrot, a splendid bird of deep red and brilliant blue, has many very musical notes. The flowers of the colony are immensely numerous in species; and, though generally small, many of them are very beautiful. There grows in the woods here a clematis which we have seen nowhere else (*Clematis appendiculata*); a very beautiful thing, with large white and very fragrant blossoms. This clematis hangs on the bushes and young trees in lovely masses. There is a plant of it near our tent, running over the fallen bole of a huge blue gum-tree like a garland. It is worthy of a painter. There is also,

in the wet places of the woods, a yellow-flowered rush, which smells exactly like pine-apple (*Xerotes longifolia*).

The insects, as I have often said, are countless ; swarm everywhere, and over everything. Their tenacity of life is most amazing. I have told you of the manner in which one half of a bulldog ant fights the other if cut in two. I saw an instance of it just now. Our giant cut one in two that was annoying him. The head immediately seized the body with its mandibles, and the body began stinging away manfully at the head. The fight went on for half an hour without any diminished sign of life ; and this is what they always do. Instead of dying, as they ought to do, they set to and fight away for hours, if some of the other ants do not come and carry them away ; whether to eat them or bury them we know not. But the flies immediately eat flies that are crushed, and ants eat the remains of crushed ants. Mr. Swainson, the eminent naturalist, has been some time in Australia ; and we may naturally expect many curious details of this kind from him.

To-day we have killed a porcupine, the first that we have caught. It is, in appearance, between the English hedgehog and the porcupine. Its quills are only about an inch long ; but it has tremendous claws, and is a truly Australian creature, having a horned snout, something like the beak of a bird, and a long, small, round tongue ; being, in fact, an ant-eater. It has the rudiments of a pouch, but does not appear perfectly marsupial. Its skin is very thick, and with the spines weighs about as much as the body. The flesh resembles pork, and is excellent eating ; but we had no proper stuffing ; notwithstanding which it was very good.

Wonderful are the changes that have taken place on these fields since we were here last year. For many miles the woods between this creek and Spring Creek have been felled, and the ground dug up for gold. Where

we used to travel through unbroken forest with the compass now extend the tents and the delvings of the digger race. Nuggety Gully, New Rush, Europa Gully, and a whole succession of gullies, are dug up, and all their woodland scenery desolated. Nine-mile Creek has been dug out again and again, and has been sluiced three times. This creek, which has acquired the cognomen of Back Creek, and Snake Valley has also been amazingly worked. Whole miles of its banks that a year ago were wild and desolate, shrouded in dense thickets of tea-trees and wattles and lightwood, and thick with sedge and jungle, are now but heaps of clay; the trees prostrate, the whole scene laid bare; the stream deviated from its course; and the bed of the stream has been dug out and sluiced, and its banks themselves cut down and put through the sluice. Digging villages, with their tents and stores, mark its course for miles, with all their tumbled heaps, tree-stumps, and disorderly objects around them.

This particular spot in the angle between our two old creeks has been more spared than any other part. The woods have escaped the general devastation. We can still look round on the old features;—the same pleasant, solitary forest-slopes, with good pasturage for our horses, and hear the same birds making the woodlands resound with their chorus at sunrise. We can still bring past our tent a stream of the coolest and most delicious water; and were there no gold even, we would here choose to spend the next two months,—the hottest in the year.

But, singularly, the very portion of the creek which we worked first remains as we left it; and on trying parts of it that we did not very completely clear, we find a considerable quantity of gold, which we shall get. Other parts about us have been more worked out. Nearer us, the creek, and the angle of land below it, and the lesser creek, have been worked with great care and labour by



some parties of Americans. They have followed the veins of gold from the creek in deep cuttings like stone quarries to a considerable distance, and have been well repaid. The very spot where our tent stood has been cut down. We slept and lived upon gold when here before. The spot where we made our fire by the great log was a golden spot. The ground on which the miller's tent stood is also gone, gold having been abundant there. But the old miller's bullock-dray still stands where it stood. It seems the miller lost all his eight bullocks, and when he went left his son behind in the winter to continue the search for them; a solitary, and, as it proved, useless sojourn.

We saw two Americans, one of them a Mormon, clearing away the very part of the creek which we left on account of a bird's nest with young ones; and they assured us that under that very bush they obtained seven ounces of gold; so that our kindness to the family of old Bluebeard cost us about 28*l*.

We have but few neighbours here, and they are chiefly Americans; and very civil, obliging, neighbourly people they are. I do not know how it is, but we find the diggers here at the Ovens, as we did last year, a much quieter and more civilised race than the diggers of Bendigo, or, at all events, than a large class of them there.

Everywhere, both here and at Bendigo, I find the diggers grown very careful in their expenditure; — a sure sign that they are not getting the same amount of gold that they did once. The storekeepers complain of a great difference, and yet they keep up the price of things as much as they can. Imagine a pumpkin being sold here for pies for 18*s*. Of mutton and beef 10*d*. per lb., where last year we got a quarter of mutton for 3*s*. 6*d*.; bread still 4*s*. the quarter loaf; fresh butter 5*s*. per lb.; onions and potatoes still 1*s*. 6*d*. per lb.; raisins 3*s*. per lb. We gave a guinea the other day for a bell for our horse's neck,

to find him by in the woods, which in London would not be above eighteen-pence. And yet, if you want to sell anything, you are offered the most ridiculous sums. The gold watches I have I could not get prime cost for. The boots that were more than we wanted we offered the other day at the stores. We first asked the price of the different kinds that are best to dispose of, and they asked 4*l.* per pair for the same kind that they offered us 1*l.* for; and they asked 2*l.* for such as they offered us 7*s.* 6*d.* a pair for. This was cool, theirs being only of ordinary ready-made quality, ours of the very first quality.

You hear wonderful stories of the diggers of Bendigo and Mount Alexander giving anything that people please to ask. Those halcyon days are long past. I have never found any class of men more close bargainers than the Bendigo men. If you had anything to sell they would offer the most ridiculous trifle for it. They would offer you 10*s.* for a puddling-tub—a thing in constant demand,—for which at the second-hand stores they must pay 4*l.*; and 10*s.* or 15*s.* for a cradle that they must give at the same stores 4*l.* 10*s.* for. In fact, they imagine that if you have anything to sell you are going and must sell; but a storekeeper just lets his articles wait till they are obliged to have them. The auctions are the places where you can dispose of anything to any advantage; and there only can you buy at any reasonable rate. By the bye, do you see the quarterly summaries of the state of this colony which are regularly published in the *Argus* for circulation in England? Making due allowance for the colouring which their enthusiasm about the colony naturally gives, you will there learn the substantial facts of its progress and position. For instance, they tell you, in the summary just issued, that this is so incurably drunken a people that nothing will be of any use but excluding all spirituous liquors altogether by the Maine Liquor Law. That the pub-

licans are the richest and most worthless set of men in the colony. That the members of Government are so deeply engaged in land speculations, that they will not yet throw open the land; and that the bits of land sold near the diggings do not benefit the diggers, for they are too dear for them, but are snapped up by insatiable speculators. That the people who land in Melbourne find that they might just as well have sat down on Wimbledon Common, as to any chance they have of buying land at a price that they could live upon;—the game going on between the Government officials, who are constantly dabbling in land, and a gang of the most hungry, unprincipled land-sharks that the world ever produced. That immigration, latterly, has greatly decreased, and is decreasing, owing to the dismal accounts sent home by disappointed people.

They add, rather inconsistently, that these accounts have been transmitted by *unfit* people. But who are the *fitting* people to come out to a country such as they thus themselves sketch. The most drunken population in the world!—a population refused land to live on, and preyed on by the most voracious land-sharks! That surely is not a picture likely to attract immigrants. They complain that good schoolmasters and efficient clergymen do not come out. But, over and above this description that they give of the drunken population, and the Government gambling in land that immigrants cannot get, they tell us in almost every one of these summaries that they don't want *intellectual* people. They then ask clergymen and schoolmasters, who are essentially intellectual people. They want, they say, only workers; physical power—an animal creation of Gibeonites,—“hewers of wood and drawers of water.” But schoolmasters and clergymen will naturally, even where most impelled by a sense of duty, wish to enjoy, to some extent, an intellectual environment. If they were willing to associate only, or

chiefly, with such a class as that of navvies, jarvies, grooms, carmen, ignorant agricultural labourers, and the twenty or thirty thousand exported felons, they need not go thirteen thousand miles for a similar luxury; they can have it by only walking into the next mews, the gin-shop at the corner, or the back-slums of any great town at home.

They should recollect, that good skilled mechanics are now very generally an *intellectual* class, and that may account for the decrease in the emigration of this order. It cannot be the rate of wages, for that is unrivalled,—from 8*l.* to 10*l.* a week. But it appears that even that wonderful scale of remuneration will not draw them. No; they will never go out freely to any country where they have no eventual prospect of getting land. If they save money out of such high wages, with what hope would they save it? That of getting land, and living on their own property. A drunken population, that has no hope of getting cheap land, will always remain a drunken population. And who would wish himself and his children to make part and parcel of such a population?

There is another great feature that destroys the attraction of immigration. It is that of all those who make money in the colony hurrying home with it as soon as they get it. It argues that, though you might chance to get money in Victoria, you would not like to stay there. That there is some grand lack of attraction there. That there is a *something* that people are glad to get away from. It does not tally with the Elysian accounts of the climate and the country. If it be such a paradise, people at home say, why don't people stay in it? Yet everybody knows that everybody is running off at the first possible opportunity. Nay, the most zealous eulogists of the colony are amongst the very first to escape from it. You drop a word in some party overnight of dissatisfaction with something or other in the colony, and find yourself in a hornet's nest of fanatics in laudation of it, from its dust winds to its fly legions; but

the next morning you are rather surprised to learn that these colonial enthusiasts have just gone on board the steamer for London, having sent their whole accumulated wealth before.

Now what is the cause at the bottom of all this? Simply, and again and again, and evermore—the one grand, palpable, and permanent cause,—the prohibition of land sale. Never, while the United States lie only 3000 miles from England, and sell land, chooseable anywhere, at 5*s.* an acre, and Victoria lies 13,000 miles from England, and won't sell any land for agricultural purposes at any price, will you get a fine, full, flowing emigration out here, such as America has, and these colonies could have on the same fair and common sense system. Never will you have a *settled* population here, till you give up the land fully and freely for settlement. The harpy of speculation and the land-shark will continue to rake up around them, and grapple in their clutches the wealth of the colony, and fly off with it, till land is cheap and plentiful, which is the same thing. The drunkard will continue a drunkard till he can buy land. Then, and not till then, will he go out from the circle of his temptations, and *root* himself down in the healthy soil, and regenerate himself, and make his family happy and his country flourish.

Therefore it is useless for the able editors of the *Argus* to seek for this or the other cause of diminished emigration, or to complain of *unfit* emigrants, or to warn off *intellectual* emigrants, or to wonder why schoolmasters and clergymen do not emigrate hither, so long as there is not land. If there were land—land everywhere, and for everybody—the intellectual might come; the more the better, for intellectual men love country life, and are capable of cultivating cheap land of their own; and the more the better again, that they might breathe a soul through the brute mass, shed refinement and intelligence

around them, and offer points of attraction to a superior class to come over and settle.

Therefore, land! land! land! should be the cry of the press here,—loud and incessant, till it takes effect. Will Great Britain see the suicidal folly of its policy in building up a mighty rival empire across the Atlantic with its own best blood, and putting a tourniquet on its own extremities, squeezing out the life and growth which should pour back by natural circulation new and inexhaustible vigour on its main body. And we must do the *Argus* justice by saying, that on this topic it has been so far incessantly earnest, eloquent, and undaunted; and I trust it will never relax its efforts till we can add the crowning word—triumphant!

As the land question is sure to become the great question of these colonies, and especially of this,—must inevitably become so from the rapid pressure of population,—we may as well take a brief view of its history, so that the reader may more fully and really comprehend it.

In the early times of these colonies, when Government wanted to induce a population to come out and settle in them, it gave free grants of land to anybody that would come and take them. In Governor Phillips' time,—that is, up to 1800,—land was granted in quantities of from 500 to 1000 acres to any person who applied for it at home, and took out an order. In fact, it was a great piece of Government patronage in the hands of Ministers: but this was put a stop to in 1818, because it induced officers who came out ostensibly to do Government duty, either civil or military, to be really only attending to their own aggrandisement. But as convicts, on becoming emancipated, soon were able to buy land, or to have grants of it and would presently have become the chief land-owners, the regulation was rescinded, and the old free-grant system resumed. In consequence of this, the Governors of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land,

up to 1823, were empowered to grant lands to settlers, and also to convicts, as a reward of good conduct. They could give to convicts when pardoned, 20 acres; if married, 40 acres; and to each child, 10 acres. Thus a married convict with six children was entitled to 100 acres of land. These lands were perfectly free of charge for 10 years, and then paid a quit rent of 6*d.* for every 30 acres. They could grant to free settlers the same quantities, and 100 acres more. These powers were so fully exercised, that up to 1810 there had been granted 177,500 acres.

This granting of small farms to emancipated convicts, appears in theory an admirable arrangement, calculated to stimulate those still under operation of their sentence to duty and reform of character; but there were causes existing in the colony, which, in a great measure, defeated this meritorious object, and converted the system into one of unmitigated evil. Ever since the soldiery had been sent out to Sydney, to keep in check the convict population, the officers of the New South Wales' corps had contrived to monopolise the sale of rum and other ardent spirits. They purchased Bengal rum, as the spirit-dealers in these colonies now do, and which can at this day be bought in Bengal for one shilling per gallon.

It is not to be supposed that these military grog-sellers were more conscientious than the civil ones of the present day, and therefore we may form some idea, from present practice, of what then prevailed. This Bengal rum, now, would yield 5000 per cent. if sold pure, at the prevailing price of 10*s.* per bottle; but the vendors are not contented with this enormous profit, and therefore they dilute it largely with water, and then give it a factitious strength by adulteration with oil of vitriol, &c. It is thus converted into one of the vilest and most deleterious articles conceivable, and this poison I have commonly seen sold at

from 10*s.* to 20*s.* per bottle. This is the stuff almost universally sold and drunk in the grog-shops of this colony, for beer they have little or none, except a species of hog-wash, honoured with the name of sugar-beer.

Whether the military grog-dealers of Sydney made similar profits or not, they managed to drive all the other dealers out of the market, because they could get from the Governor, who was in their hands, the permits for the admission of any quantity of these spirits, while the other dealers must pay a heavy duty. Besides, the soldiers and the convicts were expected to purchase their grog of these officers, or they would soon be made to feel the consequences.

This infamous system was, at length, carried to such a pitch, that rum and other spirits became the medium of exchange instead of money; workpeople received rum instead of wages; the country people received rum in exchange for their cattle and their corn. The consequence, as might have been expected, was a fearful increase of drunkenness, crime, and individual ruin. But this did not at all trouble the military monopolists; their corporals were their grog-vendors, and it was thus publicly sold in the very barracks.

It is believed that Governor Hunter was recalled in consequence of attempting to reform this devilish system; but the whole weight of these military grog-vendors fell on the next Governor but one, the unfortunate Captain Bligh.

This was the same Captain Bligh who was commander of the "Bounty," and who was sent out by Government to convey bread-fruit trees from the South Sea Islands to the West Indies. In the course of his voyage, the celebrated mutiny took place, in which his crew turned him adrift, and sailed away to Pitcairn's Island. Captain Bligh conducted his small boat's crew with great ability along the northern coast of New Holland, to the Isle



of Timor, where they obtained provisions, and thus escaped.

Being appointed Governor of New South Wales, Captain Bligh not only found this frightful system of grog-selling in full operation, but many of the colonists suffering severely from terrible floods, which had swept away much cattle and corn. He, therefore, offered to those settlers to take as much corn and cattle as would be required for the public service, and to pay them in goods from the King's stores; such as flour, tea, sugar, manufactured articles, &c., at a very low remunerating price. This was a most generous and serviceable boon, but it was a direct attack upon the monopoly and extortion of the military, and they were not long in visiting him with their vengeance.

Occasion was soon found. Mr. Macarthur, the great wool-grower, and also great spirit-dealer, had ordered a new still from England, for making brandy in the colony. This was in utter defiance of the law, and the Governor seized upon it, and had it shipped back again. Such, however, was the spirit which prevailed in this trade at that time, that Mr. Macarthur was obliged to be arrested in consequence of his resisting the Governor's proceeding; and the military, who considered him as working in their common cause, with Colonel Johnstone at their back, came to the rescue. They forcibly put an end to the trial of Mr. Macarthur, and then marched upon the house of the Governor, whom they seized, and compelled to quit the colony; Colonel Johnstone, the Commander-in-chief of the forces, usurping the seat of the Governor, with Mr. Macarthur as his Colonial Secretary, and the other officers filling the subordinate posts.

Grog-selling was now in glorious ascendancy. The colony was actually governed by grog-sellers; and the Government exchequer was plundered to an enormous extent. The most false and malignant accounts of the conduct of Captain Bligh were sent home by these

usurpers ; but the respectable portion of the community also managed to send home the true account ; and Governor Macquarie was sent out with orders to reinstate Governor Bligh for four-and-twenty hours, to show that the Government did not approve of his removal by the rebels. Captain Bligh, however, was on his way home, and this point could not be carried out ; but the military insurgents were arrested, and sent to England to take their trials, where Johnstone was cashiered, and his confederates banished for a certain number of years from the colony. The treatment which Bligh received on this occasion is said to have broken the hearts of both himself and his lady.

Grog-selling and grants of land went on, therefore, triumphantly. Who dared to encounter such a band of grog-dealers, who were armed with Her Majesty's commission ? So far from the grants to the convicts, however, being of use to them, they only completed their ruin. On receiving their orders for a grant, they sold them for rum ; and the rum-selling holders of these orders kept them till they had a claim on some five or ten thousand acres, when they selected a fine estate in some first-rate locality ; and it is said that a great number of the most beautiful and valuable estates of New South Wales were obtained in this manner.

From the date of this "rum rebellion," and the forcible deposition of poor Bligh, in 1809 up to 1823, the system of political grants went on swimmingly. Persons taking out letters from the Secretary of State in England had grants of 2000 acres of land, except where still larger estates were expressly mentioned in the Secretary's letters. Thus, Mr. Potter Maqueen, M.P., obtained 10,000 acres, and a reserve of 10,000 more ; Mr. Hart Davies, M. P., and Mr. Hart Davies, jun., had 15,000 acres each ; Sir Thomas Brisbane, the Marquis of Sligo, and Mr. J. Browne had 10,000 acres each, and a reserve of 10,000

more. No condition of residence was attached to these grants: they were, in fact, political sops.

These monstrous political jobs, however, began to attract public attention at home; and, in 1831, a stop was put to the granting system. In 1824, however, the Australian Agricultural Association had received a grant of no less than a million of acres, forming their present magnificent territory of Port Stephen. In 1834, it was ascertained that no less than 4,163,352 acres had been granted away; while, in 1843, it was stated by a committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, that about 5,000,000 of acres had been alienated from the Crown up to that time.

In 1836 commenced a new and fatal land system. A party of speculators engaged in an attempt to colonise South Australia. At the head of this party were Colonel Torrens and Edward Gibbon Wakefield. This party, having powerful Parliamentary influence, succeeded in carrying Gibbon Wakefield's plan of selling all colonial lands at a high upset price, as they said, to prevent the scattering of the population. Land was then selling in New South Wales and the infant colony of Port Phillip at 5*s.* an acre; and these crafty speculators knew that if land could be purchased at 5*s.* in Port Phillip, it was vain to hope that they could obtain 1*l.* per acre in Adelaide, the sum they wanted. Government had plenty of warnings of what the effect of such a system would be. Mr. Justice Therry, who had been seventeen years in New South Wales, stated before the House of Lords that the consequence of a high upset price would be the prevalence of the squatting system; and that the adoption of Mr. Wakefield's plan would be that of *dispersing* instead of *condensing* the population—a fact which experience has most fully demonstrated.

Sir James Stephens and Mr. Paulet Scrope also held

the same language. Mr. Scrope declared in Parliament that, supposing Mr. Wakefield's theory to be correct, that a high upset price of land would check the spread of population, it was a scheme which in a few years must annihilate itself; for people would not go to Australia to buy land when they could buy it in the United States of America, at one-fourth the price; and, therefore, instead of buying they would squat, and that consequently the direct operation of the Wakefield theory was not to condense but to disperse.

These truths now stand most universally verified, especially in the colony of Victoria. Lord Glenelg, the Colonial Minister at the time, refused to sanction the theory; but, in 1840, Lord John Russell carried it out, fixing the upset price in New South Wales at 12s. an acre, and in Port Phillip at 20s. ! Thus, the Torrens faction succeeded; and the Adelaide land speculators impoverished 200,000 people to enrich 25,000, or rather a few individuals who sold the land to that number. Thus had Lord John Russell the unenviable distinction of establishing that system of high land sale in our Australian colonies, which has for fourteen years gone on augmenting the population of the United States at the rate of 250,000 a year at the expense of our own empire. It is a measure which already has sent three millions and a half of our population to till the lands of our Transatlantic rivals instead of cultivating our own.

The consequence of this short-sighted policy soon became fearfully apparent. In 1847, a Committee of the Legislative Council of New South Wales on Immigration reported, that the Land Fund, the source of expenditure for immigration, had been annihilated in consequence of the determination to carry out the system of Mr. Edward Gibbon Wakefield; and that the remonstrances of the colony against this ruinous system had been unheeded or misunderstood. That for a series of years, the growth of

the colony was uniformly progressive. From 1833 to 1840 the sum realised by the sale of waste lands was upwards of one million sterling, by which 80,000 souls were introduced. Under this system, the population became more than doubled in a period of eight years. In 1839, land was raised by the policy of the home Government from 5*s.* to 12*s.*, and subsequently to 1*l.* per acre. This Act may be regarded as one chief cause of the disorders by which the colony has since been visited. From 300,000*l.* the land revenue fell to 8000*l.*, and immigration ceased: the sources from whence it flowed had been thus suddenly arrested.

In Lord John Russell's dispatch, town land allotments were to stand at an upset price of 100*l.* per acre. Much speculation had already been going on in Melbourne in town allotments. This added fuel to the fire; there became a rabies of speculation in town allotments, followed by a general and tremendous crash, and almost universal bankruptcy.

Thus Lord John Russell had again the honour of originating that fatal system of gambling in town allotments to which the Melbourne Government have so firmly adhered; creating the most extravagant and ruinous spirit of speculation in such allotments, the exclusion of cheap agricultural land from the market, and all the consequences now existing so mischievous to the growth and prosperity of the colony.

The next great error of the land system, — to pass over several minor regulations, — was that which in 1847 established the squatting system on its present footing, and which gives Lord Grey the honour of its parentage. Perhaps no ministers of England ever contrived to inflict such a blow on the progress of our colonial greatness as Lord John Russell and Earl Grey, except those who lost America for us. It would be a satisfaction to record that by giving the colony a representative constitution, and full

power to deal with the lands, they had made the best possible *amende* for these errors.

This system, determined by an Act of Parliament of that year, was carried out by an Order in Council. By this regulation the lands of New South Wales were divided into three classes, according to their situation: the Settled, the Intermediate, and the Unsettled Districts. The regulations, of course, extended to Port Phillip.

Under this Act, the Governor is empowered to grant leases on runs of land in the unsettled districts for any term not exceeding fourteen years, for pastoral purposes, with permission to the lessee to cultivate as much as may be necessary to provide grain, hay, vegetables, and fruit, for the use of the family or establishment, but not for trade or barter. The rent to be proportioned to the number of sheep or cattle which the run may be able to support: each run to be capable of carrying at least 4000 sheep, or an equivalent number of cattle, such run to pay a license of 10*l.* per annum; if larger, more. A Commissioner of crown lands to estimate the capabilities of the run. During the lease, no person but the lessee to purchase any portion of the run, but he himself to be allowed to buy the whole, or any part of it, not less than 160 acres, at not less than 1*l.* per acre.

In the intermediate districts the leases are not for more than eight years, but at *the end of each successive year of lease* these runs may be offered for public sale, subject to sixty days' notice to lessee.

In the settled districts the leases are only for one year, without interference as to time of disposal of said lands by sale or lease.

Such is the system which has prevailed from 1847 to the present time. The number of squatting stations in New South Wales were in 1849 about 1520, held by 1019 persons. In Port Phillip they were 827, held by 666 persons; and the extent of lands held by these in-

dividuals in these two colonies would astonish people at home. The average of square miles held by each squatter, is 69; but many individuals hold immensely more. Two squatters hold more than 800,000 acres each; two 600,000 each; one, 400,000; four, 350,000 each; three, 300,000 each; fourteen, 250,000 each; fourteen, 200,000 each; thirty, 150,000 each; seventy-three, 100,000 each; and 298 squatters hold more than 50,000 acres each. In New South Wales the Government has granted the leases, restricting the preemptive right to one square mile, or 640 acres, on which conditions the squatters were glad to get them. But in Victoria, the Government has withheld the leases, the squatters having only their receipts for their annual payments to show their right to be upon the run. By this means the Government of Victoria has kept the whole land in its power, but by the disingenuous mode of withholding the leases which the squatters assert that it promised them. At the same time it has dealt just as tortuously with the public. Retaining the power to deal with the land as it pleased by withholding the leases, still it has not availed itself of this power for the benefit of the public.

It is quite clear that the settled and intermediate districts admit of mere annual holdings, the intermediate ones requiring only sixty days' notice before the end of each year, and the settled district no notice at all. Now in these districts lie vast tracts of the finest lands in the colony, and on the arrival of so extraordinary a crisis as the gold discovery, and the inpouring of a population at the rate of upwards of 100,000 a year, any rational person must ask, why have not these lands been thrown open, at once to give homes to the immigrants, and to reduce the price of the articles of life by the cultivation of corn, vegetables, hay, and fruit?

The only answer which you get to this question is by the Government pointing to the large income that it

makes out of the sale of a very little land; and by the public pointing to the town and suburban allotments possessed, or which have passed through the hands of members of the Government, and asking whether those snug little properties could be worth 5000*l.*, and 6000*l.*, and 10,000*l.* an acre if land were plentiful in the market. The public points at the same time to the number of squatters in the Legislative Council, who, for excellent reasons, are equally averse to a large sale of lands.

The squatters having grown rich on these wild lands of the nation, are come, by that process which so easily persuades a man that that which is agreeable ought to be his, to imagine that they are not the nation's, but their own. They are very willing to forget, if the public will allow them, that they only occupy, and do not possess; that they are, by the very nature and terms of their holding, the orders in council, but tenants at will; that they are the pioneers of civilisation, and must, as a matter of course, recede before civilisation itself. That, as Mr. Palmer, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, in May last, declared,—“according to an obvious rule of political philosophy, the lesser must give way to the greater,—the particular to the general interests.” The 9th clause, if there were no other, is an insurmountable notice to quit at the pleasure of Government, issued by the Imperial Government simultaneously with the permission to occupy. Here it is—

Section 9.—“That nothing in these regulations, or in any lease to be granted under the powers hereby vested in the Governor, shall prevent the said Governor or officer for the time being administering the government of the said colony from making grants or sales of any lands within the limits of the run or lands comprised in such lease, for public purposes, or disposing of, in such other manner as for the public interest may seem best, such lands as may be required for the sites of churches, schools, or parsonages, or for the construction of high roads or railways and railway stations, or other internal com-



munications, whether by land or by water, or for the use or benefit of the aboriginal inhabitants of the country, or for public buildings, or as places for the interment of the dead, or places for the recreation and amusement of the inhabitants of any town or village, or as the sites of public quays, or landing places on the sea coast or shores of navigable streams ; and for the purpose of sinking shafts and digging for coals, iron, copper, lead, or other minerals ; *or for any other purpose of public defence, safety, utility, convenience or enjoyment, or for otherwise facilitating the improvement and settlement of the colony ;* but so that the quantity of land which may be granted or sold to any railway company shall not exceed, in all, the rate of one hundred acres for every mile thereof in length."

A perpetual squatterdom would be a perpetual disgrace to our science of colonisation. As soon could the present condition of Victoria exist in its future, as Nimrod or Hercules find room for themselves and their sports in London. There is, says Solomon, a time for all things ; and as there has been a time for squatting, so that of itself implies that there will be a time for giving up squatting ; and inpouring millions, seeking soil for the scythe and the plough, declare that that time is at hand.

Mr. Westgarth, in his recent work on the colony, says that he was in Sydney when the idea of procuring squatting leases was first started ; and it appeared so utterly ridiculous, that it was treated with shouts of laughter even by the squatters themselves. Yet they found a British Government so ignorant of the real nature and condition of our colonial property, that they not only offered them leases, but such leases, that if the Colonial Government had not been more prudent than the Imperial one, would have made over in perpetuity the whole of New South Wales and Port Phillip to about 2000 individuals !

Such is the Land Question of the colonies. It is a great question, which will have soon to be fought out between the squatters and the people. The one party, though powerful in position, is weak in numbers ; the

other party is powerful in numbers, and in the force of natural necessities ; and there requires no oracle to foretel which will prevail. Let us hope that the passions excited by the contest will not lead to rash measures, and the injury of the real interests of the colony and of the squatters,—a body of gentlemen in themselves distinguished by much intelligence and many virtues, and who have been placed, by the folly of the Home Government, in a position too tempting to the weak side of human nature.

The system that has been pursued in South Australia since the Wakefield bubble broke, compelling the colony to seek assistance from the Home Government, has been far preferable to the system here. The squatters have not been thrown into a false position by being fed on hopes of leases and long tenures. They can take squatting land at a cheap rate, but only on a *pro tempore* holding, and to be quitted at a month's notice whenever wanted for sale. Land has chiefly been sold in eighty-acre sections, so as to cut off the land speculators from the chance of buying large tracts over the heads of the small capitalist ; and by this means a farming population has been established who have not only supplied that colony with corn and vegetables, but have even been able to export them hither. While, on the other hand, never surely could the gold discovery, and its consequent rush of immigration, have found a country so totally unprepared as this to support an accession of population. The Orders in Council actually forbade the cultivation of the country. Everything,—not merely tea and sugar and manufactured goods, but all those things which a country should produce for itself, as corn, hay, eggs, butter, bacon, and even timber,—had to be imported from vast distances and at enormous cost. Thus the money has flowed out of the country as fast as it was dug up ; and the digger has had to spend nearly all he got for the most simple and bare necessaries. The

Government has had to pay away its apparently great income,—two millions a-year, for salaries, labour, and everything that it has wanted, at ten times the real value of the thing. If you look over the estimates of this colony, you will see that the salaries of 2000*l.* and 3000*l.* a-year to different officers have to be accompanied by 500*l.* a-year for house-rent besides. All the public works now carrying on are paid for at the same tenfold rate; and a proportionate loss will be suffered on them when land and labour descend to their natural value.

I believe the estimate for the Hall of the New Legislature is two millions; the original estimate of the New Parliament Houses in London! That, like all estimates, has cost more, and so, no doubt, will this. But what different buildings will be produced for the same sum!

The policy of this colony is, in fact, nothing but a piece of artificial machinery for exhausting its wealth. It draws the gold of the colony, as fast as it is raised, into the pockets of merchants, publicans, shopkeepers, and land-jobbers, whose only thought is to make off home with it as soon as they have enough. Imagine the difference if this wealth, as accumulated, were invested in the soil! And imagine the astonishment of the Americans here at this suicidal policy, comparing it with what they see at home. They declare that, if this system be continued and the gold-fields should fail, Victoria, instead of having benefited by her transient period of prosperity, would remain more like an exhausted air-pump than anything else. Such of them as are diggers say that there are thousands of diggers who could not now purchase land if it were offered; for, when they had money, they spent it in Melbourne in folly because there was no land to buy; and now their gains are small.

The Draft of the New Constitution is published. It is excellent, so far as the Lower House, to be called the House of Assembly, goes; but the Upper House, to be

called the Legislative Council, is an abortion, and will, if adopted, fall into speedy contempt. It is to consist of twenty-five individuals, who are to be worth not less than 10,000*l.* each, and are to hold their seats for ten years! Wealth is the main requisite, and that is in the hands of the squatters, land-jobbers, and publicans. To suppose that a House of Assembly, elected by all but universal suffrage, will submit to have their measures obstructed or revised by an *Upper* House of retired grogsellers and landsharks, is too preposterous altogether.

The *Argus* has given its estimate of the publicans; and I may just state that the very largest land-jobber of Australia is a certain individual universally known by the name of Long Clark. This person holds great tracts both here and in Van Diemen's Land, which lie waste, or at least untilled, waiting for a rise in value equal to his capacious desires. This gentleman was the other day going over to Tasmania in the steamer with a friend of mine, and observing passengers reading, he said, "I wonder what pleasure people can find in thrusting their noses into books. *I never read a book in my life*: and I get on very well without."

Col. Mundy happened to come across this extraordinary character in 1850 or 1851, and gives this account of him:—"Among the passengers of the 'Shamrock,' my notice was particularly attracted to a tall, stout, German-like man, about fifty years of age, with huge reddish whiskers, attired in a dirty drab Chesterfield, without waistcoat, gloves, or other expletives of dress; who stood generally with hands in pockets, smoking his cigar and leaning against the funnel. When he did draw forth a great pair of freckled fists, it was either to light another cigar, or to refer to a note-book. It was a note-book worth referring to! When not thus employed, he was frequently sleeping, or apparently sleeping, on a bench before his cabin door. This person was Mr. S. T.

Clark, well known as the great landowner and land purchaser. Last year he purchased from Government 28,000*l.* worth of land in Port Phillip district, which at the minimum price of crown lands, would give the like number of acres; and within his cabin door, whereat he keeps a sort of mastiff watch, although not an obvious one, is a small portmanteau, in which, as he told me himself, he has at this moment 20,000*l.* (5000*l.* in gold), which he is carrying to Melbourne for the purchase of another block, or special survey of crown land. In Van Dieman's Land he has already purchased 50,000 acres, part from the crown, part from private persons; a good deal of it is cleared, fenced, and with more than one valuable homestead.

“ This season, he informed me, he had sheared in New South Wales 90,000, and in Van Dieman's Land, 40,000 sheep. He had sent to England this year 1500 bales of wool, which, at 20*l.* a bale, gives 30,000*l.* He has no taste for luxuries, cares little even for the comforts of life, so far as himself is concerned. He is bestowing on his children a liberal education, his sons studying with a clergyman in England. They will soon be able to share his labours—the labour of amassing money and property.”

Mr. Clark was originally a butcher in Sydney, and made a good start by buying up property in the disastrous times following the great crash of 1842. Col. Mundy spoke of his memorandum-book, but this founder of a line of Antipodean magnates boasts that he can keep all his accounts in the crown of his hat!

There is a model Australian senator of the Upper House for you! What delicious work a few such native geniuses, associated with an equal or predominating number of grogsellers, would make in the upper regions of a colonial legislature! And yet, could they do worse than the present Government? This draft, however, will probably be a good deal modified in the course of discussion.

Several townships have been laid out at the diggings in ostensible compliance with the demands of the diggers for houses and for gardens to produce vegetables; but it would a little astonish any one to see where and what they have fixed on for these digger villages. Both at Bendigo and here at the Ovens, they are on the old deserted holes of the diggers, where no mortal would think of placing a house, namely, on heaps of clay and gravel interspersed with deep pits of stinking water, in each case these delectable sites having a background of bare rock for the growth of peas, beans and potatoes! It is a cruel mockery, especially as there is plenty of really good land and good sites in each place. A wag the other day said he supposed they only meant them to grow *rock melons*!

They have also advertised allotments of land at Benalla, Wangaratta, and other places on the road to the Ovens, in reluctant compliance with the public outcry; but what was our astonishment when passing through those places the other day to find that the auction was not held on the spot, but at Spring Creek, six and thirty miles off! whither the inhabitants of Benalla and Wangaratta have had to travel to purchase land at their own doors! This is a fair example of the disposition of the officials here to give themselves no trouble, and to put the public to all the trouble they can. How would such things be tolerated in England? Those of the diggers who have money and want to purchase land say that they are so worn out by these things and by the price at which land is offered, that they shall give up the idea and go to America.

When is this wretched, crooked and wayward policy to cease? When is this fine country, capable not only of producing every luxury for a large population, but of exporting to other countries if brought into cultivation, to cease to exhibit the strange picture of all its inhabitants,

except the diggers, huddled together in two or three towns on the coast, and its whole extent of surface still a forest wilderness?

But the subject provokes endless comment. The whole matter, and the whole remedy, lie in four words: “THROW OPEN THE LAND!” Then, instead of people crowding together, and treading on each other’s heels, with no other visible means of support than supplying the diggings with foreign articles of consumption, they would flock up the country into new farms, villages and towns, abounding with all the luxuries of life. They would soon not only supply their own towns, but other countries, with their produce. The land would not only be a land literally flowing with milk and honey, but they would soon be able to carry on a vast foreign trade, not only in wool and gold, but in corn, wine, fruits, fresh and dry, in bark, timber, flax, gum, and sundry other articles. In dried fruits, such as apples, pears, plums, peaches, and in preserves and marmalades of melons, quinces, peaches, apricots, nectarines, &c., there is no nation that could rival them. Instead of the present unnatural and monstrous condition of things, the natural pressure producing a moral tone precisely in keeping with it, Australia would soon become what it will do so soon as it casts off its incubus of selfish and ignorant government, a great country; an assemblage of countries, which, not only from its own vast extent, its fine climate, and innate advantages, but from its position in reference to India, China, South Africa, and the Archipelagos of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, must be one of the greatest and most fortunate regions of the world.

## LETTER XXIX.

Thermometer at 139°. — Description of Dust-Wind in Melbourne. — Prospecting. — Blow-flies. — Attempts to dig out a Wombat. — Rush to New Diggings in the Buffalo Mountains. — Scenes on the Road. — A frightful Gap in the Hills. — A Chat with some Commissioners, and their Notions. — Scenery on the Buckland River. — New Features of the Buckland Diggings. — Platypuses and Leatherheads.

The Buckland River, Buffalo Mountains, Jan. 1st, 1855.

I WAFT across the world a happy New Year to you. For ourselves, we begin it in new scenery.

The exposition of the Land Question in my last, which I wished to make clear to every one, put out a few incidents occurring at the Yackandanda which I shall now note, before proceeding to fresh scenes.

Mr. Bateman arrived from Melbourne, and brought us much news of heat, dust, and sickness, in that city, from which we in these pleasant woods are comparatively free. I had observed by the newspapers, that one day when the thermometer with us only stood at 115° in the sun, it was 139° at Geelong; an evidence that we are much cooler here near the Snowy Mountains. That you may not think either that I have at times exaggerated the dust-winds of Melbourne, I now cut you out the following passages of a letter from the *Argus*.

“CONFOUND THE DUST.

“*To the Editor of the Argus.*

“Sir,—You may have read of the evasive answer of the countryman, who, when rebuked by his pastor for swearing, and reminded that Scripture says, ‘Swear not at all;’ simply,



or perhaps shrewdly, replied, 'I don't swear at *all*, I only swear at those who annoys me.'

"This is very much my case; I endeavour to avoid the vulgar vice, but am ashamed to say that I do occasionally catch myself swearing like the countryman, at whatever very seriously annoys me, and when I have found myself on my return from a walk through Melbourne, laden, begrimed, suffocated, blinded, and nauseated with dust, I have forgotten Scripture, and cursed the dust most emphatically.

"I am an old colonist, but recently returned from the well-watered, cleanly streets and suburbs of English cities, which I have been accustomed to traverse for hours together, and still to retain the clean face and polished boots with which I sallied forth. I am somewhat particular on those points; they are essential to my comfort, and, as an Englishman, I look upon comforts as my birth-right.

"There is very little dust on board-ship, except what the Captain may kick up, and on landing, one is therefore less than ever prepared to encounter it.

"Melbourne, when I quitted it, was certainly a dusty town. Proud as I am, as a colonist of the year 1840, of most things connected with Victoria, I am fain to admit that I have always been ashamed of the dust, and the disorderly streets of Melbourne, and still more so of the absence of sewerage, and the commonest sanitary precautions. That we have hitherto been spared from pestilence, we have little to thank the Government, the Corporation, or ourselves; if we escape it in time to come, it seems (from the little that is doing in those respects), that we may still say the same. But to return to the dust; which I may immediately do in reality by opening the window, or leaving my mark upon the furniture, for the dust is everywhere, and on everything.

"I expected that the wealth and importance of Melbourne in these golden days would have led to the suppression of this and other nuisances; but the first glance from Hobson's Bay in the well-known direction showed me, not the city of Melbourne, but the dust of it, high in air as formerly: and I still have to regret that the most striking peculiarities of this extraordinary city are its atmosphere of dust, and the dirty faces of its inhabitants. The disadvantage at which this infliction places it in the eyes of new comers, is but too well shown by their published letters in England. Dirt is thoroughly un-English. I wish I could say it is equally un-Australian. Everywhere abroad an Englishman is recognised by the neatness of his toi-

lette, and the cleanliness of his person; why should he be forced to extinguish his characteristic in one of the purest atmospheres in the world?

"The dust is no longer what it used to be—one of the attendant plagues of a hot wind, or strong south-wester. The increase of traffic in the streets, and the accumulation, here and there, of building materials, have now made it an ever-constant plague.

"No man, woman, or child can walk the streets in peace for it. No stranger can gratify his curiosity as to the extent and wonderful prosperity of the capital of Victoria, without being disgusted, dirtied, and disheartened by the dust, and being driven to the conclusion that, on that account alone, it is the vilest place to live in that can be found in such a climate. The destruction of clothing it occasions is beyond belief—the aggravation of temper beyond conception. No man in England can have an idea of it, excepting from their experience of the Epsom road on race days.

"The state of wretchedness to which the community is reduced, or I ought to say to which they voluntarily submit, by this new destructive element, is perfectly pitiable. To see well-dressed men and elegant women writhing through a whirlwind of dust, would be ludicrous, if it were not lamentable. Heads and bodies slewed from side to side to escape particularly strong whiffs; features distorted in disgust; eyes half shut, regardless of the risks of collision, and lips rigidly closed, form a rather distressing object. Excepting when the atmosphere is perfectly still, which it seldom is, each individual passer-by becomes a picture of misery," &c., &c.

Whoever is the writer, he has not in the slightest degree exaggerated the nuisance, for, with all respect to Melbourne, it must be allowed to be alternately the dirtiest and the dustiest town on our planet. It is lucky for us that we see so little of it, but live cleanly and freshly *sub tegmine gummi*.

Our party being enlarged, we left Mr. Bateman and Charlton working our old claim in the creek. We had made a Tom, and found that we could work out with ease a good quantity of gold. Alfred, Lignum and myself proceeded on a prospecting tour in the neighbouring mountains.

We visited various creeks which we had seen and slightly tested the preceding summer, but though in all outward appearance exactly resembling those we had found so rich, and what is still more strange, though running out of the very same hills, but on opposite sides, they were all too poor to work. Such are the continual anomalies of the gold distribution.

In one of the deepest and most secluded valleys, into which we had indeed great trouble to descend, from the steepness of the hills, and the thickness of the scrub, we were surprised to find a digger's cradle standing by the creek, and the creek worked to some extent in that place. On examining the cradle, it had evidently stood there from the former summer; for its iron work was all rusted, and the heaps of gravel thrown out of the creek had lost the look of freshness. Looking about, we discovered where the digger had had his abode. It consisted of a rude hut of boughs and bark, raised against a rock, and there still remained his bed of leaves. The strange look of the cradle standing in that solitary valley, and of the deserted hut, made us almost expect to find the digger lying dead somewhere; but on trying the creek where he had been working, it turned out to be so poor that it explained the mystery. The poor fellow had carried his cradle many miles into this desert hidden place, no doubt believing that he had discovered a profitable digging, and hoping to reap the fruits of it alone, but being disappointed, he had not heart even to carry his cradle back again.

The plague of flies in this shut-up glen was something terrible. What do these vermin live on, where there is no living creature? Having here nobody but us to prey upon, they assailed us with voracious fury. The little black-devil fly all day attacked our eyes, nose, and mouth; and great blow-flies in thousands blew our blankets, rugs, and everything woollen, all over with their maggots, which were at once dried upon them by the sun. They covered spaces

of a foot square at once with them, all adhering by a sort of guiness. When these blankets, etc., were folded up and wrapped in oilcloth to carry on the horses, they glazed every end and fold that was visible with them.

These wretches have instinct enough to know that woollen is animal matter, but not enough to be aware that the larvæ will die upon it. The only plan is, to expose the woollen to the sun, which scorches them, and then brush them out in a state of white dust. They blow all the blankets they can get at in the colony, and in the roadside inns, you find the blankets frequently glazed with them, in addition to the general nuisance of bugs.

Before leaving our creek, in the woods round which wombats abound, we determined to make a resolute attempt to dig one out. Though there are such numbers, neither last summer nor this have we been able to get sight of one. They appear amazingly cunning animals. They make their holes where the scrub is so high and thick that you cannot possibly get a glimpse of them during the moonlight nights, and night is the only time that they come out. Then they dig their holes so deep and to such a length that it is almost impossible to come at them. They make their holes so large that a good-sized boy might creep into them, but not a man, and these holes gradually descending to a depth of ten or twelve feet, proceed underground for twenty or thirty yards. In the next place, they make their dens often near to each other, so that there are a sort of subterranean villages of them, and most of them have two entrances, if not three, while some have holes communicating with their neighbours' dens. From these causes you may judge of the difficulty of coming at them.

I have mentioned to you the perpendicular circular holes which descend into them, dug by the natives. But how they dig these holes is a profound mystery to me. They are so narrow that no white man can stoop in them,

and are commonly from eight to ten feet deep. How they manage either to dig these holes, or to throw the earth out of them is amazing;— we could not do it. The only way that we can imagine is for them to crouch down and dig between their legs; for they can crouch in a much less compass than we can. But what a labour to dig in this manner through eight or ten feet of hard gravel! And then how they can contrive to keep the beast exactly under the hole that they dig while it is doing! It is said that they set a child with a stick to hem in the animal, but when it has two or three outlets it would require two or three children.

As we have no black children, or white ones either, we were compelled to trust to our dogs. We sent them down, one at each end, and soon had them furiously barking at the creature a long way under ground, while it kept up a constant low deep growl. We got Prin out, and then sent him in with a string tied to his leg, by which means we ascertained how far he was from us. The other end we stopped up, and then sank a hole down to where he appeared to be. We sank ten feet there. There, however, he was not, but had contrived to move himself a good way towards the other end, spite of the dogs, one of which we had sent in each way. We then sank another hole down to where he then was; ten feet again; but on getting down, he was not there either, but about halfway between our two holes. The dogs were still furious. Pincher, the bulldog, had a regular fight with him, and Prin repeatedly came out with mouthfuls of the wombat's hair. Before we could get our third hole down, night came on, and we barricaded him in, and left him. Had we left our hole open and dug a pitfall at its mouth, we should have been pretty sure of him. But we seemed so secure of him now, hemmed in between our two holes, that we were confident of his speedy capture in the morning. By that time, however, he had burrowed in a new direction, and

that to the extent of twelve feet. Here our dogs from some cause refused to follow him, and on putting down a candle tied to a long stick to ascertain the reason, we found that the burrow was filled with choke-damp, (carbonic-acid gas), which the dogs could not breathe.

The wombat had no doubt broke a way into an old run filled with this gas. From this old burrow he had made his escape, and so we gave up our pursuit of him, after having dug thirty feet in depth and six feet by three in length after him through hard gravel. We came to the conclusion that it is useless to dig for a creature which digs as fast as you do, but that the only way is to trap him.

At this juncture there came a wonderful report of a rush to the Buckland river, sixty miles off amongst the Snowy Mountains. The accounts, as usual, were various and contradictory—full of marvel, and nuggets, and negations. We resolved to see and judge for ourselves, so Alfred and Lignum mounted and rode off; intending if not satisfied with the Buckland, to go a-head and explore some of the tributary creeks.

There is no rest for the sole of the digger's foot. Our prospectors returned on the 20th, post haste, to say that the Buckland was likely to turn out well; but that there was no time to be lost; we must be off the next morning.

They found the place about sixty miles off in the Buffalo Mountains, the roads steep and difficult for about five miles at each end, but all the rest, along the bottom of one long valley, good and sound. It was a wild country with steep rocks and precipices. The river, a rapid mountain stream, perhaps twice as large as the New River, which required to be raced off, and turned, the gold being in the bottom. But already 2000 people had arrived, and had taken possession of thirty miles of the river, running from the valley up into the most rugged defiles of the mountains, where neither cart nor horse could approach. The road was full of people hurrying thither with breathless

haste. No less than two hundred tents were struck in one day in one gully at Nine Mile Creek, and the whole of the Ovens Diggings bade fair to be speedily depopulated.

If the accounts continue good, there will be a tremendous rush from all the diggings in the colony, for everywhere they seem fast wearing out, and the now excessive numbers of diggers are at their wit's end, and on tiptoe ready to be off in any direction where rumour promises a fresh field. If there be really much gold on the Buckland, this summer will witness a regular exodus from the Goulburn, Bendigo, Mount Alexander, and Balarat. Sydney will send over its legions from Ophir, Tambourra, and the Turon, and unless the field be very large, it will be devoured as by an army of locusts. That is the worst of it. The diggings are now so overdone, that no fields can long suffice for the multitudes. The rush and struggle is awful, and the only chance is to fly off at the first sound, and keep a-head of the careering tide. For ourselves, we regarded it as the merest chance whether we were in time to secure a scrap of the river, but we were certain to witness something new in the great gold struggle going on there.

The accounts which our couriers gave of the groups on the road were very amusing. They saw huge files of men with swags, hurrying along, and other groups coming down again much faster than the others were going up, having left their tools and everything but a blanket and some provisions behind, in order to be down to their mates with the news, and get up their effects as fast as possible; drays, carts, all sorts of vehicles, were labouring along with tents, tools, women, and children. There were plenty of break-downs upon the roads, and things dropped in the hurry. Amongst other things, they overtook a huge and very fat hen, trudging along with a string to its leg; they dismounted and secured it; and seeing a dray a-head, they

tied chuckey up in a handkerchief, and rode on. On coming up with the dray they asked the people if they had lost anything; and on looking round they thought they had not; but the woman going behind the dray, and looking into a bucket which hung there, cried out,—“Oh! my hen! my hen! I've lost my hen!” They handed it over to her, and great was the rejoicing of the whole family over the recovered hen.

They saw also two boys labouring along with a heavy-laden truck, drawn by a donkey. This was on their return, and the lads asked them how the roads were; they told them that about five miles were very bad, and very steep. At which they pulled immensely long faces, and cried out in a lamentable tone,—“Then we shall never get there, for we have been upset once already!”

All that they met were anxious for the news, and when they said it was good, they gave great shouts, swung their tools round their heads, and hurried on. At the place itself all was bustle; diggers, storekeepers, and doctors, were already putting up their tents, and getting to work. A single Commissioner was there, with only one trooper, but had not even a plate, or a knife and fork to eat with, they had gone up in such a hurry; and were glad that our party could leave them theirs for a few days.

We set out with all speed for this Buckland, but still we were not quick enough. The mischief is that you hear so many wonderful stories that prove false, that you will not listen to a first rumour, and by the time that something authentic reaches you, it is too late. There are thousands of men at the diggings ready to start at a moment's notice, and having neither baggage nor good luck to detain them. At the first whisper, therefore, of a new field, they shoulder their picks and shovels, and their swags, and stalk away with all the speed they can put forth. If there be any



good ground, they at once secure it, and by the time that those who have carts and provisions to bring up arrive, there is no ground left.

This was the case here ; the discoverer of the diggings, Mr. Pardoe, an American, had been in the place fifteen weeks. Separated by sixty miles from Spring Creek, the nearest diggings, buried amongst woods and mountains; rarely if ever before traversed by the white man, he might well calculate on spending a year undiscovered. But within ten days he was discovered, and there was an immediate rush! This did not take much hold on public opinion, for the river has a strong, full current, and can only be turned by large parties, and the bed of the river kept dry by a water-wheel constantly working a belt-pump. Few diggers except Californians are equal to this, and, therefore, there was a temporary damp on the Buckland discovery. But a fortnight ago the news was, that though there was no gold except in the stream, yet parties who had succeeded in turning the river were taking out of it from twelve to eighteen ounces of gold per day.

This news being confirmed by the Commissioner, we made all despatch ; but we found 500 people a-day going up, and when we arrived, thirty-five miles of the river were occupied completely, leaving no interval of a single claim. Excellent claims which our pioneers had noted, were all entered upon before we could get up, and we were obliged to come further down the stream, where there is more water, and less certainty of gold.

What the crowds who still continue to pour up hither every day are to do, Heaven only knows. At present there is no gold discovered in the banks, or anywhere but in the river itself, and that is all occupied; and those who come up say they were so reduced at the other diggings, that they could not remain there. It is pitiable to see whole families in hundreds, with women and children,

still crowding in, knowing as we do, that nothing but the most absolute disappointment awaits them. For twenty-five miles above the Commissioner's camp, ten miles above this spot, the river runs between mountains so steep and rocky, and crowding so close upon it, that so far from carts getting up, not even horses can ascend, and those who go up thither are obliged to climb and scramble up through a dense scrub as high as their heads, with their swags as well as they can; you may be sure that now things are come to this pass, we look forward to quitting the wretched scene at a very early date; but I must give you some account of our journey hither.

After travelling a few miles we came to a dreadful gap in the hills, through which we had to descend into the valley which runs the whole way hither, sixty miles. This certainly was a formidable place; it was a sudden dip from the hills down into this valley; the only possible descent being by taking the cart round the steep foreland of the hill, steep as a house roof, with the cart hanging all on one side, and then shooting down a hollow still steeper, with a pole put through both wheels to lock them fast. We half unloaded our cart, and took off the other horses, for we were now drawing Lignum's horse too, and leaving only Ben in the shafts. Our business was to hang on the upper side of the cart by ropes, as we rounded the head of the hill, to keep the cart from toppling over; and then to hang again behind at the shoot, to keep it from carrying horse and everything before it. Plenty of smashed drays, boxes, tins, tubs, and the like, attested the fate of former attempts, and there were three carts at the bottom, which had been wholly unloaded to get them down, and the people very busy reloading them.

At the first view of the descent, Ben ran backwards, and, spite of all our efforts and floggings, jibbed most determinedly down towards a frightful ravine, where both the cart and himself would have been dashed to atoms.

It was only by actively flinging great stones behind the wheels, that we managed in time to scotch them, and get Ben out; of course there was now nothing for it, but unloading everything, and carrying our effects down the hill; heavy boxes, a bag of flour, sugar, tea, beds, blankets, a heavy Tom, a good load for four people, &c. These, one by one, as packs on the horses, or on our own backs, we carried down. By the time that all this was done, having as you may suppose, not only the loads down, but many a still more laborious climb up the hill again, it was night, and time to camp, which we did at the foot of the hill, fairly worn out. The day, too, had been a remarkably close, heavy one,—the thermometer at 102°; and we observed that all who came up the valley from towards the Buckland were covered, and their horses too, with perspiration, and with flies in thousands.

This descent of the gap perfectly satisfied Mr. Bateman. He declined any further pleasures of the journey; and the next morning took his way down again to Melbourne. Thus, like one of Bunyan's characters, "He went on his way, and we saw him no more."

While engaged in our laborious descent, two of the Spring Creek Commissioners came past, and stopped for a chat. I particularly recommended this spot to their attention, showing them that a very few days' work by half-a-dozen men would throw out a terrace road round this foreland head, and enable the diggers to make the descent in safety, if not with ease. Their reply was quite characteristic, and evinced the universal spirit of the Government here. They could not, in fact, see that there was any claim or duty incumbent upon them to make the roads to the diggings accessible. Their only duty, they imagined, was to collect the licence money when the diggers have got there by some means!

"Oh!" said they, "there is a very good road round by Dr. Mackay's." Fifteen miles round! "But see," I ob-

served, "how little would make this, the direct road, passable."

"Oh!" they rejoined, "all the rest of the way is very good, we assure you."

"Then, there will be only this for you to do." At this they smiled, but could not arrive at any idea that it in any way concerned them.

From the gap, our journey hither was up a tolerably level road, between lofty ranges of hills, for a long way along the banks of the Ovens River. Our only difficulties were in crossing creeks and gullies, which were pretty steep and swampy, and into which we had to throw wood. The rest of the road was as good as a Macadamised one; and we found plenty of grass for our horses. The Ovens we crossed without any difficulty. As we approached this place, the hills grew higher; the roads were more sidling along their spurs, and the grass and scrub were nearly all burnt up by the diggers, who burn up the country wherever they go, as they say, to get rid of the snakes. But they are a race without a spark of the picturesque or of the perception of beauty in their souls; and in a marvellously short time contrive, wherever they appear, to destroy every trace of these qualities in the landscape; setting fire to the grass and bushes, knocking down the trees, and tearing up the earth. Nearly all the country for thirty miles, and more, along this river, is thus burnt up; and they are obliged to send down their horses to the plains to keep. It would grieve a lover of rural beauty to see the ravages which they have already committed along these valleys and hills. The scenery itself is fine. Ranges beyond ranges of steep granite hills, of 1000 feet or more in height, all in the true Australian style, running in long stretches, steep and sharp-edged at the top, and ascending on the summit into occasional peaks and hollows, but covered from head to foot with a luxuriant clothing of woods. Over them, as we approached, still

showed itself the huge bulk of the Buffalo Mountain, the only one which had a partially bare and desolate aspect.

We are camped just under this mountain, but with a lower range, thickly wooded, between it and us. Higher up the stream, the hills approach nearer to each other, and are excessively steep; the roads over them being dreadful, all up and down, and on one side, in a manner to destroy both horses and vehicles; and many smashed drays lie on these abrupt and laborious acclivities. The diggers, by preoccupying the river, however, have spared us the trouble of ascending them.

There is a peculiarity in these valleys, which we noticed along the banks of the Ovens, as well as of its tributary, the Buckland; that is, of fine terraces running along them, some at one height, and some at another. If such were in England, they would be seized on as sites for noble mansions, and would make magnificent ones. Some of these enclose basins, including the bed of the river, of from fifty to two or three hundred feet deep. They have, evidently, been the banks of lakes, whose waters have since burst away into the plains. That this is the case, is shown, too, by the rounded, water-worn pebbles that you find everywhere; and the different heights of the terraces show that the waters have escaped at various successive periods.

The banks of this mountain stream, the Buckland, before they were burnt by the diggers, must have presented a scene of fine, solitary woodland country. The stream rushes along over a bed occasionally strewn with huge round blocks of granite, and between rocks hung with masses of luxuriant shrubs and trees—many of the names of the shrubs being unknown to us. I stood long to admire one bank, of several hundred feet, ascending steeply from the rocky margin of the river, which had escaped the diggers' conflagration; and I thought what would not many a nobleman have given for such an one in his

park. The whole of it was draped in a rich garniture of magnificent ferns, and verdant shrubs, many of the latter in flower; while here and there amongst them towered up the olive-leaved lightwood trees, with boughs from their very bases. Amongst these was a tall, umbelliferous shrub, with white flowers (*Cassinia aculeata*), which at a distance resembles the wild Guelder rose in blow; and tea-trees (*Leptospermum grandiflorum*), like hawthorn-trees in opening blossom; while white speedwell, six or seven feet high, and another shrub in blossom (*Lomatia longifolia*), resembling in general appearance the white lilac, broke up beautifully the dark expanse of evergreen foliage. Above, extended high, and wide, and solemn, the primeval forest, and below, the river brawled along in its deep bed, with its pale yellow water discoloured by the diggers.

These diggings present an appearance perfectly different to any other that I have seen, from the circumstance of the mountain features of the scene; the deep glens in which the diggings lie being confined to the banks of the river itself. All along, as you proceed, you still find groups and whole villages of white tents, bullock-drays, and cows and horses vainly seeking food amongst a wilderness of ashes, black and white, and the hot scorched leaves of hop-scrub, and peppermint gum-tree, which have withstood the fires.

One scene is particularly striking; it is a reach of the river in which Mr. Pardoe, the American, is working. You come suddenly to a high, precipitous bank on the road, and see below you a reach of the river, very deep between its banks, extending perhaps, a couple of furlongs. In the bed of the river you perceive water-wheels turning, and hear them screaming, and see numbers of men busy at work amid huge piles, and walls, as it were, of stones, which they have thrown up out of the bottom of the river. They are all in action, washing out the gold at their long-tom's, while they keep the ground dry by their belt-

pumps; on each side, the river banks being rocky and shaggy with wood, and the whole view most striking and unique.

Where we are camped the country is somewhat opener; but the scrub is all burnt; and bush-fires are raging in the swamps and amongst the hills, to the very tops of many of which they have reached. We are obliged to send our horses across the river, where, fortunately, a small patch of grass has escaped, and where the feet of the mountains present an obstacle to their straying. The Buffalo looks down upon us from his naked and rocky summit, and seems to stand in sublime security from this fire-scattering race of rude men, who scorch the forests around his base. The Commissioner says there are great numbers of very rude fellows already come up hither, but they are quietness and civility, nay politeness itself, compared with the raff of Bendigo.

We have platypuses sporting about in the river, wild dogs howling dismally in the mountainous woods at night, and our old friends the Leatherheads flitting about here, and as amusing as ever. They have a song here that we never heard before. It is like the note of a fairy trumpet in the words: "Tu chahaha! haha! chahaha! chaha!" ending in a most unmusical chatter, as if laughing at their own song. But nothing but such a trumpet, or a violin, could imitate the tones of this strange bird, which has an endless variety of notes. As to human neighbours here, we have only two or three parties near us, and the head of one of them an old Van Diemonian convict, but, notwithstanding that, a very decent, quiet, neighbourly fellow.

## LETTER XXX.

Better Class of Diggers.—“Good Morning Men and Women.”—Attempt to turn the River.—Arduous Struggle with it.—Banks give way.—Buckland Fever.—Irish Giant goes.—Story of Mr. Pardo, the Discoverer of the Buckland Diggings.—New Rush to Bryant's Ranges, 250 Miles off!—Decrease in the Gold.—Dangers from Diggerdom if the Gold fails.—These wild Rushes betray growing Poverty.—A Crisis approaches.

Buckland River, January 29th, 1854.

THE diggers here are a very quiet and civil race, at the same time that they are a most active and laborious one. This is all wet work; and you see them wading about to the waists in water all day, as though they were amphibious creatures. I have stated that this superior character was most striking at the Ovens; and the principal part of the diggers here are from the Ovens. The men here address you courteously, though with a manly freedom that I like; but you have no vulgar insolence. You have none of them accosting you with—“Well, old fellow, how goes it?” or, “I say, old fellow, are you a sailor, that you wear blue trousers?” or, “I say, fellow, what's the clock, eh?” It is here, “Good day, sir,” and nothing more. I never received a single incivility at the Ovens, except from the Miller and his men; but I have received many a one at Bendigo and at M'Ivor. Not but that there is a large population of quiet, intelligent, and respectable people at both these places; but it is their misfortune to have, or to have had while I was there, a prominent admixture of the ruder class. The only instance that I have seen here of that lawlessness which



was common at those places, was last Sunday, as Alfred and I rode up to Camp for our letters.

A great number of diggers had made a cricket-ground of the highway. They had put down their stumps in the very centre of it, and would neither give pause nor give way for any one. We managed to avoid the flying balls as well as we could. On returning, the same scene was going on, though the mounted police, whose duty it was to have put a stop to this dangerous play in the main road, had just ridden by. As we came up a fellow flung the ball close past my horse's ear, and it was struck back, with furious force, in the direction of Alfred, and it was all that he could do to avoid its striking him in the face. We stopped and quietly remonstrated with them on the danger of their playing in the public road, observing to them, that the ball striking a horse might occasion some very serious accident to the rider. Instead of receiving the observation well, they began to hoot and bawl, and threaten all sorts of things, saying, “Get along with you; we do as we like here. You are not in England, remember.” These certainly were not Ovens men, except they came from Reid's Creek. It is something, however, in a miscellaneous gathering of people who thus feel that they are very much their own masters, to have only one such scene amongst 5000 or 6000 persons. We were very much struck with the blunt, republican style of address in a young man who came up to a tent by the road-side where there were several smart young people of both sexes:—“Good morning, men and women!” There was no affectation of “ladies and gentlemen,” which you hear amongst the very humblest people at home,—it was plain men and women. He lit his pipe at their fire, chatted awhile, and then, with “Well, men and women, good luck, and good day to you,” marched on.

I told you in my last letter that we were marking off a portion of the river, and had cut a race of 120 feet long,

7 feet deep, and 5 feet wide. That finished, we proceeded to make a dam across the river. This we did by felling a white gum-tree on the banks, so as to fall in a slanting direction across the river. It fell admirably, so that its upper end was exactly at the entrance of our race, where we wanted it. We now cut a large quantity of stout stakes, and drove them in along the front of this tree to support the dam of earth. This completed, we cut large sheets of bark, and with them made a wall along the front of the stakes, which itself stopped the bulk of the water. We next cut a vast quantity of sods and earth from the banks of the river, and threw them in front of the bark, and trod them, with the mass of earth, well down. All went on very well; but as we had in awhile to bring the sods and earth a good way from the sides of the river, we went over, and commenced the same process on the other side. We worked on from day to day, till we were within six feet of meeting in the middle. But now began our difficulties. We went to bed that evening heartily tired; but with the confident feeling that the following day we should close our dam, and turn off the river. But alas! the first thing that we saw in the morning was, that at least six feet of our dam on the farther side was washed away! We hurried across, and attempted to put a stop to the damage by throwing in fresh sods and earth, and treading them down with all our might. For a time the mischief seemed stayed, and again we advanced with activity from this side.

But now we were to experience the fortune of the diggers on the Turon. The weather for two or three months had been intensely hot, the thermometer at noon in the sun ranging from 100° to 132°. Under this blazing sun we had to pursue our work, which admitted of no intermission. But this heat brought on its usual consequence of storms of thunder and heavy rain. We were stopped by a grand thunder-storm, followed by a day and

night of incessant deluging rain. Of course, the river running, as it does, out of a region of precipitous mountains, began to swell and roar most ominously. It rose and rose, and would have risen over the head of our dam, and carried the whole away at once, but that we jumped into the river, and wrenched away a long row of the stakes in the centre, and let the torrent go freely through it. We then paused for a day or two to let the flood abate, but, at the same time, getting a fresh supply of earth and sods ready.

The water having at length subsided, we again proceeded with our dam. We restored the stakes and the bark, and began once more to advance our mound. But now we became fully sensible of the arduousness of our undertaking. Our race, large as it was, was not so deep as we could have wished, owing to the bottom being solid rock, and, therefore, the water in the dam rose proportionably. Instead of a river of thirty feet or so across, it was now at least fifty feet. Instead of two feet deep, it was at our dam five feet deep. It backwatered the whole river up for several hundred yards; and the vast mass of water thus thrown on our dam caused it to rush and roar furiously through every crevice of the bark which we had not packed with our earth.

It seemed to us like a great lion who was finding himself penned in, and was raging against the obstacles, and determined to break through. Higher and higher it rose, and was every moment about to overtop our dam, and we had to run and carry earth in buckets, and keep raising the bank in height, and treading it hard. But though we succeeded in preventing the water rising over the dam, we were struck with its furious and determined roar, and became afraid that the vast weight of water now on the dam would press too heavily on the stakes and carry all away. To prevent this, we hurried off, and cut down some long stout poles, with which we shored-up and se-

cured the back of the dam. This answered admirably, and we once more retired to rest, trusting next day, by dint of hard labour, to close the dam; but, alas! once more. On rising we found that our race had dissolved like so much sugar or salt, and the bank between it and the river had for the most part disappeared.

Here was an end of all our labours, and of all chance of turning off the river. The whole of the soil here was crumbling vegetable matter, which had been washed from the hills, or accumulated by the decay of the thicket and jungle, and had not consistency enough to resist the action of water. We had spent nearly a month's Herculean labour, under this Indian sun, in vain! It reminded us of Achilles contending with the river Scamander, as described by Homer, when the watery god rose, and raved and roared against him, till it chased him from its bounds.

We have since tried to reach the bottom of the river, and see what gold there was there, by making what they call a paddock; that is, enclosing a square piece of the river with a strong bank of earth between two walls of stones. But we found that the water oozed through the loose, gravelly drift under our banks, in such quantities that we had no hope that a belt-pump and water-wheel even could keep the paddock dry, while the cost of these would be 30%. The gold that we could collect from a quantity of drift at the bottom of the paddock was not, on calculation, sufficient to pay for this apparatus, and the enormous and incessant labour. This was the experience of two parties just below, who had succeeded in laying dry their claims, and of several parties above; so that it was clear that this lower part of the river would not answer for working. We therefore concluded to wind up here, and return to our old favourite camping-ground on the Yackandanda during the remainder of the hot season, where we know that gold is to be got with ease and comfort.

Here fever, and adulterated articles of food, as well as their excessive dearness, warn us to retire. Articles such as flour, bread, sugar, &c. are excessively adulterated all over the colony. Here, if you buy brown sugar, the sand makes a large per-centage. If you buy a sack of flour, it is 20%, and full of lumps, being clearly American damaged flour mixed with good flour. In Melbourne they have appointed a superintendent of weights and measures, who has summoned great numbers of shopkeepers before the mayor and fined them heavily. And the consequence is, that they have threatened to assassinate him. A superintendent is still more necessary in the diggings; but who dare occupy that post there? The swindling on some of the diggings is as wholesale as that which was some time ago carried on at Sydney. There a man sold a large quantity of tallow, so-called, which afterwards turned out to be only casks of earth, with a cylinder across the barrel from the bung-hole—where they try the tallow by a probe—filled with the most excellent tallow. Of course, before the fraud was discovered, the ingenious author of it had vanished.

Partly, I suspect, from the bad flour sent hither, but still more from causes connected with the situation, there is a great deal of sickness here. Though the diggings are but of a few weeks old, there is a considerable burying-ground already, where you see numbers of fresh graves surrounded with a rude paling, and on the post at each corner placed a square turf, the digger's monument!

These deep valleys, inclosed between steep, wooded mountains, are intensely hot, and rarely traversed by any wind. There are vast jungles here and there where the valleys open out into flats, and everywhere the earth is of a light, porous quality, which absorbs the rain like a sponge, and in the heat exhales malaria. You may smell the dry-rot of decaying roots of trees as you walk over the surface. A species of low fever prevails, and has attacked,

more or less, almost every tent. I feel the creeping approach of it in a depressing lassitude, and shall decamp without delay.

Our Irish giant quits us here. He has not worked amiss, considering his bulk and the continued broiling heat; but stooping, he said, killed him; and he very soon rode off to the stores, and purchased a shovel with a handle about six feet long, so that he could shovel as he stood erect. It looked dreadfully like a lazy man's contrivance, but still he flung a great quantity of earth behind him with it. But the giant did not bear close acquaintance. In a short time he had exhausted all his fun and his anecdotes, and, as the gay surface wore off, a coarse nature looked through that was not so agreeable. He had habits that were not the most refined, and we, therefore, shall not leave him behind with any severe regret.

Yesterday I had some conversation with Mr. Pardo, the discoverer of the Buckland Diggings, and what he told me may show what bold prospecting—or, in plain English, exploring—is necessary to hunt out new diggings in the wild bush and hills of this country. The Americans are in this, as in all other respects, the people who go a-head. I see that a Captain M'Clure professes to have discovered the North-west passage; but if he have not, only offer a good premium, and the Americans will get into it, spite of fate. I expect they will some day discover the north pole, and saw it up for lumber.

Henry W. Pardo is a middle-sized, dark-complexioned man, in the prime of life. His clear skin and lively eyes denote an active and energetic nature, and his countenance altogether is prepossessing and intelligent. He was born in Oneida County, State of New York, but has chiefly lived in British America. He went to California, on the discovery of gold there, overland from the states, crossing the plains and the Missouri River. He was taken ill, and was laid up nine months amongst the Mormons at

the Great Salt Lake. He was treated very kindly by them, taking care to keep on good terms with them by his orderly conduct; for he observed that they were not more prodigal in the appropriation of wives than exclusive in their possession of them. They resented any familiarity with their numerous harems; and he saw a man shot for incautious attentions to one of their sultanas.

He said that the greatest difficulty that he ever experienced was on this journey. The passage over the sandy plains and over the Sierra Nevada was marked by a regular succession of the carcasses of horses, bullocks, and men, and the fragments of demolished vehicles and goods. He observed that he would desire no more property than the value of that which lies destroyed on that terrible track. He saw bullocks left yoked to drays that had been deserted, the people having fled for their lives; for the heats are so fierce, that unless they cross the burning sands before daylight, they are inevitably lost; the very hoofs of their horses and cattle being parched up and falling off. This was the desert at the head of the Humboldt River.

He was five days crossing the Sierra Nevada; but they got over with only one attack from the Indians, who did no further damage than carrying off three bullocks. He continued thirteen months in California, chiefly on the American River and the Sacramento.

On arriving in this country, he went up to the Owens, and, finding the diggings there very much exhausted, set out with one companion to prospect a-head. They ascended the Owens River on the 23rd of November, 1853. They had a couple of packhorses and good store of provisions. They found gold in the river where it divides into two branches, about forty miles above Mackay's Station. They crossed and followed the right-hand branch of the river, and found gold two miles onward. There the road spread out into a swamp, and they found no more

gold. They therefore advanced onwards towards the Snowy Mountains. As they went along the river they saw several parties digging on its banks; but the greater number of the men were looking at what the lesser number were doing, and, according to the phrase, waiting on Providence. That was a system which did not suit him; so he ascended the ranges of the Snowy Mountains till they came to where the snow was lying deep. They followed the dividing range till they came to this river, which they struck about twenty miles above where the Government camp now stands. They prospected down its course, finding but a pennyweight to a dish; and when they got down to where he was now located, they found half an ounce to a dish. In half an hour they washed two ounces of gold from the stuff out of the bed of the river, and determined to stay there.

They now proceeded to Spring Creek to bring up the rest of their property, the whole party consisting of nine. They were watched; but eluded their watchers by going up the Buffalo River, at Johnson's Station, as if seeking the scene of a former unsuccessful rush. They then crossed a high, steep range, in the direction of the Buckland, and encountered a terrific hail-storm, in which the ice fell in square, solid lumps, three of which would fill a pint pot. The horses broke away from the frightful pelting of this storm, while they themselves sheltered as well as they could under trees; but one of the party was struck on the head by one of these formidable stones, which raised a lump as large as a hen's egg. Another grew extremely frightened, and declared that this evidently was a country which was never intended for the abode of white men, and began to pray. Mr. Pardo described this storm as rising out of the Buffalo River like a waterspout, which came right on towards them.

They crossed a river which lies, he says, between the Buffalo and the Buckland, and falls into the Ovens; he



supposes ten to fifteen miles below where he is camping. He had determined to work this river, which they prospected, and found gold, but that the doctor tells him that he has been in the water too long already, — sixteen months; and he was at this time suffering from fever. He described the range of the country about here as consisting of quartz and slate.

Arrived at the chosen spot, he and his party set to work and sawed timber, and made a water-wheel and belt-pump. Thus enclosed by steep mountains, and dense, scrubby forest, the scrub and jungle of which reached in many places higher than a man's head, he expected that they should scarcely be disturbed till the following summer; and, indeed, to form any idea of the obscure hiding-place of the scene, it must be seen. The nearest diggings were sixty miles off; the country for the most part trackless and unfrequented. The hills rose everywhere high, and covered with thick forests. The river ran between the hills in a deep, rocky bed, concealed by tall hop and wattle scrub, and here and there shrouded in thick, rank vegetation, a chaos of brambles, speedwell, coarse grass and reeds. It must have been an arduous task to push a way through this thick obscurity, and continually to scramble up rocks and tangled steps between the rough acclivities. What a solitary feeling such wanderers must have, especially as evening came down upon them in some of these close, dim, gullies, filled with prostrate trunks of giant trees, and inhabited by the wild dog, the wombat, and the snake. They had managed, too, on their journey, to lose their pocket-compass, and could only tell their locality by climbing the highest ranges and contemplating the bearings of the country.

Well might they expect to enjoy for some time their profitable seclusion; but the very week following a party, who had contrived to track them, came up to where they

were at work ! The secret was thus out, and could be no longer kept. To make the matter worse, one of their own party, who went down to Spring Creek for stores, got too much brandy, and boasted publicly that they were making 5 lbs. weight of gold per man daily. There was a violent rush, and in a few weeks the whole course of the Buckland was taken possession of for thirty-five miles in length.

Some of the baser spirits contended with the discoverer of the gold for the ground which he occupied. They protested that he had got too much, and threatened to cut his race and seize on the chief portion of his claim. This, however, nineteen of the better class of diggers resisted ; declared that no one should touch his claim, and asked the ungenerous fellows, whether they were not ashamed of themselves. Mr. Puckle, the young Commissioner, also protected him.

But Mr. Pardo's treatment by the Government has been worse than that of the diggers. There is a clause in the new law for the gold-fields, enacting a reward for the discovery of new diggings ; Mr. Pardo sent in his claim, but never received even the courtesy of an answer. This is disgraceful to the Government ; but Victoria is not given to rewarding its benefactors. Mr. Esmond, who first discovered gold in this colony, at least, first after its discovery in Sydney, for it is said to have really been discovered in Victoria in 1848 ;—Mr. Esmond, who, acting under the stimulus of a reward of 200*l.* offered for the discovery, made that discovery in the Pyrenees in August, 1851, has never been able to obtain it.

Mr. Pardo would proceed to work the river just mentioned, where he has also found gold, if he could have a lease of a sufficient length of time from Government ; but he receives no encouragement. He complains that the only quantity which he could get of the Buckland did not remunerate him and his party for the outlay in prospecting and working the claim. These are facts that neither

reflect honour on this colony, nor are conducive to its real interests.

The largest quantity of gold sent down by escort in one week is 3000 ounces.

There is a new rush, and a violent one,—thousands and thousands of the people who have come up from the Ovens are now off again, helter-skelter, down to a place called the Porcupine, from the Porcupine Inn, near which our horses were, beyond Bendigo 250 miles! Thus, with the sixty miles from the Ovens hither, these crowds will, in less than a fortnight, have travelled upwards of 300 miles after new rushes!

By all accounts the diggings at the Porcupine, or Bryant's Ranges, are totally destitute of water; a hot, burnt-up place, and however rich it may be, will be torn up, long before these people, about 5000 in number, can get there. It lies between Bendigo and Front Creek, and not more than about sixty miles from Ballarat; so that if it prove good, 80,000 people could be upon it in less than a fortnight.

This state of things presents a frightful crisis to the imagination at no distant period. This vast mass of rude people without homes, without a foot of land, the majority of them without ties of any sort, thus daily drawn by stern necessity from place to place, and consequently growing poorer and poorer, will, ere long, unless some fresh and extensive gold-field—for extensive it must be to last such a number any length of time—be discovered, become desperate, and then, wo-betide that Government and colony which have allured them hither by the most florid statements, and then shut them out from soil to settle on. Mr. Khull, the gold broker, the highest authority in the colony on the subject, states that there has been a decrease this year in the production of gold, of 142,460 ounces.

That is a serious revelation, and is a palpable proof that what the diggers say is correct, that they are, large

numbers of them, becoming less and less able to live. Now it is not necessary to anticipate anything so extreme as the total exhaustion of the gold-fields of Victoria — a circumstance by no means probable—in order to foresee very disastrous consequences to the colony and to the cause of emigration. If the number of immigrants exceed largely the demand for labour, or at least that free and independent sort of labour found on the diggings, where are we to look for a source of occupation for them? The only other general means are in towns in skilled or unskilled labour. But vast quantities of the diggers are unskilled labourers, and would overwhelm the coarse-labour-market, if they were thrown upon it. But they are not disposed to return to that kind of labour if they can possibly avoid it. They have set themselves free of masters and servitude. They have enjoyed all the liberty, equality, and fraternity of what is called the new aristocracy — Diggerdom. Before they will lay down that charter of newly organised freedom, they will, many of them, if driven hard, resort to outrage and to social disorganisation. Let the Government look to it in time. Land they would settle on; but land they cannot get, and it is thus by an eternal necessity, starting from whatever point of evil we will in this colony, that we are driven to the same grand and invariable origin — THE WITHHOLDING OF THE LAND.

As I was closing this letter my attention was called to a passage in a Sydney paper, which may be compared with my own observations, as I have made them in these letters: “The monster nuggets and the extraordinary yields which characterised the discoveries in Victoria were, we are confident, but evanescent, and that while they excited false hopes and false capital, they were contributors to the demoralisation of the community and the ruin of its best interests. The last few months have proved that our anticipations were correct. The great

gold-fields of Victoria, Bendigo, Forest-Creek, Ballarat, and the numerous off-shoots of the great belt of auriferous land, have ceased to offer inducements to enterprise, either for commerce or digging. Within that time, and previous to it, there has been a social disorganisation, and an absence of moral restraint, which have assisted in creating a condition of circumstances disastrous to the ultimate welfare of the colony. In addition to this, "the hope that told a flattering tale" has excited a trade which nothing within the colony can sustain. Overtrading has created a class of men not scrupulous in their transactions, and the community, lead headlong on without reflecting, have given in their adhesion to apparent success. That a crisis is at hand no thinking man can doubt, and the sooner it arrives, the better for the colony."

Now, making all allowance for colonial jealousy, we must admit, after what is just stated, that there is great truth in these remarks. While the gold has decreased in 1853, nearly five tons and a-half, according to Khull, crime has increased six per cent., according to the Government return; 10,000 criminal cases this year having been brought before the magistrates, the amount last year being only 4000.

It is impossible to close our eyes to these facts; they are in fearful accordance with the wild rushes which I have described, and with the comparatively deserted aspects of the old, chief gold-fields. The overtrading is equally appalling. *Fourteen millions of imports* to supply a population of 250,000,—nearly that of one of our second-rate towns, is, allowing for all the anomalies of the case, evidently the result of excited speculation, and not of sound transaction. *Six million pairs of boots and shoes* sent hither in six months, for this quarter of a million of people,—or at the rate of four dozen pairs per annum, for man, woman, and child,—is a fair example of the insane rate at which supply is outrunning demand, as it regards this colony. That a

crisis *must* come, every sober person outside the whirling Maelstrom of excitement, clearly sees, and as the Sydney paper says, the sooner the better. But is not that another imperative reason for a wise Government to prepare for it, and to hold in readiness land—for the people to fall back upon, and where the shock of commercial revolution may be mitigated, and demoralization may purify itself?

## LETTER XXXI.

At our old Creek.—Captain Murray, our Commissioner.—Good Neighbours.—A Character from the Cape.—His Rat-trap.—His Escape from an Alligator.—Loses his Gold-bag.—An American compares our Colonial Policy with that of the United States.—Notes our Fear of Russian Invasion of our Gold Colonies.—Points out a great Army of Diggers, and advises to give them land to defend the Colony as Jonathan does.—Could soon populate Australia.—Arrival of Duke of Newcastle's admirable Despatch.—Unrivalled Advantages of the Squatters.—Pay no more for a whole County than an English Grazer for Four Acres.—Charge as much for Meat or more.—Ask Compensation for growing Rich on Crown Lands.—Present Squatters not the original Pioneers of the Bush.—Jumping Ants.—Attempts to burn the Bush about us.—Black Thursday.

Yackandanda Creek, March 12th, 1854.

WE were delighted to get back again to our old creek, to cool shades, quiet, and delicious water. We have remained here ever since awaiting the approach of the cooler weather, at the same time that we have been profitably employed. We have had only about half-a-dozen neighbours; the great bulk of the diggers from these diggings have gone down to Byrant's Ranges, or as they are now called, Tarrangower, so named by some Highlander. We hear that great disappointments have occurred there, but that the people, utterly exhausted by their rushes over such immense distances, cannot get back, and are obliged to do as well as they can. The drought and want of water are said to be unheard of, and that water for culinary purposes is 2s. 6d. a bucket, having to be brought several miles. But as we propose to leave here the day after tomorrow, and shall take all these diggings in our way, we shall be better able on the spot to learn the *truth*,—a very

difficult thing to get at here; meantime, before quitting this pleasant and long abode of ours, we will give a few further notices of our life here, though of a very quiet kind.

To our great satisfaction, on our return from the Buckland, we found Captain Murray located here, as the Commissioner. Mr. Hood, an excellent officer and very amiable man, who was here before, being removed elsewhere, Captain Murray, who found himself naturally enough bored at Bendigo, had prayed to be removed, and as our good stars would have it, was sent hither. His society has added greatly to our attachment to this neighbourhood. Like ourselves, Captain Murray is extremely pleased with this part of the country; he has a real feeling for nature, which one would expect in a Highlander, born and brought up amid the splendid scenery of Athol; he has served in India, and seen a good deal of the world and its most intelligent classes. Consequently, he is quiet and unassuming in his manners, and you feel at once that he is a gentleman, and a man of intelligence; he is, in fact, a relative of the Duke of Athol, and cousin of the Hon. Mr. Murray, who wrote an excellent book of travels in America, and the Prairie Bird, and is now consul in Egypt; the same who sent over the Hippopotamus. He has read a great deal, and therefore we have had topics in common beyond horse-racing, horses, dogs, cigars, and all the nauseating platitudes of snobbish assumption, which abound so much in the Government camps on the diggings.

Captain Murray, having worn the Queen's uniform, seems to have a natural contempt for the tawdry laced-coats and caps of this pseudo-military commission. I never, at least, see him wearing it, and, I believe, he has not once spent his money in the purchase of the trumpery. I see him frequently in different parts of the diggings seated on a log or stone talking with the diggers at their work, talking to them as to rational creatures, and that is the way to



make yourself really acquainted with them and their affairs; and until a man understands them, it is impossible to be a good umpire amongst them, which he is daily called on to be. In the rainy weather, he frequently comes across from the camp to our tent here in his Highland kilt, dashing away the wet from the scrub, as if it were nothing worth thinking of, which the generality of the fine rose-water young gentlemen of the Commission would as soon think of doing as they would of doing anything else that is natural and manly. You never see him, if he has to go to the next tent, mount his horse, like the majority of the young official puppies, and ride as though he had a poker thrust down his back, with an orderly, or, as Jonas Popkins calls it, an ordinary riding after him; but he goes in a gentleman's usual dress, and in a simple, straightforward way does the business.

There is a Mr. Smith engaged in business here, from Sydney, the brother-in-law of Mr. Dight, the originator of the private escort, who with Mrs. Smith have been very friendly, and have afforded us, by their society and the loan of books and newspapers, occasional relief from the solitude of the wood.

But the most amusing fellow has been our nearest neighbour here. It was impossible to see him without at once recognising an original. He is a Mr. Hodgkinson, from the Cape; he wears a vast bush of hair of a light colour, you might call it tawny, and a sandy beard. At the top of his head is stuck a very small cap, without brim or shade, but when at work that is changed for a red handkerchief, tied up in much the same shape as the cap. He assigns as a reason for this lion-like growth of hair, that till he let it grow he was always troubled with head-aches, from which he had since been wholly free, and declares that his hair may grow down to his heels before any scissors shall touch it again. He lives alone, in a neat tent, fenced in with a light post and rail, and

all within his enclosure is kept exquisitely neat. He says he hates a crowd, and means to stay here alone all winter, for then every one else will be gone; he knows, he says, that here he is to stay, and he shall build a hut with a good fire-place, and make himself comfortable.

The man has the oddest light jaunty way with him imaginable: his walk is a sort of dance, always quick, alert, and active. His voice has a quick, half-effeminate tone, but piquant and original. When he has done his work, he comes home, gives himself a liberal lavation at the clear stream that runs by his tent, combs out his lion's mane—mounts his little smoking cap—takes his coffee, and smokes in perfect calm and meditation for some time. That is the only period during the day in which he is still. The first announcement of his rising in the morning is a loud, jovial, huntsman-like cry of "To-ho! Prinny! To-ho! you dogs there! Prinny! Prinny!" and out dash our dogs, and behold Mr. Hodgkinson with his regular morning sport for them. This is afforded by a rat which he has imprisoned between two tin dishes, and which he is carrying in great triumph to some distance from his tent, before he turns it out amongst the dogs. These rats, which never come near us on account of our dogs, pay him regular nocturnal visits, and he catches one or more of them as regularly by setting a tin dish on the floor, baited with some cheese, and another tin dish secured in it, propped by a peg, to which he has a string which he holds in his hand as he lies in bed. So soon as he hears the rats at his bait, he plucks the string—down goes the dish, and the contented trapper rolls on his side, and goes to sleep.

Having despatched his rat, and then his breakfast, he is seen dancing away, with pick and shovel and tin dish, down to his Tom at the creek. But the same restless erratic movements attend his work. He is never more than a day in one spot — often not many hours. He is

always prospecting — always finding wonderful new places, shifting his apparatus to them, and coming at night with a long face, and some odd pennyweights of gold in his dish, shaking his great mane, and saying, “Now that won’t do. Just a pennyweight — three and sixpence a day. A man will never get rich at that.” And so he is always flitting and starting about like a will-o’-the-wisp. He is sure that he knows of a great gold-field at the Cape. He can now see it as clearly as he sees the sun, that it is a great gold-field from its minerals and its aspect, and that, as he has a farm in Natal, he shall go there, as soon as he has money enough to take him, and then start for this great gold-field, and of course make an enormous fortune. The only misfortune is, that he has forgotten in what part of the Cape territory his great gold-field lies.

Unfortunately, when he had got a great bag of gold — “a great bag,” he says — yet still not so big but that he carried it in his trowsers’ pocket — he set out for Sydney, to embark for the Cape. He was “disgusted with diggings; oh! most thoroughly disgusted;” and went on as if on wings, though he was only on foot. He was attacked by a desperate species of thieves called fleas, which so assailed him in the inns at night, that though he used every night to put his trowsers under his pillow for the safety of his gold, yet, that he might not carry any of these vermin with him, he took out his gold-bag, put that under his pillow, and his trowsers on a chair. He was at Gundagai when he adopted this anti-flea precaution; and the next morning took the mail for Yass, sixty-six miles off, being fatigued with his previous journey. Arriving at Yass, he missed the usual weight of his bag in his pocket, and recollected, to his horror, that he had left it under his pillow at Gundagai! Disconsolate, and yet at a desperate speed, he trudged all the long way back again, scarcely allowing himself a moment to rest or eat. He

arrived in a state of exhaustion, called for his bag of gold, and was told by the people of the inn that they knew nothing of it! It was in vain that he protested and entreated. In vain he pleaded his utter ruin; and finally threatened to accuse the landlord to the authorities. He was quickly pushed out of the house, and threatened in his turn with being denounced to the magistrates as an impostor, and a libeller of an honest, honourable house!

The African lion, no longer rampant, but as *passant* as the coward dingo of the bush, turned once more his dejected steps and his penniless person towards the gold-fields, which had before so infinitely disgusted him. Here he had been working ever since with the moderate success of about a pennyweight per day!

While relating his misfortunes, he suddenly brightened up, raised his person erect, his eyes sparkled with a fire that seemed to announce some joyful intelligence, and throwing himself into a theatrical attitude, with one hand on his breast, and another on his back, he exclaimed—“This time last year I was in the jaws of an alligator!” On inquiring how, and where, and by what extraordinary means he still happened to be there relating this, he said, that he was crossing a river in Natal. That this alligator, but a few days before, but unknown to him, had eaten up one black man, and taken off the leg of another. That, when wading in mid-stream, he suddenly found himself crushing up in the jaws of this monster; and, to his surprise, as suddenly released. The wretch did not like him. He was too salt for him; but he had broken three of his ribs, and torn his flesh horribly besides.

Our only other neighbours are the Mormon and an Englishman, his mate, who have been at work ever since the gold discoveries in California and here. They have made, what, invested in land in America, will give them a little independence; but as they can no longer get much gold, they are going off to the United States

to settle, though they would rather settle here. The newspapers have lately been alarming the public, or the public the newspapers, with the apparition of a Russian fleet, the plunder of the 8,000,000*l.* of gold in the banks, and the burning of Melbourne. All sorts of schemes are broached for fortifying the harbour and the town, and planting war steamers on the coast. And the newspapers here have hit on a very original scheme of protection, which is, to throw off their allegiance to Great Britain, and then demand her assistance! This most original of schemes is based on this idea, that Russia would not attack the colony as a neutral power, only as a British dependency; as if Nicholas would care a jot about the neutrality so that he got the eight millions of bullion. Of course, it is a great compliment to the magnanimity of old Mother England to suppose that she would not resent the repudiation of her sovereignty, but would rather take it as a favour, and neglect her own colonies and interests to come across the globe to protect this "great nation" and "young giant" in his panic.

Our Mormon says, "Why don't they imitate the States? Why don't they open their hearts for once, and offer to every volunteer, as the States do, 160 acres of land at the close of the war?" That is really a fine, and yet a common-sense idea. The United States offer to any volunteer this amount of land, and on the breaking out of the Mexican war it produced such an overflow of volunteers that whole troops of them could not be accepted. Every soldier who serves his four years has the same claim. When the time arrives, the Government sets out a district of good land in the interior, and makes a road to it, and thus every soldier has his farm, besides his pay during the war, and his pension afterwards. Is it any wonder that by such a system as this, and by the cheap sale of all lands, that the valley of the Mississippi, which a few years ago was a desert, is now the home of upwards

of a million of free and landed men, and calculated to accommodate eight millions?

Only let the Government of Victoria, on the approach of any hostile fleet, announce such terms to the diggers, and in one month they would have an army of 50,000 men, armed, at least one-third of them mounted, and ready to carry on such a guerilla warfare, as no strange, invading force could cope with for one hour. Here is an army of sturdy fellows, who know the bush, who are accustomed to live in the open air, and are ready with a single rug and a panikin to march anywhere at a moment's notice, and to live anywhere. Such an army would have something to fight for; would be composed of good practical shots, and would drive any invading force into the sea in a very few days.

That would be the way to draw all the overflowing numbers of British subjects to these shores, and to plant them there. I wish I had a voice powerful enough to shout it to the enlightened legislators at home, who have of late made such rapid advances in the direction of truly philosophical principles of colonial rule. If they would adopt the American land system altogether; throw all waste lands open at 5s. per acre, without auction, but with an imperative condition of cultivation; having the country properly surveyed, and maps at all the offices of the surveyors, where any one wanting to purchase, may go and select what he wants, and have it where he wants it,—the effect would be perfectly miraculous. People would flock over by hundreds of thousands; all who could scrape together a little money, would come and buy a little farm and homestead. It would be we, and not our cousin Jonathan, who would grow and flourish on this stream of English life. Happy homes would arise; agriculture would flourish everywhere, and the brandy-bottle would be exchanged for the tea-kettle singing at the fireside. What is it that bewitches British rulers to thus persist in

throwing their wealth, their people, their commercial greatness, into the lap of their transatlantic rivals, instead of husbanding these mighty seeds of empire for ourselves?

While transcribing these letters for the press, March 12th, 1855, I see this paragraph in an American paper: "The emigrants to the United States in the year 1854, amount to 460,474. From Great Britain, 150,000; from Germany, 206,000: and these emigrants will bring with them at least 60,000,000 of dollars: adding that to the wealth and prosperity of the States. What say the Know-nothings?" Surely we may place ourselves in that category.

And here, at this very moment, arrives the Duke of Newcastle's admirable despatch on the Squatting Question! I have read it with a delight that I have not experienced for years. It is all right; and just what one ought to expect from the present enlightened ministry who promise new and representative constitutions to the colonies, such as would have struck their own fathers dumb with astonishment.

This despatch hits the nail exactly on the head, and shows that His Grace, as Colonial Minister, has well studied the subject, and made himself master of it. It grants the squatters all that they are justly entitled to, and leaves the bulk of the country open to the purchase of the public. If the new Governor, Sir Charles Hotham, pursue this policy vigorously, he will originate a new era, and lay the permanent foundations of universal prosperity.

The squatters are to have their leases as they have them in Sydney, that is, conditionally. The right of pre-emption is to be restricted to one square mile, 640 acres. The right to purchase the whole, or any part, of their stations, as they pleased, which the Order in Council proposed to give, is disallowed. But that is no more than it has

been by the Colonial Governments both of Sydney and Victoria, from the first. It was refused simply because it could not be granted without committing an absolute act of *felo de se*. There must have been a total abnegation of common sense in any Government, to make over an immense country, far larger than Great Britain, to a mere handful of men for ever:— to about 2000 in the whole of New South Wales and Victoria.

But these leases, if granted, are only to date from the date of the Orders in Council, 1847; so that the longest, those of the unsettled district, fourteen years, will now have only seven to run; and in the intermediate district, only one year. All land that is wanted for the settlement of the country, is, according to the 9th clause, to be taken with due notice, as wanted, and sold. Any claim for improvements is to be settled according to the judgment of the Government.

Now that is a plain, common sense reading of the law; and what, sooner or later, the necessities of the public would compel. This, therefore, remains the law, till the new constitution comes into force, when it will become the great question between the squatters and the public.

The great questions, as it regards the British public, and which are apt to be deemed serious at home, are these. Will this arrangement injure the growth of wool here? And will the squatters be injured by disallowance of their improvements? These two questions may soon be decided.

In the first place, the wool. In my opinion, no injury whatever is likely to occur to the produce of wool. No land will be taken before it is really wanted for agriculture. Vast tracts are not calculated for agriculture at all, and will, therefore, remain grazing grants. It will be the part of a judicious government to settle the population with all due regard to the interests of every class, for



those interests include the public interests. Squatters will not be dispossessed of their runs a day sooner than necessary, nor in quantities larger than necessary. The intermediate district includes immense tracts of the finest lands in the colony, and will require very many years to settle them. In the unsettled districts, where agricultural land is required, it may be accommodated with large backgrounds of mere barren ranges, fit for the wandering over of flocks and cattle, and will, under those circumstances, be more favourable to the growth of sheep and wool than the present wild woods and plains, many of them very wet during winter, and productive of foot-rot and catarrh, those direful destroyers of sheep and impoverishers of wool. As the country becomes more populated and fenced, and the wet lands drained, the flocks will be better tended and cared for, the fleeces heavier and better washed, and the result will be like that in the enclosures of Great Britain, which, with a similar extent of country, produces 120,000,000 lbs. of wool, while Victoria only produces about 20,000,000 lbs.: at the same time, Great Britain maintaining twenty-eight millions of people, and Victoria only a quarter of one million. Why is this? It arises from the mixture of agricultural and pastoral pursuits, which the squatters here would denounce as utterly destructive to the wool-yield.

Meantime, as agriculture advances, squatting also will advance. Milton's words —

“To-morrow to fresh fields, and pastures new,”

will be the watchword of the squatters for ages to come. The navigation of the Murray will immediately open up vast regions for the squatter to enter upon, and as cultivation presses behind, the fertile wilderness will open before. A squatter is a nomade by his very name. He is not a proprietor; he is not a cultivator, but a king of the desert, and can reign there alone. When it ceases to be a desert,

he ceases to reign, and either assumes the shape of a denizen of cultivated earth; a lord of ploughs and enclosures, or moves on.

All local interests must fall before the general interests and the prosperity of the people; and the effect of the settlement of the colony would be incalculable on both domestic and foreign trade. In these vast territories, a vast population would create as vast a demand for manufactures. On the other hand, imagine 650 individuals holding the whole of this colony at a rental of 20,000*l.* for the whole! Imagine these individuals holding each from 50 to 100 square miles, for some nominal sum of 10*l.* or 20*l.*, and charging for their beef and mutton from 6*d.* to 9*d.* a lb.,—as much as the graziers of England get, who pay from 2*l.* to 5*l.* per acre, besides land-tax, county-rates, highway-rates, church-rates, poors'-rates, property-tax, and a host of other imposts. The thing is preposterous, and makes the condition of the Australian Squatter appear a fable and a fairy-tale! There never was anything like it, from the foundation of the world: for the ancient patriarchs, with all their free-grazing flocks and herds, had no race of diggers and traders to eat mutton at 9*d.* a lb.!

And yet these gentlemen talk, and talk loudly too, of COMPENSATION! Compensation!—For what? For the serious injury of having grown immensely rich at the public cost! They desire to be paid for all their—Improvements! *All their Improvements* consisting, for the most part, of a slab hut in which they live, a few slab huts for shepherds and stockmen, and the posts and rails of a paddock or two,—or rather the mere cost of cutting and putting down, for the timber stood at hand, on the Crown lands.

Would it be believed, that when these gentlemen talk of improvements, they are actually forbidden to make any? That the Orders in Council, by which they hold

their runs, strictly prohibit their *cultivating* any more land than what is absolutely necessary for corn, vegetables, &c., for their establishments, but not to grow anything for sale or barter? Yet such is the case; and these conditions they have very exactly fulfilled. They simply let their flocks and herds feed on the waste, and grow rich upon them. Government has been the first to tempt them to break their engagements, or rather to absolve them from them, so far as it alone is concerned, and to sell hay and corn to the diggings: and in these cases the benefit of the squatter would appear wonderful to the ears of English farmers. These squatters, who give 10*l.* a-year for a run equal to an English county, sell hay at 60*l.* a-ton to the Government from its own waste lands. I have already spoken of that famous contract, by which a squatter on Charlotte Plains gives 10*l.* a-year for his station, and lets to his landlord, the Government, one paddock out of it for 500*l.* a-year! Yet these are the gentlemen who are clamorous on the score of compensation. The answer lies in a nut-shell. They are allowed to purchase at 1*l.* per acre the whole square mile on which their improvements stand. "But," say they, "our runs are grown so much more valuable in our hands; and, in proportion to their present value, we ought to be compensated, if they are taken away."

The answer is: "They are grown valuable, not by your *improvements*, but by the influx of a public; and it is that public which demands, and has a right to enjoy, the advantage. The gain has been yours; the occasion of it has been theirs. You have *paid no* more on that account, and you have no claim to ask more now. It is the Government who may justly complain that they made a very bad bargain with you. Your 10*l.* or 20*l.* a-year has still been all you have paid; while you have been benefiting tenfold. You have not even paid the head-money on your stock."

"But," say they, "see what we have suffered in opening up and establishing this great wool-field; we are the pioneers of the forest."

The answer is:—"You have suffered nothing. In the words of Scripture, 'Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labours.' The first race of squatters *were* great sufferers. They penetrated the then savage wilderness. Without houses or homesteads they had to encounter the elements in rude tents or under the mere shade of the gum tree. The natives attacked them and their cattle, and the troops of wild dogs seconded the natives. In the arduous life of watching and defending themselves against their numerous enemies, they were the victims of rheumatism, fevers, and dysentery. When they had conquered the blacks and the dogs, and made themselves comfortable homes, they found no customers for their meat; wool was low; and the crisis of 1842 put the climax to their ruin. They were obliged to give way, and you stepped in; stepped into good huts and houses; large flocks at 9*d.* or 1*s.* ahead for sheep; 10*s.* or 12*s.* ahead for cattle, about the same for horses, which, in fact, were unsaleable at any price. Corn and hay were equally a drug. A friend of mine records hay at 30*s.* a ton; wheat, 3*s.* 6*d.* a bushel; barley, 2*s.* 6*d.*; oats, 1*s.* 6*d.*; butter, 6*d.* to 9*d.* per lb.; beef and mutton, 1½*d.* per lb. He gave up farming in despair. See the Colonial newspapers of 1842. In June, 1843, it was announced, that by boiling down for the tallow 8*s.* to 10*s.* per head could be made of sheep, including tallow, skin, and wool. From that moment your profits began to advance, and have continued, till you now command, through the advent of the gold, 25*s.* per head for sheep, valuation-price on giving up stations; 12*l.* to 15*l.* per head for cattle, and from 50*l.* to 150*l.* for horses! Macgubbins and Macfiggins—the real pioneers—retired from the field, ruined in purse and constitution; you have had nothing to do, but on their ruins

to sit still, let your flocks and herds graze, and grow fat with them. Is that a case for compensation?"

Now, you are aware that I have no prejudice or ill-feeling against the squatters of this colony. Quite the contrary. As a class, so far as I have become acquainted with them, I have a high respect and esteem for them. They are, for the most part, gentlemen of good family and education. In private life they are simple and unostentatious, kind, and hospitable. But private regard and public right are two things. It is not these gentlemen who are to blame, but the Government. Human nature is everywhere the same. Put into men's hands a good thing, and they will grasp it firmly; the better it is, the tighter.

It is a considerable fall from the Land Question to insects; but there is a species of ants that we became acquainted with at the Buckland which is worth a notice before we leave this part of the country. These are the jumping ants. At the Buckland we were dreadfully persecuted by them. They are about half an inch long, and jump surprisingly. They are great fly-catchers, and so far would be public benefactors, were it not only one fiend giving place to another. The little black flies are, even in this cooler and shadier spot, the most pertinent persevering vermin possible. The moment meat is brought upon the table they cover it black. If you allow them to settle on your hands, they suck up blood-blisters, and then suck them till they burst. The moment the spot is raw they thrust as many of their heads in as they can get, and continually irritate and enlarge it. What was a mere scratch becomes a sore under their incessant operations, and unless you defend the sore with plaister or gloves it will speedily be a wound. Nay, plaister is not enough, for they will suck and envenom the wound through it.

You, may, therefore, imagine, that we should see these tormenters destroyed with pleasure; and yet these ants are such vindictive little wretches, that we cannot regard

them as friends, though they kill quantities of these flies. At the Buckland they covered the whole surface of the ground, and everything on it. You could neither stand, sit, nor lie down without offending them. You could not lay your hand on a tree, or attempt to lop off a twig from a bush, but they stung you. As you stood by the fire they would leap upon you, and wherever you laid your hand on your dress they were there and stung it. The moment they felt themselves on any moving substance, they began stinging without provocation, and their sting is nearly, if not all but, as bad as that of a wasp, though not so venomous.

As I sat writing in the tent, they frequently pounced down from the roof with each a fly in his mouth. They saw the white paper, and took it as a half-way descent. They make unerring pounces upon the flies, and are most desperate in their battles with each other. The moment you kill or wound one they drag him off and devour him. I have seen them sting a boot so that they hung by the sting and could not get away. As you have your shirt-collars open in the hot weather five or six will jump down your back, and be all stinging away as fast as they can. Fortunately, I never saw them so about anywhere as at the Buckland.

I had very nearly closed my letter without telling you of the narrow escape we lately had from one of the greatest dangers of the Australian woods—bush-fires. These fires are of very frequent occurrence, and especially in February and March; months of autumn, equivalent to our August and September, and when the whole country is dried almost to tinder by a far hotter summer than we know anything of at home. While down in Melbourne last I sought out, in the newspaper files of the date, the account of the great bush-fire of Feb. 6. 1851, on what is there called Black Thursday; the details of which, too long for insertion here, I send you to publish elsewhere.

The terms of that strange recital made us peculiarly alive to the dangers of such a catastrophe here, where we are surrounded by woods full of dry grass and hop-scrub, and other shrubs equally dry and combustible; and you may imagine our consternation, when, night after night, we found these fires breaking out around us, and when, though beaten out energetically by us as soon as perceived, they were continually renewed. There was a persistence in the attempt, and a care to make the ignition to windward that showed a settled purpose and a determined one. That purpose, we shrewdly suspected, was entertained by a sluicing party who had worked out the creek up to where we and others were, and could come no further, by the rules of the diggings, while any one was working there. They probably made themselves sure that, if they got up a thorough conflagration, destroying all the food for our horses, and obliging us to pack up and be off hastily, we should not come back again. If there had been a brisk wind, nothing could have prevented the whole country round us being completely turned into a wilderness of ashes. When you have read the account of Black Thursday that I send, you will see that that fire destroyed the face of the whole colony over a space of 300 miles by 150, with farms, flocks, and herds, by tens of thousands, and numbers of people. So rapidly did it travel, that men on horseback galloped before it till their horses fell dead. Herds of cattle were seen running over the country in a frantic state, and birds, in whole flocks, fell suffocated into the flames. We have since travelled over much of this ground, and seen everywhere the traces of the conflagration remaining; while the people tell you how they had to run and sink themselves in rivers and fords, the very hair or skin being singed off if it appeared above water. The whole country, for a time, was a furious furnace; and, what was the most singular, the greatest part of the mischief was done in one single day.

Luckily for us there was no wind for many days in the recent attempt, or we should not have been able to save anything we had, so near came the flames one night. And one Sunday, as I was coming from the camp in the broad afternoon, I perceived the scrub being set on fire opposite to our tents. I ran on, and heard some one crash away through the scrub. I mounted instantly upon the gigantic bole of a tree near, to get, if possible, a view of the incendiary, who was liable to a penalty of 50*l.* or six months' imprisonment for the offence, but the jungle was too tall. So I beat out the fire and went on. In about a week—the winds seeming determined not to favour them with our destruction—the party took itself off, and the fires disappeared with them.



## LETTER XXXII.

Sluicing.—Mode of.—Government Impediments to profitable Undertakings.—Coal Fields.—Approach of Winter.—Vast Flocks of Birds.—A native Camp, and new Grave.—Mode of breaking in Bullocks.—Stop the Mail in Futter's Ranges.—Land Sales at Benalla.—Victorian Government as Paymasters.—Government Mode of doing Business.—Convey Prisoners 600 Miles for want of a Lock-up.—Mr. Robertson on the Campaspe buys 640 acres of Government for 640*l.* and sells them 6000*l.* worth of Hay from 80 Acres of it the first Season.—Mr. Robertson's Troubles.—Story of a Tyrant Overseer.—Mrs. Chisholm going away.—Giving false Colouring to the Colony in her Speeches in the manufacturing Districts.—Is evidently ignorant of the Drunkenness here.—Horror of Spirit-drinking in this Colony.—Amount of Duty on Spirits.—Mrs. Chisholm's *couleur de rose* Ideas of Bush Life.—The Reality.—**POSTSCRIPT, 1855.**—Mrs. Chisholm, her Arrival in Victoria.—Gone up the Country.—Sees the whole great Cheat.—The Roads! The Diggings! The Public-houses! and the Refusal of Land! and speaks out nobly.

Bendigo, April 23rd, 1854.

BEFORE leaving the Yackandanda Creek, we made an endeavour to undertake a large sluicing concern. In the new act of Regulations for the Gold Fields there is a clause empowering the Government to grant leases of such portions of those fields as are worked out and abandoned by the ordinary digger. These, when they have ceased to remunerate the digger who works them in the ordinary fashion with a small party, and with cradle and tom, yet frequently contain sufficient gold to pay, and pay well, for working on a larger and more rapid scale. Where the digger by the cradle, or even by the tom, can put through a few cartloads of earth, the sluice will work out hundreds.

It will not pay the cradler or the tommer to put through much rough earth. He must carefully separate the auriferous strata from all else. This requires much time and labour, and the result is comparatively small. But the sluicer will come after him, and even out of the earth that he has cast aside as containing little or nothing, will obtain in the aggregate large quantities.

This is effected by bringing a strong stream of water to the spot, where he runs it through a long descent of wooden troughs into a capacious tom. The sluicers can therefore dig up and throw into this stream of water immense quantities of earth, which are borne away by it, carried down, dissolved, and all its auriferous particles separated before it reaches the tom. Ten or twenty people, according to the size of the troughs and force of the stream, can be employed on a sluice. They can be all busy digging up and shovelling the earth on both sides into the troughs, while two men with shovels at the bottom throw out as fast as they can the stones which are washed clean, all the dissolved earth having escaped through the grate in the tom, and left the particles of gold in the ripple-box below.

It is amazing what a vast quantity of earth can thus be washed out in a day; and the result is, of course, proportionate. Where an ordinary party with the ordinary mode would not out of this earth produce many penny-weights, the sluicing party will extract pounds. This, therefore, is the mode by which the abandoned gold fields will be all worked out and finished up wherever a stream of water can be brought to bear, which is far from being always possible.

Now, there was a certain Madman's Gully at Spring Creek which had been hastily and partially worked, and was now completely abandoned by the diggers. It was very well known, however, that it still contained great quantities of gold in places, and that the earth throughout con-

tained enough to pay for sluicing. This gully, or portion of it, we were prepared to contract for. It was true that we should have to bring a watercourse from the main creek for a quarter of a mile, or more, and to convey it in a rude sort of aqueduct across the creek itself lower down. It would, therefore, require much labour and a large outlay. But we were prepared to engage a sufficient number of men, readily procurable at 1*l.* per day per man; and two Californians, experienced in the process, and quite aware of the contents of the gully, were ready to join in the enterprise.

But the whole thing fell to the ground through the inertia of the Government. With full power to grant such leases, with an especial clause in the new bill for this very purpose, and with a declining yield of gold, and deficiency of remunerative employment in the diggings, still you could not rouse this extraordinary Government. To all applications—and there are many of this very kind—the answer was the same: “The Government was not yet prepared to carry out these leases.” Large sums were offered for small portions of abandoned ground, but without effect; and to attempt to do it without a guarantee of protection by Government was useless. Though the diggers had totally deserted a spot, such is their jealousy of the introduction of even the simplest machinery, or of working by companies, that they would have flocked back again in crowds at the sight of a sluice, and reoccupied the ground, cutting off and destroying your watercourse, and rendering abortive all your efforts.

It is probably this jealousy of such works by the diggers which deters the Government from granting sluicing leases, the outbreak on the diggings last winter not having yet lost its effect on their nerves. But this does not apply to the coal fields of the colony. Large beds of coal, some of them from eight to fourteen feet thick and of excellent quality, are discovered in the direction of

Western Port and Cape Patterson, and on the Barabool Hills; but, though coal in Melbourne is selling at 8*l.* 10*s.* per ton, the Government cannot arouse itself from its lymphatic prostration to grant leases of these coal fields to companies most anxious to work them.

Defeated, therefore, in our designs on Madman's Gully, where large fortunes are no doubt lying buried in the earth, we struck our tent, and took our final leave of the Ovens country, where we had spent so many pleasant months, diversifying our labours by an occasional chase after a kangaroo or an emu.

As some diggings have been opened at Lake Omeo, across the Snowy Mountains, in Gippsland, Alfred and I proposed to take a ride and see what they were likely to turn out, and also to see the mountain scenery. We meant to leave Charlton at Spring Creek. The journey, we calculated, would occupy us about a fortnight; as, from the round we should have to take—for at this season we could not cross the mountains, except over a saddle, near Omeo,—it would be about 170 miles; some of it through very steep and rugged country. We should have to proceed to near Albury before we could turn the high ranges, and then we should follow up the course of the Mitta Mitta. But we got a warning in time: a very cold wind blew out of that quarter, followed by immense flights of birds. First came whole clouds of carrion-crows, congregated exactly like our rooks, and making a noise very much like them, having abandoned, under the circumstances, their lack-a-daisical complainings. Then followed large flocks of the grey magpie; then a large flock of leatherheads; and, last, as numerous ones of noisy wattle-thrushes: all wending their way into the lower country; plainly intimating that there had been a wintry visitation in the mountains. Immediately, and on the very morning that we had fixed for setting off, set in rain, heavy, drenching rain, which continued five days and

five nights without intermission. We considered it now altogether too late in the season, and gave it up.

The weather was again fine, and our journey was delightful. The mushrooms that were growing by the roadsides, as we went along, were something wonderful in their quantities and fineness. We every day had large dishes of them, and found them, in the absence of other vegetables, quite luxuries.

We called on our old and kind friends, the Reids, for the last time, and dined with them. Near their house, on the banks of the Ovens river, there was an encampment of natives. Many of them were in the most wretched condition from measles and influenza. We observed that there were whole flocks of children, but that nearly all were half-castes. On inquiring how the men tolerated these, we were told, as we had been before, that, up to a certain age, they were very fond of them, and after that they disappeared! A very clever half-caste lad, of twelve or fourteen, was very anxious to get into some employment amongst the whites.

The young men of the tribe were stationed at a distance from the families, at a fire of their own. They were lazily roasting portions of the entrails of a bullock which had been killed at the station, without any cleaning, or without bread or vegetables. Nothing more miserable than the whole scene can be imagined. Yet one of these young men, we were assured, was a most admirable mimic.

A woman of the tribe was just dead and buried. Mr. John Reid had desired to know at what hour the funeral would take place; but they do not like white people to witness these ceremonies; and when he went at the hour named, all was over. They had buried the woman sitting, their ordinary mode, and piled a heap of earth over her. Mr. Reid told them that the floods covered the spot they had chosen. On which they said they would put down a post to tell the floods not to come there. They accordingly

cut a stout post, which they set upon the head of the corpse, and which, when I saw it, stood some five feet high in the centre of the conical heap of earth. They had also put round the grave a neat, circular fence of the boughs of the native myrtle.

Here, also, we saw the method of breaking in young bullocks to the yoke. Having managed to drive one of them up in a corner of a paddock, behind some steady old bullocks, they get on the yoke as well as they can,—very commonly a task of no ordinary difficulty. Once on, however, they put into the same yoke a stout, steady, practical bullock; and they then tie the tails of the two animals together, or the young wild ox would soon wheel round, and thus turn the yoke upside down.

Thus yoked together, the pair is let loose, and the poor victim of a practised bullock is dragged and pulled about by the frantic young one, in a most unceremonious manner. For a day or so the tyro is a most uncomfortable companion to the steady one. He makes the most violent efforts to get rid of his new-fangled machinery. He rears and kicks, and tries to rush here and there. He snatches and drags, and darts forward, and as suddenly hangs back, as if he were trying to just pull off the other bullock's head, and did not care how soon. He refuses to eat, and won't let the poor wretch of a yokefellow eat either. Thus, for a day and a night, and sometimes more, according to the temper of the subject, the two are struggling and wrangling. The poor patient prisoner to the fiery neophyte holding down his head, and silently but stiffly resisting the efforts of the youngster. At length hunger tames the impatient juvenile; he begins to eat and becomes quiet; the elder is glad to avail himself of this improved circumstance, and soon all is right. The young beast finds that this primitive bond of unity is an indissoluble bond so long as his master pleases, and the two are left to bear the yoke till the scholar is perfectly tamed,

and obedient, not only to the yoke itself, but to all commands under it that the driver is pleased to impose.

In Futter's Ranges, between Wangaratta and Benalla, where we camped for the night, I was struck with the very unguarded manner in which the mails traverse this country, and the thorough ease and impunity with which they may be robbed in the very solitary places which they have to pass. As we expected a packet of home letters from Melbourne by a gentleman who intended to come up by the mail, and as this mail was to pass our camping place at twelve o'clock at night, I waited up for it.

We were encamped in a very secluded place in the ranges, some miles distant from any house, and where the road passed between thick bushes and trees; unless the mail came well armed and guarded, a very few men could "stick it up," without any trouble or danger. There appeared as it approached only two persons upon it, the driver and a passenger. The vehicle was only a mail-cart, in front of which they sat. Two men advancing in front, and two coming out from amongst the bushes behind, would leave no chance for these two solitary individuals whatever.

It occurred to me that they might suppose that there was an intention to stop them when they were hailed at such an hour in such a spot; but there was no alternative. So, as they came near, I called out "Hillo!" At this call the driver instantly stopped the cart, and both he and his companion looked alarmed.

"Who is that?" called out the amazed mailman, and I hastened to put him out of surprise by inquiring for my friend. The very name of the gentleman inquired for seemed an instant relief to the travellers. Their countenances underwent a sensible change, and they informed me that my friend was staying behind at Benalla, and would not come on till morning, having his horse there. I thanked them; we exchanged "Good night," and they

drove on. But at that moment the Sydney and Owens mail would have certainly had no chance, had even two sturdy bushrangers called on it to surrender. Surely some greater security ought to attend the mail through such a country.

At Benalla we spent a pleasant day with Dr. Carkeet and family, formerly of Plymouth. There we witnessed some very curious experiments in Mesmerism and table turning.

We were delighted to see the progress of land sales in this neighbourhood. Some splendid level land near the town, and also near the river, had been sold in considerable lots at 1*l.* per acre, which required very little clearing, and scarcely anything but fencing. Township allotments were sold here lately at 120*l.* per acre; yet this land, and fine land, too, was close upon the town. The people had refused to give more, and the prospect of plenty of land being thrown into the market had deterred the jobbers from meddling. This is as it should be, and is the dawn of a new and noble day.

A Government officer here told us frankly that now the Governor was going, even his own officers talked freely enough of the setting sun; and every one was very liberal in his censure of the management which has prevailed during the last two most important years. He gave us a few specimens of the management in this quarter. He said that a man applied to the Commissioners at Spring Creek for a bill of 10*s.* He had to apply again and again,—a most common and notorious circumstance throughout the whole executive of this colony. There was letter and reply; letter and reply, till the man's patience was exhausted, and he went to a lawyer. Being at length compelled to pay him, they had to send a trooper with the money a day's journey, at the usual cost of 1*l.* 10*s.* per day; thus paying 1*l.* 10*s.* and the lawyer's charge, rather than disburse in due course and fashion 10*s.*



Observe, it is the Government at Melbourne which plays this most absurd game, as much as the officers up the country; and this practice is so well known, that numbers of people would not undertake a Government contract at all.

In transcribing for the press, I here anticipate a little, in order to give a very curious proof of this. The *Argus* of June 20th, of this year, has this paragraph:—"VICTORIA GOVERNMENT AS PAYMASTERS. — Several publicans, drivers of coaches, and owners of steam-boats have proposed to place up this placard:—'No Government officer accommodated, and no Government work done, except for cash, which must be prepaid.' Those who are aware of the frightful expense and anxiety attending payment of even the most paltry sums of money, cannot be surprised at the public refusing to give credit to Government officers. The escorts, the police, and the military, are all alike. Accounts varying from 1*l.* to 2000*l.*, for accommodation at inns on the road, for the transmission of escorts per steamer, and for the conveyance of prisoners,—accounts which should have been paid twelve months ago,—are to the present day unliquidated.

"One gentleman to whom the Government owed 2000*l.* sent seven or eight times to Melbourne, at a cost of about 50*l.*, to get payment, but all in vain; some document was wrongly worded, or mislaid, or some signature was wanting, or something or other stood everlastingly in the way of the payment. When he remonstrated with the proper officer, that gentleman told him he could not be troubled with his business, that he had enough to do to be signing his name all day."

A tradesman, in speaking to me of this disgraceful state of things, gave a merry twinkle with his eyes, and said, "Oh, they don't know how to deal with this Government. I have contracted repeatedly to supply goods for the diggings, but I soon found that I should never get the

goods delivered if I did not use some management. The moment the draymen heard that the Government was to pay them for the carriage up, they refused to take them, as they said they should never get paid, or if they did it would cost them more time and trouble to get the money than it was worth. I therefore paid them myself. I never was repaid at all for this carriage, but then I laid it on in the contract; and when I got 2000*l.* by a contract, I did not grudge 80*l.* or 100*l.* for carriage; and as to my money, I was on the spot, and I bored them till I got it. I knew it must be done, and I did it."

While the Government has thus been so backward in paying, it has left money in official hands for extraordinary lengths of time, thus throwing great temptations in their way. The other day a pound-keeper at Bullock Creek, near Bendigo, it appears from the newspapers, walked off with 9000*l.* in his hands, which had lain there instead of being paid over to the proper officer quarterly.

But here is a still more extraordinary specimen of colonial management, detailed to us by one of the very officers concerned. I have already stated that they have expended enormous sums, as much as from 30,000*l.* to 60,000*l.*, on each digging, for houses for the officers, barracks, &c., which will soon be perfectly useless, because the diggings themselves are moving away. Well, at Spring Creek, with all this outlay for building, they have no prison capable of keeping secure any prisoners. Men, therefore, who are there brought before the magistrates and committed for trial, are sent down to Melbourne, a distance of 200 miles, to be kept till the assizes. They are then fetched up again to be tried, and, if condemned, are once more sent down to Melbourne to have their sentence executed. Thus they travel 600 miles for want of a secure prison, where some 30,000*l.* has yet been expended in buildings; and they are sent over all this ground, to and fro, with men and horses at the well-known high rate of

Victorian charges, and attended by no less than two, and more frequently four troopers, at 30s. each, per diem.

Now that, I think, will match any specimen of the burlesque, either in official or unofficial life, which Dickens, Thackeray, Cervantes, or Shakspeare, can furnish. Honest Dogberry, and the worshipful Shallow and Slender, what are they in the presence of these glorious antipodes? People here don't live with their heads downwards for nothing. They are original beyond the reach of European genius; they are sublimely absurd beyond the reach of all caricature.

We called and spent a pleasant day with our friends the Turnbulls, and also spent two or three very wet days at Colbinabin. On again crossing the Campaspe at Mr. Robertson's station, we witnessed a circumstance worth relating, both because such circumstances do not and cannot occur in any other part of the world, and because it furnishes striking evidence of that vast charge for forage at the Government camps on the diggings, which I have affirmed at an earlier page. If this one individual sold so much hay to one camp, how much must have been the total consumption? for he was only one out of various suppliers.

It will be recollected that, on crossing as we went up, we observed that we had to go round Mr. Robertson's paddock, because he had bought his square mile, and stopped the road. Now, on this purchase of 640 acres at 1*l.* per acre from Government, he had at once fenced in this paddock of eighty acres, and sowed it with oats. The land was splendid meadow-land, requiring no clearing, nothing but the fence of posts and rails, which the neighbouring forests furnished. By the time that we had thus returned, he had grown and cut upon this eighty acres 100 tons of oaten hay, which he had sold to the Government for the Camp at Bendigo, fifteen miles off, at 60*l.* per ton. Thus, he had given 640*l.* for a fine estate of 640 acres,

and from eighty acres, the very first season, sold 6000*l.* worth of hay to the party from whom he made the purchase; or, in other words, he had cleared in his bargain with the Government, the whole estate, and 5360*l.* besides!

Nor is this, after all, the full extent of this extraordinary case. Speaking of it, soon after, to a gentleman, he said, "But instead of 60*l.*, Mr. Robertson might have had 120*l.* a ton, had he only waited a little, and watched the market. I have been buying up hay for the winter for this same Camp at Bendigo, and I have been obliged to give that price. So that Mr. Robertson, by a little more delay, might have made 12,000*l.* instead of 6000*l.*!" Have the squatters no privileges? Are not these square miles valuable? Is not this despised presumptive right of 640 acres worth something? I should like to know where is the spot on earth where such deeds of gain can be done? Why Aladdin and his lamp are flat prose in comparison of Mr. Robertson and the poetry of his paddock!

This lucky squatter is quite a young man. I have heard that his father left Scotland in the humble position of a stocksman, or, at most, of an overseer; and yet he died and left his sons, as I am told, 10,000*l.* each,—this knight, not of the padlock, but of the paddock, being one of them. The father's wealth was made on a station, I believe, in the Portland Bay district; and if he could have made 10,000*l.* in a whole life of management, industry, and economy, on the pastoral hills of Scotland, he would have been looked upon as a most fortunate individual. Yet here he leaves to his sons that sum each, as the product of squatting; and this son, taking a more wonderful flight still, buys a fine estate, and instead of paying, at once gets a premium upon the acceptance of it of upwards of 5000*l.*

Yet such is the vanity of human wishes, that Mr. Robertson only presents another example of the fact that—

"Man never is, but always to be blest."

We found him living in a small cottage with a door and two windows, suitable to the merest labourer in England. He did not appear to be married, and his whole establishment presented the same unexpensive aspect. He was already cutting and carting his hay; and when we congratulated him on his fine crop, what did this poor man do? This poor young man, the holder of a station worth probably from 20,000*l.* to 40,000*l.*? He shook his head, looked very wo-begone indeed, and said—"Ah! but see! the rain has got into the hay, as we had unthatched part of it for trussing, and there is ever so much spoiled!"

We looked and saw that the rain had only wet a very little along the top, and which many a 'cute trader would take care to dry, and put a little of it into the middle of the other trusses, as the old woman put a bit of bad tow into the centre of each rock that she sold, saying—"It deceives nobody; they all expect a little bad in the middle, and they find it there."

But poor Mr. Robertson had a host of other troubles. He had got the scab amongst his sheep, and he said, "they had been dressing them, and it had killed ever so many." If the number of his defunct sheep did not exceed in proportion the amount of his damaged hay, as I dare say they did not, he was not much hurt. "But, then," said he, "labour is so scarce; no men to be got for any money; and here my shepherd has lost his dog, and not a dog to be got at any price. Everything is running against us poor squatters! Everything! Everything!" And with that he went off in a most disconsolate state of mind to assist in trussing his hay. I say if such a man could have done the same things in Scotland or England in a long laborious life, he would have been considered a miracle. Here he is no miracle at all, but thinks himself a most miserable man.

On the banks of the Broken River — I turn back on

our course, for the contrast — we saw a picture which is of another hue. We were encamped one evening, opposite to a squatting-station, when one of the shepherds came across the river to our fire. He was in quest of a horse; and when we showed him the horse grazing with ours, he staid awhile to talk. As I knew the gentleman to whom the station belonged, but who himself resided in Melbourne, I asked him if there were a garden at the head station. He replied, “Not a bit; it is a thorough wilderness.”

“And have you none?”

“Me, sir! why I’ll tell you. For a wonder, I have my wife with me; so I thought I would make things a little comfortable, and I fenced in a little plot of ground for a garden behind the hut, meaning to have a few cabbages and potatoes. One day the overseer came. He drew up his horse at the garden-fence, stared hard at the enclosure, and then said, ‘Well, and what may this mean?’ ‘It is for a bit of a cabbage-garden, sir.’ ‘A cabbage-garden, eh? And what the d—l do you want with a cabbage-garden? By the Lord, man, if you can’t be content to look after your sheep, and let alone cabbage-gardening, I’ll soon settle with you. Pull down the fence directly.’ And so saying he rode off.

“A few days after, he came to see if the fence were down; and finding that it was, he went to the hut, and said to my wife, ‘And so you want a cabbage-garden, I reckon, eh?’ ‘Well, sir, it would have been a comfort,’ said my wife; ‘and I don’t, for my part, see what harm it could have done. I could have looked after it; for time, in fact, hangs rather heavy on my hands.’

“‘Oho!’ said he, ‘that’s the way the wind blows, eh? It’s *you* who set on your husband. Well, now mark me; if you have not enough to do, I’ll just give you something.’ So he set to work at once; and threw the bed, and the stools, and the cooking vessels out of the door;

and said, 'There! there's a little job for you, as you are bored for want of something to amuse you.'

"When I came home, and found my wife crying, and heard all this, I was mightily angered; but I knew it was no use going and complaining. It would only make matters worse. But the man did not let me rest. The day after, he came riding up to where I was with the flock, and said, 'Well, you're not cabbage-gardening, I hope?' My heart rose into my mouth with anger; but I said as quickly as I could, 'No, sir, I dropped all that when you bade me; and I don't see why you need have flung my few traps out of my hut, and frightened my wife.'

"He gave me a look. Gad! it might have been a pistol-shot, it seemed to go through me so. 'D—n you for a scoundrel,' he exclaimed. 'I tell you what, let me catch you any more at any such nonsense, and I'll make it my business to shift you round and round from one station to another; and we have got seven on the run; and then we shall see how you manage to cultivate cabbages.'

"With that he rode off; and there ended my notions of making things comfortable. I've had enough of the bush; in a few weeks I'm off to the diggings."

Now that is a fact for Mrs. Chisholm. She has published *her* facts respecting New South Wales, and very pleasant facts many of them are; but I have just been reading, with a most painful interest, her speeches in the manufacturing districts of England — her statements respecting this colony, made to induce people to come out hither; and I am bound to say, that these statements are most mischievous, because totally untrue.

When Mrs. Chisholm talked of New South Wales, she talked of a colony, and a condition of things with which she was practically acquainted; but here she is talking of a colony, and a condition of things of which she evidently

knows nothing. And yet her husband has been here for some years. He has been living amid all the colonial, social, and moral revolutions which the gold discoveries have produced; and how is it that, engaged in the same most important business as his wife, that of bringing over large numbers of emigrants, he has not taken care to make her fully acquainted with the real facts? Has Captain Chisholm never been up the country? Never seen the diggings? Never seen the shepherds' huts? Never seen the unparalleled extent of drunkenness? Never looked at the estimates, and seen the most marvellous amount of duty on spirits alone,—more than half a million sterling a year? Never informed her of the fearful battle which the magistracy, the Temperance Society, and all thinking people are waging, and vainly waging, with the most frightful intemperance that the world ever knew? Never told her that *there is no land for people to settle on*? Yet that this is the case, we have the evidence of the *Argus*, one of the most eloquent advocates of emigration hither. On the 20th, only a day or two ago, it said, “It will be a happy day for this colony when every man who has come hither, in quest of a home, can have his own free homestead and snug garden; and when, in addition to his newspaper, he can employ his leisure time in reading. *What people are chiefly disappointed with here is, that there is nothing which they have been accustomed to associate with a colony.* Notwithstanding all our gold, America is still preferred by thousands, because it is the country of cheap land, cheap education, and cheap books. When we have these here, then will the book triumph over the bottle. Then will home-sickness fade away before the sight of waving corn-fields and smiling landscapes.”

Believing that Mrs. Chisholm is what the world gives her credit for, a true-hearted, and brave-hearted woman; that she is earnestly and faithfully labouring in a great cause,—that of removing people, and especially women,



from a situation of struggle and discouragement, to one of hope and prosperity; that she is aiming to do a noble work of humanity; and that it is from this conviction that so large a portion of the public, in all classes at home, have bestowed upon her its confidence and esteem, it is with the deepest pain that I have read her speeches just mentioned, and especially the one delivered at Leeds. In that speech, this heroic woman utters things which she herself would be the first to condemn if she knew the reality. She is there, in fact, falling into that very system of false and distorted eulogy of Victoria, which has occasioned such lamentable misery and disappointment, during the gold mania, and which has now so severely reacted on the progress of emigration hither.

I have repeatedly stated the fact, that the false colouring given to life here, was the cause which produced such painful and miserable disappointment in the minds of thousands and tens of thousands, who came to the gold-fields. The shock which the first perception of the reality gave them, completely overturned the balance of their judgments. Hundreds and thousands made a precipitate retreat; thousands of others, who were hardy enough to remain, or too poor to retreat, remained in a dogged sullenness, exaggerating every inconvenience in their unhappy minds, and unable, through the fogs of disappointment, to perceive the clearer prospect a-head. Had these people come out with a fair statement of the truth of things, nine-tenths of them would have succeeded. It was the fallacious picture which disgusted them with the plain, but good and substantial reality; as the flattering picture of Holbein made Henry VIII. think Anne of Cleves no better than a Flanders mare.

Mrs. Chisholm tells the operatives of Leeds, that in leaving England, they leave all their hardships and privations, and in Victoria, "step at once into every imaginable comfort."

How little can Mrs. Chisholm be aware that these words sound to us here as nothing short of burlesque. Comfort is not the word which contains the true inducement to emigrate to this colony. That inducement is probable and eventual advantage. Comfort is precluded to the poor, arriving emigrant, by the circumstances of the colony. It does not produce indigenous comforts, because the whole land is under a legal interdict of cultivation. People, here, therefore, seem to know nothing, and get to care nothing, for comforts.

The artisan's position is the bright spot of Victoria. Workmen of most kinds, but still not of all, get great wages; and working men of the manufacturing towns are often of a class that would find no employment of their own kind here. Cotton-spinners and cloth-manufacturers here could only become labourers and porters; but builders, joiners, tilers, glaziers, and many others, step into ready employment at high wages. Yet, even to them, comfort is not the true word. Their high wages will not purchase comforts; they must learn to live with a certain degree of rudeness, and many privations, for the acquirement of ultimate and great advantages. That is the statement which should be made, and which would equally influence, and at the same time prevent disappointment with its distorting effects.

And yet, even the most required workmen feel a shock on first coming. Captain Chisholm himself has most graphically painted, in letters to the newspapers, the miseries of the first advent of emigrants. Has he never in his letters home represented the horrors of crowds of poor emigrants turned out of the steamers at evening, on the muddy wharves of Melbourne, without any knowledge of the place, and without any place of shelter for the night? Has he not described, as he has done here, the almost impossibility of procuring the shelter of the rudest roof for them? Of their being compelled to open their little

stores, and sell their clothes to procure food and shelter at the stupendous prices of the place? Does he relate the wretchedness of the starving inhabitants of Canvass Town, and of the difficulties, and the fleecing exactions through which those who attempt to ascend into the country, have to pass? Does he state fully and distinctly, that *no cheap land is to be had*, and that if they fail at the diggings, they fail altogether? And as to that portion of mechanics who remain in Melbourne, does he say what is the charge for meat, for clothes, but, above all, for house-rent, which they have to pay out of their high wages of 1*l.* or 30*s.* per day, if skilled labourers, which the demand of land has made on a par with the wages themselves? That it is precisely the price of labour, and the absence of indigenous comforts, which, acting on each other, give the artisan his 30*s.* per day into one hand, and take it pretty fast out of the other?

But the workman's chance is the best chance, and if fairly stated would be that of ultimate success, against all sorts of present *dis-comforts*,—if he keep out of the grog-shop, the grand ruin-shop of this colony.

Mrs. Chisholm told her audience at Leeds, that she had received a letter from some gentleman, warning her against the awful responsibility of inducing young women to go out and marry the brutal lags, and drunken monsters who abound in Victoria. It was a most important and most kindly warning; but Mrs. Chisholm treated it lightly, and told her fair aspirants to colonial matrimony, that it is the hardships at home that render men savage and brutal, but that “they become mild and refined in the colonies, from the improvement of their circumstances!”

Oh! Mrs. Chisholm! Mrs. Chisholm! if you value your good name; if you would not renounce the honour and regard which years of steadfast prosecution of a great work of philanthropy have won you, hasten out, and behold the moral amelioration which you thus imagine!

Where are these hardened wretches—these men made brutal at home, who are here so softened and refined? Will universal drunkenness refine them? Is the grog-shop the school of this amelioration—this elevating process? But it is in the grog-shop that you find nine-tenths of the population of Victoria; that is their school, their haunt, and their home! Do you read the newspapers of Victoria and Sydney? If you do, you must be aware that the monstrous and all but universal drunkenness of these colonies is recorded and proclaimed daily by these journals, as the giant and indomitable curse of them both. Nor is Van Diemen's Land far behind; and all means of checking it have proved in vain. Neither the preacher, the moralist, the temperance pledge, nor the terrors of the magistrate, singly or all together, can grapple with this monster, which is destroying the lives and substance, intellectual and physical, of the bulk of the labouring class in these colonies. These papers tell you plainly, however much they may eulogise these countries in other respects, that they are unquestionably the most drunken regions on the face of the earth! And in this statement the Government returns bear them fully out; they show that the consumption of ardent spirits has kept pace and more than kept pace with the wonderful influx of population. In 1851, the duty on spirits imported and sold in Victoria amounted to about 30,000*l.*; in 1852, to 80,000*l.*; in 1853 it was 237,769*l.*; in 1854 it was 596,017*l.*; and the Government in its estimates for this year, ending March, 1855, calculate their reaching 900,000*l.*! That be it remembered, is merely the *duty* on spirits, not their value, and that for the consumption of a population of 250,000.

To check this moral plague there has of late been a vigorous agitation for the introduction of the Maine Liquor Law,—that is, for the total prohibition of the sale of spirituous liquors in these colonies, as a last and

only remedy. But this is not likely to be carried. The whole of the working population almost are against it. The Government, deeply in debt, and defeated in its expectation of a good sum out of the squatters, is now letting loose fresh legions of publicans all over the colony. This Government, which hitherto prohibited altogether the sale of spirits at the diggings; which burnt down so many tents, confiscated so much property of the grog-sellers, fined and punished them so severely; this same Government is now licensing, both in town and country, and in the diggings, as many pot-houses as people please to ask for. Money must be made by Government,—for, with about 3,000,000*l.* a-year, it is this year 1,000,000*l.* deficient,—and this is the easiest means. They know that the people will drink brandy like so many grog-fish, if they will only let it be freely supplied. And already in the diggings you see the result. The grog-shops are crowded, especially on a Saturday afternoon. At Bendigo, the theatre and other places of entertainment are provided with taps; and those frequenting them *have to pass through the tap to the body of the house!*

Already, too, the effects are visible enough. The coroners of the diggings are in increased business. Sudden deaths—drowning of drunkards, and wives knocked on the head by drunken husbands—are in rapid advance. Crime, as we have already shown, has increased in the ratio of from 4000 to 10,000 criminal cases per annum.

If Mrs. Chisholm ever reads the Melbourne papers, she must, from time to time, have seen the recorded perplexity of the magistrates how to deal with the numerous and increasing cases of abuse and murder of wives, and of wives drawn to drunkenness, and the ruin of their families, by the drunkenness and brutality of their husbands. She must have seen some new and stringent legislation called loudly for on this very subject. But of what avail? So long as men drink alcohol, brutality,

beatings, and murders of wives will follow: and, according to all appearance, drink they will while they can get the detestable dram.

Such are the men whom improved circumstances have softened and refined! If women — simple and believing women — are persuaded to come out here to form matrimonial connections, let them at least know the sort of men that predominate, that they may at least be upon their guard. As Dr. Embling, in an excellent communication from Melbourne to the *British Banner*, says, “Why not represent the truth? This fiction is dishonourable; and the cruel agony new comers suffer, when the curtain of their fancy is removed, description cannot convey to any reader.”

But Mrs. Chisholm equally revels in descriptions of the Paradises of the Bush! She describes her having seen people rolling on the ground in delight on having attained such rural paradises. These paradises were on small farms in New South Wales. All the world knows of Mrs. Chisholm’s travels with young women up the country there, to locate them in happy country homes, and honours her for it. But alas! where are the paradises of the bush in this colony? at least any paradises into which she could introduce her dowerless Eves? Does not Mrs. Chisholm know, that up to this time it has been the policy of this sage and beneficent Government, with few and insignificant exceptions, to refuse the sale of small farms,—of any but small town allotments, so carefully doled out, that they would fetch from 1000*l.* to 15,000*l.* per acre? How would Mrs. Chisholm locate her poor *protégées* on such costly bits of earth, especially when a cottage of humblest pretensions built upon one of them would cost nearly as much as a palace in England? What would be the real cost of cabbages and turnips grown upon such purchases?

No; these paradises of the bush are not yet attainable

by emigrants here. Had they been so, this country would, ere this, have had hundreds of thousands of families established upon it; and all the rural luxuries of corn, milk, butter, eggs, fruits and vegetables in abundance, where they are now either unattainable, or nearly so from their price. Had it been so, the population would have purchased such houses and lands instead of destructive spirits, and would now present a picture as purified and refined as Mrs. Chisholm fondly imagines it.

Lastly, she describes the homes and lives of shepherds in the bush as most delicious and Arcadian, and invites young women to go out and share their felicities. If there be a desolate and comfortless abode of humanity anywhere on the globe it is the shepherd's hut in the Australian bush. I speak of what I know, for I have visited them from one side of the colony to the other. My picture is not an imaginary one but the reality, and that reality everywhere; I have seen no single exception: a little slab hut, with a mud floor, and a log or two or a stool, a single bed, and the simplest cooking apparatus. It does not abound in comforts, but it often abounds in fleas. It has no garden or enclosure; it stands in the unfenced unadorned bush; and the fare of the shepherd is the eternal monotony of mutton-chops, damper, and tea, occasionally varied by a doughboy or Norfolk dumpling. He has no milk, except he be near the Home Station; not always then. No vegetables of any kind.

Truly the shepherds are lonely enough, for nine-tenths of them are single men, living alone in the remote bush, or with a hut-keeper to prepare their meals. Good wives would be a grand acquisition to them, but, then, will the squatters give their wives and children rations? Do they want the shepherds to have wives and families? I doubt it. They prefer single men, for they are cheapest. Their wages 30*l.* or 38*l.* a year, and their rations are not calculated for families. Wives might serve as hut-keepers, but

the hut-keeper is expected to go out and sleep in the field box with the flock, and wives cannot do that; and, therefore, that duty would fall on the shepherd. I believe the case of the tyrannic overseer which I have given to be an exceptional case, and a rare case; but the desolate, comfortless, solitary, and unembellished hut and life of the shepherd is universal. It is that which drives so many mad. Let Mrs. Chisholm get this altered; let her spread wives through the bush, and light up the solitude with cheerful families and children's voices, but let her candidly state to her female *protégées* what these huts are now. Let her organise new ones, and she will effect a great work, none nobler, none humaner; but the work has yet to be done—the Arcadian homes she imagines have yet to be created.

I have that faith in Mrs. Chisholm, that I believe when she arrives in the colony she will see for herself, and she will fearlessly declare what she sees; and, therefore, her arrival will be one of the most auspicious events for Victoria that can befall it.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

*March 1st, 1855.*—While transcribing these pages for the press I have received the Melbourne newspapers for Nov. 11th, 1854, and find Mrs. Chisholm acting as I anticipated, and candidly at a public meeting in Melbourne declaring her discoveries of the painful reality which awaited her. She has boldly gone up the country, and astonished herself beyond expression at the utter want of roads, and of those fearful bogs and gullies in which we had so many adventures. She broke her shaft, and came back having lost all hope of the Government making roads, and telling the people they must make them themselves! “Talk of the want of labour!” she exclaims,



“ look at the labour that is wasted in getting through the thick mud of the Black Forest. Just where I broke my shaft I saw ten or a dozen men dragging at a single wheel. It is at such places that the merchant's goods are lost or destroyed.”

She was horrified by the sight of “ the long ranges of public-houses at the diggings;” and her practical, penetrating mind immediately detected the giant evil of this colony:—“ The great grievance of the diggings is, that they cannot get the land. *It is this great grievance that requires to be immediately remedied.* . . . It is a serious thing for a man who has made 200*l.* or 300*l.* to sink it all in a piece of ground that will not give him a piece of bread, nor even a potato! . . . The lands must be unlocked! I NEVER COULD — I NEVER WOULD HAVE RECOMMENDED ANY MAN TO COME TO THIS COUNTRY IF I DID NOT THINK THIS POSSIBLE, AND THAT IT WOULD SOON BE DONE!”

That is the honest and noble confession of an heroic nature. These words ought to be written in letters of gold over the doors of the Queen's palace, of the Houses of the Imperial Parliament, and of the Legislative Council of Victoria, as the sentiment of every disinterested and patriotic mind, and as embodying the great truth—that to persuade or induce people to go over to Victoria while land is withheld is to practise a cruel fraud upon them. And, moreover, to deny colonial waste lands to a people pushed forth from their native country by necessity, is at once suicidal and disgraceful to the intellect of any nation.

## LETTER XXXIII.

**Bendigo Races.**—Character of Population.—Decrease of Gold and Growth of Public-houses.—Frightful State of Roads through the Diggings.—Official Neglect.—Horse Gins at Work.—A Round amongst the Gold-buyers.—Dine with the Clergyman, who laments the Want of Endeavours to elevate, instead of demoralising, the Population.—Vast Reforms wanted on the Diggings.—Gross Abuse of the Office of Pound-keeper.—Example; Case of a Digger's Horse.—State of the Government.—Four Millions Sterling per Annum required to govern 250,000 People! List of official Salaries.—Sample of Allowances for House-rent.—Propose to tax the Squatters, who resist and threaten to double Prices of Meat.—Mutton, in Melbourne, 1s. 3d. per lb.—Present Amount of Sheep, Cattle, &c., in Colony.—Squatters memorialise Home Government, claiming Right to buy all the Land at 1l. per acre.—These Claims and 70,000 Diggers with decreasing Gold, threaten serious Evils to the Colony.—Leading Men from Victoria and N. S. Wales watching the Fate of the new Constitutions sent Home.—Mr. Wentworth.—Mr. Robert Lowe.—*Postscript.* Diseases of the Flocks.

Bendigo, April 25th, 1854.

WE arrived here nearly a week ago, and have been detained by unluckily stumbling on the races; and as we wanted to dispose by auction of a number of heavy things that we left here, so that we might go on our survey of the remaining diggings lightly, we have been compelled to wait; for, of course, no business is to be done while the races last, which continue three days. We have pitched our tent in our old place in the bush, below the diggings, but unfortunately the race-course is only a quarter of a mile from us, and we hear too much of the noise.

Two young gentlemen—real gentlemen,—who had sunk a deal of gold on the diggings, instead of raising it,

contracted to make this course, by clearing the trees away and drawing them to each side. The ground was perfectly level and good, and made an excellent course. I believe they cleared 70% by their contract. But unluckily, they entered into another speculation. They procured a license for a coffee-shop and eating-house on the course, for the term of the races, and so managed to lose all the money again. They had an unbounded stock of energy, and were quite in their element in making the course; but they were gentlemen and not publicans, and, therefore, were totally out of their element in drawing and entertaining customers of the prevailing class. A man, much more *au fait* in that sort of thing, set up next door; got a piano; kicked up a dance; supplied plenty of grog, under the rose; laughed and joked with his customers in their own vein, and carried away all the business. His tent was crammed from morning till night,—or, rather, from morning till morning; for the piano was thumping away all night, and the jolly diggers and diggeresses stamping away merrily all night long; and the end of it was, that our young friends found themselves, during the fête, with an empty booth, at the end of it with empty pockets, and their jovial neighbour with his stuffed to repletion.

We took an occasional glance at these races, and found both better horses and more order than we expected. But whether holiday-making or at work, Bendigo presents to us the same odious features as it did before. I do not know why it is, but I have seen no diggings where there appears such a predominance of low and insolent people as at this place. There are, undoubtedly, a large number of decent and worthy people here, both amongst them and amongst the storekeepers; but there is a very tangible class, too, of the very lowest characters amongst the diggers, and of clownish and quirking characters amongst the storekeepers. They tell us that great numbers of the

worst class of both kinds are gone away to Tarrangower, the Avoca, and other *new* diggings. It may be so, but I don't miss them. There are swarms of German Jews amongst the storekeepers and publicans of Bendigo—and they are Jews to some purpose. At the Ovens, where the carriage was 60*l.* per ton when we left, we could purchase all sorts of articles for 28 per cent. less than we could here, where the carriage was, till yesterday, 30*l.* per ton—just half the price! There has been a little rain this week, and on the plea of the state of the roads, they have at once raised carriage to 80*l.* per ton, and all articles in proportion. In fact, as the gold decreases here, and people go away, the storekeepers appear to raise their prices, so as obtain the same amount of profit out of the small remainder as they did out of the whole. In the end they seem likely to realise the fable of the Kilkenny cats, and having eaten up the diggers, finish by eating up each other.

The same monstrous drunkenness still prevails. I was told that great improvements had been made since I was here last. On inquiring what these consisted of, the answer was fifteen new houses of wood,—all for public-houses! It was added that the Commissioners who had granted the licenses were chuckling and rubbing their hands at the idea that so many could not answer, and that soon they should be able to get them for an old song; that is, that they could get the Government to buy them for them to live in. But in this I think they will be mistaken, for the diggers will drink to the last, and will only cease to drink when they cease to find any more gold, and no Commissioners are wanted to collect the license-money.

The most extraordinary erection here, however, is one purchased for a new Post-office. Instead of being up in the camp, where the Post-office now is, and where it is dry and accessible, this is built in a hole at a sudden bend of

the creek, where it will all winter be up to the ankles in mud, except when the floods are out, when it will stand some feet deep in water, if the floods do not carry it clean away. This selection was the talk and wonder of the place, and was represented as a most flagrant job; that the builder, conscious that it was no place to live in, had disposed of it to an officer for a very low figure, and that by good management Government had been induced to buy it at a very much higher figure. Every one declared that it must come under a Government inquiry one day, and that the whole structure was so bad from foundation to roof, that it already rained in as through a sieve. How true these statements were I had no means of knowing; but the absurdity of the spot for a building of any kind was patent at the first glance to any one.

As for the public business, it is conducted in the same admirable style as ever. The roads under the very eye of the camp, and in the very centre of the diggings, are in the most frightful condition. The Commissioners have been obliged to throw down the fence of the camp inclosure next to the diggings to allow carts and drays to pass through, the road itself having become utterly impassable. These able Commissioners have just been patronising horse-racing, but close under the camp, on the way out of Bendigo to the race-course, there is a piece of road of the most abominable description. It has been dug up by the diggers on both sides till there are holes so near each other, that it is impossible for carriages to pass without the wheels dropping into one of them, on one side or the other. The piece of road is so hollow and full of mud that the holes are not perceptible till you are in them. All day long, therefore, the drays, carts, gigs, dog-carts, and odd, anomalous vehicles which abound here, are seen tumbling in and scrambling out of the Scylla or Charybdis of Bendigo. The road during the races has been continually blocked up by such disasters, and it is impossible

to get any other way, for other way there is none. All is one vast chaos of gravel heaps and deep pits.

Well, these Commissioners, Panton and Barnard, have ridden every day to the races and back, and seen all this, as a matter of course, without its appearing to have struck them that they ought to have had these pits filled up; and this piece of road raised with gravel which lay in millions of tons on each side. They have been themselves obliged to wait while carriages got out, and they have seen a sort of American waggon, and other carriages, which have carried passengers to the races, oblige these passengers regularly to get out at these holes, and wade over the muddy clay and gravel heaps, ladies in fine dresses and silk-stockings amongst them, while the vehicles managed to get through empty. Yet still, it never struck them that *they* had anything whatever to do with this state of things! But in this colony the art of government is certainly reduced to the simplest principles. These are to do nothing for the public, and to scrape out of it all that they can. And the officials from the highest to the lowest are perfect in this art.

Alfred tells me that he did one day see three or four prisoners, under guard of police armed with muskets, shovelling mud into these holes. I suppose, therefore, that these admirably accomplished Commissioners hold mud to be the very best thing for filling holes in a road with; and that it will require a new avatar of Commissioners to arrive at the fact, that solid gravel only will make a solid road. In Melbourne they actually make the footpaths in the principal streets of *dust*, which in dry weather is tossed up, and smothers everybody, and on the first rain is swept away into the kennels; whence, on the rain ceasing, it is once more flung back upon the trottoir. The mud of Bendigo and the dust of Melbourne are, with equal sagacity, imagined to be materials for road-making.

Bendigo exhibits few symptoms of ground yet un-

broken — of yet untouched expanses of gold. The diggers are all at work amongst the old heaps, either searching for small unworked patches between the holes, or are washing over the stuff which has been thrown out. Others are pursuing the gold in a north-westerly direction, towards Robinson Crusoe's Gully, and so onward to the Loddon and Avoca.

Here you see the first introduction of machinery, except the steam-engine at the Bendigo Gold Company's enclosure, which, as I prognosticated, has not been found to answer, and the whole concern is standing still. The machinery now at work consists of a contrivance to crush and puddle the clay and other refuse of the diggers. It is a roller working in a cylindric box, and into which the earth and water are introduced, and the roller kept in motion by a horse-gin. Numbers of these gins may now be seen at work in different parts of the field.

But that the individual earnings of the diggers in Bendigo are now very small may be inferred from this fact: — Alfred and I, to get some idea of the amounts sold here by individual diggers, put a small bag of gold of a pound and a half into our pocket, and set off to sell it. We did not go to the Adelaide Escort Company, because we did not consider that a fair criterion. They, no doubt, would take any such amount, and a great deal more at any time. But we took the regular storekeepers who are purchasers, and beginning at the new Post-office, went to all places where there were placards of "gold bought in any quantity," "gold bought at the highest price," or "3*l.* 18*s.* for gold," or "1000 ounces of gold wanted." Would it be believed? We could not find a single storekeeper prepared to purchase such a trifling amount as that. On asking if they bought gold, the answer was, "Oh yes, certainly." "You give 3*l.* 18*s.*?" "Oh, yes." "Well, we have only a small quantity, about a pound and a half." At the words "a pound and a half," it was laughable to

see how their jaws fell, and what an air of blank dismay fell over them. One endeavoured to get out of it by saying that he had just made up his thousand ounces; another, that he was only the assistant — his principal was out; but the far greater number began to back out of the price; — “Well, they could not give that price for that quantity; only 3*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.*, as it might fall before next escort day.” Towards the last, we laughed in one man’s face, and said that we had now been nearly the length of the once famous Bendigo, and could not find a man who could purchase a pound and a half of gold at once. “Oh!” replied he, with genuine colonial bluster, “I could soon show you a man who could purchase 10,000*l.* worth.” “Pray do,” we said, “for that is the very man we are seeking.” To which the polite storekeeper replied, that we might go and look for him: it was no business of his.

You are not to suppose from this that there is very little gold sent down from Bendigo. There often goes down from 12,000 to 20,000 ounces by escort. But then, that is the product of 40,000 diggers, according to the popular estimate. What is clear is that the average weekly earnings of each digger is extremely small. Even 20,000 oz. in a week only averages half an ounce per man if there be 40,000 men. And it is quite obvious that individual storekeepers are not accustomed to expect large amounts at once. It is perhaps from these circumstances that you now hear Bendigo called the Poor Man’s Digging.

At the auction-room of Mr. Jones, however, the other day we saw a magnificent specimen of quartz containing gold. The mass of quartz was about a foot square, and was richly powdered with particles of gold. It had been found in Long Gully, and one of the party who found it was there. They had showed it at the races, and made 70*l.* by the exhibition at 1*s.* each person: and they now sold it to Mr. Jones for 90*l.* rather than abide the result of the auction. The very next day he sold it



for 230*l.* The old digger who had sold it for 90*l.* said, "Oh, well, Mr. Jones behaved like a gentleman, and I am quite satisfied. We've got 160*l.* by it."

On Sunday I dined with Mr. Norris, the postmaster here. Mr. and Mrs. Norris have lived much in America, and are really intelligent, intellectual people. Mrs. Norris is a niece of Colonel Valiant, of the 40th infantry, who are quartered at Melbourne. Mr. Gregory, the clergyman, was there, an excellent young man. I expressed to him my regret that horse-racing and grog-shops appeared to be the chief objects of patronage, and that I should like to see gentlemen organising reading-rooms, news-rooms, lectures, and musical societies, anything which would give an intellectual tone to the population;—that the host of public-houses which now were opened, and in which magistrates and professional men were concerned, were calculated to become the very focuses of drunkenness, gambling, and swindling, of which there were already too much;—that what was wanted were movements that would give a harmonising instead of a brutalising tendency to the tastes of the diggers;—and that, in my opinion, such a collection of rude and, in too great a degree, uneducated men, loosed from the restraints which superior classes imposed in Europe, and left to the indulgence of a new and wild freedom, could not have their worst passions and appetites stimulated by drunkenness under the patronage of the very authorities, without there coming, ere long, a terrible retribution in some shape or other.

Mr. Gregory fully accorded in both the sentiment and the presage, and said that he was at this very time anxiously engaged in bringing into play such beneficial agencies; but lamented the great want of cooperation in the task.

All thinking men admit that vast reforms are needed, not only in the diggings but throughout the colony. The whole system appears one vast mass of corruption and

mismanagement. The elopement of the pound-keeper at Bullock Creek with 9,000*l.* of the Government money has turned the public attention to that class of persons, and all are amazed to find what is the real value of such a post here. What would be said in England to the office of a pound-keeper being worth 4000*l.* a-year? Yet every one declares that it is. The fact is that too many of these pound-keepers are, in truth, horse and cattle stealers. They keep a set of men who ride about the bush, and snap up all the horses and cattle that they can slyly drive off. These they tail out, as it is called, that is, watch them away in the bush, and in a while advertise them, as they are bound to do, in the newspapers. They do this by the time that they think that the owners of horses especially are gone away into some distant part of the country. Ten to one whether the owners see the advertisement till too late, if ever. The horses are sold at certain fixed pound sales, and no one after that can recover them. The owner may go to the pound-keeper, and on proving any horse or bullock was his, may claim the price at which it was sold; but then, the expenses are charged for the time the animal was kept, and they often contrive to make this swallow up the whole creature.

We were told by a squatter, as we came down the country, that a digger encamped one night near the Goulburn, and not very far from one of these pounds. He had a fine horse for which he had given ninety guineas. The next morning it was no where to be found. He hunted the whole neighbourhood over, to no purpose. He went to the pound-keeper. It was not there, of course, for that is not the plan. It was without doubt tailing out in the bush that he might *not* find it. After a time, he heard that it actually was in the custody of this very pound-keeper; and he went to the squatter on whose run he had that night camped, and asked if it had been taken up by his orders. He said, "No; certainly not." In fact, he had

no right to pound it at all. Diggers' horses are entitled to graze on the waste. He then went to the pound, and found that his horse was already sold, and in demanding the sum that it was sold for, he was told it was *seven guineas*, and that the expenses left a balance due to him of *seven and sixpence*.

Such cases are numberless; and so long as the law converts stolen property into legal property, by its being sold at a pound sale, so long will this villany and horse-stealing flourish. No law whatever should bar a man's right to property which has been stolen from him, whenever he meets with it. This is a most mischievous law, and a perfect god-send to the dishonest pound-keeper, and only originates in the dislike of Government to indemnify a man for the purchase from itself of stolen property.

I see by the newspapers, that the squatters have been called upon to supply the deficiencies of the revenue to some extent. The Government of 250,000 people here has required this last year no less a sum than four millions and a half. That will surprise people in England, who have not had the opportunity, as we have, of contemplating the wonderful establishment of this gold colony,—the wonderful crowd of officials, both at head-quarters and in the diggings, at high salaries, and the wonderful way in which business is done. I have given a few rich specimens of these things as I have gone along. They are a sample of the bulk. And this colony last year with a revenue of 3,270,000*l.*, is declared to be, on the year, upwards of one million deficient.

But no one would longer wonder if he could glance over the long list, now lying before me, of official salaries, as published in October last. Take a few specimens:—

	Per Ann.
The new Governor is proposed to have	£15,000
His private secretary, aid-de-camp, clerks, &c.	2,888
Legislative Council,—Speaker 2,000 <i>l.</i> , other officers,	
6,311 <i>l.</i> ; total	8,311

Colonial Secretary, 2,500 <i>l.</i> , making, with his staff	-	18,335
Colonial Treasurer, and staff	-	16,637
Auditor-General and staff	-	15,080
Judges, and administration of justice	-	43,280
Post-office department	-	64,622
Ports and harbours	-	42,580
Public works	-	800,000
Police	-	317,597
Gaols	-	94,549
Officers in the Gold-Fields, independent of police, forage, buildings, &c.	-	71,923

And on the same princely scale is the supply of all these departments with the necessary expenditure for working at the high rate of colonial charge.

A very large sum of the above charges is paid, as before stated, for house-rent, which the enormous price of that item renders necessary. The particulars of the post-office department in Melbourne will show that this generally amounts to half as much as the salary:—

POST-OFFICE, MELBOURNE.

	Salaries.			House Rent.					
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.			
Postmaster-General	-	-	-	1,200	0	0	500	0	0
Secretary	-	-	-	600	0	0	300	0	0
Accountant	-	-	-	500	0	0	250	0	0
First clerk	-	-	-	500	0	0	250	0	0
Inspector of dead letters	-	-	-	500	0	0	250	0	0
Resident clerk	-	-	-	400	0	0			
Seventy-five clerks,—eight at 300 <i>l.</i> each, and sixty-seven at 200 <i>l.</i> each	-	-	-	15,800	0	0	7,900	0	0
Allowances to seventy-six clerks, for extra hours (including resident clerk), at 100 <i>l.</i> each	-	-	-	7,600	0	0			
Four sub-sorters,—two at 15 <i>s.</i> each, and two at 13 <i>s.</i> each, per diem	-	-	-	1,022	0	0			
Twenty-six letter carriers, at 12 <i>s.</i> per diem				5,694	0	0			

It will be seen from this statement that Victoria pays four times the real value of every item of its Government as well as of everything else. And why? Because it has created this high pressure system, by its embargo of land, and its gambling town-allotment system. It is the Pelican

that stabs its own bosom, and suckles its official brood with its life-blood. It is true that the sudden change, inevitable on the gold discovery, must have originated a temporary high rate of prices; but this insane policy has aggravated four-fold at least, instead of abating this evil. With plenty of land would have come plenty of market supplies; town allotments and house rents never could have reached that scale; and with land a-head, the tide of labour would have been pouring in with double rapidity; all tending, as these manias did in California, to a more speedy return to a healthy and comparatively easy state.

Well, towards defraying the whole of this magnificent outlay, the squatters contributed only 20,000*l.* a year; and it was proposed to lay again the head-money on their stock, which had most unnecessarily been dispensed with since the separation from Sydney. Had an income-tax of three per cent. been laid on the public, the squatters, with their present noble revenues, must have contributed a splendid quota to the exchequer. But though the sum required of them was estimated at only 100,000*l.* they grew very indignant, cut it down to 50,000*l.*, and then demanded that it should be expended in bridges and other improvements in the vicinity of their own abodes. They declared, moreover, that this sum they would take back, ten-fold, by doubling the price of meat.

Now, with all my respect for these gentlemen individually, I must say that, considering the proud advantages which they enjoy in the colony, this was by no means generously or moderately expressed. Yet I am sorry to hear that they are really carrying this menace into effect; and while we are giving 9*d.* per lb. for beef and mutton here, at Melbourne mutton has reached the astonishing price of *fifteen-pence* per pound!

In consequence, however, of the decided enunciation of public opinion on this conduct, the plea has been shifted, and the decrease of stock, owing to the increased demands

of the population, and the devastations of scab and catarrh, made the ground of augmented price. Fortunately the returns of these gentlemen themselves to Government present a very different result, as the following figures from the *Statistical Register* show:—

	Horses.	Horned Cattle.	Pigs.	Sheep.
1851	- 21,219	378,806	9,260	6,032,783
1852	- 22,086	399,923	7,372	6,589,923
1853	- 34,021	431,380	8,996	6,551,506

Here, though we find about 38,000 sheep less than last year,—owing, no doubt, to the vigorous slaughter of scabby sheep under the regulations of the new law,—yet there are half a million more than in 1851, the year of the gold discovery; very nearly the same number of pigs, and an increase of 1600 since 1852. Of cattle, the increase since 1851 is 52,574; and of horses, 12,802. That is far from an alarming statement; and when we come to the item of wool, the very destruction of which was prophesied from the want of shepherds, the discovery is still more animating. From 1851, the gold year, the exportation of wool has increased, in round numbers, from 16,000,000 lbs. to nearly 21,000,000 lbs.; and its value from 734,618*l.* to 1,651,871*l.*

Years.	Quantity. Lbs.	Value. £
1849	- - 14,567,005	574,594
1850	- - 18,091,207	826,190
1851	- - 16,345,468	734,618
1852	- - 20,047,453	1,062,787
1853	- - 20,842,591	1,651,871

That our friends, the squatters, take no gloomy views of the value of their stock and runs—no fears of any serious decline in the amount of stock—is obvious from a memorial presented by them to Lord Aberdeen in reply to the Duke of Newcastle's despatch. In this they modestly tell the Prime Minister that they conceive that, by the sixth section of the Orders in Council of 1847, no land can be

sold "prior to the refusal of it at a fair value by the lessee." That is, that the squatters really have the preemptive right to the whole colony at 1*l.* per acre!

This is not simply taking high ground on the question; it is taking the very mountain-tops. There is no instance, we may safely assert, in any age or nation, of a parallel to such an act of assumption; namely, that 650 men should hold a great country of 93,000 square miles in perpetuity, and that from the mere fact of Government having allowed them to graze on it. It is another and most flagrant instance of a set of amiable and excellent men in their private capacity, assuming the most aggressive and grasping character in a corporate one. A man is not the same man in his family and in a council or a clique. The squatter is not the same as a solitary patriarch amongst his woods, his flocks and herds, and as one of the squattocracy agitating at the Port Phillip Club Hotel, or haranguing in the Legislative Council. The child cries for the moon because his nurse says, "Pretty moon-penny; would not baby like it!" The squatters are the spoiled children of the colony; they insist, in the profoundest simplicity and faith in their own reasonableness, on their right to a whole country, and to the exclusion of the millions of their fellow-countrymen who are asking from the common mother lands to settle on. They contend that this fair country shall for ever remain a waste merely because they find it pleasant and profitable to wander there, and not to be interrupted. But see what this inflated pretension portends to the colony! With one party resisting, on this exaggerated, this monstrous ground, the natural progress of society and spread of cultivation; with another and more numerous one demanding houses and farms; with the body of diggers, already 70,000, arrayed against 650,—a body ever growing, but growing in discontent,—a body without lands, without homes, without ties to the soil, exasperated at the unfeeling

selfishness of Government, which refuses them the great rights of humanity, and the more unfeeling conduct of its officials,—a body armed and mounted, and capable, by a little organisation, of sweeping the squatter in a week from the face of the land,—a body growing daily poorer, and, with this poverty, more desperate and disposed to vengeance;—are any so blind as not to see, in an antagonism between these landless regiments and the land-refusing few, the elements of a future that must be fought out in anger, and too probably in blood?

But when to the diggers is added the momentum of the mass of workpeople generally in the colony, and of the immigrants constantly arriving, the conflict becomes more inevitable; and every lover of his country ardently desires that all parties may in time perceive the peril of their position, and that Government, both here and at home, may be endowed with that wisdom and prudence which are most needful to guide this fine colony through the approaching crisis.

I hear that some of the most influential men in Sydney are gone to England to watch the progress of their new constitution there, and that numbers of the squatters are preparing to follow from this colony, to watch also the examination by the home Government of the one now preparing here. Mr. Wentworth, one of the most powerful intellects which New South Wales has yet produced, but reported to be of an impetuous temperament, and to draw 7000*l.* a year from landed property in that colony, is already there, and will throw every possible weight into the scale against cheap and free land. On the other hand, Mr. Robert Lowe, a man of distinguished ability, and profoundly acquainted with the statistics of the colony, will, there is every reason to believe, maintain, with all his energy and eloquence, the cause of public right and sound political equity.

The public in both colonies should take care to have



in London able and well-informed advocates of the true interests of the colonies, and plenty of living evidence, to rebut the skilful and subtle representatives of party sophistry. On the decision of the coming moment hangs the fate of years.

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## POSTSCRIPT.

In this letter I have alluded to the ravages of scab, catarrh, and foot-rot; these certainly are terrible scourges to the flocks, and which you would not expect in this fine climate. But my opinion is, that it is not the climate, but the fact that the flocks are now too large to be well managed. When the circumstances of sheep-pasturing approach nearer to those of England, these evils will rapidly diminish; that is, when the flocks are small, and therefore more manageable. The foot-rot is a severe attendant of flocks that run on wet ground in winter; and this disease, which requires active and rigid repression, here is often allowed to run to the most fearful extent. I believe I have already stated that I saw a flock of 20,000 sheep, belonging to one of the squatters of the highest reputation for pastoral management, in which hardly a sheep could stand on all fours; and I was assured that the poor creatures had never been dressed for the disease—a rapidly contagious one—even for a year and a half!

A new remedy for foot-rot has lately been introduced, which is said to be very efficacious, but is certainly highly dangerous. Spacious baths or troughs of wood are made, into which the sheep in successive quantities are driven, and suffered to stand a certain time in a strong solution of arsenic. This is so powerful, that it frequently causes the whole hoof to come off. But the danger to the public is this; the feet of the sheep burn as if on fire, with this application, and the moment they get out, if possible, they

will run into the first pool they see. In a dry country like this, where travellers are obliged often to get water from any small holes, they are very likely now to get a strong arsenic solution. After having witnessed this process, we always examined carefully the margins of water-holes, to see if they were imprinted with sheep's feet, before venturing to take water from them. The birds will be in great jeopardy too on great sheep stations.

The catarrh, a kind of influenza, is so fatal, that it speedily decimates a flock; and is so contagious, that it is said even to remain long on the pastures which an infected flock has cropped. Squatters who have it on their stations are obliged to post notices by the wood sides of its existence.

The scab has of late become so dreadful a plague that the law referred to is made most stringent. Inspectors are appointed to examine all sheep before coming into the market, and to destroy all that are affected. Every one who is driving a flock of sheep anywhere beyond the bounds of his own station is obliged to give twelve hours' notice before entering any other station. The holder of that station then comes and examines the sheep, and relentlessly destroys all that he finds infected. I have just read that a Mr. Darlot has cut the throats of 7000 of his own sheep, and burnt their carcasses, to resist the ravages of this terrible disease on his station.

## LETTER XXXIV.

Forest Creek. — Naming of Places in Victoria. — Tarrangower Digging. — State and Appearances of it. — Rumours. — Disgust of Diggers with the present. — The Gold-belt of the Colony. — The Gold-belts of the World. — Tom Tiddler's Ground. — Second Half-Year of 1852 gave culminating Point of Gold Product. — Then, 71,000 ounces a week, now 35,000. — Sharp Distress in the Diggings. — Dryness of this Neighbourhood. — The Springs a picturesque Spot. — Splendid Land round Township of Muckleford. — Why not sell such Lands in Farms? — Government asleep, but Squatters awake, fencing in the best Land. — Mr. Laski's Brewery. — The old Mount Alexander Diggings nearly deserted. — Their Aspect. — Fixed Government Camps and moveable Diggings. — Crowds of lazy young Officers doing nothing, and New Diggings without Officers. — The Post-offices at the Diggings. — Well-appointed Post-masters. — Offering great Contrast to the Camp. — The Philosophy of Clothes at these Camps. — Whole System wants changing.

Forest Creek, May 1st, 1854.

ANOTHER week, and we are encamped near the famous original diggings of Mount Alexander, now styled by the name-changing Government, CASTLEMAINE. I do not know on what principle the Government of Victoria proceed in giving unmeaning names to places that before had native names full of meaning and often euphonious, or good rough names given by the earliest settlers. It seems as if on the arrival of each batch of new novels, they set about and selected the names of the most Rosa Matilda character for their townships. Thus, the Ovens has rapidly given way to Beechworth, on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, because there are no beeches there; M'Ivor into Heathcote, because there is no heather; Bendigo into Sandhurst, because there is *quartz*; Forest Creek

into Castlemaine, in some mysterious connection with the memory of one of Charles II.'s sultanas; and on the same principle they have a Hawthorne, because the spot is blest, probably, with wattles and tea-scrub. A place with the good native name of Kinlocue is recently turned into Campbell Town—a very original conception. And thus they go on; so that in a while the whole country will be dotted over by caricatures of English towns, and every appellation that would give a character of individuality will have vanished. However, that may concern the poetical ideal of Australia, but it does not concern our journey. It is certainly rather travelling out of our way to speculate whether Wangaratta and Benalla sound better and more unique than Violet Town or Muddy-Water-Holes. Perhaps they cannot make worse work of it than the Americans, with Troy and Buffalo, Athens and Schenectady, Jerusalem and Jobson's Town, all mixed up together.

We came by an easy journey and good roads round by Tarrangower. You will recollect my account of the rush from the Buckland last summer to those new diggings in Bryant's Ranges. Numbers who made rushes amounting to 300 miles within the fortnight, were dreadfully disappointed, and many went back to the Ovens, thus extending their journey to 500 miles. But numbers had utterly exhausted their means, and were compelled to remain, and do as well as they could on those diggings, or crawl on to Bendigo, or hither—Forest Creek,—each about a dozen miles. The fact is, that Tarrangower in summer is totally destitute of water to drink, or to wash their auriferous earth with. The distress was dreadful. To cart their washing-stuff to the Loddon, eight miles or more distant, was ruinous, costing, I believe, 3*l.* per load; and water there was a shilling a bucket. Yet under all these disadvantages many remained. Some parties who had tried the surface of some part of the ranges, reported

that they had got 3 lbs. weight from one cartload. This produced a perfect mania, and crowds began digging up surface-stuff, and carting it down to the gullies, where they hoped there would be water in winter, paying 1*l.* a load to have it carted.

Thousands of tons were thus piled up in various places, and the sanguine expectants awaited the arrival of rain; but vast was their consternation and amazement when rain came, and they could fairly try their mountains of surface-stuff, to find it yield not pounds nor ounces, but merely pennyweights to the load, and thousands of tons not even that, but just nothing at all!

In consequence of this, we expected to find these diggings nearly deserted. But nothing of the kind: on the contrary, there was the most busy throng that we have ever seen since our first arrival at Spring Creek.

Our way from Bendigo was through a rather fine country, with ever-succeeding swells and glades, or gullies, as they call them here; though a gully, to my mind, is a deep, narrow ravine torn out by a watercourse. But here the broadest and smoothest valleys, or any dimple amongst the hills, is a gully; broad levels, which we should call meadows or plains, are flats.

We crossed a tract of granite country quite different to the auriferous regions, and then again came upon low ranges, or swells scattered with small quartz stones, like a sprinkling of snow. On these grew, as usual, the stringybark. But in no case was the country so extremely sterile as about Bendigo. Again, it grew green and fertile, and, emerging into a verdant vale, contrary to all our notions of a gold country, behold the diggings!

A host of tents, whitening all the valley as far as we could see, announced a well-populated scene. When we came up to these tents, we found them surrounding a part of the valley which was all completely dug up, and throngs of diggers at work presented a very different aspect to the

old diggings at Bendigo. All there seems now to move on slowly, scatteredly, and as if on the decline. All here was bustle, and man thronging on man. This was, in fact, a new rush; the last of many which had taken place here. We could see that thousands of holes had been put down, which had proved *shicers*—that is, blanks; but in the middle, the heaps of white pipe-clay which were thrown out, and the windlasses at work, showed that there the diggers had struck the gold.

When we came to traverse the whole of the diggings, we found them extending about three miles along this valley, which, at the upper end, turned off to the left, and again descended in the opposite direction towards the Forest Creek road.

All the way up this valley, and again down the last-named part—called, properly, Long Gully,—the ground had been turned up with an amazing activity for so short a space of time—only a few months. There had clearly been the same degree of success and disappointment as we observed in the new rush. The majority of the holes had yielded little or nothing; others had evidently yielded well, and, as it is said, very well. We were assured that some men had taken as much as 1000*l.* out of one hole: but these marvels we always accept *cum granis*, for we never meet with the actual men who have bagged these large quantities; and we know too well the wonder-mongering of the diggings. But I suspect that where the gold lay it proved as good as at most of the other diggings now-a-days.

The mischief is, that it is evidently a lottery, with far more blanks than prizes. Accordingly, while some said that a few were doing well, the majority denounced the diggings as not worth the name; as having neither gold nor water to work it, if it were there. Numbers we saw again on the move for another new digging across the Loddon, on a Mr. Mackintyre's Station. One man told

us that he had just seen a digger who was come thence with a bag of nuggets, the least of which was as big as his thumb. That the gold was all nuggets there, and that they did not trouble themselves to wash the earth. The next man you met sneered at this account, and said that those who had gone there were coming back as fast as they could.

Such is the state of the Victoria Diggings. Everywhere there are the same rumours, the same excitement, the same disgust with the present and the actual. The race of diggers is never at rest, and least of all men have they any abiding city. But the fact is, that gold can be found, more or less, in all the belt of country abounding with quartz, clay-slate, or ferruginous sandstone, from the Australian Pyrenees to the Snowy Mountains, and from the Snowy Mountains to near Sydney. Nay, the auriferous tracts seem to encompass the earth with belts, including in their sweep South America, New Zealand, Africa, Australia, New Guinea, Borneo, and India; and, though not so continuous in the northern hemisphere, yet showing themselves in California, Britain, the Ural Mountains, and Asiatic Tartary.

Indeed, when Ariel boasted that he would "put a girdle round the earth in forty minutes," he might have added, and at the same time, "gather gold on Tom Tiddler's Ground;" for Tom Tiddler's Ground, on which we all played as children, seems to be a golden zone of the whole globe.

But, so far as this colony is concerned, they now hit no particular spots so rich as the original gold-fields of Bendigo and Mount Alexander. There is no field whatever which can boast with Mount Alexander of sending down 110,000 oz. in one week. And though the number of diggers has been continually increasing, the aggregate produce of the gold has fallen off nearly one-half.

The culminating point of the Victoria Diggings was

reached in the second half of the year 1852, and it was the marvels of that period which produced such prodigious excitement in every region of the globe. The monthly accounts of gold sent down to Melbourne during these six months were, according to data procured by Westgarth, as follows:—

	Ounces.
July - - - -	320,218
August - - - -	314,218
September - - - -	307,282
October - - - -	277,574
November - - - -	322,550
December - - - -	149,581
By Private Escort from Kyneton, &c. -	3,692
Total - - - -	<u>1,695,115</u>

This yields an average of 65,196 oz. per week. Thus at the best period of the diggings the produce of gold in Victoria was upwards of 65,000 oz. per week, while it now only reaches about 35,000 oz., or, as we have said, little more than one-half the amount.

This is enough to maintain an excitement,—to remunerate a few and to tantalise the many, and keep them poor; for, take the diggers at 70,000, it is only half an ounce per man per week, or about 33s.; which—25s. being the least sum which a single man can live upon at digging-prices of food, much less a family—is not very brilliant.

We ought not, therefore, to wonder at hearing of much distress on the diggings, for the gold is by no means equally distributed any more than the gifts of fortune any where else. Some get more than their average quota; others, and for many weeks together, get none. A surgeon who goes a great deal amongst the diggers at Tarrangower assured me that there was much misery and destitution on that field, outwardly so active and prosperous. That it was terrible, and to an extent that no one who did not go so much behind the scenes as he



did, could or would believe. I have heard the same on all other diggings from the same class of men, whose duties lead them among the population.

Gradually the intervals in the vast auriferous belt from Ballarat and the Pyrenees to Lake Omeo are filling. Waranga, or the Goulburn Digging, fills up a space between Bendigo and the Ovens. Between the Ovens and Lake Omeo you have now the Buckland. Bendigo now stretches away to within four miles of Tarrangower, and the ranges of Mount Alexander are as near to Tarrangower on this side. Then there are Jones's Creek, and Sandy Creek, and Moliagul, west of Bendigo and near the Loddon, and beyond the Loddon new diggings are struck on the Avoca. Beyond the Loddon, too, on our future way, more westward, are Creswick's Creek, and the diggings in the Jim Crow ranges, or, as they are now styled officially, Mount Franklin, and then Ballarat. More north-west Mount Korong, and some slight working in the Pyrenees; and so patch after patch is turned up, almost from the frontiers of New South Wales to those of South Australia.

It will take years to work out this belt of country thoroughly, and there may be for years a good aggregate yield of gold to the colony; but the now pretty well ascertained limits and yield, and the patchy and irregular nature of the gold deposit, must make it still, and increasingly, an occasional gain to the few, with a very poor result to the many. The eccentric courses of the veins in which it lies—or the lead, as they call it—are such as must always necessitate an enormous amount of fruitless labour and disappointment. Not one-tenth of the ground turned up at Tarrangower had proved productive; and we saw one instance in which a whole gully had been dug up, and no gold found, the lead having commenced in one part of it, and then, instead of following the gully, had abruptly broken away from it, and taken a most

astonishing direction, forming the segment of a large circle along the side of a hill. Most of the holes sunk ranged from ten to twenty feet deep.

As we came down Long Gully on our way hither, we saw the vast heaps of stuff which had been piled up during the last summer to await the rains of winter. Thousands of tons lie, and probably will continue to lie there, either from want of water to wash out the gold, or the want of gold to wash out. Yet the diggers have constructed many dams across the gully to catch the winter rains, which must be plentiful indeed if they suffice for all this stuff.

Truly the whole district is amazingly wanting in water. In the valleys, where, in England, would be actively running brooks and streams, there are channels clothed with grass. Yet the valleys and the uplands are finely swarded and green, and possess a deep, rich soil. The scenery is very pleasant, — wooded ranges, and hills scattered with crags, bounding these fertile slopes and glades: and the diggers are actually digging up, and converting into a wilderness of gravel heaps, slopes of such verdure as it would make an English farmer's heart ache to see destroyed.

The people on this gold-field are said to be 18,000 or 20,000; the gold procured, from 1000 to 2000 ounces a-week.

A little beyond the present extent of the diggings, the country dips rapidly down into the valley of the Loddon, and presents some really delightful scenery. The hills send down long roundish slopes into the valley, with dells between them, covered with rich grass, and sprinkled with trees. It is like a bit of Germany; and one wonders not to see old timber-framed cottages standing at the feet of these slopes, in the midst of old orchards and vineyards, with their upland crofts behind them, terminated by the granite heights above; for here the granite

country commences again, and the gold ceases,—or at least to a considerable degree.

At the bottom of this valley, before reaching the great plain of the Loddon, water-dealers have sunk wells with great success. They are called the Springs; and here, during the summer, all the people congregate and pitch their tents for the sake of the water, going to and fro to their work. Here would be the site of a beautiful township, where the people would have the most lovely situations for houses and gardens, with plentiful wells on the spot; but, as is universally the case, the surveyors have laid out the township on an adjoining barren hill, where the whole ground is stone or stones, and where the people would have to carry up in carts, for nearly a mile, every drop of water they would require.

In this notoriously dry country surveyors seem especially careful to select the driest and most sterile spots. Is this want of taste and common sense, or are they, as the people generally assert, in league with the squatters, and so avoid, as much as possible, taking any land worth anything? Yet the amount of rich alluvial land, running amongst the ranges all the way from Bendigo hither, has astonished me, and made more palpably culpable the conduct of Government in keeping this land out of the market, so near the diggings, where farms and farm produce are so urgently needed.

There is one township which we passed a few miles from Forest Creek, called Muckleford, which is an exception to the general rule of surveyors. It lies in a splendid expanse of the richest meadow land imaginable, on the banks of a good creek. The soil is many feet, nay many yards, deep; a rich and black soil, which centuries of crops could not exhaust. A man crossing it at the same time that we did said, "This is the greenest place in all Australia that I have seen, and I have seen most of this colony." And, in truth, it was a magnificent ex-

pense of most verdant meadow. The Government has here not only laid out a considerable number of township allotments, but has sold a large portion to Mr. Hitchcock, the auctioneer, of Castlemaine, and brother to the eminent draper in St. Paul's Churchyard, who is reselling it at a truly Victorian profit. No matter, so that it is sold. But why does not Government sell small farms here, in connexion with these town allotments? Why did it not sell farms here long ago, and at the moment when the gold of Forest Creek, of Fryer's Creek, and Campbell's Creek, in the Mount Alexander district, proved so abundant? Why not plenty of farms in that most fertile and immense valley of the Loddon just by? These are questions which the people may ask of the Government; and for want of which the public have had so dearly to pay in corn, hay, vegetables, fruit, and in comfort and in health. The Government of the United States would have done it, and given them three years to pay it in, if they required it.

One cannot help, at every fresh sight of such lands as these, asking, does our Government, either here or at home, know that there is such land here, and that there is such a country as the United States, which is constantly drawing away, by a policy as profound as ours is shallow or stark mad, a quarter of a million of people a-year who should come hither? Did the Government here ever ask itself where the diggers with their bags of gold in the good times would carry them to, as they could not invest them here? Did it never strike them how much fitter it would be to let them spend that gold in good acres, in estates for themselves and their families after them, instead of spending it in the growth of the publican and their own destruction?

When I see such glorious prairies as these, green as emeralds, rich as the primeval paradise, and remember that there are tens of thousands crowding hither, and

hundreds of thousands at home, that would crowd hither, and this teeming, abundant soil is denied to them I cannot help standing in amazement, and asking myself whether these are not the signs of the decline and fall of an empire? Whether, as a nation, we are not really verging on superannuation? Whether such contempt of God's bounty, such a withholding of his blessings, such a perversion of intellect, can arise from anything but fatuity and decay? Certainly there never was a nation, which professed to be a colonising nation, which colonised on so lunatic a system.

We had a view, from the hills near Tarrangower, of the country along the Loddon, and it was amongst the very finest we have seen in this colony. A noble valley, containing in itself immense plains of most fertile land, was bounded by hills more picturesque than this country usually presents, and across the valley lay range beyond range of hills, some dark with dense forests, others green and merely dotted with timber, terminated by blue mountain ranges, altogether truly beautiful.

It is somewhere in this valley that those Charlotte Plains lie, where the Government, after letting Mr. Simpson some scores of miles of fine land, at 10*l.* or 20*l.* a-year, gives him 500*l.* a-year for a single paddock of it. But we found the people there not less discontented at the huge extent of fencing which Mr. Bryant, the squatter, was putting up along the frontage of the Loddon. In fact, the despatch of the Duke of Newcastle has rung the tocsin of their system in the squatter's ears; they know that the doom of their monopoly is at hand; and they are in haste to secure at least their square mile, and as much more as they can, especially of water-frontage. These encroachments they coolly call *improvements*, and put in a claim for them, or for *compensation* for them! Truly, if the Government be asleep, or imbecile, the squatters are not. They are wide awake, and in the full blossom of

their intellect; and unless the new Governor prove a man of vigilance and ability, the colony, from long absence of anything like a government, will suffer irreparable injuries.

In the pleasant valley of Tarrangower we met with an old Bendigo acquaintance, Mr. Thompson Laski, from London, a frank, warm-hearted young man, who has established a brewery there, and is supplying almost the whole of the Tarrangower Diggings with a wholesome beer, instead of the deleterious grog. We were surprised, however, to learn, that by the singular regulations of this most singular Government, he is not allowed to use *malt* for his beer, as if a fermented liquor from malt was more injurious than from sugar. Who shall fathom the wisdom of these antipodean sages? However, Mr. Laski has made a great moral and sanitary innovation, in introducing even sugar-beer in preference to rum and brandy; and no one better deserves, both from that cause and his many genuine qualities, the large fortune which he is amassing.

At the camp, too, we found another friend, Mr. Bernhard Smith, now installed in the full honours of a Gold Commissioner. Mr. Smith and Mr. Lowther, with some half-dozen police, I believe, were all the officials on whom rested the whole business and responsibility of a population of 20,000.

*Fryer's Creek, May 4th.*—We have made a general survey of the old Mount Alexander Diggings, and our first impression of them is confirmed; they appear as nearly as possible deserted. Long stretches of valley, each of several miles in extent, and forming a sort of large square, including miles in their area, are all dug up, and the great army of diggers who once attacked its gold, sending the wondrous rumour of their discovered wealth over the world, have again, for the most part, vanished. Only here and there a solitary man or two is left, sinking holes between the old deserted ones, as at Bendigo. The

grand feast has been devoured ; those who linger behind do it only to pick up the fragments. The great mass of the diggers are gone, or are still moving off ; they are bound for new and distant rushes, Tarrangower, Kingower, or the Avoca, the last fifty miles off. It is from these places that the chief amount of gold which goes down by escort under the head of Castlemaine, is made up.

Castlemaine is the name given to the camp, and to a new township laid out adjoining it. Thus the headquarters remain here, while the real diggings are moving quite away. It is one of the original ideas of this Government to suppose that they can fix down diggings to a particular spot, by laying out enormous sums in permanent camps, and by selling allotments for townships adjoining them ; but the diggings themselves pay no regard whatever to Government measures ; they start up just where God laid the gold, and they cease to exist when their purpose is served ; that is, when the gold is transferred from the earth to men's coffers.

But Government, giving no heed to these inevitable laws of change and removal, not only build large solid stone houses for a permanent camp, but lay out townships, and the people are foolish enough to give most extravagant prices for those allotments, where everything indicates that in a very short time there will be no town at all, for there will be nothing to support it. New stores, new bakeries and butcheries, new breweries and doctors' shops, and all other shops, accompany every new rush, and supply the new diggings. Who and what are to support the old ones when they are deserted ? They can, in general, have no support, except the land round them be sold, and they become farming villages. Perhaps Castlemaine, as on the road from Melbourne to new diggings beyond it, may stand a better chance as a wholesale depot, and from the traffic of the road. But this is an exceptional case.

The mischief attending these permanent camps is still

greater. At these reside swarms of commissioners, police officers, soldiers, grooms, constables, and the like, who are supposed to be attending to the business of the diggings. But this business, except the general posting of the accounts from the new and actual diggings, is all transacted at those new diggings. The licenses are issued there; the gold for transmission by the escort is taken in there; and there the commissioners, police, and soldiers ought to be, if anywhere, for there the people are who want keeping in order.

At those branch stations there is one or two commissioners, often only one, who is worked nearly to death, and the police are so few that a commissioner at one of them assured me, showing me his book in proof, that they could get very few licenses in; that the police were so few that nobody paid any attention to them, and he had himself to ride about and threaten, if they did not come in and pay. Everywhere at these branch stations, which are the chief stations in fact, there is the same complaint of the want of the proper number of officers and of police.

But arrive at the chief camp, standing in the midst of desertion and solitude, and you find a whole army of officials, doing nothing in the world, but assembling from morning till night in groups in the area of the camp, gossiping and lounging, smoking, and calling on each other to admire the beautiful colour which their short pipes are taking. Any other remarks that escape them are in quizzing the passers-by. It is clear that these lazy young fellows, receiving their three, four, and five hundred pounds a year each, either have nothing in the world to do, or that they do not do it. The camp here appears on the face of it an exact counterpart of that of Bendigo; a great, not Lazar-house, but Lazy-house, of young gentlemen, who ride about with gold lace, and smoke cigars or cutty-pipes in the service of their country.

Captain Bull, the Chief Commissioner, appears almost the only person who is really busy; and I must do him the



justice to say, that he is at once active and courteous. He has an office full of clerks, who seem full of employ, and the police magistrate is pretty well occupied in dealing with the thieves and rogues. But the multitude of officers appear to be of the genuine *fruges consumere nati* class. This strikes the eye the more, perhaps, because the most active officers are sent out to the busy out-stations. Captain Bull, in this respect, does not imitate the example of the Colonial Government. He puts active men into the posts that need them. The Government system is so well known, that I once heard a witty squatter, whose name is familiar all over the colony, say, "If I were a Government officer here, I would take care to get well promoted." "How would you effect that?" "I would do nothing myself, but order others to do it. Those are the men that get on." A great truth.

The exception, however, to this state of things at every camp is the post-office. That you always find busy, and surrounded by people waiting to post or receive letters. These offices are everywhere notoriously short-handed. The post-office has not been a paying concern in this dear colony, and therefore it has always been most defectively manned. I believe it is much better in Melbourne than it was; but the General Post-Office there has a world-wide notoriety for non-transmittance of letters, and that from the same cause, a most misapplied economy of clerks.

In the diggings, especially, the post-offices require absolutely a great number of hands, for, owing to the unsettled and ever-moving population, there can possibly be no general domiciliary delivery of letters. Every man must attend and inquire for his letters. This necessitates a continual reference to the masses of letters in the office, and as inevitably augments the labour of the post-office officials, and the enormously protracted waiting of the people at the windows. In London, except at the last

moment in an evening, you can post a letter at the General Post-Office, in an instant; but at any one of these camp post-offices you can rarely get near the window for many hours, and sometimes not for whole days. As to waiting to inquire for letters, that is a most formidable affair. You have to stand and jostle in a rude crowd for many hours before you can get up to the window. Nay, on particular occasions, for days; and you may suppose what is the sacrifice made by the diggers in loss of time. *They* are thus made to pay out of their own pockets the value which the Government refuses to spend in necessary servants, and which it expends so lavishly in unnecessary servants. For all this time, these industrious diggers, while they are compelled to waste their valuable time, see close at hand, and in full view, crowds of young men who are doing nothing in the world; but ruining in themselves every principle of energy and industry, and consequently of moral worth.

If some of these gold and silverlaced youths could be set to sort and deliver letters, it would be a vast public improvement.

But, oh, horror! The very thought of these genteel young goldfinches being set to sort letters and make themselves useful! Why, sacrilege would be nothing to it. To set them to anything practical and useful would be to degrade them in their own eyes; their real dignity being about on a par with that of so many figures of gilt gingerbread, which used to be set in the windows of village shops for show.

Nothing can demonstrate so clearly the thoroughly false basis of the system of the gold-fields, as this contrast between the camp and the post-office. The post-office is organised as a *business* establishment. It gives no gentlemanly standing; its officers have no laced uniforms, no horses, and no troopers riding after them. They are men of business, and to descend from a commissionership, however petty, to that of a postmaster, would be to lose caste.

The one department is really for business, the other is for show; and it is for the maintenance of this and similar follies that this Victoria Government, the income of which has jumped up from about 250,000*l.* annually to 3,270,000*l.*, is deeply in debt, and obliged to raise the price of inland letters from twopence to sixpence each, and of those to the out-going colonies to eighteen pence each. A most Gothic and retrograde piece of legislation! and this at the very time that the newspapers are earnestly calling for cheap ocean postage and cheap literature,—the *Argus* even advocating the free admission of the American piratical reprints of English works.

But so far as concerns the post-offices, I must do the post-masters the justice to say that I have always found them men every way superior to the people at the digging-camps. The post-office appointments, wherever I have been, do the utmost honour to Captain Macrae, the Post-Master-General. It is curious how the spirit at head-quarters invariably finds its way through the whole of a country and a system. Captain Macrae is at once a gentleman, and a man of business; and his own application and courtesy are reflected faithfully in his appointments. I have always found the local post-masters not only obliging, but almost invariably intellectual men. A punster would say, of course, their taste for *letters* makes them so. But the fact is undeniable. How different the spirit of the camp! There, from the highest to the lowest official, it is generally difficult, without assuming an air and style equal to their own, to get common civility, or even attention.

It is one of my amusements at these camps to go up in a dress very much approaching that of a digger, namely, a simple grey blouse and straw hat. A decent digger who comes about business *ought* to be attended to; but in such a costume, I have always found it difficult to get any of the common officials to attend to me, or to give me a

direction where I should find any particular commissioner. After witnessing the cool insolence and *nonchalant* inattention of these orderlies for some time, I have had recourse to peremptory language, on which some pert underling has gone to the commissioner whom I sought, and said, "Here's a man wants you." When the answer has commonly been, "Then let the fellow wait." Instead of doing which, I have always made it my practice to march at once into the august presence, and produce my letter, or state my business. Another day I would go up in the ordinary dress of a gentleman, when, especially if on horseback, the attention and touching of hats by the subordinates has been equally amusing, or rather, disgusting; and the announcement has been, "Sir, here is a gentleman wishes to see you."

Enormous are the reforms which are demanded in the camps. What need of all this empty parade, and assumption of grandeur in diggings? What need of this gold-lace and holiday state? What we want here is *business*, and *business men*. We are paying vast sums for mere laziness and nothing, when we might have our business really done by a few real business men for a little. How ridiculous at home would appear a mounted aristocracy in gold-lace, followed by troopers, in our coal-fields. And it is not a whit less ridiculous here. The bush does not call for all this finery, nor the digger either. It does not impose on the digger, it only excites his contempt; and it is high time, on every account, that it was done with. I flatter myself that my plain representations on this head to His Excellency have had some effect, for, since I made them, I see that none but the Chief Commissioner in each camp is allowed to sport an orderly in his rides. But it is not merely the tinsel that wants stripping off; the whole of this tom-foolery wants throwing overboard at once, and a plain, sober, effective business machinery substituting.

## LETTER XXXV.

Serious Thoughts inspired by Extent of Gold-Field already exhausted. — English Policy of allowing People of all Nations to gather our Gold, compared with that of America, which allows them also to invest it. — A Survey of Forest Creek. — Bands of Lava and Quartz working in Spring Creek. — Quartz Crushing. — Entertained by an intelligent Digger near Golden Point, Forest Creek. — His Observations on the Exaggerations of Rumour — on Official Insolence — on Average Gains, and Want of good Investment for Money. — The Experiences of a Northumbrian Man on Campbell's Creek. — Fryer's Creek. — Singular Character of the circular Quartz-pebble Hills at the Red Hill here and White Hills at Bendigo. — Mr. Simpson Davison's Theory of Gold Formation. — How far agreeing with Author's Experience. — Analysis of the Claims of the Gold Discoverers of Australia. — Convicts and Stockmen. — Count Strzelecki, Sir R. Murchison, W. B. Clarke, Hargraves. — Victoria Discoverers. — Why does not Government work the other Minerals of Victoria? — Ovens Tin.

Forest Creek, May 10th, 1854.

THE immense extent of diggings already worked out here gives one some serious thoughts regarding this colony, and the policy which has been pursued in it since the gold discoveries. You would see a short time ago a very scaring article in the *Times*, on the conduct of Mr. La Trobe in this great crisis. In this article it recurred to a favourite topic of its own, that of the impropriety of allowing anybody and everybody to come and dig up, and carry away the wealth of the crown here. Substitute the word nation for crown, and I agree perfectly with the leading journal. That the British people should be allowed to come and dig up the treasure of the British people, under proper conditions, certainly cannot be wrong.

But I confess that I cannot see the soundness of that policy by which foreigners of all other nations are allowed to come and take this wealth from the crown and people of England, and carry it away to their own countries.

No doubt it was done in imitation of the policy of America, which allows all nations to enter and dig gold in California, but there, it was under very different views and conditions. The United States made and still make it an inducement for these foreigners to *settle* in America — to invest what they took from the earth in the earth again. That is a good and a profound policy. Here, one half of this policy has been adopted, the other, and most essential half, has been totally abandoned. Instead of using any inducement to foreigners to *settle* in Australia, the Government has done all that it possibly could, and it has done it effectually, to drive these strangers out again. They have been literally compelled to carry their gold away with them. It refused to sell them any land, except on such terms as only madmen would comply with; and, therefore, Americans, Germans, Dutch, Swedes, Danes, Italians, Poles, Hungarians, Chinese, Malays, New Zealanders, and Russians, have marched off with their booty, as soon as they got it, thus depriving both Englishmen and the colony of it. The German, if he can collect a couple of thousand thalers, can become an independent landed proprietor at home. The Chinese says he can live well in China on a dollar a month, and have change out of it; so that 100*l.* dug up in Victoria makes a very great man of him in the Flowery Land. An American landing with 100*l.* in the States can purchase 400 acres of excellent land with it, and have three years to pay it in; while here he could not get so many yards for that sum!

Now, what is the object of this policy? Has it any object? Or is it only an idle, bragging feint of pseudo-liberality? The American liberality I can understand. It is a sound liberality with a politic object. Ours is a

fungus liberality, with no object at all, except to invite plunder, and to show John Bull drunk, scattering his money amongst a mob, and when they have picked it up driving them away with his cudgel. Yet, to such a length has this fungus liberality been carried, that as we have seen Red Republican Germans and Frenchmen have been suffered, wholly unrepressed, to march in revolutionary processions bearing revolutionary flags, resisting the payment of the fee required for the licence to dig our gold. And if it be argued that it is unjustifiable for our English diggers to possess themselves at will of the property of the crown, how is it more justifiable for squatters to do it? Yet this also is our policy and Mr. La Trobe's policy, for the Orders in Council clearly authorise him to sell land as fast as it is wanted. And out of this side of our policy arises the mischief of the other. We allow anybody to take our gold, but refuse them land, and, *therefore*, they are obliged to take away the gold to get land from our wiser rivals. Truly, we English have comical ideas of business and of policy.

The other day I rode down Forest Creek ; it was on the 5th, and seeing what has been done in extirpating the gold in two years, I asked myself with serious thoughts, what will be done in two or three years more? And when the gold is exhausted, or comes hardly and sparingly into the washing-dish of the digger, what will be the condition of the vast mass of landless, homeless, and rude, sturdy men who are in the gold fields? It will certainly require a wise and strong government to turn aside the menaces frowning from the past, and convert this heterogeneous mass of vigorous but chaotic materials, which have been repelled and irritated instead of conciliated and domesticated, into the orderly elements of a loyal community.

I rode along the scene of the original rush here, and of all those marvellous stories of the diggings of Mount Alexander, which brought such headlong torrents of men from

all quarters of the globe. The creek winds through a broad valley between low woody ranges, and the diggings extend from where they abruptly commence, a little above Golden Point to Castlemaine, about four miles. The extent of ground in the valley all turned up bears testimony to the numbers who must have been at work on it. And, be it remembered, this valley is only one of three of equal extent, lying in a large square, at one point of which lies Castlemaine, the point where Barker's Creek and Forest Creek unite, and form Campbell's Creek, of which more anon. Besides the three chief diggings on Forest Creek, Campbell's Creek, and Fryer's Creek, including Spring Creek, there are numerous flats and gullies both within the quadrangular area and without it which have been dug up; and the extent altogether of ground which has been worked at the Mount Alexander Diggings is something which strikes the observer with astonishment. To return, however, to Forest Creek.

The whole of the level on both sides of the creek; the flats and gullies running off right and left; a low range of hills running along the middle of the valley, and a broad gully constituting the other side of this great valley, on the other side of these low hills are all more or less turned topsy-turvy. In many places you see where the vein of gold has deserted the valley, and run in circular lines along the hill sides, and even over their tops. These the diggers have managed to hit, but whether they have managed to hit all, so eccentric as they are, is very questionable. All along this creek still stand stores and doctors' shops, but there are only here and there a few groups of diggers left grubbing amongst the chaos of the old heaps; and I met numbers with loaded carts, or with swags inquiring their way to the Avoca, now the great attraction. Store-keeping must every day become a worse business on these old, rifled diggings; yet, as there are a number of men at work all up and down amongst the hills, in little patches



of diggings, the population is greater than it appears. I expect for years there will continue a certain number poking about amongst the old ground, or turning up new, yet what is worked seems pretty thoroughly worked already.

The clerk of the bench at Benalla told us that he had dug here, and that Spring Gully in Fryer's Creek was worked in such a hurry, and only for the nuggets, that the washing stuff was never washed, and was lying still a fortune to any one who would go and tom it out. That on a visit a short time ago he and a friend with a tin dish washed out an ounce and half in a morning. We thought it very strange that in the present state of the diggings, there should be any such amazing carelessness, and when we went up this gully we found the whole of it most carefully dug out and tommed. We tried the stuff in various places, and so clean was it cleared out that we could not see a single trace of gold.

There are still a few diggers in Cobbler's Gully near Spring Gully; but they are nearly drowned out by water, and go thirty feet deep. Higher up Spring Creek itself, a few more are following the smaller gullies up amongst the hills. They said they got a little. I stayed and saw some washed out, and it appeared very little. At the head of one of these small gullies lies Specimen Hill. This is a hill with one of those north and south ridges, or dykes, which run across the whole gold district. It had an enormous belt of quartz, which they were breaking up and smashing with hammers for the gold, which appeared small in quantity. Burdon's quartz-crushing machines would be the only profitable things here; but the diggers appear too poor to afford them. I saw only one in the whole range of hills.

On the lower side of the quartz ridge ran a band of lava, clearly showing volcanic action. It comes to the surface, or near it, and is about four feet thick. It is of a

greenish colour. The diggers are breaking it up with picks and gads where they can; and where it is too hard, blasting it, and then crushing it with hammers. It contains gold, but apparently not much. Two men told me they had been at work on it for nearly a month, and had not yet got quite an *ounce*. Yet they went on in hope, saying, "It must be somewhere; and that they *might* happen to come upon it." The greatest quantity got by any party on the hill, they said, was a pound weight.

Near Golden Point, on Forest Creek, I fell in with a very intelligent digger from Dorsetshire, one of the few gentlemen left on the gold-fields as diggers. He was a young man of reading and observation. On learning my name, he would have me go into his tent and see his wife, and take some refreshment. He had a very young, pretty-looking wife; and on my saying that he was happy to have a wife on the diggings, for it was a desolate life, he said, "Yes, I feel that; and such a wife,"—an expression that greatly pleased me. His table was soon spread with a luncheon that would have done credit to a country-house in England, and a bottle of excellent port; and I sate, I suppose, for two hours, very much enjoying my conversation with this amiable couple. The young digger told me that he had come out here almost at the very commencement of the diggings, and had remained here steadily all the time. He confirmed what all my observations had tended to strengthen, namely, that the accounts of the amounts secured by individual diggers had been grossly exaggerated. That he had known one or two persons who could retire, with some three or four thousand pounds, but that a certain number had only made a few hundreds, and the multitudes but a bare living. He said that he himself had made some hundreds, and had kept a large refreshment-tent; but that suddenly the new rushes had carried off all his customers when he was making at the rate of 2000*l.* a year. He had then had drays on the roads bringing

up stores from Melbourne, but that it did not answer, and that he had taken to digging again ; but that his earnings did not average more than 10s. a day, which is very little, considering the price of provisions: flour, 10*l.* a bag; bread, 4s. the quatern loaf; and meat, 9*d.* per lb.

He complained of the want of the means of safe and profitable investment of savings, which, he said, made what little capital he had almost useless, and was the cause that the majority of those who got money spent it in the grog-shop. Both he and an intelligent storekeeper, with whom I had a conversation, assured me that there was extensive and severe distress on these diggings.

My friend, the digger, said, that what he felt as one of the greatest evils of the digging life was the constant and close contact into which they were brought with the police. At home, he truly observed, you know that such things as laws, magistrates, and police, exist, and you find the benefit of them, though they seem to pass at a distance from you ; but here the man-hunters are out every day, and you are constantly favoured with their visits. He said, as many had said to me before, " Three and four times a day I have been summoned to show my licence, and threatened with handcuffs if I murmured. It is," he added, " a common saying, ' A man has no home in this country. His only chance is to get money, and spend it elsewhere.' "

Both this gentleman and the diggers generally here speak extremely well of Captain Bull, Mr. Dufton, Lieutenant Smith, and one or two others of the Commissioners, a fact which it is pleasant to record.

Since then I have had a long conversation with a Northumbrian man who is at work on Campbell's Creek. He is strong and hopeful ; says he has been working here eighteen months ; and that if he could raise 1500*l.* he would go home. He hopes to do it in four or five years. He said that Campbell's Creek is now the best creek in the Castlemaine diggings. That if a man works hard and

steadily he can earn on an average 1*l.* per day, or 6*l.* per week; and that it costs him from 30*s.* to 2*l.* a week to live as well as a man who works hard should. He said that a number of diggers now were in the habit of clubbing together, and employing a man to shop and cook for them, which they found most convenient and economical of time. This rate of labour is a good exchange for that of an English labourer; and if such an amount were pretty certain on the diggings, it would be a sufficiently attractive life to working men. How few working men at home can clear 200*l.*, not in a year, but in a life! But, on the other hand, if you take this as the best rate of remuneration at the diggings, what a fall from the original romance of Mount Alexander!

The diggings on Campbell's Creek extend three or four miles; and a few miles below both it and Fryer's Creek run into the Loddon. But, as I have said, besides these creeks, go where you will, you come upon flats and gullies amongst the hills, where a few men are working,—often very rough, hang-dog looking fellows, as if they did not care to be much seen. Thus between Barker's Creek, where there has never been much digging, and Forest Creek, lie Sailors' Gully, Moonlight Flat, &c. Between Forest Creek and Fryer's Creek, over a large extent of hill and wood, lie Poverty Gully, Red Hill, Morepork Gully, German Flat, Murdering Flat, &c. On every creek they have their Golden Point, Wattle Flat, and the like, and they are sure to have their Growler's Gully, Poor Man's Gully, and Sulky Gully, designating unsuccessful spots.

Fryer's Creek, with its offshoot of German Flat, presented a more active scene than Forest or Spring Creek. The ground which had been turned up there was immense, and still they are turning up *some* new ground, with a degree of success which appeared to satisfy the men. I saw there what I never saw anywhere else. At what they

called Golden Gully, one of the sandstone ridges running from north to south, had all been broken up at the surface for gold, which from all appearance must have been pretty plentiful. That is the only instance that I have witnessed of the sandstone of these dykes yielding gold at the surface.

There is a class of hills, both here and at other diggings, which puzzle me, and which I think would puzzle the geologists. The White Hills of Bendigo and the Red Hill here are of this kind. They are composed to a great depth of a quartz conglomerate, that is, pebbles of quartz set in a cement of the detritus of these stones, ground to a very fine powder, and now grown as hard as the pebbles themselves,—so hard, that neither picks nor gads, that is, steel chisels, have much effect on this substance, nor, indeed, anything but blasting. When you get down perhaps forty or fifty feet, you come to as many feet of a soft, white pipeclay, or pulverised schist, as white as snow, and with a satiny brilliancy. In this lies a stratum of quartz gravel, and gold, and below these pipeclay again.

Now it is evident that all these substances have at some time been under water, and been subjected to a long and violent aquatic action, both from the worn roundness of the pebbles, and the trituration of the parts worn off into the finest powder, now hardened into cement. The gold found in the subjacent pipeclay is small and water-worn. But all round the base of these hills the strata, be they what they may—granite, sandstone, or slate—do not appear to have been acted on by water at all. They are clear, sharp, and solid, and any gold found amongst them is generally unworn by water, and frequently nuggetty.

It appears clear that these which are now hills were once basins of water; but by what peculiar phenomenon have just these basins been lifted up and made convex instead of concave, while all around them remains as it was? Why should what were hollows—just these places

and no others—have become hills or rounded mounts? It seems to me that it will still require a considerable series of observations, and much further reflection, on the part of geologists, before this mystery can be cleared up.

Mr. Simpson Davidson, of Sydney,—in two letters to Mr. E. H. Hargraves, with whom he was associated in California, which letters have appeared in the *Sydney Empire* and the *Melbourne Argus*, and which he has done me the honour to forward to me,—considers these quartz pebbles to have become rounded by rolling as they cooled. But to my mind there are many circumstances opposed to this idea. In the first place, it is not usual for things to roll up hill. But here these rounded silicious pebbles, or nodules, exist in isolated masses, which are heaved up by some subterranean force above the level of the plain on all sides of them. There is no slope down which, or plain along which, they could have rolled, for they are considerably above the plain on every side. It is not to be supposed for a moment that in the act of projection from below they could cool into spherical forms. They would under these circumstances have cooled into one solid mass, as the quartz on the ridges or dykes mentioned have done.

In the second place, if they had been formed thus by rolling in a semi-fluid state, they would have exhibited a surface as bright as their interior. But their surface is opaque like ground glass, while their internal fracture is bright like that of quartz in general. Moreover, whence comes the cement in which they are set. This, no doubt, is the detritus from watery friction. It is contrary to all known laws of crystallisation that a huge mass of quartz or other stone should arrange itself in different forms under the same influencing agency. In fact, the rounded pebbles must have become rounded and set before they were thus piled into a mass, or they would by their own

weight have been compressed into a solid compact body. They were clearly set hard *before* the interstices were filled up.

Of Mr. Davidson's theory of the gold formation in general, I may here state that I think he has approached nearer to the truth than any other geologist hitherto. He has ably combated the doctrine of quartz or schist being the matrix of gold. We have long, from our own observations, arrived at the conclusion that these substances are merely contemporaneous, and were thrown up at the same period, and by the same subterranean force, with the gold. The only particular on which I cannot bring myself to agree with Mr. Davidson is that of the gold, or any portion of it, having been held in chemical solution, and deposited in a perishable lava by the action of alkalis.

We know of no agency, except that of the old *aqua regia*, nitro-muriatic acid, which is capable of dissolving gold; but, supposing some sufficient solvent to have existed in the interior of a volcano, we do know that gold precipitated from this solvent by alkalis would have been deposited in the form of an impalpable powder, and probably of a protoxide. But gold in Australia, clearly the exhibition of a volcanic agency, *is not* so found. It is everywhere in a pure metallic state, and frequently in extraordinary masses, as the 28 lb., the 60 lb., and 136 lb. nuggets of Ballarat.

That lavas as well as quartz were thrown out by the volcanic action, and that gold was diffused through them both, is not only true, but the most familiar of truths on the diggings. I have just instanced a case of lava. But that all the gold found should be merely such as has been liberated from perishable lavas, as Mr. Davidson supposes, is opposed to all facts. As Mr. Davidson himself observes, "The gold in Victoria is nearly all found richly and thickly imbedded on the bare rock;" the heaviest

masses are usually there, and must have been laid there while the rock was quite bare, and, therefore, before decomposition had taken place on the surface, so as to furnish drift matter. That the gold has been molten, and not chemically dissolved, every appearance of it from the largest to the smallest grain demonstrates; and in no shape more than in one to which Mr. Davidson again alludes. "The nuggets from M'Ivor Diggings appear as if one side was yet in a state of fusion, with the other side indented as if just cooled upon a sandy or gritty floor." Exactly so. I have seen nuggets resembling a piece of paste dabbed down on a table, or pieces of lead run molten on a stone floor. You could not be more convinced that they were thus thrown up in fusion from some lower region of the earth, and thus cooled, if you had seen it done.

If, therefore, we leave out Mr. Davidson's theory of a perishable lava, and accept it only as a partial adjunct, and suppose, instead, that when the gold and quartz were thrown up from below by volcanic agency in a state of fusion, the same agency broke and threw up extensive strata of clay slate, sandstone, and other perishable substances, and through which good quantities of the molten gold was diffused, we seem to me to have every recognised element necessary to the production of the existing phenomena.

These slates, sandstones, and other perishable substances holding gold, being thus brought to the surface, where they are by places so conspicuous in those perpendicular dykes lately described, have gradually undergone decomposition from the action of the atmosphere and of rains, and thus by degrees liberated the gold which has been washed into the streams and valleys. This action is still going on; and therefore, after fresh rains, you will often find gold deposited in the roots of the weeds and shrubs in the creeks.

A most striking proof of the result of the gradual



decomposition of the surface we found in the creek which we worked at the Upper Yackandanda. The gold was found in the mud of the creek, resting on a stratum of clay, at about a depth of two feet. But on digging through this clay we found fresh drift of three feet deep, which must have been the accumulation of centuries. Neither in that, however, nor on the rock beneath, was there the slightest deposit of gold. It was quite evident that the gold had only begun to wash into the creek from the surrounding slopes at a comparatively recent period, because these slopes had only then begun to undergo decomposition.

Two facts in Mr. Davidson's letters do not accord with my own experience. I have never seen much gold in trap formations; though it is an important question whether gold may not yet be found beneath surface traps. That "very hard quartz veins are usually level with the surface, and are rarely found a few feet high," is singularly in opposition to the gigantic quartz rocks which I have described at Bendigo. These assertions, however, do not affect his main theory; which, with the exception of the precipitation of the gold by alkalis, and "the perishable lava," as a universal medium, approaches nearer to a solution of the gold mystery than any yet proposed.

Another question, the precedence of the gold discoveries in Australia, and the fitting distribution of reward, has just been agitated by the Government, and the Committee of Inquiry of the Legislative Council has published a rather curious report on the subject. The whole question has been the subject already of much controversy and of many claims both here and in Sydney. There, when Mr. Hargraves's claim to reward as "the first discoverer of the gold-fields" was brought before the Legislative Council, a number of very curious facts were cited in the debate. It appeared that the very first man who announced the discovery of gold in New South Wales

was a convict. Since then, a letter in the *Times* has referred the public to an account of this singular affair, as given in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of 1798, pp. 325 and 326, in a passage quoted from "An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales, by David Collins." In or about the year 1788, which was, in fact, the very year in which the colony was founded, a convict professed to have found gold some distance down the bay, and offered to take an officer to the spot. One was sent; but he soon gave him the slip, and got into the woods. He came back, however, next day; and the Governor ordered him fifty lashes for his conduct. He still persisted in his assertion of discovery of gold, and showed the Governor gold which he said he had found. The Governor ordered another officer to go with him, and to shoot him if he offered to escape. On their way he told the officer that he knew of no gold; that he had invented the story, and showed him the remains of a guinea and a brass button out of which he had manufactured his nugget. For this he was ordered 100 lashes more; total, 150 lashes!

Now, this is a very curious case. Did the man merely hoax the Government, or did he really know of gold, as his comrades always persisted that he did, and would not disclose, hoping some day to secure it to himself? As the colony has turned out so strangely prolific of gold, there is, at least, a strong probability that 150 lashes were the reward of the first Australian discoverer of gold. There seems, in fact, no doubt, that gold was found by the convicts who, in Governor Macquarie's time, cut the road over the Blue Mountains, soon after the discovery of the route in 1813. They are said to have picked up many pieces of this metal, but were threatened with severe punishment if they said anything about it. Again, in 1830, it is asserted that a nugget of several ounces was found by a man employed by Mr. Lowe, near the Fish River.

The next claimant for the discovery was Count Strzelecki, the traveller. It was stated by Mr. James Mac-

Arthur, during the debate at Sydney, in the Legislative Council, in 1853, that, in 1839, the Count had communicated his discovery to the then Governor, Sir George Gipps, "of an extensive gold-field in the Bathurst district;" but that Sir George Gipps had required him to keep it secret, as, from the penal condition of the colony, such a disclosure might be attended with serious consequences. Mr. Macarthur stated that the Count had not only communicated this information to Sir George Gipps, but had frequently at the time also spoken of it to himself: and he moreover produced a letter from the Count, dated October 26th, 1839, mentioning his discovery of gold in specks in silicate.

The evidence of a man of Mr. James Macarthur's standing and character, therefore, places Count Strzelecki the next in the list of undoubted discoverers of gold in Australia, to those unfortunate convicts and the man on the Fish River. Next to him stands the Rev. W. B. Clarke, of Sydney, who discovered gold in quartz in 1841, but whose discovery, announced to Sir George Gipps in 1844, was concealed for the same reasons as those of Count Strzelecki.

Next comes Sir Roderick Murchison, who, in 1844, having compared geologic specimens furnished him by Count Strzelecki, from New South Wales, with others procured by himself in the Ural Mountains, declared that extensive gold-fields would be found in Australia. Confident in his deductions, he published his opinions in the *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* in 1844. Again, in 1846, he repeated his convictions at a meeting of the *Royal Geological Society of Cornwall*, held at Penzance, and urged the sending out of Cornish miners to search for the gold in Australia.

Sir Roderick, in a letter in the "*Times*," declares that he not only thus positively asserted that there were gold-fields in Australia, but that his assurances led directly to its discovery: and he gives the names of two persons who

wrote to him, stating that, in consequence of his announcement, they had gone out and found gold, one of them in New South Wales, and one in Adelaide. In consequence, on receiving actual specimens of gold ore, he addressed a letter to Earl Grey, Colonial Secretary, on the 5th of November, 1846, repeating his assurances of such gold-fields in Australia.

From that time, 1846,—when a Mr. Smith, also of Sydney, presented a large specimen of gold to the governor, and claimed a reward,—to 1851, specimens of native gold were exhibited in the windows of the jewellers in Sydney, where a general impression was gaining ground that there was plenty of gold in the interior, if it were regularly sought for. There wanted only some fresh impulse to occasion this search, and that was supplied by the discovery of gold in California towards the close of 1848.

In 1849 tens of thousands of adventurers were flocking to this new Eldorado; amongst them Mr. Hargraves. Returning thence, he commenced in January, 1851, to search for gold in the creeks of the Macquarie river, and his party on the Turon, and in April he announced to the colonial Government that he had discovered extensive gold-fields. These discoveries were disclosed to the Government, and the gold-mania broke out in full force.

Such, amid all the conflicting claims which have been raised, appears as nearly as possible the historical outline of these discoveries. First the convicts, then a labourer of Mr. Lowe's, then Count Strzelecki, and finally the Rev. W. B. Clarke, found gold by accident or actual inspection. After Sir Roderick Murchison published statements on the subject, the Rev. W. B. Clarke appears, on the announcement of Sir Roderick Murchison's opinions, to have exerted himself in Sydney, through the newspapers, to move the public to an active search for the colonial riches. For this he deserves well of the colony, and of the country at large. But it appears to me, that

the scientific deductions of Sir Roderick Murchison constitute the most honourable fact in the history of this discovery. It is a scientific triumph, of which science may well be proud.

It was therefore with regret that I read, a short time ago, in the Sydney papers, a letter of Mr. Hargraves, sneering at the claims of Sir Roderick and Mr. Clarke. "Nothing," he there says, "is so easy as to prophesy, and that he will now prophesy that gold will be found in various parts of the world; and whenever and wherever it is found, let the world remember that he foretold it."

Mr. Hargraves has received his reward,—10,000*l.* voted by the New South Wales Government,—and no one will begrudge him its enjoyment, as the practical link between the vaticinations of science, and the spade of the digger. He is the undoubted opener up of the gold-fields, and the immediate evoker of the wealth which has poured into these colonies. But there can be little question that the repeated announcements and arguments of Sir Roderick and W. B. Clarke, acted upon by the grand event of the Californian discovery, produced that state of the public mind which made it quick to answer his call, when it had been torpid to theirs. A generous man, therefore, will give all honour to whom honour is due,—especially as in this case the profit is his own, the empty honour alone is theirs.

As it regards Victoria, a nameless discoverer, so early as 1848, brought gold into Melbourne. At that time, however, it was treated as a hoax. The gold was admitted to be genuine, but was believed to be brought from some other country. Afterwards, various quantities were brought in by shepherds, and sold; yet the fact, precisely as in Sydney, excited no attention till the Californian discovery awoke the whole public with a start; and when gold-fields next appeared in New South Wales, the people of Victoria rushed off thither, in such precipitation, that, lest the colony

should be totally deserted, a resolution was passed, at a public meeting in Melbourne, offering 200*l.* to any one who discovered gold in Victoria. Gold was immediately found ; but the reward has never yet been paid, on the ground that the true *first* discoverer could not be decided upon.

When Mr. Hargraves came over to Melbourne, to urge his claims also on that Government, a committee was appointed by the Legislative Council to ascertain the merits of various claimants, and it has come to this conclusion : that 5000*l.* should be given to Mr. Hargraves, and 1000*l.* to the Rev. W. B. Clarke. That, of Victoria claimants, a Mr. Michel and party should have 1000*l.* for the discovery of a gold-field at Anderson's Creek, in the Yarra ranges ; to Mr. Hiscock, as the substantial discoverer of the Ballarat deposits, to Mr. Esmonds as the first actual producer of alluvial gold for the market, 1000*l.* ; to Dr. Bruhn 500*l.*, for exploring the country, and diffusing information, and to Mr. Campbell, squatter, of Strath Loddon, and member of the Legislative Council, 1000*l.*, as the original discoverer of the Clune Diggings.

The singularity of this last claim is, that Mr. Campbell candidly avowed before the Committee that he had kept the discovery concealed for a whole year, lest it should hurt the station of his friend Mr. Cameron, and, in fact, never disclosed the valuable secret at all, till he actually found Esmonds and his party digging for gold upon the very spot. Thus, it appears that, so far as he was concerned, the public would never have been the wiser or the better for his discovery, and that he only made it known to set up a claim to the reward, when it could no longer be concealed. To award him 1000*l.*, therefore, looks vastly like giving him a premium for doing his best to injure the colony !

However, the whole ended by the Colonial Secretary saying that the Government had no money for anybody ;

and thus even the offered reward of 200*l.*, which led to the immediate enjoyment of the colony's unrivalled gold-fields, remains still unpaid.

We may here ask, why does not the Government encourage the working of its other metals? There are said to be large quantities of iron, copper, silver, tin, &c.; but, except at the Ovens, where the tin was mixed with the gold in the shape of a black sand, resembling emery, and very troublesome to us in separating it, I never saw any attempt made to procure any metal, except gold. Twelve months after the alleged discovery of the rich copper ore at M'Ivor, the discoverer was complaining in the newspapers that the Government had taken no step whatever towards authorising him to get it.

We may here observe that gold was discovered in 1846 in South Australia. This discovery was made while sinking for copper on the purchased section of Mr. Wickstead, in the county of Adelaide, by a miner named Tyrell. The vein was about two inches wide, and yielded about a quarter of an ounce of gold to an inch. The metal was examined amongst others by Captain Sturt, Mr. Burr, the Deputy Surveyor General, and Dr. Davy, who analysed it, and found an unwashed specimen to contain ninety-four parts of gold, three of silver, and three of oxide of iron and earthy matter accidentally adhering. The discovery was proved beyond any doubt, but has not yet been followed by the results which might have been expected. There has been great search for gold since the splendid discoveries in Sydney and Victoria, and with only moderate success.

The country round Castlemaine is much pleasanter than that about Bendigo. It is on the whole much more fertile. The hills are not lofty, but finely undulated, and present, not only well-wooded summits, but beautifully verdant slopes. The valleys, especially that of Campbell's Creek, are wide, and, where not turned topsy-turvy by

the diggers, are green and pleasant. The township of Castlemaine, at the junction of the creeks, is much better laid out than most of these new townships, has a fine, large market square, and already a considerable number of shops and houses.



## LETTER XXXVI.

Journey to Ballarat.—Magnificent Downs.—The Jim Crow Ranges.—Diggings there.—Hepburn's Station.—Volcanic Hills.—Sulkiness of the Common People.—Aborigines Station.—Creswick Creek Diggings.—Cheapness of Human Life.—The nameless Dead.—A Bullock-driver's Evening.—Wonderful Consumption of Brandy.—Sulky Gully.—Country near Ballarat lying in Water.—A Group of Chinese Diggers.—John Chinaman returning rich.

Ballarat, May 16th, 1854.

SOON after leaving the Mount Alexander Diggings on our way hither, we came out upon open, green downs, with a fine turf, and scarcely a tree upon them, and, at seven miles distance, crossed the Loddon, there a stream so small that in some places I could jump over it. The ford that we crossed I suppose some Nottingham man must have named, for it was Wilford.

Between the Loddon and Ballarat we alternately travelled through woody ranges and over wide extents of these high, green downs, as finely turfed as the South Downs themselves, and, of course, grazed by immense flocks of sheep. Most of these lie higher than the wooded ranges, and show themselves afar off. We had actually to descend into the wooded hills. These downs are all of volcanic origin, and covered with the black, rich soil which is always found on the volcanic plains. Here and there rises upon them a lofty conical hill, evidently an extinct volcano. These hills are smooth, and very green, and only thinly clothed with trees. At the feet of most of them lies a lake, or a great reedy swamp, as if the ground had sunk in the place from which the hill had been heaved up.

These downs are remarkably pleasant, and must in summer be fine, fresh places to live upon. They are splendid pastoral regions. It is curious that the gum-trees, the usual trees of the country, and which cover all the ranges around them, rarely or ever will grow on this soil. If you find a few, it is in some gully, or swampy part, and they are almost always stunted and dwarfish. On the contrary, the acacias, the Banksias, and the casuarinas flourish there. The lightwood, a species of acacia, grows finely; but they are principally the Banksias, and the casuarinas or shiacks, which prevail, and, in the moist parts, wattles. The shiacks are thinly scattered over these verdant plains, downs, and high table lands, and present a very pleasing aspect; their broom-like and flowing tresses giving a great relief to the eye from the eternal sameness of the eucalyptic forests. Fine clear streams, too, traverse these magnificent downs, like those of the green pastoral hills of the south of Scotland.

Many of the valleys, also, amongst the wooded ranges consist of very good land, and would make excellent agricultural farms, with good backgrounds of the ranges for grazing.

At some fifteen or twenty miles from Forest Creek, we passed through the Jim Crow Ranges. These ranges are rough, steep, and barren. In the most secluded and solitary parts of them, but at some miles from each other, there are two, so-called coffee-tents, but, in fact, grog-shops, and, to judge by the sort of fellows who keep them, none of the most respectable places. At the first we inquired of the man where a road, that went off to the left, led to. He answered short and surlily, "To th' Jimcra," that is, the Jim Crow Diggings and, without deigning another word, disappeared into his tent.

The next, some miles on, in one of the deepest and most obscure glens, was kept by a tall, dirty, unshaven, gallows-looking fellow, who appeared at his door with a

basin of broth, or some liquid of the sort, in his hand, and answered our inquires in the same favourite style of surliness. We were surprised to see a number of natives haunting about this grogshop in European costume; but learnt that they were from the Aborigines station ahead of us, called Parker's Station, from the protector. The place in which they were found did not argue much for their progress in civilisation; but we found that Mr. Parker was resident at a station of his own some ten miles off, at Mount Franklin.

Farther on, we emerged once more upon a fine tableland with a lofty conical hill, called Mount Smeaton. Near this mount we observed the house of the squatter, Captain Hepburn, some distance from the road, standing on a commanding elevation, and large enough for a Manchester manufacturer or Staffordshire potter. It is, in fact, one of the largest squatter's houses that I have seen, and has a good garden on the slope in front, with a slovenly potato-ground oddly enough interposing between it and the house. On the plain below are scattered a number of wooden huts tumbling to decay.

Supposing that some of the shepherds lived in some of these huts, I went up to one to inquire if we could procure meat there or at the station, when three fierce dogs, who appeared to be the sole inhabitants of the hut, rushed out, with a tremendous mastiff at their head, and made a furious assault upon me. I thought that then, if ever in my life, I was in for a laceration by these savage brutes; but by active use of a good heavy stick, which I always carry for the benefit of such assailants, I managed to keep them at bay till I could plant a telling blow on the scone of the mastiff, which quite satisfied him; and he and his allies retreated to the hut. Had I not thus rather unexpectedly remained victor in the fight, I should next have treated the captain of this canine band to a pistol bullet; but as the whole inhospitable crew

retired to their own fortress, I left them, and pursued my way towards the next hut.

There I found a young woman, who, as soon as she saw me approach, began to move off round the hut; and I was obliged to move round after her to get the requisite information. By dint of activity, I came within ear-shot of her, as, having completed her gyration round one hut, she was making off to a second. In answer to my inquiry about meat, she gave me a sulky "Up at the big house," and moved on.

The common people who have come out here seem to delight in this churlish sort of conduct. I verily believe they take it for a sign of independence; but whatever they take it for, they certainly indulge themselves in it most thoroughly. Courtesy is a thing which you might suppose cost something; but I dare say it is, in many cases, only taking their change out of the servility they have been compelled to practise at home. Every man is here his own master; but it will require some time to enable him to become master of himself. This most unattractive and unloveable manner has a very extensive prevalence here, both in town and country, in stores and inns, as well as in huts and on the road-side. I hate servility, but I just as much dislike churlishness; but it requires some refinement of mind to practise and to take a pleasure in courtesy; and a vast mass of the poor devils, male and female, who have come out here, knew no better at home, though they were held in more restraint there.

Captain Hepburn, who was originally master of a merchant-vessel, certainly made a happy exchange from ploughing the sea to grazing the Crown lands of Victoria. He has not only a noble house here, but it stands in as fine a situation as man could desire. Backed by the woods, with scores of miles of these beautiful downs spreading around him, and, in full view from his windows, the noble, verdant height of Mount Smeaton,— few more

delightful places of residence could be found. We were informed that he had bought great quantities of land. Happy man to be a squatter, and enjoy "preemptive right!" When will a digger find a nugget so large that he will be able to buy large tracts at 1*l.* per acre?

We again passed over fine downs, capable of making scores and scores of splendid agricultural and sheep farms. On these we passed Parker's station, the station of the Aborigines, and should have liked to have had some conversation with the protector, had he been there, as to the condition and prospects of the natives here. We saw several about, in European dresses, and we were glad to hear that some of them, not satisfied with having this station as a home to which they might, at will, resort, had requested to have pieces of land for their own exclusive cultivation.

This station commands a grand prospect of these green downs; another lofty conical hill at a few miles distance in front; a beautiful stream, like an English mountain stream, below; and to the left mountainous hills, densely wooded, with Mount Franklin towering above them far beyond.

Soon after we again entered the ranges, and, a few miles further, found ourselves at Creswick's Creek Diggings. These are of considerable importance, and in their general aspect reminded us strongly of the Ovens Diggings. There is a Spring Creek, in fact, on which we came first; the ranges consisted of ferruginous sandstone and quartz, and were overgrown with the peppermint gum-tree, just as at the Ovens. The gully down which Spring Creek ran, at our right hand, was dug up, bottom and sides, and the diggers were at work on the ridge down which we went.

We found the main diggings at the confluence of Spring Creek and Creswick's Creek, where a considerable flat lay. The hills round this flat, rather than the flat it-

self, were the scene of the diggings, being all turned up, or in the act of it. I suppose there must be 5000 or 6000 people there; the sinkings were generally from ten to eighty feet deep, and the stuff thrown out very much like that at Tarrangower, especially heaps of a rose-pink looking clay.

The hill over which we passed in leaving the diggings was very much dug up; the holes sixty feet deep, and numbers of them, as I have already stated, sunk in the very road, without any protection whatever around them.

But really, human life in this chaos of strangers of all nations, rushing frantically from every quarter of the earth to enrich themselves, is, as may be supposed, held wonderfully cheap. Who is likely to care for any one but himself? The number of unrecorded dead, who are found and put into a hasty grave, without anything frequently being known about them, is something frightful.

There have been instances of people entering a tent, and finding a solitary man in the last stage of illness, without a friend, or any means of help, where he has lain for days, or perhaps weeks, amid a busy multitude, all eager in the quest of gold, neither able to raise hand nor foot, nor cry for help, though there were people all round him. Others have been found dead in such a situation, with every sign of destitution about them, and not the slightest clue to whom they were, or whence they came.

Out of hundreds of thousands of adventurers, English and foreign, how many have friends who would give almost their own lives to learn news of them! But they never will; for they either lie in those nameless graves, or in these sixty and eighty feet deep shafts, now deserted, and their sides fallen in, burying their victims under many tons of clay.

The Creswick's Creek Diggings looked active, and on the increase; though, as usual, the accounts that diggers gave were various. Some represented themselves as doing

well, others as badly, and others as doing nothing at all. Numbers were on the move for the Avoca, and, on the other hand, numbers were coming in from Ballarat, and new stores were erecting in confidence of success and permanence. Bread was 5s. per quartern loaf, and other provisions in proportion.

Soon after leaving Creswick's Creek, we found ourselves in the midst of very barren and stony ranges, and we went on and on in the vain hope of finding some pasturage for our horses. Night overtook us in these desolate and inhospitable hills, and still we had no place where we could expect grass or water. Both our horses and ourselves began to be weary, and we had every prospect of stopping where we could neither refresh ourselves nor them, when suddenly, down to our right, at some distance, we descried a fire. Well assured that it was the fire of some travelling party, we made our way towards it, and found three bullock-drivers, with their drays and bullock-teams, who had camped there for the night. They soon showed us plenty of excellent grass and water.

This group presented a good picture of the life of these rude men. They had piled one upon the other a number of the boles of trees, and set fire to them, so that they had a fire large enough to roast an ox. At this, suspended by a string from a stake, was roasting a leg of good mutton. Opposite to the fire they had made a bed of a number of young trees, which they had cut down with all their leaves on. That was to be their bed for the night, and over them they would merely throw their blankets.

Before them, on the grass, lay half a dozen bottles of rum or brandy—their quota for the night. They invited us to take a nobbler a-piece; but we declined, saying that we must have some tea.

“Tea! stuff!” said they, “here is something better than tea.” And one of them, seizing a bottle, began to pour out a panikin of it. We still, however, begged to

decline. "Fiddlesticks!" said they, "why there's plenty more; don't you see? Look! we have not quite emptied one bottle yet, and we must drain the half-dozen. What signifies talking, mates? — down with it!"

We, however, left them to their half-dozen, and proceeded to some distance, where we encamped. All evening, and all night, till three o'clock in the morning, these fire-proof fellows were vociferously singing, hallooing and laughing outrageously at their own rude jokes. Then all was still; and when we rose at six, they had already woke up again, collected their cattle, and were gone!

That was but the ordinary jollification of the evening. On the road, they would stop at any public-house that there happened to be, and take a nobbler; at noon they would get a good long sleep under their drays, and again at night roast their mutton, drink their tea, and then finish off with a carouse of rum, that would kill a score of ordinary mortals. How these fellows manage to endure this unexampled drinking of spirits, can only be imagined from their rude, rough exercise, continually in the open air. But sooner or later it must kill them. Delirium tremens will overtake them, and they will terminate their career by leaping from a window, or into a pool.

From Creswick's Creek to Ballarat was but twelve miles; and less than half way, we passed a small digging, called Sulky Gully, from the looks of the diggers who did not find it very productive.

The country as we approached Ballarat became leveller, and a great deal of the land was of a fine agricultural quality. To our great pleasure, we came upon a party of surveyors, within three miles of Ballarat, measuring out the whole of Waldy's squatting station for sale, in farms of from thirty to 100 acres. Hurrah! that is a good beginning! Let there be plenty of these sold, and all will be right. The surveyors were amused at our enthusiasm at the sight, and said they hoped there would be



plenty for sale too, for then the wages of surveyors would rise. "At present," said they, "Government attributes its not selling land to the want of surveyors to set it out; and yet we find ourselves at a discount."

The country here, however, was nearly all under water, from great rains of late; and yet, though it was green on the surface, it was a hungry sand beneath, which in summer must rapidly burn up. Very inferior it was to the land farther back. We found at length, a rather higher piece of ground, where we encamped, as the surveyors said we should find no grass nearer the diggings.

The country on this side of Ballarat is the least like a gold country of any that I have seen. Instead of barren quartz ranges, the land is nearly flat, and grassy. To the right of the diggings lies a huge swamp, called the Great Swamp, a mile or more across in every direction. It is a constant resource for water for the people, numbers of whom camp on its banks in summer, though to all appearance, except one slight expanse, it is one wide mass of reeds and bog-grass. Beyond it lie the new diggings of Winter's Flat, and farther out, twelve miles off, that of Wardy-Yallock.

Near Ballarat, we met a company of Chinese removing to Creswick's Creek. It was quite a picture, and a curious one. The Chinese here, who have come lately in crowds, still continue their national costume in a great measure, and their national custom of carrying everything on their necks on a long pole. This, to us, apparently most uncomfortable plan, they adhere to pertinaciously, as the only easy one. At each end of a pole of some two inches thick, and six or eight feet long, they suspend weights astonishing, considering their slight physical structure. You would think the pole would cut their bare necks, if not their heads off. But, only now and then shifting the pole a little, more or less inclined to one shoulder or the other, they go for scores of miles with

ponderous burthens, keeping up a shuffling kind of trot, their very legs seeming to stagger, and their bodies to waver under their loads.

Here were ten or a dozen of these Chinamen, all apparently of recent arrival. They were chiefly dressed in loose blue blouses, or shirts, with a belt round the waist; short, wide, blue trousers, and light boots. On their heads they had those flat straw-hats, of nearly a yard wide, lying flat on the head, and not enclosing it at all, and in the centre above, running up into a point like the top of a parasol. They were, in fact, more like umbrellas, with the Chinamen for handles, than anything else.

Most of these men are very short, as well as slight, but there was one extremely tall man amongst them, as there every now and then is. This man waded and waggled about in a most extraordinary manner. But the strangest things were the loads they were carrying to Creswick's Creek, twelve miles, or probably to Forest Creek, forty miles farther.

One man had at one end of his pole a working cradle, and at the other end a puddling-tub. These must have weighed at least a hundred-weight. Others had shovels, picks, tin dishes, provisions, boots, and the like. Others had huge bundles, done up in Indian matting—I suppose their bedding—with occasionally one of these huge, flat, straw-hats hung to the bundle. One man had a blue cloth cap on his head, of the true Chinese shape, but the quantity of their bedding and stuff for tents, if they had any, must have been amazingly small; indeed, they often seem to travel without one or the other. We observed one John Chinaman going alone the other way. I suppose he had made a little fortune, out of which he could live splendidly in the Celestial Empire at the rate of a dollar a month, and change out of it. He was dressed in a thoroughly English costume, and carried a carpet-bag.

## LETTER XXXVII.

The great Basin of Ballarat. — Eureka and Canadian Gullies. — Gravel-Pit Diggings. — Wonderful Scene of Filth and Activity. — Ballarat in Winter the muddiest Place in the World. — Holes 160 Feet deep. — Scene of the Gravel-Pits. — Extraordinarily coloured Clay thrown up. — Sixty Feet here to be sunk through the Water. The Golden Gutters. — Hauls of from 10,000*l.* to 30,000*l.* — System of Shepherding. — Intense Watching and Manœuvring. — An eager Game of Chess. — Produce of Miller's Hole. — Probable Cost of Working a Hole. — No Machinery employed. — Specimen of Medical Civility. — Hosts of Quacks. — Irishwoman with her Quinsey. — Fifteen Guineas for a Doctor's Visit. — Enormous Consumption of Holloway's Pills. — Card-Playing and Drinking. — Mountains of empty Bottles. — Marvellous Prices for Township Allotments at the Diggings.

Ballarat, May 20th, 1854.

AFTER all the accounts which I had seen of the Ballarat Diggings, I had no idea of what sort of place it really was. On approaching it, instead of traversing, as usual, long gullies filled with great heaps of gravel, and quantities of tents, I found myself standing on a green bank near the Commissioner's camp, and before me lying a deep basin, which had evidently been some time a great lake. This basin, the main field of the diggings, is some mile and half wide or so each way. In the bottom of it rises up a chain of low, rounded hills, something like the White Hills of Bendigo, and these hills and the slopes all round this great basin were dug up, and presented the usual chaos of clay and gravel-heaps.

On the right hand lay, as usual, a Golden Point, and before me, more centrally, a Red Hill. A creek, now strong and rapid from the rains, traversed the bottom of the basin in the foreground, coming from the left, and

running across a little below the camp. On the left the hills rose higher than on the right, and well wooded; and up and over the top of the nearest and loftiest of these hills had been diggings. This hill was called the Black Hill, for no reason that I could discover, but that it was *green*, and the gravel turned up whitish-yellow.

The gold had evidently flowed, or rather been washed down from its summit, through various gullies to the basin, and the diggers had turned up the whole of its different courses. It had lain only about two feet below the surface, and, I was told, had been one of the richest parts of the digging. Still farther along the same side I could see that flats, gullies, and summits of other hills had been turned up in the same way; and the diggers having exhausted these hills, are following the track of the gold from the feet of the hills across the bottom of the basin; and there the sinkings are deep,—I understand eighty feet or more.

To the left-hand side of this great basin runs up towards the woodland country beyond, the celebrated Eureka Gully; and to the right hand, and hidden by a point of land, the equally celebrated Canadian Gully. Out of these gullies have been taken the monster nuggets which have made so much sensation, the largest being found in deserted holes in the Canadian Gully.

No diggings that I have seen—and I have now seen all of any importance—lie so compact as these of Ballarat. They are all comprised in this one basin under your eye, and the two arms, as it were, of Eureka and Canadian Gully. Beyond extends the belt of unbroken forest, with the two conspicuous hills of Warrnepe on the left, and Mount Buninyong on the right, looking out of it, as you stand with your back to the Commissioner's camp.

On exploring the diggings, we find Canadian Gully running two miles, or more, away to the right on the Geelong road. The greater part of this gully now lies

deserted—worked out; being obviously the scene of the first great rush to Ballarat. The greater part of these excavations had been shallow ones, though here and there a wooden windlass or two shows that the diggers are now turning up a deeper bottom.

But the deep leads of gold evidently tended towards the main basin; and it was here, at the foot and on the sides of the Red Hill, that the diggers of Canadian Gully were busily at work, putting down shafts at from 130 to 160 feet. In the Eureka Gully the scene was the same. The rush was towards the great basin, and occupied chiefly the gully just behind the chain of low hills which runs across the middle of the basin. Still nearer to the camp, a vein of gold had been traced from a hill on which the Catholic chapel stood, and had run down into the bottom near the right-hand corner of the basin, below the camp, whither the diggers were rushing like a swarm of bees. This was called the Gravel Pit Lead, but might with more propriety have been called the Mud Hole: for a more astounding scene of mud, muddy water, muddy diggers, muddy tools, and clay trodden into the most vilely adhesive filth, it is impossible to conceive.

In fact, Ballarat in winter is unquestionably the most dirty place, the most perfect Serbonian Bog, on the face of the earth. Melbourne at its most sludgy moment is a paradise to it: Kilmore is a clean-swept floor in comparison with it. From all the hills round the water is perpetually running down into it; and everywhere along the bottom of the basin it is one deep slough of black mud and water. It is impossible to wade about in it, except in jack-boots.

But when you come to where the diggers are at work, the scene defies all description. The whole surface is thrown into heaps of clay from six to ten feet high—for it appears to be all clay which they throw out here. Here is, indeed, accumulated all the mud and clay which for thousands of years have been flowing from the hills

around. It is this which has thus buried the gold 160 feet deep, and through which the diggers have to sink for it.

Between these muddy mountains thrown up by the diggers, the water accumulates in deep pools, which they avail themselves of to wash their gold out with: and the heaps of clay are trodden by hundreds of men constantly crossing them in all directions into a slippery, adhesive limbo of bird-lime and filth, which require not only much nerve, but much muscular power to traverse; for your jack-boots sink deep into it, and refuse to come out again. In other places, where there is a harder substance under, and the surface only is slippery, it requires as much dexterity as courage to prevent your pitching headlong — heaven knows where! For right and left, at the same time, you are menaced by yawning gulfs and what once were diggers' holes, but which now have tumbled in, and present clay pits of some score of feet deep, the bottom and the sides of which are all one tumbling, crumbling, toppling, treacherous mass.

The deep sinkings are the scene of such eager excitement, that the holes are put down as close to each other as possible. Twelve feet square are the usual allowance, and only twenty-four feet square are allowed to any party, so that the heaps of dirt and the pools of water are as thick together as possible; and nothing can be more astonishing than the sight of hundreds of men bustling about, all eagerness, all hurry, working away in the midst of mud up to the hips, and pools of puddle thick as batter for a pudding; tubs, cradles, windlasses, and wee-gees, or long poles balanced by a stone at one end and a bucket at the other, to raise water for their washing, all — all in motion — a perfectly confounding phantasmagoria of impetuous action and of mire.

The scene at the Gravel Pits was especially animated, and would have made a capital sketch. The crowded

assemblage of white awnings in these clay heaps, which the diggers have raised to protect them at their work in rainy weather, these standing at different elevations; the diggers turning their windlasses; and others, in rows of half-a-dozen along the sides of the muddy pools, working away at their puddling-tubs with their shovels, chopping and stirring them about; others cradling; others washing out. Numbers of stores scattered about, with their gay flags; and numbers of new holes put down, and waiting the result of those in progress, with their windlasses standing on a framework of logs, some five or six feet above the ground. The crowds; the heaps of clay thrown up, of all colours—every heap different—bright yellow, dazzling white, mottled black and white, and brilliant rose-pink; the dirt and the noises, were altogether something extraordinary. Similar scenes present themselves in Eureka and Canadian Gullies.

All was bustle and activity; for these are the great lotteries of the Victoria Diggings, where there are really heavy prizes, and to each a—thousand blanks. The gold here runs in veins, or gutters as they call them,—that is, it appears to lie in the channels of the ancient watercourses, which now are buried from 80 to 160 feet in clay. These watercourses are very changeable in their direction; so that no one can calculate long beforehand what turn they may take. They may pursue a pretty straight line for a furlong or two, and then as suddenly turn aside, and pursue a lateral and devious course. This renders the pursuit of the heavy deposit of gold so exciting.

If a party comes down upon it, it may yield in a claim of 24 feet from 10,000*L*. to 20,000*L*.—a great prize! But it may also be missed by a few feet, and the sanguine party find themselves some 1000*L*. minus by their labours.

One party was so near to the gold, that they could see the next party getting it within a foot of them. There

had been a dip in the strata, and all the gold in the claim of the one party had been shot down into that of the other. Tantalus himself was not in a more tantalising position.

Scores of parties are on the watch to determine, if possible, the exact tendency of these golden gutters. As parties are sinking holes on the apparent line of the veins, others mark out claims in the same direction for half a mile or more ahead; but they do not work these claims till they see that there is a probability that they *are* on the line. This cannot be perfectly known till the vein has been pursued close to where the new claims are marked out; and, therefore, there are scores of parties constantly "shepherding" claims ahead, as the phrase is. They do a little at them every day, in order to retain the right to them; for if they do nothing at a claim for twenty-four hours it lapses, and every one that can may jump into it. But they merely build up a square framework of logs, high enough to admit of the earth thrown out being ranged round it, and set their windlass upon it. They then only throw out a single bucket of earth every day, till they know the result.

Thus there is an intense watching of the parties at work. Every day deeply interested numbers are waiting round to learn whether they hit the gutter or not; and, if they do, the next three or four claims lying in the same direction are begun working in good earnest. If the lead is found to have changed its course, all the shepherded claims ahead are abandoned in a moment, and there is a rush in the direction now indicated, where, again, as many claims are marked out and commenced. Thus you see whole lines of abandoned holes, just commenced, and in other places a number where the operations are suspended, but the framework and the windlasses left, because the diggers think that, after all, the lead may run that way.



It is thus very apparent that the gold-digging of these deep sinkings at Ballarat is a very serious affair, and a very anxious, exciting, and uncertain lottery. The large amounts taken out of some of these holes, as in what were called the "Jeweller's Shops" in Canadian Gully, the monster nuggets found there, or in the Eureka, have naturally turned the heads of thousands; and you may yet meet numbers of new chums going up to Ballarat, whom the fame of the great nugget has fetched out, and who are hoping to secure similar ones.

Accounts of the sums taken out of the deep sinkings, like all such golden accounts, have been greatly exaggerated. It has been said that 36,000*l.* was taken out of one hole by twelve men, being 3000*l.* each. But from what I could learn on the spot from the diggers themselves, a hole called the Italian's, or Miller's Hole, in the Gravel Pits, was the richest yet known: and a highly respectable digger assured me that he had full proof that the party, which consisted of eleven, netted 42 lbs. of gold each, the total weight of gold for the eleven being 502 lbs. This, at 4*l.* per ounce, would amount to 24,096*l.*, or nearly 2,200*l.* per man. The Gum-Tree claim in the Gravel Pits also was a very rich claim. A most respectable gold-buyer confirmed this statement, by saying that the highest dividend which had been made by a party was about 2,000*l.* per man. And that, indeed, is a grand prize, and enough to excite wonderfully the minds of men who have in England been probably working for 12*s.* or 20*s.* per week.

While transcribing, the Melbourne newspapers announce that a party of eight men in December of this year, exhibited there a nugget of quartz and gold of 98 lbs. That they had cleared, after all expenses, 20,700*l.*, or about 2,587*l.* each. They had put down their hole of 150 ft. in the wonderfully short time of thirty-five days, with the

help of six hired labourers; but had been shepherding and working altogether for two years there.

But then, for one party which gets this, five hundred get little or nothing. A few feet on one side or other of the gutter, and it may be a blank. Perhaps no one party ever gets two prizes. And we must next take into the account the time, the expenses, and the wear and tear of life, as well as of power and material. First, there is shepherding, and six or twelve months may be wasted in that, as the lead may change its course many times, and occasion many delays and flittings to and fro. All this time, independent of the anxiety and tension of mind, expenditure for living is going on.

After this, if you seem to have a chance sufficient to justify your proceeding with your sinking, there is the direct expense of working the claim. I was assured by the diggers themselves, that a hole of 160 feet might be put down in six weeks; for the stuff through which they dig is by no means hard. It is all soft clay or gravel; yet still the average time is six months, or more. The first 100 feet can be put down easily, and without interruption, for it is dry; but, after that, they come into the subterranean water-course, and the water pours in upon them in such torrents, that no single party can work a sinking independent of their neighbours. There must be various sinkings at work in one spot simultaneously, to enable them, by consentaneously drawing the water, to keep it down. When one or two parties cease, all are compelled to cease. They say they can tell in a moment when their neighbours, according to their phrase, "knock off:" and they add, that when a party has been a few days soaking in the torrents of gelid subterranean water, they are glad of a pause—nay, must have it; and either go into the woods to split slabs, for lining the sides of their shafts, or roofing the tunnels under, or to the grog-shops to "comfort their souls," as their notion is.

During all this time, every sinking in that immediate vicinity must stop; and as one party or another is, ever and anon, taking such an interval of relaxation, and of drying their skins in the warm upper air, the delay to the whole is altogether great. Six months, therefore, is a moderate allowance for putting down one of these deep claims; and during the whole time, a whole host of shepherds are waiting, watching the result, and, of course, living at digging expenses, which is no trifle, especially when flour is from 12*l.* to 20*l.* a bag; meat 1*s.* a pound; onions and potatoes 1*s.* 6*d.* per lb.; brandy 1*l.* per bottle, and beer 10*s.* Many, having shepherded for six months, there are nine chances to one that the lead may make a bend, and they are off to shepherd six months more, and quite as likely six months after that; and, finally, to put down a hole of 160 feet, through 60 feet of water, and miss the prize by a few feet!

Such are the formidable antecedents to the working of a claim. So formidably are the good claims hedged in by crushing and vehement competition; and the working itself is equally serious. The moment that a party has struck the gutter, down go a dozen claims a-head, and others around as close as they can be edged in by the rules of the diggings. Day and night they work with might and main. One party takes the work by day, and is relieved by another for the night; the labour never ceases till they descend below the 100 feet, and come into the water. The whole of the shafts, from top to bottom, in most cases,—and, I believe, in winter, all,—have to be lined with slabs to prevent the sides falling in and burying the diggers. In summer, thirty or forty feet can sometimes be left unslabbed; but the general rule for safety is, to slab the whole. The shafts are, therefore, made about four feet square; the slabs of a couple of inches thick, and eight or ten inches wide, are secured at the corners by strong pins, to prevent them possibly being

forced inwards by the weight of earth; so that the shaft is, in fact, a wooden box of 150 feet or more deep. This is, of course, a considerable expense, as these slabs cannot be bought, even second-hand, for less than 4*l.* 10*s.* or 5*l.* per hundred; and it will require 700 or 800 to case a shaft. These slabs, however, may be taken out when the claim is finished, and again used or sold: but, besides this, they have to roof the whole of the excavation below with similar slabs, and support them on props, none of which can be taken away again.

When we add to the expense, the unavoidable delays mentioned in getting down, and the previous loss of time in shepherding, with the many chances against striking the gutter, it becomes obvious what a serious undertaking is a Ballarat deep digging. In fact, it is one in which only stout men, and that in parties of not less than eight, have any chance at all. It is the place of all others where the gold is least generally distributed amongst the diggers as a body. There are a few lucky, and a vast many unlucky ones, while a large number of others are only moderately successful. We were assured that, out of the large number of people, hundreds of them, in fact, actively and anxiously at work at the Gravel Pits, only four parties had hit the vein. Great numbers of men ruin themselves there, and then go away to other diggings, which are shallow, and give a better chance of getting a moderate quantity.

Some of the diggers in Eureka Gully, and other parts of the field, told me, that they expected to get when down 1500*l.* a man, others 500*l.*, others 300*l.*, — if they hit the lead! And I was assured here, too, that there was much destitution on the field. Still, Ballarat is one of those fields which displays an active and busy air, very different to Bendigo, Castlemaine, or the Ovens; and new ground is always breaking up.

It was no easy matter to get about these diggings,

The roads, as usual, are all dug up; and we had to go floundering over mountains of miry clay, and amongst stumps and holes, as well as we could. The only comfortable walking was on the hills, where no digging had been done. These hills were overgrown by grass-trees, from one to three feet high, which the people use for fuel, and which in burning diffused their balsamic fragrance far and wide.

One thing greatly surprised us here. We expected to find machinery introduced at these deep sinkings of Ballarat; but, on the contrary, there is none whatever. I expected that with 160 feet of depth, they would at least have horse-gins to turn up their earth and water; but nothing of the kind. They still stuck to the simple windlass, which was turned by two, and sometimes three men. One reason may be, that there is scarcely room for a gin, as there is such crowding to be, if possible, in the gutter; so that each party only gets room enough to throw out their earth. Another reason, no doubt, is the price of oats and hay. Oats at 1*l.* 15*s.* and 2*l.* a bushel, and hay at from 60*l.* to 160*l.* a ton, as the carriage happens to be, are dreadful diminishers of profit.

If steam-engines were introduced they would speedily drain the whole flat for them. But their introduction implies a degree of combination which does not and cannot exist here, where there is so much uncertainty, and where Government gives only twenty-four feet claims. If companies could be formed, steam-engines could be introduced: but all the prejudices of the diggers are opposed to companies and combinations, from an idea, and a very natural one too, that capital would soon, in that case, usurp the monopoly of the gold-fields. They prefer, therefore, to struggle on, each party independent of the other; and thus at Ballarat there is the least advance in artificial means of gold-mining, where one would expect the most. At Bendigo, we have shown that, within the last six months, a considerable quantity of machinery has

been introduced in the shape of puddling-troughs, worked by horses. But there the competition is less: the field is much deserted; and these puddling machines, which consist of a cylindrical bore laid horizontally in the earth, with a cylinder set with iron spikes revolving in it, is admirably adapted to tear to pieces the stiff clay which there abounds, water being admitted to the box, so as to dissolve the clay into a pulp, which is afterwards easily washed out by the common cradle. Yet even at Bendigo there is no advance towards a wider combination than that of ordinary parties, from the very same causes—the hostility of the diggers to companies, and the fear of Government to encounter this hostility.

I had occasion to go into a druggist's here to procure a little opodeldoc for a bruise. It was *only* 3s. per ounce; being about as many pence at home. Twelve times the English price appears to be the cost of drugs on the diggings; and perhaps from the quantity consumed it could not be less. But a man who had Dr. over his door asked 5s. an ounce, which I told him I thought a *little* too much. On hearing this, the man flew into a violent rage, crying, "Go along! go along to the druggist. I am no druggist. I am a physician." I begged him to keep his temper, as courtesy was cheap enough if physic were not, and that I would oblige him by going to the druggist. On this he grew more furious than ever, starting up with a face scarlet with passion: "Say that again! just say that again, and I'll pitch you under the ear!" I only smiled and withdrew.

Such is a specimen of a large class of men calling themselves doctors, who have come out to prey upon the diggers. Numbers of these men possess no diplomas whatever, but are arrant and impudent quacks, who fleece the poor, ignorant digger enormously. I believe I have related the story of a poor Irishwoman that we met with, who had come with a very large family all the way from

Sydney, and who had fallen under the hands of one of these quacks with a quinsey. As he did her no good, her husband determined to go to Dr. Crawford, the colonial surgeon at the Ovens. But on asking the quack his charge, he said, "Twelve days' attendance—twelve pounds." On hearing which, the poor woman was so indignant, that she burst her quinsey in her wrath; but was inconsolable at the escape of the quack with the twelve pounds before she could get her throat cleared to "ase her heart upon him."

By the colonial law, all medical men are required to submit their diplomas and surgeon's certificates to certain medical inspectors appointed for the purpose; and a list of these qualified persons is published annually. Without such registry, no practitioner is legally qualified; but the law at the diggings appears to be quite neglected.

The calling in of a real medical man, even, at once qualified, and a gentleman, is a serious infliction. They do nothing under a pound a visit, and a pound a mile, which on illness of any length is certain ruin to many a poor digger. At some of the diggings they have now combined, and erected hospitals. But in the bush, where they can have no hospitals, this charge falls heavy on all but the wealthy squatter. An overseer at a station, who had a small salary, told me that he had occasion to send for a medical man; the nearest being twelve miles. His charge was fifteen guineas,—three guineas the visit, and a guinea a mile. He said he could not afford to have him a second time. When I was remarking on this subject, and saying that a doctor on the diggings would soon exhaust any one's purse, a surgeon present, one of the very best men of his profession, said, laughing, "Oh! well, when a man can pay no longer, he can take the benefit of the act."

I imagine that it is the excessive cost of regular medical treatment which causes the diggers to take Holloway's

pills so universally, and in such amazing quantities. They are the digger's established nostrum. He takes him by handfuls; and when his dog is ill, he gives them a few dozen as a dose. Holloway's ointment is in scarcely less repute. If Professor Holloway had only the diggers for purchasers he must make a fortune.

Card-playing on the diggings is as universal as the taking of Holloway's pills. Cards are the diggers' grand resource, next to drinking and pills. In the fine weather you see them seated by their holes at all leisure hours, or by their tents, deeply intent on these magical bits of pasteboard.

But oh! what evidences lie about everywhere of the diggers' greatest propensity. All over Ballarat bottles broken and whole lie about in such quantities, that it is wonderful how horses go anywhere on the field without getting lamed. There was a pool down in the basin, not very far from the camp, into which literally thousands of bottles were thrown. Before all the public-houses on the road, there lie heaps, sometimes of many waggon-loads, and all along the bush you still find them, some dashed against the trees, and others still whole. I believe I have already said that no one need desire a larger fortune than the value of all the bottles, broken or whole, which are sown broad-cast over this colony. At Geelong, the bay is floored with them.

Here we bade adieu to the diggings for ever, and the only difficulty was to get out of them. If it had been a labour to wade about in our jack-boots, it was a twofold one to get our team safe and well through them. Road there was literally none, unless the most indescribable chaos of clay-heaps, sludge-holes, stumps, pits, and huge trunks of trees, lying exactly in your way, constitute a road. We were constantly in danger of falling into Scylla in seeking to avoid Charybdis; but there was nothing for it but to



flounder on, and sink, and plunge, and bounce forward for two or three miles, till we got clear of the diggings.

Town allotments, I see by the newspapers, have been selling at the Government sales at Ballarat from 3000*l.* to 7000*l.* per acre! and at Castlemaine for 3000*l.*; the purchasers of which dear bits are petitioning the Government that there shall be no stores allowed within two miles of the townships. Thus all parties here, Government, squatters, and store-keepers, are striving hard for high prices and monopolies to support them. None of these things can eventually answer; the diggers already say, "These storekeepers, who give such great sums for their ground, will, of course, want to lay it upon us; but we shall go to *tent* stores on the diggings; and, as to the squatters, if they cannot afford *cheap* meat, what is the use of their having all the land for nothing?"

True; and the land speculators in Victoria are already calling out to Government, "Stop your sales; there is land enough in the market;" a clear sign that plenty of land in the market will swamp this mischievous class.

Before a free circulation of advantages, and a genuine prosperity can pervade the colony, all this obstruction and monopoly, the result of the wild speculation, and spirit of sudden fortune-making which came with the gold, will have to run their career, and fall to pieces at the fiat of public need.

## LETTER XXXVIII.

Journey through a rich Country.—Thousands of embryo Farms lying there.—The whole South of Victoria, from End to End, splendid Land.—Line of new Road to Geelong laid out.—Discouraging Experience of Buninyong Township.—Half-acre Allotments and a wooden House no Independence.—Road-side Grog-palaces.—One-hundred loaded Drays per Day on the Road.—Why not a Railroad here?—Strange Location of Muddy-Water-Holes Township.—Beautiful Valley of the Moorabool.—Extreme Fertility.—A few attractive Homesteads.—A splendid Site for a Water-Mill.—Beautiful Site for a Town.—The Barabool Hills.—English Larks let loose upon them.—Town of Geelong.—Great Plains between it and Melbourne.—Much Land monopolised here by Speculators.—Deluging Rain.

Melbourne, May 28th, 1854.

TURNING our backs on the diggings, we made an easy and pleasant journey to Geelong, and thence to Melbourne. We made this detour to see as much of the country as we could, and also to visit the thriving town of Geelong, the second in the colony.

Once out of the awful quagmire of Ballarat, we hoped to get into tolerable road; but the whole country, for about half the way to Geelong lay full of wet, and the roads in consequence were execrable. However, at Ballarat we had sold our large tent, and everything except what was absolutely necessary for our journey down, and, therefore, we had no difficulty in wading through. I may say generally of our journey that it was all through a volcanic country, in many places abounding with large trap boulders, scattered on the surface; in others clear and green, but always exhibiting the rich, black, volcanic earth.

Thousands of farms may be laid out along this part of the country, capable of yielding the richest harvest, as well as of pasturing any amount of cattle and sheep; and by universal testimony the whole of the colony westward, at least a very broad tract of it from the coast inwards, is still more fertile, and is, indeed, the very richest land in the colony. The neighbourhood of the lakes Colac and Corangamite, and all westward to the Glenelg near the borders of South Australia, and south of the Pyrenees and the Grampians, is reported to be one of the finest grazing and agricultural countries in the world.

So far as we went the whole country was beautifully green; but we could see that in the autumn the grass was all burnt up by the sun and the bush-fires, for the shiacks and light woods which prevail in all volcanic lands were cut down in great quantities for the sheep and cattle to browse upon, when the grass had failed. This will be a circumstance which the farmers of Australia will have to provide for each year, growing sufficient oaten hay, or turnips and mangel-wurzel, to carry them through what may be called their hot winter, or time during which the grass fails from the great heats of summer.

We were glad to see that the Government was beginning to bestir itself in laying out roads and preparing to sell land along this district. As yet, however, they have only marked out the line of a great road from Ballarat to Geelong, by stubbing up the trees, and removing the trap boulders, and arranging them along each side of the road. But till it is regularly metalled the drays cannot travel on it; it would become one long bog immediately: and, accordingly, the carriers still follow their own routes through the bush. There the grass forms a resisting surface; but where this has been removed on the new line, the wheels sink in at once.

The diggers and bullock-drivers, appeared still to doubt whether there would be any made road in their time; their

want of faith in the Government being extreme. On expressing my satisfaction to some of them that Government was at length beginning to make a road, they replied, "A road, Sir! no, it's no road, it's a sham. It is no road, nor can be till it is metalled. Perhaps in twenty years' time there may be a road." But to me the *prospect* of a road even was something. It showed a degree of life; not that deathly torpor which has hitherto so universally prevailed.

One would have been glad to have seen something more decided as to the sale of lands. The Government has laid out several townships on this line of road, as Buninyong, Meredith, Muddy-Water-Holes, &c. But it has only sold town allotments; and how are these towns to exist without farms? The township of Buninyong, the first we came to, is a striking example of what must result from such a system. It is only seven miles from Ballarat, and lies at the divergence of the road to Winter's Flat and Wardy-Yallock-Diggings. The land is rich, and the country beautiful.

Such were the expectations from these circumstances, that the acre and half-acre allotments in this township were eagerly bought up, at the rate of 300*l.* per acre. Houses, stores, &c., were speedily built, and the most sanguine anticipations of going ahead were entertained. Storekeepers, auctioneers, doctors, innkeepers, wheelwrights, smiths, &c., flocked thither, all expecting to grow rich "by living on one another," as they said, "as people of other towns do."

They very soon, however, found to their astonishment, that people could not live very well on one another, when "one another" had not incomes independent of an half-acre allotment and a wooden house. They must have independent incomes, or farms attached to their locations yielding marketable produce. So, very soon the storekeepers found they had no customers; the wheelwrights

and smiths that there were no carts to build, or horses to shoe; the doctors found that there was nobody to physic, and the auctioneers that though there were speedily plenty of empty houses to sell, there was nobody to buy them; so they all fled away again to Ballarat, where there were people and income. And there stood the empty wooden houses and shops, cutting a most desolate figure,—an infant Auburn, a deserted village, almost before it had become a village at all. A post office and two or three inns were almost the only inhabited places.

On all these roads the inns are the only things that flourish in the new townships. At every township there are at least three, some built in the same style as the London gin-palaces, and infinitely larger. Several of these public-houses could not have cost less than 10,000*l.* each. But all these, I dare say, pay. They are a significant sign of the great propensity of the colony. We have demonstrated the rum-swallowing capacities of bullock-drivers, and the traffic up this road conducted by these men is something enormous.

We counted the loaded drays going up on various occasions, and found that they amounted at least to 100 per day; each carrying on an average upwards of a ton of goods. The bullock drays carry two tons; the horse-drays from half a ton to three-quarters each. But the majority are bullock-drays. Say, then, that these 100 drays carried a ton each at 80*l.* per ton,—the then rate from Geelong to Ballarat,—that would amount to 8,000*l.* per day for carriage alone—a charge to be added to the prime cost of the goods sent up from Geelong to be consumed by the diggers of Ballarat. The same, but on a still larger scale, is the case on the other roads from Melbourne to Forest Creek, Bendigo, Waranga, and the Ovens; carriage to the Ovens in winter being frequently 150*l.* per ton.

No wonder, then, that the draymen can afford to drink

oceans of brandy, and they do it, for many of them have 2*l.* per day. These men are paid much higher than the hard-working digger, who lives amid all kinds of privations. But wherever digger or bullock-driver sees an inn, there he must go. Bottles of brandy, which cost from 10*s.* to 20*s.* each, drained dry, and lying in mountains before these inns, attest the mighty powers of suction in this tribe of men. Such is the rude, riotous life they lead along these roads. All day the bullock-drivers are shouting and swearing at their teams, and all night they are drinking, singing, and rollicking. I fancy that there is not an amount of swearing and blasphemy perpetrated in the whole world equal to that which is daily concentrated on the roads to the diggings of Victoria.

But next to the subject of drinking, there is another which strikes one greatly on considering the statistics of the roads: and that is, how it happens that there have been no railroads long ago laid down upon them. I do not mean any very expensively finished railroads, but such as the Americans would have laid rapidly along these forest-lands, plain wooden tram-roads, the materials for which exist all along the roads. How enormously would they have reduced the expense of living to the diggers, while they might have yielded a most splendid dividend to the projectors. From Geelong to Ballarat, three-fourths of the road would have required no levelling at all.

Well, it has not been done; the bullock-drivers labour, and swear along; and the publicans flourish everywhere on the lines of road. But as to the townships, we found the same infatuated ideas prevailing all the way down. The people on them were buying up the little modicum of land, at almost any price, and expecting to live upon one another, spite of the experiment at Buninyong. About half way between Ballarat and Geelong, they were laying out one at the ominous locality of "The Muddy Water-Holes." It was on a flat, level plain of good land,

but bare of trees, and totally destitute of water, except at certain muddy water-holes. These water-holes appeared to have been the cause which determined the surveyors to lay out a township here, while two miles off flowed the beautiful river Moorabool, through a most lovely valley, and with fine table-lands overlooking this charming valley, capable of locating a town, surrounded by fertile farms to any extent, and with easy access to the delicious and un-failing water of the river. Nay, at this two miles' distance the river comes within a quarter of a mile of this very line of road: so that it is impossible to conceive the motives for such a gross neglect of most rare advantages.

On asking the people at the new township whether the water of these muddy holes was wholesome, they said, No; on the contrary, it was unwholesome; giving everybody who drank it the dysentery, and a road would have to be cut to the Moorabool, of two miles, and a cutting down to the river to be made, where the descent into the valley was very precipitous. Truly, these Victoria surveyors are a very comical set of fellows!

Never did I see in this country a more delightful valley than that of the Moorabool. It has all the amenity of feature of the most soft and cultivated valley of the south of Europe. On either side of it, the plains for about a mile are free, or nearly free, of wood. Only here and there a few shiacks, or lightwood, or Australian myrtles, break the uniformity of the green and singularly level plain, — level as any bowling-green. Then the sombre forest stretches on either hand its pleasant line, while along the centre of the valley itself, the river runs in many a beautiful curve and winding, fringed thickly with large and vigorous red gum trees.

So sudden are the curves in some places, the point of one curve fitting the hollow of the opposite one like teeth meeting, that the trees there assumed the appearance of dense woods. Here and there the river divided,

and left large level islands of some scores of acres of the most fertile land imaginable. But the bottom of the valley, and its gently sloping sides of the most fertile soil, were, for the most part, without tree or stone, perfectly ready for the plough; and I was glad to see, here and there, already a farm with its cultivated fields. Most pleasantly they looked, with their ricks, their waggons, their poultry and cattle about them; and their great corn-fields, either already green with springing crops, or under the plough, turning up dark and rich, lying over the swelling and sinking slopes in beautiful softness. The single fence of post and rail, here and there, scarcely seemed to break up or disturb the unity of the scene.

These fortunate people had truly located themselves in goodly places, and gave me a delightful foretaste of what Australia will one day be, when a wise Government has made land cheap, and the people, weaned from exciting and demoralising pursuits, literally sit down, every man under his own vine and his own fig-tree.

It was by a pleasing surprise that I first came upon the Moorabool. I had endeavoured to make a short cut over some hills, right away through the bush. The road was evidently taking a great sweep to keep the level land, and I left my party, and steered my course alone, in the expectation of meeting them again some miles ahead. I had wandered over various hills and descended again into several deep valleys, crossing two or three creeks, or the devious windings of the same, when at once, amid the profound silence and solitude of the scene, I caught the low murmur of water. The sound gave me an idea of a greater volume of water than these creeks contained, and I proceeded towards it. Arriving at the summit of a woodland hill, I was met by the full roar of a cataract, and beheld the water in the valley below like a deep-lying forest lake.

It was the Moorabool, which here running through deep glens, inclosed by places with lofty precipices, and sur-



mounted with fine, steep, and moderately wooded land, struck boldly on the imagination in its wild and secluded scene. The river here ran through a channel of solid sandstone, with the rocks rising 800 feet or more, and hung with fine forests. A creek came running down from the left hand, under cliffs of sandstone, at nearly a right angle, and discharged its waters into the river at the feet of these cliffs, and before it passed over a bar of this sandstone forming a substantial weir.

Above the bar the river presented the appearance of a long and deep dam, overhung with rocks and bushes, and swarming with wild fowl. Below the bar, the waters roared over a rapid of the detached sandstones, hidden by masses of tea-trees. Wild grass up to the knees covered the lands on the river banks, and the whole scene presented a picture of bold, solitary beauty rarely found in this country.

Here was a magnificent natural mill-seat, which probably ere long will be discovered and appropriated by some lucky miller, for, independent of its natural advantages, it possesses that of being situated in a most fertile country midway between Geelong and the diggings,—two great markets. All around, both upwards and downwards, the banks of the river displayed the same bold beauty; winding about amid noble promontories, scattered with giant trees, and high hollow combs, as impressive in their loneliness as they were rich in soil. I could not help imagining that here lay the spot of some future town, which would spring up from the force of its own advantages, and soon outstrip the bizarre selections of the surveyors.

It was drawing towards evening as we came upon the brow of the hill overlooking this enchanting valley, some miles lower down, and two beyond the Muddy Water-Holes. The lights and shades had a magical effect. Long dark stretches of shadow lay amid a sunlight of the softest

character, and gave a wonderful beauty to the scene. The whole valley was clothed as with the greenest and softest velvet; and the forms of the hills were so rounded, so shining, and so lovely, that no reality of the kind could exceed it. There were, here and there, mounts rising out of the bottom of the valley, so rounded and beautiful that you wondered not to see them already seized upon, and crowned with some picturesque mansion. Others ran in low lines across the valley, as if they had been thrown up by the hand of some landscape artist to give effect to the grounds of some prince, but were so draped in delicate verdure as nature only could drape them.

In full view of this exquisite valley, with the easiest access to its waters, and yet with all the advantages of the level and fertile lands on the plain, might the unaccountable surveyor of the Government have planted his township. It is a site worthy of an imperial city: but for him, muddy water-holes had superior charms — and people had really purchased in his muddy-water-hole village allotments at 100*l.*, and corner situations at 150*l.* an acre.

They must have been people of similar taste who had named most places as we came along. At one station I asked two men who were resting with their cart by the road-side whose station that was? — “Hungry Scott’s” was the reply.

“Why that name?”

“I don’t know; but that’s what they call it. But I never found it a hungry place; but quite the contrary.”

Farther on, I saw a shepherd with his flock by the road, and asked him whose station that was. “Gentleman Reid’s.” On asking him why “*Gentleman Reid’s*?” he pointed across the plain, and said, “Because another Mr. Reid lives there, and they call him ‘Poor Man Reid;’ but now,” he added, “‘Gentleman Reid’ is dead, and this is Mr. Macleod’s.”

This shepherd had a great number of lambs with his flock; and said that they contrive to have one flock of ewes with lambs in the autumn, and one in the spring, so as to have more time to attend to them than if they all came at once; but he said the spring lambs were generally the strongest, because the ewes had better pastures. In autumn the grass was often burnt up and scarce.

About half way to Geelong we came upon good sound roads, the land being sound and dry, but still fertile; and on the distant hills, right and left, quite out to the sea-coast, we could see signs of pretty extensive cultivation. On the Barrabool Hills, in that direction, a patriotic, and I may add, truly poetical settler, turned out last year fifteen larks which he had brought from England: may they flourish, and awake in the heart of many a listener to their aërial music many, many pleasant memories of the old mother-land! All this part of the country is capable of being immediately converted into agricultural farms, scarcely requiring a stone or a tree removing; in fact, as you approach Geelong, trees become much too scarce.

Geelong lies well for a seaport; the bay comes quite to the foot of the town, admitting vessels of several hundred tons close up, and, on the removal of a bar now in progress, will admit vessels of heavy burden. The ground on three sides of the town rises in a fine, easy slope, affording a site for a large town at a good, pleasant, and healthy elevation. The town has all the air of an active and rising place. It is a sort of little Melbourne, presenting the same medley of newly erected houses, some of wood and some of stone or brick; but there is plenty of fine freestone in this neighbourhood, so that hereafter the whole town will probably be built of this material.

The want of fresh water is its greatest disadvantage, the nearest being the river Barwon, several miles from the town. It is also dreadfully destitute of wood, the shiacks which formerly adorned the neighbourhood having been

ruthlessly destroyed for firewood, leaving the landscape utterly bald and naked.

Between Geelong and Melbourne, the country is one great plain, all of the volcanic character, fertile, but naked up to the foot of the ranges, some miles distant on our left hand as we came.

We saw the railroad between Geelong and Melbourne in progress, but wondered where the traffic was to come from, for the high road between these two chief towns of the colony was so little tracked that we were several times very near losing it altogether. It is evident that it must rob the sea-coast of its traffic, if it is to have much; for we met only seven persons in the whole fifty miles, and the greater number of these were near Melbourne, going to places by the way. How immensely more profitable must be a railroad from Geelong to Ballarat, or from Melbourne thither. In fact, Geelong, as well as Melbourne, is supplied with what it wants direct from sea, and its great traffic is not with Melbourne, or that of Melbourne with it, but that of each of them is away up to the diggings.

We were glad also to see land was sold, or in progress of survey and sale, to a considerable extent. But the quantity of land thrown into the market must be large, before men with only a few hundred pounds can get any of it. Already the speculators are pouncing upon it—buying it all up as fast as it is sold, and letting it lie in hope of an augmented price. Here, again, we are reminded of the remedy,—that of a glutted market, and a clause of cultivation. The true growth of the colony must depend on the number of families of moderate capital who are settled on the lands, and who must necessarily become consumers as well as producers. These are the living sinews which are at once to knit up a powerful antipodean England, and to extend their elastic vitalising vigour to the mother-country.

It is useless telling us that there is already near a million acres sold in the colony, making four acres for each individual. The fact is, that the individuals have not got it; the largest proportion is in the hands of the speculators, and of the square-mile purchasing squatters. If the squatters purchase one square mile on each station, that for the 1000 stations, will, of itself, make 640,000 acres. This very plain would furnish hundreds of excellent farms; at present large flocks of sheep, and of native companions, ducks and geese in the swamps, and a considerable quantity of turkeys inhabit it.

The last day but one that we were on these plains we had a parting salute from the weather. It began to rain soon after noon, and continued a cold and driving deluge till night. Intensely cold it was, and there was no shelter whatever, nothing to break the wind or offer an asylum from the rain; the sky was thick, and threatened a permanent descent of wet; the plain under foot was soon one universal pool. There was nothing for it but buttoning ourselves well up, and wading steadily along. As it was about to get dark, we descried a few trees some couple of miles off to the right; we went across to them in the hope of finding some shelter and firewood. To our consternation we found, on arriving at them, that these trees grew in a great swamp, and the ground was all around one deluge of water.

There was nothing for it but giving up all hope of fire or tea, and exerting ourselves to drain a piece of ground by making a ricket round it, and another from it to the swamp, to carry the water away. This effected, we raised our blanket tent upon it, laid down our tarpauling and our mattresses, and got to bed. There we were perfectly dry and comfortable. In the night the rain cleared up, and in the morning we managed to get a fire and some breakfast. A very light breakfast it was, for we were told at Geelong that we should be able to procure bread

and meat at the half-way inn on the Werribee. Not a bit of either, however, could we procure, either at the inn or at any cottage, so we marched on as well as we could to Melbourne, nineteen miles, where we arrived quite ready for dinner just as the day closed.

And thus terminated our travels in this colony of Victoria. Our horses we have sold — poor Ben and Gray — and were sorry to part with them after all our adventures together for two years. Our dogs we have dispersed; Susan, the colly, going with a squatter to the banks of Lake Colac, beyond Geelong, and Prin only remaining to make the voyage home again; when, having destroyed immense numbers of opossums, wild cats, bandicoots, kangaroo rats, and other creatures; swum many a river and lagoon to recover the water-fowls we shot; and having circumnavigated the globe, it is to be hoped that he may be wiser for his travels.

## LETTER XXXIX.

Wonderful Growth of Melbourne during one Year's Absence. — Vast spread of Suburbs. — Striking Improvement of Buildings in the Town. — Superior Inns. — Manners of Tradesmen more courteous. — Mr. Gabrielli's clever money transaction. — Lends Melbourne 500,000*l.* of its own Money, and goes home 50,000*l.* the better for it. — With this Half-million of Money Miracles performing. — Streets draining, macadamising, and paving. — Water Company and Gas Company promise great things. — New Reservoir and Water-works. — The Banks of Victoria. — Scientific and Literary Institutions. — Projected University. — Botanic Gardens. — Superb Grants of Money for Education. — The School System, and Account of Schools and Scholars. — The Newspapers of Melbourne, &c. — The New Constitution as passed and sent home. — Imports of 1853 upwards of 17,000,000*l.*; Exports 14,000,000*l.* — Traffic at the Wharves, and throngs of People on the Roads near the City. — The other Side of the Picture. — Symptoms of approaching Crisis. — Causes of this not merely Overtrading but Gambling in Town Allotments. — Wonderful Instances of Fortune. — Present Rates of Labour. — Price of Articles of Life. — Government Expenditure. — Debt. — **POSTSCRIPT.** 1855. — Crisis arrived. — Fighting at Ballarat. — Eight hundred People out of Work at Melbourne. — Consequence of Land Speculations stated by *Argus*. — Government seized on the Land Fund. — Gold still decreasing. — People leaving. — Census of 1854.

Melbourne, June 1st, 1854.

THE growth of Melbourne during the twelve months that we have been up the country is something absolutely marvellous. Here is a town which in 1851 counted only 23,000 inhabitants, which now counts nearly 80,000. And this is only in accordance with the general growth of the colony, the whole population at that period being only 90,000, and now being calculated at 250,000.

On whatever side of Melbourne you take your walks

you are met by the same evidences of rapid and unparalleled growth. Where two years ago Liardet's Beach and the lands between it and the town showed an odd house or a few straggling tents, Sandhurst and Emerald Hill now present populous towns, with good houses, excellent inns and stores, a fine macadamised road traversed by numbers of omnibuses and other carriages.

It is the same if you extend your excursion to Prahran, Windsor, St. Kilda, and Brighton. There you find yourselves amid miles and miles of houses. Go to the north of Melbourne, there is the same wonderful extension of human habitations where you left bare ground. Collingwood and Richmond, populous then, are doubly populous now.

Come into the town, there you find innumerable open spaces, no longer open, but occupied by good houses, and the town swelling out on all sides. What is more, there is not only a vastly increased number of houses, but there is an equally rapid process of elevation of character in the buildings going on. Poor, wooden, one-storied houses are, as in the changes of a pantomime, turning into most substantial and capacious stone ones. The trap-stone of the neighbourhood, worked, as it must be, at a most formidable expense, is liberally used for buildings that may last for ever. A substantial town-hall of this stone has arisen at the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets. The shops have equally advanced in an air of elegance, with their plate glass windows, and their tasteful display of all kinds of articles of use or ornament.

The number of inns, which would do credit even to London, is very striking. The Criterion, in Collins Street, is a hotel which, by its long and elegant frontage, its ample *table-d'hôte* rooms and saloons fitted up with singular splendour, remind one of the gayest establishments of this sort of Paris or Vienna. The style and usage here, however, is more American, the landlord, I believe, being a



United States man. The Duke of York, The Prince of Wales, a German hotel, The Port Phillip Club Hotel, Bignell's Family Hotel, and Tattersal's—to which, of course, is attached a large horse bazaar,—these and others mark the progress of Melbourne in hotel accommodation. Billiard-tables, baths, and every requisite for private enjoyment or public display are to be found in these establishments at a cost which would delight the most liberal lover of expense.

A very agreeable improvement also is obvious in the manner of the tradespeople. The first paroxysm of success and excitement is gone off. The diggers have ceased to have handfuls of money to throw away; and competition and the already perceptible decline of prices have had their taming and civilising effect. The increased attention and courtesy in the shops struck us forcibly.

The work of improvement is wonderful in the streets. Hundreds of men are employed in getting stone on the banks of the river, in breaking it, and macadamising the streets; nay, they are actually at length flagging the causeways! This and other prominent metamorphoses have been effected by a circumstance which I must state. It is one which again exemplifies the truth of the old saw, that the lookers-on see more of the game than the players.

Now, the people of Melbourne for the last two years have been making enormous sums of money, and the *Argus* in its summaries for England has been continually boasting of the wonderful wealth of the colony; of the 8,000,000 of money which lay in the banks, &c. &c.; and yet nobody ever was struck with the idea that some of this idle capital might be very usefully and most profitably employed in making the town clean, comfortable, and healthy. They went on wading up to the knees in mud, or choking with dust, having bad water, and worse drainage, and no light. Like the eels in the frying-pan, they were used to all this; and so it might have remained

till doomsday ; but the oddity of the thing struck the minds of those wide-awake fellows in London called capitalists, who are said to be as sharp as a needle with two points. At once they saw that there was an opening for a great hit. This capital wanted using, and this work wanted doing : they determined to be the medium, and to reap the benefit.

Therefore, a certain Mr. Gabrielli, armed with proper powers and authorities, quietly transferred himself to the capital of gold ; examined on the spot all the points which appeared so salient at home ; found all right, and therefore lent to the Corporation of Melbourne 500,000*l.*, and to that of Geelong 200,000*l.* — total, the pretty sum of 700,000*l.* that they might mend their ways.

This sum he lent at a discount of 5 per cent., that is, he paid 95*l.* as 100*l.*, and every numerical hundred was chargeable with interest at *six* per cent., and this secured by a Government guarantee, and on the town rates. This was a good and notable business transaction, but Mr. Gabrielli had a yet higher aim, and that was to sell this scrip at a premium to the very merchants who should have done all this themselves, and secured all the advantage of it, instead of letting their money lie, as gratuitous deposits, in the banks. He effected this sale readily at a premium of *three* per cent. ; and putting near 50,000*l.* in his pocket, as quietly returned home. Nay, more ; he has returned home with the grateful acknowledgments of the Melbourne public for easing them of this sum, and pronounced by the newspapers as a public benefactor. Mr. Gabrielli had his eye, too, on further capabilities. He threw out hints of doing the same by the projected railways ; and it will be curious to see whether the merchants of Melbourne will arrive at the idea that they may just as well do this thing themselves at first hand, or whether they will have to thank Mr. Gabrielli for easing them of another fifty or hundred thousand pounds by selling them scrip which they have not the wit to create for themselves.

“Our merchants and others,” says the *Argus*, “are very fully employed in private pursuits. Even when rich, they find ample employment for their spare attention and spare means, in the land speculations consequent upon an odious land-monopoly system. The classes, therefore, who principally attend to the promotion of such works at home, here care little or nothing about them.”

However, Mr. Gabrielli's money has done miracles. Hundreds of men are in full employ, actively blasting stone along the river, carting it into town, breaking it, and laying the streets. Others are laying down flags; others are cutting drains, and laying down water-pipes and curb-stones; so that we are not like again to have such amusing accounts of mud, as Dr. Embling gave in 1853:—

“Mrs. Embling was to have been at the *soirée* last evening, and with her I chaperoned Miss Flint, lantern in hand; with many a detour, we made some 300 yards through mud, bog, and quagmire, in our streets. This we accomplished with much labour and dexterity; when, *horribile dictu*, as I crossed the last gulf, and thought we were safe, Mrs. Embling stepped into a quagmire; it required desperate efforts to extricate her without her goloshes; for these I had to navigate the slosh with my stick, and then to turn homewards, after half an hour's absence, having traversed nearly 600 yards. I doubt not many will think this an absurd, overdrawn picture. Well, then, in Gertrude Street, within 400 yards of my house, the day before yesterday, a horse and dray got stuck, and the horse all but suffocated; it required great effort to save the wretched animal. Yet Gertrude Street is a noble street, in which C. H. Ebdon, Esq., the late Auditor-General, and other colonial aristocrats, reside. So much for a roadway in this great city.”

New water-works and gas-works are in progress, new railways and electric telegraphs.

The water of the Yarra, saturated with the filth of the town, is to cease to poison the people. Pure and excellent water from the river Plenty is being brought a distance of twenty-five miles, a gigantic reservoir being formed there for securing a regular supply.

The Gas Company promises to light up the streets of Melbourne in another six months, as well as those of any English town; and coal of excellent quality is ready for the getting both at Cape Pattison and on the Barrabool Hills.

The electric telegraph, already working between Melbourne and Williams Town, will soon be extended to the Heads. The railway from Melbourne to Liardet's Beach is complete, and only awaits the arrival of engineers and carriages from England. Melbourne boasts its half-a-dozen banks, all most flourishing concerns; namely,—the Bank of Australasia; the Union Bank of Australia; Bank of New South Wales; Bank of Victoria; London Chartered Bank; and English, Scottish, and Australian Bank. Some of these banks pay a dividend of 40 per cent.; and, by a statement published just now, they have an aggregate circulation and deposits of 8,876,166*l*.

Amongst the public institutions of this rising capital are,—the Botanic Gardens, the Mechanics' Institution, the Philosophical Society, its Educational System, and in connection with that its projected University.

The Botanic Gardens I have already spoken of; but it ought to be mentioned, in connection with them and the botanical science of the colony, that Victoria is most fortunate in the services of Dr. Müller, as the official colonial botanist. Dr. Müller is not only a gentleman of profound acquirement in his department of science, but of indefatigable energy and enthusiasm. Already he has made wide explorations; and under his hands the extensive

and curious *flora* of Victoria, will be made more completely known than that of any equally remote region. And here I may say, that whatever were the defects of Mr. La Trobe as a Colonial Governor—defects unquestionably originating in timidity,—he was ever ready to promote the moral and intellectual progress of the colony. The appointment of a State botanist and State geologist evidence not only this fact, and that of his Excellency's own tastes, but the whole official provision for science, education, and religion do the highest honour to his administration.

The Mechanics' Institution is also a literary society. It includes an extensive library, and lectures are frequently given there. The Philosophical Society is intended to be the Royal Society of Victoria, to be established by Royal charter. It is yet quite in its infancy, but enumerates some of the most distinguished men of the colony amongst its supporters, and has already had very valuable papers read before it by Dr. Müller, by its President, and other gentlemen. As a proof of the attention to strangers by those Institutions, I may mention that they both did me the honour to elect me an honorary member.

The colony sets a splendid example to the mother country in the item of support to education. While I believe the amount of direct grants for educational purposes in the United Kingdom do not exceed 250,000*l.*, this colony, of only 250,000 persons, voted, in 1853, 79,000*l.*, and in 1854, 155,000*l.* The schools to which support are given are divided into Denominational Schools and National, each under a Board. The National something resemble the Home Government schools in Ireland; the Denominational include those of every sect and church in the colony.

The National Schools, at the close of the year 1853, amounted to 35, with 3060 pupils; and the Inspectors were, Mr. A. B. Orlebas, M.A., of Oxford, and Mr. Maxwell Miller, of the same University.

The Denominational Schools were, Church of England 52, with 2,436 pupils, costing 26,373*l.*; Presbyterians of various kinds 19, with 803 pupils, costing 8,738*l.*; Wesleyans 14, with 813 pupils, costing 4,410*l.*; Independents 3, with 115 pupils, costing 2,994*l.*; and Catholics 37, with 1824 pupils, costing 13,951*l.* This made a total of 125 schools, and 5,781 pupils; and a cost of 56,468*l.*

At the close of the first half year of 1854 ending June 30th, the number of schools were 167, of pupils 12,000, and of cost 58,000*l.*

Forty acres are appropriated to the site of a University north of Melbourne; 30,000*l.* voted for the erection of the building, and 9000*l.* a-year for its endowment. In 1850, 10,000*l.* was voted for the erection of a Public Library, and 3000*l.* for books. In 1854, as much more was granted for both these purposes, making 20,000*l.* for the building, and 6000*l.* for books. Access to the library is to be perfectly gratuitous; but all means used for the protection of the books. The foundation stones of these two important buildings were laid on the same day by Sir Charles Hotham, immediately after his arrival.

Seventeen years ago Mr. Fawkner, now member of the Legislative Council, published in manuscript the first and only newspaper of the colony. At this moment Melbourne publishes four newspapers, the *Argus*, *Herald*, *Banner*, and *Express*. The two first daily, the *Banner* twice a-week, and the *Express* weekly. Sandridge has also its paper; and I hear of others projected. Besides these, Geelong and other towns, as well as the diggings, have their newspapers.

The *Herald* and *Argus* are newspapers which would maintain a high rank anywhere. The former is edited by Mr. Frederick Sinnett, the son of Mrs. Sinnett, well known in English literature, and under his management it has immensely improved. It is a journal which abounds with information; and in its selection of European topics, especially of literary interest, has no rival. The *Argus*, how-

ever, edited by Messrs. Wilson and Mackinnon, from its bold spirit, enterprise, and popular, democratic tone, carries all before it. The *Argus* is the *Times* of the colony; and one of the most striking scenes in Melbourne is the issue of one of its Extraordinaries on the arrival of a mail from England. On approaching the office, you may see that the mail is in. There is a dense crowd of hundreds of people, all struggling and crushing to get in for a copy. The press is its own obstruction; nobody can get in, or once in can get out, except a swarm of boys, who, creeping between the legs of the adults, possess themselves of armfuls of papers, at threepence each, for which, on emerging with them, they boldly ask half-a-crown! And I have seen them get it too, as fast as they could deliver them. The *Argus* is the undaunted and unwearied champion of the public right to the lands. It has never ceased, from the time of its passing into its present hands, to make war on the fatal monopoly, and insane system, by which, if it could be perpetuated, the colony would be strangled in its infancy. It has demanded the "unlocking of the lands" with an ability and patriotism which, when it has accomplished its object, may justify the boast of having achieved the salvation of the colony, and will have well earned more than statutory honours — those of perpetual remembrance by a grateful people.

How soon this grand victory shall be won, will depend very much on the condition in which the Imperial Government shall return the New Constitution now transmitted for its consideration. The Constitution is much modified since it was first introduced into the Legislative Council. It consists, in its present form, of two Legislative Chambers, — the one called the Legislative Council, the other the Legislative Assembly. The Council is to consist of thirty members, elected from six electoral provinces, into which the colony is to be divided. Thus each province returns five members, one of whom retires at the end of

every two years, in succession, and is replaced by another election. Every member of the Council must be possessed of landed estate of the value of five thousand pounds, or of an income from it of five hundred pounds a year. He must be full thirty years of age; and must be elected by persons of freehold estate of the value of one thousand pounds, or income from it of one hundred.

The Legislative Assembly is to consist of sixty members, each of whom is to be of the age of twenty-one and upwards, and possessor of freehold estate to the value of two thousand pounds, or income from it of two hundreds; and he is to be elected by freeholders to the amount of fifty pounds, or rental from freehold of five pounds, or leaseholders or householders of ten pounds annually, &c.

By this Constitution, the Queen is required to make over all her interest in the waste lands, minerals, and land revenues,—in fact, to renounce interference with the property of the colony, for the consideration of a civil list of 112,750*l.* a year. The waste lands to be dealt with by the Colonial Legislature.

It is very clear that if the English Government accept this Constitution, it makes over totally, and for ever, all the property of the colony, and all the power, except such as it may exercise through the appointment of the Governor and executive. From that moment, the great land question would have to be fought out between the people and the colonial legislature; and as the squatters would possess a great preponderance of influence, from the fact that nine-tenths of the colony are yet unpeopled, it may be foreseen, should this Constitution receive the sanction of the Queen, that a great struggle on this question is before the colony. How it will end, where the interests of nearly 300,000 people are opposed to those of about 1000, it is not difficult to perceive.

In the fact of the framers of the Constitution, reserving large retiring allowances for government officers, we see



the leaven of our own Government operating in singular contrast to that of the United States; but this is a minor matter,—the land question is the grand cardinal point. Set that right, and all will soon right itself. So long as that is wrong, the whole community will be wrong,—in colonial phrase, “bailed up” at the mercy of its own tenants.

Nothing can show the wonderful growth of this city, and the mercantile excitement in England, the consequence of that growth, more than the fact that, while in 1850, the year before the gold discovery, the imports of the whole colony amounted to only 744,925*l.*, for the year ending 5th April, 1854, the declared value of imports, at the Port of Melbourne alone, had reached the enormous sum of 17,675,472*l.* as follows:—

Quarters ending	Value.
5th July, 1853 - - -	£4,115,233
10th October, 1853 - - -	4,336 291
5th January, 1854 - - -	4,153,527
5th April - - -	5,070,421
	<hr/>
	£17,675,472

Meanwhile the exports have grown within this short period of four years, from 1,041,796*l.*, to 4,672,000*l.*, in native produce, wool and gold; and if we include specie to pay for goods, to 14,000,000*l.*

The throng and traffic that you find everywhere are on a scale proportionate to these exhibited results. The ships lying in the bay; the crowded forest of smaller craft blocking up the river for miles; and the bustle of loading and unloading at the quays; the piles of goods of all sorts; the clamour, and stir of hundreds of porters and wharf-labourers, mark the seat of an astonishing commerce. The streets are thronged with a busy press of people; and carriages, omnibuses, and cabs are plying as actively as in London; and in all the great highways leading to the city, long trains of loaded drays, smart equipages,

people hastening along on horseback and on foot, announce a numerous and a prosperous population.

If the singular fortunes of the people that you meet were written down, it would form one of the strangest volumes in the world. "Mark this dashing equipage approaching," said a friend, as we drove out; "that gentleman occupying the carriage was some years ago so unsuccessful here, that he resolved to leave; he engaged to work his passage home, for he was too poor to pay it. He went down to the bay to go on board, when, luckily for him, he found the ship gone without him. The moment that he returned into Melbourne, he found there had been an inquiry after him: it was from a person who wanted to offer him employment, and now he counts his hundreds of thousands."

If, morning or evening, you go out into the great roads in the vicinity, especially that leading to Prahran, St. Kilda, and Brighton, you find a continuous chain of drays, omnibuses, carriages, and people, reaching for miles; on all sides hundreds and thousands of clerks and men of business are marching in in the morning, or out in the evening in groups, and knots of acquaintances and neighbours, bound for the numberless rural dwellings which stud the vicinity for miles round. All seem to cling to their English habits of getting out of the city as soon as the counting-house stool is abandoned, and breathing the air, and enjoying the quiet of the country. Therefore Melbourne has its great living tide, night and morning, flowing towards it, and again ebbing from it, as regularly as London has.

It requires us to account for this marvellous and sudden congregation of busy people here, to remember, that through this city has passed down from its mines, and out into the world, nine-tenths of the gold dug up since 1851, being no less an amount than nearly 10,000,000 of ounces, upwards of 362 tons, and of a value exceeding 38,000,000*l*.

Yet over this miraculous city and its thronging people, hangs a dim and menacing shadow. There is a presage of coming evil which haunts its throngs; the penalty has yet to be paid of that wild speculation and excitement, which its golden prodigies have called forth, and which, instead of being as much as possible neutralised and abated by a wise Government, have been greatly aggravated by one that refused its aid, except to stimulate gambling. The whole place is in an artificial status, which no human wisdom or concurrence of circumstances can possibly maintain, and in the transition to a natural one, there must be a grievous and extensive suffering.

Every man feels that a crisis is at hand, and each prognosticates that it will be more or less severe, according to his temperament, his knowledge, or his hopes. That all must suffer, more or less,—that a vast depreciation of the present *nominal* value of property, especially of merchandise, houses and suburban land, must take place,—is very certain.

The tradesman who is paying his 1000*l.* or his 2000*l.* a-year for a shop, and who has, besides, bought a suburban allotment at the rate of from 2000*l.* to 6000*l.* per acre, and has built upon it a house which in London would cost him 1000*l.*, but here has cost him 10,000*l.*, might maintain that scale of expenditure, if he could ward off competition and the decline of profits. But, already, there is a determined tendency to a fall of prices. The city is crowded with goods of all kinds to repletion; the warehouses are choked with them; the shelves of the shops are groaning, and you may see piles of goods, bales, and packages, standing in the back streets, before warehouses which are unable to take in more, and are there merely protected by a tarpaulin, and sometimes not even by that. I have seen loads and loads of such goods lately standing nearly a foot deep in mud, and

weather, while the owners at home have, perhaps, fondly imagined them sold, or at least well housed.

These goods, the product of 17,000,000*l.* of importation in one year, must be sold. In vain does the retailer struggle to maintain his old gigantic prices, for around him open a host of auction rooms, where these goods *are*, and *must be*, sold for what they will fetch. If, therefore, the retailer uphold his price, he curtails the extent of his sales; for his customers will find their way to the infinitely cheaper auctions. If he reduce his prices, he cannot pay his huge rent, and maintain his dear-bought villa in the old style; in either case, rents and profits must fall together.

But it is not merely overtrading, the cause to which it is generally attributed, which has prepared the impending crisis; the unparalleled rage for gambling in town allotments, which has been fostered by the Government, has gone hand in hand with it. There are great numbers of merchants or commission-agents, as I am assured by men perfectly acquainted with the business and statistics of the place, who have been employing the proceeds of the goods consigned to them on these enticing ventures, and at one time they could not have been made without a superb return. I have already stated that land at Sandridge, a mere waste of sand, sold at 12,000*l.* an acre. I was shown a lot there, for which a gentleman gave 150*l.*, and immediately let it on a lease for six years at 700*l.* a-year, on the strength of which he set out to enjoy himself in England. Another man purchased a lot at the same place for 70*l.*, and forfeited the deposit, because he thought it a bad bargain. Within a month it sold for 5000*l.* Another gave 1500*l.* for a lot or lots, and sold the same quantity for 15,000*l.*

A man came out with one of the bubble gold companies, and soon perceiving the prospect of any advantage from that quarter hopeless, he recollected that in the crisis of

1842, he had left the colony, and some building land in Bourke Street, for which at that time he could get no price whatever. He, therefore, went to a solicitor, and asked him whether enough could be made of it now to carry him home. The solicitor smiled, and said, yes, he thought he could make him *rather* more than that: and receiving his authority to sell, in a few days handed him over 12,000*l.*, with which the astonished man joyfully hastened home.

I have been assured that a certain well-known firm have retired with an income, derived from trading and land-jobbing, of 80,000*l.* per annum! In fact, up to a certain point, as in the railway mania in England, a man could not possibly do wrong. But the climax has been reached; the scale has turned; and those commission-agents who have ventured the money of their correspondents find themselves in a cleft stick. If they sell their urban or suburban bargains, they must do it at an awful sacrifice; if they do not sell, they cannot remit the balances due.

There are those who confidently assert that the crisis will not be severe, but all experience and the laws of cause and effect assert inexorably that the reaction must succeed the action which produces it in its just proportion. One of the first persons whom I encountered in England, assured me that he had 46,000*l.* worth of property in the hands of agents in Melbourne; and the news which he received the same day was of the failure of these agents. Even the *Argus*, one of the most encouraging advocates of the soundness of mercantile affairs in this city, gives a list of no fewer than 295 persons summoned before the court of requests.

The failures already are stated to amount to upwards of one million sterling. In fact, the extraordinary romance of the past points inevitably to a deep baptism in the future. The extravagance of the past three years, beyond anything in the history of wild speculation except those of the

tulip mania and the South Sea bubble, would stand alone in the affairs of this world if it had no adequate retribution. It would be an isolated fact, detached from all the laws of time and space, of physics and morals. The height at which property stands above all really inherent value, above all that can be made of, or derived from it, must as surely bring it down to the natural level as if it were subject to specific gravity. As we have already asserted, this state of things will no more be able to perpetuate itself than pyramids can stand on their points.

But the grand and interesting question is, how will the colony pass through the crisis, and what is the colour of its future? On these essential points there can be no doubt, and there need be no fear. A colony which produces from its own wild surface an annual income of 1,650,000*l.* in wool, and which digs from its bosom 3,000,000*l.* worth of gold,—a colony which has many millions of acres of fertile, virgin soil, can neither sink nor suffer long, if she have only fair play given her. She has within herself the elements of an invincible vitality, and under the energetic hands of Englishmen will march on towards a great future, undaunted and victorious, and all the more so, because the errors of the past will, we may trust, be the beacons of that which has to come.

At present the price of labour exhibits no decline; in some respects it is now higher than it was twelve months ago. Wood is still charged from 2*l.* to 3*l.* a cart-load; and English coals are selling at 8*l.* 10*s.* per ton!

The following are the rates of labour as paid in September, 1853, and at present:—

	September, 1853.				May, 1854.					
	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.		
Married couples (without family),										
with rations - per annum	70	0	to	100	0	80	0	to	100	0
Ditto, with family -	60	0	"	90	0	70	0	"	75	0
Shepherds - - -	35	0	"	40	0	40	0	"	45	0
Sheep-shearers - per hundred	2	0				1	0			

RATES OF LABOUR.

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	September, 1853.				May, 1854.					
	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.		
Hutkeepers - - per annum	32	0	to	35	0	30	0	to	35	0
General useful servants, with rations - - per annum	70	0	„	75	0	70	0	„	75	0
Bullock-drivers, with rations (on farms) - - per week	2	10	„	3	0	1	10	„	2	0
Bullock-drivers, for the roads „	2	10	„	3	10	2	0	„	3	0
Gardeners, with rations per annum	70	0	„	80	0	75	0	„	100	0
Cooks (male) - - per week	2	0	„	4	0	1	10	„	3	0
Waiters - - „	1	0	„	1	10	1	10	„	1	15
Grooms - - per annum	60	0	„	70	0	60	0	„	70	0
Carpenters (good house), town work - - per day	1	5	„	1	10	1	0	„	1	5
Masons - - „	1	10	„	1	15	1	0	„	1	5
Plasterers - - „						1	5	„	1	10
Bricklayers - - „						1	0	„	1	5
Compositors (2s. 6d. per thousand) - - per week						7	7			
Wood splitters and fencers, with rations - - per day	0	15				15				
Stockkeepers, with rations per ann.	55	0	„	75	0	50	0	„	75	0
Blacksmiths, accustomed to country work and to horse-shoeing - - per day	1	0	„	1	5	1	0			
Good farm labourers, with rations - - per week	1	5	„	1	15	1	0	„	1	5
Ploughmen, with rations „	1	10	„	2	0	1	10			
Labourers on the roads, with wood, water, and tent accommodation - - per day	0	8				0	10			
Seamen, for London, for the run home - - - - -	45	0	„	50	0	25	0	„	30	0
Seamen, for Calcutta, for the run -	40	0	„	45	0	20	0	„	25	0
Seamen for Callao - - - - -	40	0				20	0	„	25	0
Coasting - - - per month	9	0	„	10	0	6	0			

FEMALE SERVANTS.

Thorough servants - per annum	25	0	„	35	30	0	„	35	0	
Housemaids - - „	20	0	„	30	0	20	0	„	25	0
Laundresses - - „	30	0	„	40	0	40	0	„	52	0
Nursemaids - - „	20	0	„	26	0	20	0			
Cooks - - - „	35	0	„	50	0	45	0	„	100	0

Thus it will be seen, that while seamen's wages have considerably declined, showing that the mania in that class for running off to the diggings is over, most other

employments have preserved a rate of remuneration little affected by the downward tendency of other things, and in some cases, as those of cooks, laundresses, and gardeners, have advanced. But this cannot last. In the shock which prostrates commerce, labour also must go down. The rations mentioned, are 16lbs. of flour, 10lbs. of beef or mutton, 2lbs. of sugar, and  $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of tea, per week.

Gold has long reached a price most favourable to the diggers, and is now quoted at 3*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* per ounce; and the amount of this metal exported by this colony is as follows:—

From 1851 to 1852	-	-	-	-	3,539,422 ounces.	
In 1853	-	-	-	-	3,193,059 ditto.	
In 1854	-	-	-	-	3,022,596 ditto.	
Total				-	-	9,754,077 ounces.
Value at £4 per ounce				-	-	£38,016,308.

“First class heavy draught horses in good condition from 90*l.* to 120*l.*; second and third class do. (in more request), from 50*l.* to 80*l.*; useful roadsters and light harness horses, from 23*l.* to 60*l.* First quality fat cattle, from 14*l.* to 16*l.*; second do., 11*l.* to 13*l.*; lambs are worth from 10*s.* to 15*s.* Good fat sheep at from 14*s.* to 20*s.* per head. Thus meat is reasonable, and vegetables are plentiful, but the prices of these are out of all proportion with the facility the country affords for their production. For instance, carrots and turnips sell at 6*d.* per bunch, or 1*d.* each for small ones; young onions, per bunch of twelve, 6*d.*; radishes, 6*d.* per bunch; asparagus, 2*s.* for a bunch of about eighteen tops; cabbages, from 6*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* each, according to size; cauliflowers, from 6*d.* to 2*s.* each, do.; lettuces, 3*d.* each; broccoli, 6*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* each; spinach, 2*s.* a dish; old potatoes, 35*s.* per cwt.; new do., 6*d.* to 7*d.* per lb.; rhubarb, 1*s.* a bundle of about six stalks; cress, 6*d.* a bunch; and beet-root, 1*s.* each. Poultry and dairy produce also extravagantly high. For the former the following quotations may serve:—turkeys, 20*s.* to 25*s.* each; geese, 20*s.* to 30*s.* each; ducks, domestic, 20*s.* a pair; fowls, 16*s.* to 18*s.* a couple; and eggs, 3*s.* to 4*s.* a dozen. Fresh butter is bringing from 4*s.* to 5*s.* a pound, and sweet milk from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.* per quart.”



Such is Melbourne in May, 1854, altogether exhibiting a wonderful spectacle, especially when we look back a little. In 1838, Melbourne consisted of a nucleus of huts embowered in the forest, and had much the appearance of an Indian village. Two wooden houses served the purposes of inns, one kept by Mr. Fawkner, for the settlers who frequented the place. A small, square, wooden building, with an old ship's bell suspended from a tree, was used as a chapel by the various religious denominations. Two or three so-called shops of miscellaneous articles supplied the inhabitants; and Mr. Fawkner's MS. newspaper was the only journal of the colony. Take another look at it in 1842 and 3, when sheep sold at 1s. 6d. each; cattle, not at 12*l.*, but 12*s.* each, and Melbourne had 282 insolvencies.

There is no such instance elsewhere of rapid growth, and of a vigour not usually attending rapid growth. Spite of the want of land it would seem as if there is so far room and high remuneration for the labouring classes; and the crisis through which the trading class is passing may be regarded as one of our spring frosts at home, which strengthen the crops by checking momentarily their too active development. This crisis may render, too, an essential service to the Government, by checking its luxuriant extravagance, through which, with an income of upwards of 3,000,000*l.*, it is annually running 1,500,000*l.* into debt. The debt incurred within the last two years by the Government of Victoria, including the 400,000*l.* of the land-fund surreptitiously seized, amounts indeed to 3,271,005*l.* The actual expenditure of 1854 was 4,801,292! The colony, like a young heir, is now sowing its wild oats—anon it will have to reap them; and then will come, as a natural consequence, reflection; and, we will trust, a healthier tone, wisdom, and eventual strength.

## POSTSCRIPT.

*March, 12th, 1855.*—The newspapers, up to December 1854, bring from Melbourne the news of more mercantile failures, riots, and fighting at Ballarat; and something like a glut of workmen in Melbourne.

The unhappy circumstances at Ballarat only too gravely confirm my own strictures on the state of things there. The correspondent of the *Argus* thus remarks:—

“The Ballaarat outrage bears with it a mark of unanimity, on the part of the people, that is almost without a precedent in the history of riots in any civilised country. The fact that such an infamous outrage as the burning down of Bentley’s house could be committed in a British colony, and that not one in a hundred of the vast population of Ballaarat can be found who sympathises with the injured man, proves most unmistakably that there is something radically wrong in the government of such a people. When the riot occurred, some of the commissioners issued notices calling upon all the well-disposed people to assist in maintaining law and order, by enrolling themselves at once as special constables. Two gentlemen who arrived last night assure me that up to the time of their leaving they had not heard of one individual offering his support to the Government. Now there must be some cause for this, as for the riot; and it may be as well to say at once what rumour assigns that cause to be. As my information is derived from the statements of others, I do not feel justified in giving names (these will, perhaps, be given up at the proper time and place), but shall confine myself to a narrative of what are reported to me as ‘facts of easy proof.’ The first great fact is, that the diggers and other people at Ballaarat have long since lost all confidence in, or respect for, the Government officers of that district (allowing that there may be an exception or two, however). The second is, that the Government Camp at Ballaarat is a perfect hotbed of corruption; and that officers connected with other services are alike guilty of the most glaring malpractices. Among these, the following have been mentioned to me as being easily established. Bribery of the most direct and barefaced description has been unblushingly resorted to, particularly among the higher officials, in matters connected with publicans’ licences. Magistrates are said to be bound in unholy compact with many of the publicans. Horses, the pro-

perty of private individuals, are said to be fed at the Government expense in no small numbers. Contracts are entered into, annulled, or altered in a most suspicious manner, a system of 'commission' being established by the Government officials.

"The system of 'man-hunting' to find out the unlicensed diggers has been carried out more in the style of English fox-hunting than in that which should distinguish officers of the law apprehending law-breakers; and were it not that their necks might pay the penalty, some of these 'hunters' would as readily indulge in a day's 'man-shooting' as in a snipe-shooting excursion. The majesty of the law has been entrusted to the care of a most incompetent set of men; and the plunder of the Government, which pays and feeds them, seems in too many cases to be their sole object."

A complaint of want of employment in Victoria, by carpenters, masons, joiners, bricklayers, &c., is a new feature, and betrays a more severe shock to trade there than the journals are willing to admit. From a statement of the *Argus*, it appears that 800 men, at least, have been thrown out of work, and that the skilled labourers are obliged to seek work on the roads, railroads, &c.

"From an analysis of the signatures to a petition to the Legislative Council on this subject, adopted at a public meeting, and extensively circulated for signature, it appeared that 537 men had been unemployed for an average of five weeks each; that of them 217 were labourers, 112 carpenters, 42 masons, 30 joiners, and 21 bricklayers: the remaining numbers were distributed over about twenty other trades."

This is surely a *crisis*, and ought to convince all parties that it is time to cease penning up its mass of immigrants in one or two towns, and on the diggings. Why should dangerous crowds of people be compelled to exhibit themselves in the character of insurgents and paupers, when they might not only be living in peace in the country, but sending thence luxuries for the whole community?

The Geelong correspondent of the *Argus* argues well on this subject. After stating that, in consequence of land speculations, of 240,000 acres sold in the county of Grant, nearly 230,000 are lying wild, he observes,—

“It is a well-known fact that emigrants of small means arriving among us cannot find a place to make a home of. They cannot buy a piece of land, nor rent a piece of land, except at rates altogether unsuitable for their means. Work they must, and when they have wrought hard and long and earned a purseful, they more generally prefer leaving a country which offers them so little encouragement and proceed to New Zealand, South Australia, or some favoured land, where such abominable land systems as ours do not retard the progress of the country. At present the only inducement we can hold out to emigrants of small capital—the yeomen of Britain, say,—to improve their condition here, is hard work, at daily wages, and that doubtful. If instead of this these people could select a farm for themselves, within reasonable distance of any market, they would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity. They would be rendered happy by being able to settle down with their families to work for themselves, and to be able to be independent of a master. But no; there is no such prospect as this for them here under our present system; and nothing but disappointment, and in many cases misery, stares them in the face. Instead of diffusing happiness through the country, and setting good examples to others, these unfortunate people shed a feeling of discontent over all with whom they associate. Their hopes were blighted on arrival, and they see no probability of anything turning up to warrant them to hope for better times. To increase their dismay further, the small amount of land under cultivation tends of course to increase the value of provisions, and hungry stomachs are not easily reconciled to dear victuals. Under such circumstances, immigration must be forced, and we must pay for it. Reverse the picture, and immigration will flow in upon us to our hearts' content. Let the people of Britain know that they can get a home here if they wish to avail themselves of it; let them know that there is plenty of land to be had at a cheap rate, and another pound need not be spent in inducing them to come to a country from which so many hundreds have already been turned away with disgust. I do not believe that there is a country on the face of the earth possessing such splendid tracts of the richest soil, that produces so little from that soil as Victoria does, considering her population and the inducements she has to encourage agriculture. But notwithstanding this, year after year we find ourselves dependent upon foreign countries, or upon our colonial neighbours, for those supplies that we could produce ourselves. The direct cause of this is the difficulty experienced by in-

dustrious men of small capital in obtaining land. It is to be hoped that the Home Government will ere long see the necessity that exists for an immediate alteration of the present land system.

The mails up to January 5th, 1855, bring news of still increased distress and embarrassment. The papers contain a list of nearly 200 insolvencies, amounting to two millions sterling. The gold was steadily decreasing, and the Government increasing in expenditure; and, to make up its serious deficiencies, had seized upon the proceeds of the sale of Crown lands, guaranteed by act of Parliament, for the importation of labour, to the amount of 400,000*l.*, a fact likely to add an additional check to the colony, as it will cut off the supply of Government emigrants. As it is, great numbers, owing to the embarrassments of trade, the decrease of gold, and the embargo on land, have left the colony, and the census of last April does not give the amount of population expected. The total population of the colony, instead of 280,000, proves only 230,000; of Melbourne, instead of 97,000, only 71,000; and of the diggings, instead of 100,000, only 67,000.

## LETTER XL.

Sydney.—Beauty of the Bay.—View of the City.—Interior of City.—George Street.—Woolloomooloo.—Hyde Park.—Government House.—Domain.—Bourke's Statue.—Botanic Gardens.—Lady Macquarie's Chair.—List of Trees noticed.—Gigantic Nettle Tree.—Country Houses and Gardens.—Ride to Botany Bay.—Beautiful Shrubs.—Inn and Pleasure Gardens at Botany Bay.—Animals.—Shark-hunting Parties.—Old Cemetery of St. Andrews.—Sail up the Bay to Paramatta.—Cockatoo Island.—Orange Orchards.—Paramatta.—Ride to the South Heads.—Crossing Chasms in a Gig.—Settled Tone of Society.—Case of extraordinary Liberty.—Convictism.—Consumption of Spirits.—Land.—Scarcity of Labour.—Doctor Pomatum.—False Lord Lascelles.—A Lord importing Shoes.

Sydney, June 14th, 1854.

STEAM-vessels ply between Sydney and Melbourne twice or three times a week. Of these, the "City of London" and the "Waratah" are excellent vessels, with good accommodations, and well-supplied tables. They should be so, for, compared with the charges of such vessels at home, their rate is high. Seven pounds ten shillings for a voyage, frequently done in fifty hours, is a round sum; but these vessels are generally well filled, and the charge is only on a par with the usual prices of Australia, including provisions and coals, of which latter article, I think, Captain Bell, of the "Waratah" said they burnt about thirty tons on a trip, at 6*l.* 10*s.* per ton. My lot, however, was to get, in going, into a small steamer, called the "Fettercairn," which had an engine, apparently, of one-donkey power. The wind was dead in our teeth nearly all the way, and it was almost more than this one-donkey engine could do to make head against it. In fact, once or twice the captain despaired of getting there, and was on the point of putting about, and running back to Melbourne.

The character of this steamer was, no doubt, pretty well known to the public trafficking between these cities, for there were only two cabin passengers besides myself, and about a dozen steerage ones. Well, in about five days we had managed to plough our way thither. There was nothing on the voyage to record. The views we had of the shores were not very striking, Wilson's Promontory being the boldest, for it is the termination in this direction of the great Australian Alpine range. We passed a remarkable circular rock, called the Rodonda, with a huge cavern in it, and saw a number of other rocks stretching across the straits, towards Van Diemen's Land, as if marking the line of some former isthmus, uniting that island to the continent.

The Bay of Sydney, or Port Jackson, is the first fine object; and that is really fine. You enter it between bold rocky headlands, and it then extends for five miles before you, surrounded by wooded hills, of a great variety of forms, and into which run deep coves right and left; their shores being beautifully overhung with woods. On your left hand as you enter, you catch a view of the lofty tower of the lighthouse, and as you advance, you see handsome country-houses, beautifully located amid the forest hills.

As you draw near Sydney, you are struck with its noble appearance, running on your left hand along a ridge of hills, from a point of land on which stands a battery, between the inlets of the bay and beyond it, into the country.

The Government House, a fine castellated building, with a bold tower, stands finely above Fort Macquarie on the swell of the hill, commanding splendid views of the bay, of the town, and of the shipping in Sydney Cove, close under the town. On the left of the Government House, you have a fine scene from this part of the bay spread before you. The Park surrounding the house itself, richly

wooded with native trees; the Domain, or public grounds to the left; and the Botanic Garden, covering the slope of a lovely little cove, called Farm Cove. Still further to the left you observe a finely-wooded island, called Garden Island, I suppose from its vicinity to the garden; and beyond it, and the cove in which it lies, Woolloomooloo Bay, the new suburbs of Woolloomooloo stretching up a long steep.

The vessel bears you on past a very striking and busy scene of the town on its bold height, and shipping nestling at its feet; and, rounding Miller's Point, you find yourself in what is called Darling Harbour, but to all appearance shut into a large lake. The scene is at once beautiful and animated. There is a mixture of the charms of nature and of the works and abodes of men that strikes you with both delight and astonishment, when you consider in how short a time all this great city, with its shipping and commerce, has sprung up in this new world.

On your left runs along a steep slope the oldest portion of Sydney. The houses rise one above another thickly, and with an aspect of age upon them which seems to express considerably more than seventy years' existence. In fact, this part of the town reminded me strongly of the old town of Scarborough, as seen from the harbour. There were warehouses, wharves, cranes, piles of goods, yards full of timber and of other materials crowding the water-side, stairs and jetties thronged with busy people, and steamers coming in and going out, with all the rushing roar of steam, and the clamour of human voices from ships beyond ships, and boats plying across to the other side, on whose hills around rose other towns, or, at least, populous villages, amongst them Pymont and Balmain, standing conspicuous, with their rocky terraces, and churches, chapels, and picturesque houses. A more striking and enlivening scene than this you shall rarely see in any part of the world. Wide waters alive with commerce



and human life, the overhanging town, and all around villages, woods, hills, rocky slopes, and delicious hollows, retreating from the bay into woodland wildernesses, out of which peep the white walls and roofs of delightful country houses.

All at the same time is so English. They are English towns, English villas, English quays, warehouses, shipping, and people. Advancing into the town, you are still more struck with this English character, and with the actual growth and splendour of the place. You advance through streets and squares of new and first-rate houses, all worthy of London, and superior to London in this respect, that they are built of a beautiful freestone, and not of wretched perishable bricks and stucco. You arrive in George Street, which may be said to be the great back-bone of the city, running from the very point of the land called Dawes Point, on which stands the battery, up parallel with the bay, but only now and then in sight of it, away into the country towards Paramatta. George Street is the great thoroughfare and centre of retail business. It must, with Paramatta Street, in continuation of it, be at least three miles long. The main part of the street is extremely fine. It would suffer little from a comparison with Regent Street, and in its material, that fine freestone, is much superior. It is wide, paved with the solid rock on which it stands, and, therefore, never exhibiting bottomless sloughs like Melbourne; its causeways are broad and beautifully paved; its shops are extremely handsome, and display to the eye rich stores of all kinds of goods. Draperies, books, prints, jewellery, glitter and attract you on all sides in plate-glass windows, as in one of London's best streets. Banks, inns, offices, and public buildings claim their share of admiration; a gay and well-dressed and active throng is passing along on each side. Splendid equipages flash by, the heavy, laden drays and carriages of commerce toil on, and cabs and omnibuses are as regu-

larly pursuing their different ways as those of our own metropolis. In fact, all is stirring, wealthy, and brilliant; and it is much easier to imagine yourselves in a substantial English city, than in this comparatively new creation of the antipodes.

The farther you proceed along this street in the direction of Paramatta, the more the delusion of an English town pursues you. It changes gradually from Regent Street to Holborn, from Holborn to Whitechapel or Ratcliffe Highway. The houses dwindle down from first to second-rate, and even to third and fourth. The grog-shop at the corner loses the swell and outside swagger of the gin-palace, and assumes the character of the haunt of coaches, and the movers of the coach and cab world—jarvies, coachies, ostlers, hangers-on, are for ever assembled around it, and the fumes of its rum and brandy are diffused liberally over the street by the breath of this peculiar race. Then follow at intervals oyster-shops, coal and wood and potato-shops, always in some mysteriously-linked union, the greengrocer's, the hay and straw warehouse, the cheap shoe and boot shop, and the barber and the old-boot-stall. You rub your eyes and say, "This never can be Sydney: it is Shoreditch."

But you have only to take some one of the streets which cross at right angles, and proceed a little way, to convince yourself that you are far enough from England. The gardens which there mingle with the houses in the outskirts and the better parts of the town, are rich with a tropical verdure that leaves no mistake about the matter. The cabbage-palm and the banana, the tall clumps of bamboo fluttering their streamer-summits in the air, the orange and lemon, the tall formality of the Norfolk Island pine, and the dark rich evergreen foliage of the Moreton Bay fig and India-rubber tree, tell you that you are in a warmer climate than even Melbourne, and far more so than Van Diemen's Land.

The best part of Sydney consists of three or four streets running in parallels with George Street, and of others which cross them at right angles, as Pitt Street, Castle-reagh Street, Elizabeth, Philip, and Macquarie Streets. Taking one of these cross streets, Market, Park, or Bathurst Street, you soon find yourselves in Hyde Park, of all places: but a very different place to the original Hyde Park, for it has not a single tree in it. No doubt it had once trees enow; but they shared the fate of all trees which come in the way of new colonists, for where they settle, they settle also every individual tree, and leave the ground as bald as a slate. Such is Hyde Park at present. It rather resembles a spacious square, railed off with a drive round it, and enclosed by terraces of very much such houses as you would find surrounding a park or square at home. On the eastern side stand the new University, the Museum, and a conspicuous Catholic church. The University is but in its infancy; and, indeed, is to be removed, or rather established, further out of town, I believe on the Paramatta side. But here at present you observe a troop of young collegians going to and fro, in orthodox gown and tile; and my friend Dr. Woolley is at the head of this first university of Australia.

From this elevated situation of Hyde Park you have a good view of a considerable part of the neighbourhood. Westward lies the town; eastward the singular hill side of Woolloomooloo, crowned with sundry windmills, extensive barracks, prisons, and other buildings, with the Surrey Hills to the south of it. Woolloomooloo, like all the neighbourhood of Sydney, is built on the sand rock; and the number of new houses, based on this bare rock, and built of it, presents a strange stony aspect, at present little relieved by the verdure of trees or gardens. Indeed, it seems an entire town of stone, both buildings and base.

Southward from Hyde Park you have a view of the Sand Hills, at about a mile distant, now covered with cemeteries, thickly studded with their white monumental stones. Around and above them the bare, loose sand-hills still show themselves, intermingled with green downs and occasional patches of wood. Northward lies what may be called the aristocratic part of Sydney. Streets of superior houses, with their ample gardens, the Club House, the Public Library, Macquarie's Hospital, the Chamber of the Legislative Council, and the Government House, with the Public Park or Domain, and the Botanic Garden.

At the north-west corner of Hyde Park rises the lofty spire of the church of St. James; and, taking your way past it, you soon arrive at the Club, a good building, where you find all the departments of an English club. This building stands on a slope looking down towards the harbour. A little above it stands the Public Library, a substantial, rather heavy building, of the native stone, but containing one of the finest and largest rooms that you will find in any library anywhere. A reading-room is attached to it. The amount of books is large; and there, also, I observed exhibited a number of paintings by Mr. Marshal Claxton, who is very successfully practising his art here, where Mr. Woolner has modelled various clever medallion profiles of leading people, which are duly appreciated. In fact, art is beginning to be patronised in Sydney. Nearly opposite to the library is the entrance to the Domain, having at its right hand the extensive buildings of Macquarie's Hospital, including the Council Chamber.

Here you have one of the noblest prospects that any city can present. Close on your left is the Government Park and House, standing finely overlooking the Bay on one hand, and the town on the other, as well as the opposite slopes of the north shore. The Domain, a beautiful park, beautifully wooded, descends at your feet to the Botanic Gardens which skirt the Bay; while the eye, ranging

over these, traverses a most extensive and elysian scene of waters, woods, promontories, and retreating coves, made still more attractive by occasional glimpses of those country mansions which are inimitably located in this Australian fairy-land.

The Bay of Sydney reminds me extremely of the Havel, near Potsdam. It has the same broad expanse of water, surrounded by hanging woods, and enlivened by pleasant islands, especially as you see it from the Phauen Insel.

On this beautiful height, soon after entering the gate, you arrive at a colossal statue of Sir Richard Bourke, the Governor here at the time of the settlement of Port Phillip, and one of the best Governors that the colony has had. The statue is by Baily, and does him great credit.

Descending through the Domain to the Botanic Garden, we find them possessing one of the most enchanting situations imaginable. They occupy a considerable extent of land sloping down to the bay, and following its windings of cove and promontory. They are divided into two parts, a carriage-way running between them. The upper one is more expressly laid out as a botanic garden, and contains a most comprehensive collection of plants and trees, all ticketed. The lower portion is more in the fashion of a pleasure-ground. The ground is retained in grassed lawns, with seats under the trees, and is, naturally, the grand resort of the Sydney public. The gardens enclose in a fine circular sweep Farm Cove. Walks are cut along the beach, and wind amongst the trees; the native rock jutting out here and there. These walks extend along the beach of the Domain, over rock and steep, under the shade of wild foreign-looking trees and shrubs; cedar scrub and tea scrub, with huge masses of rock starting from the earth under their shadow, and splendid piles of cliff overhanging the clear, smooth water.

Following this walk round the next point, you arrive at what is called Lady Macquarie's Chair. This is a long seat cut out of the native rock, reached by several steps also hewn out of the solid rock, and overhung by a canopy of the same. In front, at some distance, lies the beautiful object of Garden Island, and glimpses of the bay right and left, with Woolloomooloo to the right showing its bare, rocky, lofty slope, its stony, drab wilderness of houses and crowning windmills.

All about Lady Macquarie's Chair there are other seats cut in the rocks, some of them most curiously canopied by the overhanging crags, worn into the strangest tracery by the action of wind and water, as if actually carved out by the chisel. There is abundance of fine wood about these walks, or along the margin of the bay, making the place perfect as a scene of human enjoyment of nature, and that so immediately near to a large city, and in the full reach of its inhabitants. Darling Point opposite, with its gardens and villas, the wooded, hilly island, Garden Island, and the retreating sweep of Rushcutter's Bay, with the views over the main breadth of the bay, all lend their charms to this delicious spot. Garden Island has been preserved carefully by the Government for the free enjoyment of the public, in spite of most seducing offers of heavy sums by private individuals for the purchase of it. It is, of course, a grand resort of picnic parties.

Following the beach from the Botanic Gardens the other way, you find a walk leading close along the edge of the water under the Government House, round by the fort, and so to the town. Fine oysters are gathered here, in the shallow pellucid water; and you see number of boys, and also of adults, generally busily looking after the "natives." From the fort the view over the bay, with the ships lying at anchor—the Calliope, a man-of-war, and a small war steamer amongst them—is very attractive.

But we must return to the gardens. The lower gardens contain a large reservoir, which is filled with sea-water by the tide, and which was constructed by Governor Macquarie for a turtle pond. The trees, which lend shade and beauty to these gardens, are of the most splendid tropical kinds. There are some of the largest Norfolk Island pines known out of Norfolk Island itself. East India pines; noble fig trees, — one venerable old fellow growing on the rock overhanging the walk by the water, in such a manner that it is obliged to be propped up by a stout tree stem. There are oleanders ten or twelve feet high, and proportionally large; large Moreton Bay figs, more resembling magnolias than the ordinary fig; large India-rubber trees, with their ample glossy leaves; the two last trees in ample masses, and large as many of our forest trees, giving, as I have said, a peculiar character to the gardens and shrubberies all about Sydney. Besides these, the native gum trees present here varieties which I had not before seen, especially one kind planted along the sides of the carriage road, between the two gardens, the bark of which resembled sponge, and when pressed with your finger poured out water freely. The weather had been rainy lately, and the whole of the bark of these trees was charged with water.

In rambling about the upper, or more exclusively Botanic Garden, I noted down a few of the trees, which may give a little idea of the rich variety which it contains. The *Opuntia tuna*, from South America, 15 feet high, with a stem 7 or 8 inches in diameter; I have seen this gigantic cactus growing wild in the neighbourhood of Rio of equal size. The *Cedrela Australis*, the red cedar of New South Wales, more resembling a walnut tree than an ordinary cedar; *Doryanthus excelsa*, or giant lily of New South Wales; *Bologhia lucida*, the blagd wood of Norfolk Island; *Phœnix farinifera*, the wild date tree, East Indies; *Eriobotrya Japonica*, the Loquat,

*Mangifera Indica*, the Mango, East Indies; *Thea viridis*, green tea, China; *Melia Azedarack*, the white cedar, Syria; *Psidium poniferum*, the red guava, West Indies; *Circis siliquastrum*, the Judas tree, South of Europe; *Urtica photrinophylla*, shining nettle, Moreton Bay. This is a genuine nettle, but a large tree, with bright glossy leaves, something resembling mulberry leaves in shape, and bunches of white flowers, something like small bunches of white lilac flowers, but pendant. The most remarkable nettle, however, of this country is the *Urtica gigas*, or rough nettle tree. This tree has a large leaf something like a sun-flower leaf, hirsute beneath, and every bristle has a most painful sting. Some gentlemen who had been in Illawara collecting specimens of trees for the Paris Exhibition told me, that they had measured one of these wonderful trees, which was 32 feet round, and, I think, 140 feet high.

Such is the potency of the virus of this tree, that horses which are driven rapidly through the forests where they abound, if they come in contact with their leaves, die in convulsions. I have seen a statement of the actual death in convulsions of his horse by a traveller through these parts; and one of the gentlemen of the Exhibition Committee told me, that as they were riding in the Illawara forest, a young man who had lately arrived, and was ignorant of the nature of the tree, breaking off a twig as he rode along, had his hand instantly paralysed by it. His fingers were pressed firmly together, and were as rigid as stone. Fortunately, a stockman who was near, observing it, came up and said, "I see what is amiss, and will soon set all right." He gathered a species of arum, which grew near, for nature has planted the bane and antidote together, in the low grounds, and rubbing the hand with it, it very soon relaxed, and resumed its natural pliancy.

This is precisely the process used by the children in



England. When nettled, they rub the place with a bruised dock-leaf, saying all the while, "Nettle go out, dock go in." But to return to our list.

*Dracæna nutans*, New Holland; *Brugmantia suaveolens*, Peru; *Corynocarpus levigatus*; Kraka of New Zealand; *Ficus syringifolia*, the Moreton Bay fig; *Ficus macrophylla*, also from Moreton Bay; *Ficus elastica*, the India-rubber tree, East Indies; *Dimocarpus Lichi*, the Lee Chee, China; *Castanospermum Australe*, Moreton Bay chestnut; *Catalpa syringifolia*, Catalpa, North America; *Platynerium grande*, Great Staghorn Fern, New South Wales. This prince of ferns, with leaves some feet large every way, in unbroken sheets, was growing on pieces of wood in the garden walls, having a perfect architectural look. They seemed calculated to suggest the ornament of the capital of some new Australian column, as peculiar to it as the acanthus to that of Corinth. *Olea Americana*, North American Olive; *Eucalyptus glauca* glaucous gum-tree, New South Wales, with blue perfoliate leaves; *Sterculid heterophylla*, the Kooromin of New South Wales.

These are but a mere sample of the host of trees collected in these gardens, and which, all growing in the open air, are a sufficient indication of the climate here.

These gardens are conducted on the most liberal principles; the public has the freest admission, and seeds and plants are supplied gratuitously to all parts of the world on application. I brought away myself nearly a hundred kinds of seeds.

A debt of perpetual gratitude is due to Lady Macquarie, by whose liberal energies these parks and public grounds were secured to the public. A most well merited inscription cut in the rock, over what is called her chair, records her having procured the laying out of these beautiful and extensive reserves. By this means she has conferred on Sydney an enduring boon. She has saved these lovely features of the neighbourhood from the havoc

and desecration of speculation and private cupidity. What a pity that Melbourne has not had an Elizabeth Macquarie to preserve the natural features, which its inhabitants are irremediably destroying. It is the feeling of grateful remembrance which has, no doubt, caused the Australians, in every town which they erect, to name one of the principal streets, Elizabeth Street.

Here, indeed, the name of Macquarie seems impressed on everything. Governor Macquarie was one of the most energetic and public-spirited governors that the colony ever possessed. Mr. Sidney, a recent writer on Australia, has pronounced this just eulogy on him:—"He found New South Wales a gaol, and he left it a colony. He found Sydney a village, and he left it a city. He found a population of idle pensioners, paupers, and paid officials, and he left it a large, free community, thriving on the produce of flocks and the labour of convicts." He wonderfully improved and enlarged Sydney. He erected the splendid hospital and all the accompanying buildings. He made new streets in the town, and roads in the country, especially the great one through the passes of the Blue Mountains. His hand seemed everywhere, and, accordingly, his name seems now equally ubiquitous. Macquarie Hospital, Macquarie Street, Macquarie Lighthouse, Fort Macquarie, &c., meet you on all hands. The name of Macquarie is stamped for ever on Sydney, and is found, more or less, in every quarter of Australia.

My visit to my old friends, the Smythes, at Darling Point, gave me opportunity of observing the bay from that point. From their pleasant villa you see the wooded shores of the opposite side of Rushcutters' Bay, and Garden Island, with the point of Lady Macquarie's Chair, and across the main bay to what is called the North Shore. Here the changes of light and shade on the water, and on these surrounding hills and woods, are often exquisitely beautiful. Sometimes the water, one clear,

glassy expanse, is only stirred by little boats that are slowly gliding to and fro with what little air they can catch, or a pleasant breeze gives them life and speed, and sends the waves to the pebbled beach, with an inspiring sound.

Every part of this neighbourhood is beautiful. It is a succession of earthly paradises. The wealthy inhabitants of Sydney have shown true taste in locating their country-houses in every direction upon these rocky, woodland shores, slopes, and promontories, which give them every element of natural beauty, freshness, and rural seclusion, within sufficiently near proximity to the city.

Nearly on the summit of Darling Point, another friend, Mr. Skinner, has fixed his abode, enjoying the most extensive and varied views over still different scenes of ocean and romantic land; and close below him on the strand lies nestled the villa of Sir Thomas Mitchell. While Mr. Skinner might almost drop a stone down Sir Thomas's chimney, the Surveyor-General seems as though he could conveniently angle in the bay from his drawing-room windows.

At this same Darling Point, but on the farther side from Sydney, I had an opportunity of seeing, in the house and grounds of Mr. Mort, what pre-eminent advantages for suburban residence these inlets and forelands of the bay present. Mr. Mort's grounds ran along a steep side of a hill, and gave you every variety of garden, lawn, wood, and wilderness that can be conceived. Here you find in his conservatories, or in the open ground, a splendid variety of trees and flowers, from almost every region; his views across the next cove of the bay, and to the forest hills beyond, are superb; and he was erecting a perfect palace on the summit of a rock, in a position of natural magnificence rarely to be met with. The still more extensive grounds and woodland walks of Mr. William Maclaye, I was prevented by my short stay from visiting.

In all these gardens you find the vine, the fig, the peach, the nectarine, the loquat, the banana, and indeed almost every fruit of every climate, flourishing in the greatest luxuriance and excellence in the proper season. The soil on the hills is often, to all appearance, a mere sand, yet vegetation thrives wonderfully on it; and in the hollows between the hills, the market-gardeners have found a deep, rich, alluvial soil, and appear to raise crops of vegetables which Battersea and Fulham could scarcely surpass.

I rode with Mr. Smythe across the bush to Botany Bay, a distance of about five miles. The whole of the country which, after ascending the downs near Darlinghurst prison, is nearly flat, is a pure sand; a pure white sand, as clean and white as Calais sand. There did not over the greater part of the track, appear any soil to discolour it; yet, in this fine, silicious sand, excellent, I fancy, for glass making, which in summer must be almost red hot, an assemblage of curious and beautiful shrubs was growing, and in spring, especially in September, they tell me, as wonderful a growth of flowering plants appear. Now, in winter, the whole ground is clothed with a thick mass of shrubs, each of which is worthy of a conservatory.

At every step your eye falls on some new or beautiful thing. There the *Zamia*, like a young date palm, spreads out its rigid bushes; there the prickly *Solanum Sodomæum*, or Dead Sea apple, shows its light yellow fruit on its low diffused stems. There half-a-dozen species of *Banksia*, present themselves, every one different from those of Victoria. In our ride we collected specimens of *Banksia æmula*, *marginata*, *spinulosa*, and *latifolia*. Two of these were extremely elegant, their branches and foliage much slenderer than in the *Banksias* of Victoria and Van Diemen's Land, and their singular bottle-brush shaped flowers in one were of a brilliant, pale gold, and in another its flowers, a foot long, were of a rich red gold. The other two, the *æmula* and *latifolia*, were shrubs, having leaves

very different to their tribe generally; in one they were like the leaves of the Spanish chestnut, and as large; in the other, they were narrower, but boldly serrated.

Besides these, the *Lambertia formosa* displayed everywhere its rosemary-like bushes, and rich crimson flowers; and we recognised the *Crowea saligna*, with its pink flowers, the *Hakea dactyloides*, and a most elegant fern, *Gleichenia dicarpa*. Besides these, brilliant crimson flowers, formed of fine long filaments radiating from their common stem, and a variety of others, were continually tempting us to dismount and gather.

Nothing can more admirably display the all-disposing and accommodating power of the Creator, than the clothing such an apparently sterile sand, and, in summer, burning desert, as this must be, with so luxuriant and superb a vegetation. One does not wonder at the astonishment and enthusiasm of Sir Joseph Banks, when he stepped ashore here, and found himself in the midst of so entirely new and singular a family of plants, shrubs, and trees. Well might he name it Botany Bay.

The bay itself, when we reached it, was not so striking, except for its solitude. It is a large expanse of water, opening only by a rather narrow outlet to the sea. The country all round it is flat, consisting of this sand, and covered with a dark and monotonous-looking forest. Its waters are, to a great extent, very shallow, and a moment's view shows you that it never was calculated for a settlement. How such a navigator as Captain Cook could have left the magnificent bay of Sydney unexplored, just at hand as it was, is wonderful, and equally wonderful that the botanists ranging around in search of new plants, did not come within sight of its waters, and its very striking environs.

The bay, however, is a great resort of the Sydney people in summer; close to it stands an inn, the Sir

Joseph Banks, which has pleasure gardens, and walks, and baths in the bay, and boats for the amusement of the visitors. It has, in fact, a sort of Zoological Garden, in which are various animals and birds, native and foreign. There, besides an elephant, Bengal tigers, &c., you see kangaroos, emus, wombats, and wild dogs; the finest pair of native dogs that I have seen are there. The inn-keeper informed us that he had a lion on its way from the Cape, and in front of his house he had a splendid collection of living birds, and in his house numerous others stuffed. You may imagine that a ride or drive over the blossoming and aromatic heath, and the attractions of these objects, with the, perhaps, in their estimation, superior ones, of good viands and wines, draw great throngs here occasionally; and one of the great amusements is shark-hunting in the bay. These monsters abound in all the waters both of Botany Bay and Port Jackson; and parties in boats go out and angle for them. On hooking one, he is hawled up as quickly as possible to the side of the boat, and struck upon the nose with the boat-hook, which stuns him, or he would speedily upset the craft, and his friends would as speedily lop off the limbs and make short work of his captors.

We saw at a distance the monument of the unfortunate La Perouse on the shore near the entrance of the bay.

I paid a visit to the Sand Hills, lying south of the town. I had read some accounts of burials of convicts there in the early times of the colony under circumstances which interested the imagination, and I expected to see it a spot of desolation and neglect; but, on the contrary, these hills were occupied by two extensive and thickly-populated private cemeteries, one of them belonging to the Catholics, and abounding with crosses and Irish names. I also visited the old burial-ground in George Street, near St. Andrew's Cathedral. The people here very wisely seem to have commenced from the first with the

cemetery system, instead of crowding their churches and churchyards with corpses. But the town has long engulfed this old cemetery, and therefore it is disused as such, and the interments made farther out.

But here you find traces of the earliest inhabitants of Sydney, and, indeed, there is a certain air of antiquity about this inclosure. It is surrounded by brick walls, and clothed with a thick English-looking turf. There is an old school, looking very like an English grammar-school, on one side of it; and behind that is rising the new cathedral of St. Andrew. Schoolboys are playing about as in some old school-ground or churchyard at home; and the memorial stones, which are laid flat on the ground, are many of them broken, and others sunk sideways, their inscriptions being too frequently effaced by the restless feet of children. I could scarcely persuade myself that I was not in an old burial-ground in England, all looked so little in keeping with a comparatively new land.

The first tomb on the right hand of the gate bore the name of Shelley; that on the left hand, "Captain Gavin Hamilton, commander of the ship Sidney Cove. Died, 1798." Most of the dates are from 1796, within eight years of the founding of the colony, to 1814, when it seems to have been disused. It abounds with the names of the officers of the New South Wales regiment. A new cemetery is now opened at Camperdown.

Steamers run every few hours to Paramatta, distant sixteen miles. I took one of these, and found the trip a very interesting one. The part of the bay called Paramatta River, entering between Goat's Island and the promontory on which Balmain stands, is for about three parts of the way very picturesque and attractive. The sand-hills rise from the water in fine variety of form. Here are green slopes dipping down into the bay, smooth and smiling; there stout, bold pieces of rock; and here, again, swell up the hills, covered with large, square masses of

crag in splendid disorder, but everywhere covered with forest or with shrubbery. There is the same running forward of promontory and retreating of woodland cove as in the great area of the bay, but on a smaller scale; and country-houses, vineyards, and orange orchards, perpetually vary and enliven the scene.

The whole of the banks and hills around, in the whole neighbourhood of Sydney, are sandstone rock; and the cliffs near the water are frequently carved out by the tides in very picturesque style. And on the sloping surfaces of the hills, great blocks of stone are thrown about in all directions, producing a fine effect as seen amongst the woods.

We passed on our left the well-known Cockatoo Island, the depôt of the convicts; a naked, yellow sand rock, with houses built along its ridges, and its glaring baldness but little relieved by a few gardens. Sentinels were pacing to and fro below, and convicts were working in groups above, at getting and hewing stone for a dry dock near the place, an advantage which Sydney has not hitherto possessed.

Mangrove trees, with a thick shining foliage, grow in the salt water along each side of the bay for the greater part of the way; and very extensive orange-orchards showed themselves as we advanced. These orchards are now splendidly studded with their golden-hued fruit, which shows beautifully on the dark green ground of the foliage. The trees grow with great freedom and luxuriance. They are not trimmed, as we see them in conservatories in England, into a round head on a naked stem, but they grow more in the style of Portugal laurels, putting out branches from near the ground, and forming magnificent masses of foliage and of fruit. At Kissing Point, where the boat puts out passengers, there is an orchard which extends nearly three miles up the country from the water-side, and walking in it amongst these fine, fresh, unconstrained trees, hung all over with the riches



fruit, you might imagine yourself in the real Hesperian groves.

Paramatta is a long straggling village. Originally it was the seat of Government, and here is a Government House, old barracks, an orphan school, king's school, and other public buildings. It has also some manufactories of the fabric called after the place, Paramatta, and also of Tweeds. But the place looks anything but thriving. I walked up its straight road, between very quiet houses in large quiet gardens, till I came to the park in which stands the Government House, resembling a group of cottages standing on a rising ground backed by stables. The park was rather naked of trees, and the country monotonous. At the entrance of this park the late governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, had the misfortune to lose his lady by the upsetting of the carriage, and since then Paramatta has not been a very favourite residence, but a railway now in progress from Sydney will no doubt give a new life to this village, making it, in fact, a suburb of Sydney.

Paramatta reminded me of England by the number of English trees,—oaks, willows, &c.,—which had been planted, and I walked amongst withered leaves rustling on the ground as in an autumnal forest in England. Yet ever and anon, orange and lemon trees, loaded with fruit, recalled me from these delusive impressions. There were lemon hedges, with their fruit all gone next the lane, but hanging very thickly within, demonstrating that the boys here are not deterred by the sourness of lemons, as the American boys in Sam Slick's story were by the sour apples, which the old gentleman by grafting took care should hang outside his orchard.

A ride to the South Heads,—a most delightful ride through the hills and woods above the bay, with some of my friends, and a splendid view over the rocky portals of the bay, over wide shores, and broad ocean, from the light-

house, completed my peregrinations about Sydney. Near the lighthouse, I observed to my surprise an Independent chapel, certainly I should think the most independent chapel in the world, for it was quite independent of any congregation, and they were already wisely turning it into a couple of dwelling-houses.

The weather setting in wet cut off a very charming project of a journey on horseback into Illawara, about seventy miles distant. The splendid vegetation and gigantic trees of this quite tropical region, its palms, its stupendous nettles, its parasites, and lianas, hanging and streaming in the wind from the summits of its lofty trees, its amiable bushes furnished with hooks to seize you as you traverse the forest, and other delights, strongly attracted us, and not the least of them the recommendations of the journey, which was said to be through the most steep and rugged defiles of the mountains, with, I think, only one halting-place on the way,—Liverpool. Then there were grand chasms many fathoms deep in the road, that you had to leap, and yet over which a gentleman said he had driven in his gig. This, he said, he accomplished by taking a strong rope with him, and, on approaching one of these chasms, flinging the rope over the branch of a tree on the other side, and then hauling the gig over, letting it swing in the air till it could be lowered safely on the right side! A second Munchausen; but, of Australians, the first!

My visit in Sydney, from its necessarily short duration, did not allow me to see so much as I could have wished of the interior life of the place; yet, what I did see gave me a high impression of the intelligence and refinement of its society. I was thrown into contact with various of the leading men of the different parties and denominations there; and everywhere I found as high a stamp of education, intellectual activity, and social culture as in the best cities of Europe. There was nothing to remind you that

you were in a place founded only sixty-six years ago on a foundation of felony; nothing that you were not in London itself. Many of its wealthier people have been educated at the English universities; many others have come hither in the years of their manhood. There is a tone of liberality, a spirit of progression, and a most cordial feeling of hospitality which extremely charmed me in the people of Sydney. And yet, how much more quiet and steady seemed the spirit of the place than that of Melbourne. There, all is in an exotic and feverish condition. The eager, hurrying, unsettled tone of men who live only to speculate, and grasp at vast fortunes to be accomplished to-morrow—nay, to-day, this instant—is the spirit of Melbourne. Before that, art, literature, science, the philosophy of government, of religion, and of the social economy, fall flat, as dust or dross, and are only accepted and admired by the few. Here you could come near very few people of any standing who would not be pronounced accomplished men at home, or who had not a genial and active taste for the advancement of knowledge and religious enlightenment.

A very striking proof of this occurred to me very oddly. I was riding towards the South Heads with some friends, when two gentlemen drove past in a carriage, and immediately turning back, asked if I were not of the party. Though somewhat surprised by this odd rencontre, I announced myself; and one of the gentlemen said he was the Rev. Mr. Poer, from England; that he had seen some of my friends just before leaving, and gave me news from them. They drove on, and we rode forward considerably amused by the scene.

A few days after I met Mr. Poer; and he told me that he was sent out with the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, to raise subscriptions for the building of chapels, and establishing ministers of the Independent Church in these colonies; and asked me what I supposed he had obtained at one meeting? I guessed in vain; and so would the reader.

It was 20,000*l.*! In proof of the fact, he produced his subscription list, and allowed me to examine it. It contained items of individual subscriptions of 2500*l.*, 2000*l.*, 1000*l.*, and 500*l.*, put down with a promptitude which has scarcely any, if any, parallel. In Melbourne he had obtained, but as the fruit of various efforts, I believe, about 7000*l.* This, with the wonderful golden harvest, the vast influx of people, and the then apparently unapproachable prosperity of Melbourne, formed a curious contrast. We must, however, recollect the comparatively short career of Melbourne, and that revolutions so sudden and exciting as the gold mania of Victoria, are not favourable to the growth of literature, art, or religion. They will come anon. I only wished to point out the more *natural* tone of Sydney. In Melbourne we seem to be in a hot-bed, a forcing-house; in Sydney, in the natural atmosphere.

And yet Sydney participates in the same class of social and political evils as Victoria. It has an ingrained taint of convictism, that will take years entirely to work out; it has the same tendency to excessive intoxication in its lower classes; and it has the same obstructions to the sale of land.

Under the fair and pleasing exterior of Sydney life, there is a horrid line of demarcation running through society which becomes more and more apparent, as people become more acquainted with it. The emancipist class cannot overpass it; and a thorough amalgamation of the two discordant elements will require a long period yet. Perhaps the love of show and splendour inherent in the emancipist class, tends to keep open the gulph which they thus by ostentation strive to hide. The houses, furniture, and equipages of these people have a dash and *outré* display about them, which naturally attracts attention, and leads to inquiry.

It would appear to be an hereditary quality. Mr. Macarthur, in his account of New South Wales, speak-

ing of the arrivals of female convicts, says:— “The madams on board, occupy the few days which elapse before landing, in preparing the most dazzling effect on their descent on the Australian shore. With rich silk dresses, bonnets *à la mode*, ear pendants, brooches, long gorgeous shawls, and splendid veils, silk stockings, kid gloves, and parasols in hand, dispensing most sweet odours from their profusely perfumed forms, they are assigned as servants. The settler expected a servant, but receives a princess.”

Victoria has reduced the evil of convictism, by drawing off its latest convict class; but the old wound remains deep in the bosom of society, and will not cicatrize at present. As, however, I may have to speak of this elsewhere, here I will only remark, that the population of the colony is estimated at 230,000, and it costs 130,000*l.* annually in police.

The consumption of spirits, though large, bears no proportion to that of Victoria. In 1853, the duty amounted to 193,239*l.*, while that of Victoria, for about the same population, amounted to upwards of 600,000*l.*! The duty on wine in New South Wales for 1853, was 32,296*l.*; and of ale and beer, 8,915*l.*: total, 234,440*l.*!— which is estimated to make, though so far inferior to the quantity drank in Victoria, upwards of 3½ gallons of spirits, of 6 gallons malt liquor, and 2½ gallons of wine, to every man, woman, and child, in the colony. There is wide room for reform even here, and the soberer classes are extremely anxious to effect it, if they knew how.

With respect to the sale of lands, the same laws and impediments operate as in Victoria, but then, the pressure of immigration has not been so overwhelming, and the mischief has not been so keenly felt. The land-owners and land-holders, the old grantees and purchasers, together with the squatters, constitute a much more powerful body than the isolated squatters in Victoria, and they are equally

resolute to resist encroachment on their present privileges and monopoly. But the mischief contains its own remedy. When the land embargo is taken off in Victoria, as it assuredly will be from the force of circumstances, its doom is sealed. Unless this colony can offer the same attractions to immigrants as its neighbours, immigration will cease, and the progress of the colony will cease with it, for those without land will walk over the borders and get it in the next colony. It will become stunted, and instead of the leading colony, will sink into the lowest and weakest. But this is a condition, which, with the present population, enterprise, and public spirit of New South Wales, is an impossibility.

Labour, in all the Australian colonies, is extremely scarce, and the colonial Government has been called upon to give free passages, as that of Van Diemen's Land does, exclusive of the Government immigrants furnished by the land-fund.

While wandering about this fair city, I have often thought what a strange record could be furnished by "the oldest inhabitant" of the singular characters who have been sent hither during half-a-century; from Barrington, the celebrated pickpocket, who became a first-rate police magistrate, down to Margaret Catchpole, who became a highly respectable and wealthy woman, and to Tawell, who made a fortune here, while under sentence of transportation, and went home to finish his destiny, by hanging. I shall close this letter by an amusing anecdote, and a piece of convict romance, which were related to me.

An old female servant accosted my informant, on coming home one day, with the assurance that Dr. Pomatum had called, and wanted to see him; "What Dr. Pomatum?" asked the gentleman, "I know nobody of that name!" "What!" exclaimed the woman, "not know Dr. Pomatum, who was sent out for trigonometry!"

My friend then recognised, through the disguise of the

old woman's language, Dr. Parmenter, who was transported for bigamy.

Some years ago, a clever and impudent convict gave himself out to be Lord Lascelles, the son of the Earl of Harewood, and ran a most amazing career of successful imposition. I have heard the story related by different persons, with considerable variations, but this is very much as told me by a gentleman who was at the time in the colony.

This man professed to be sent out by the Home Government to ascertain the real condition of the colony, and the administration of its affairs. He represented that it was necessary to the successful execution of his mission that he should be perfectly incognito, and that as little as possible should transpire as to the fact of a Government commissioner being in the colony on such an errand. He made a tour up the country, and prudently began his operations at a distance from the capital. The victims whom he selected he flattered by taking them aside, on arriving at their places of abode, communicating to them in secrecy his rank, title, and object, and stating that he had been recommended to them as the especially able, well-informed, and trustworthy persons of that particular district. The twig was well lured; the tickled vanity of the individual almost invariably won the impostor his confidence; and as the parties thus addressed were generally country gentlemen, living in the simplicity of the remote bush, he was received and treated as a live lord—a *rarissima avis* there, was pretty sure to be.

The man was feasted, fêted, and caressed; all that he pretended to wish to know was freely communicated to him, and as it was received in strict confidence, so he solicited in return that no breath of who he was should escape them.

But my Lord Lascelles had lordly tastes. He was very fond of good horses, and always made particular inquiries

whether such were in possession of the host whom he honoured with his company, and purchased the very finest, paying by cheques on his banker in Sydney. One would have thought that these cheques, on being presented and disallowed, with the ominous words "no effects," would have speedily checked his lordship's career. But, somehow or other, they did not for a long time. Probably the able actor had so impressed these rural victims with his being a real nobleman, that they might suppose there was some mistake at the bank: that the cheque had been presented when his lordship's remittances had failed to arrive; and that by making any public stir about the matter they might damage the business of Government. However, the illustrious stranger had gone away: they had to find him; and his course was so still and secret that this was no easy matter, across the thousands of miles of a wilderness and thinly peopled country. Be that as it may, they did not find him, and they did not expose him, till he had had ample time to make a very extensive tour through the colony, doing astonished squatters the honour of an aristocratic visit; flattering them by his confidence; and purchasing their very finest horses. At some of their houses he had staid for weeks together, enchanting his entertainers with his affability and abandonment of all lordly pride. At one place he had done a most generous action in a most unostentatious manner. The daughter of the house where he was staying attracted his attention by her evident pleasure in the society of so great a man, and finding that the circumstances of her parents were not very flourishing, he told her one day as they were alone together, that he understood that she was engaged to a neighbouring settler, but that the young man not being rich, and her father not being able to give her a fortune, the marriage was delayed. "Now," said he, "I have such a regard for you; I see that you are so thoroughly good and amiable a creature, that I am anxious to do



what I can to remove this obstacle to your happiness. Here, then," he continued, "is a cheque for 1000*l.*, take care of it; keep it to yourself; do not say anything to your father about it; only communicate the circumstance to your lover. That is your dowry; as soon as you are married present it for payment, but not before."

Of course the astonished girl was overwhelmed with gratitude for this unexpected generosity. She kissed his hand, bathing it with floods of tears,—finding no words strong enough to express her emotion. His lordship took his leave; and the happy girl secured her treasure in the most secret place of her chamber, and lived in the full felicity of her good fortune and bright future, till she was awakened from her dream by the eventual exposure of the impostor.

In another case he had gone further than this, and was on the point of marrying the daughter of a wealthy squatter, when the frightful discovery of his real character was made public.

During this time he had been down in Sydney, ever and anon, probably to dispose of his valuable horses; and during one of these visits, it having oozed out that Lord Lascelles was actually in the colony, and in the city, the Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, who knew Lord Lascelles very well, wondered that he did not even privately call upon him, and sent him an invitation to dine with him. His lordship took care, of course, to stay away, and to take his departure from the city with as little delay as possible.

In many cases this bold adventurer had not only purchased horses, but had got his cheques to large amounts cashed. One of his last visits was to a gentleman whom one of my informants well knew. He had staid with him for some time, and finding that he was not prosperous,—only too common a case with the squatter and agriculturist at that period,—he had generously presented him

with a cheque for 1000*l.* as a loan, to be free of interest, and to be repaid at the perfect convenience of the receiver.

This gentleman, who had pressing debts, which he was anxious to discharge, lost no time in travelling down to Sydney; but was struck dumb by the clerk at the bank handing him back his cheque, saying that no such person had any account there.

The poor man, dreadfully cut down, rode back home, where he found his lordship still very quietly and comfortably sojourning, and told him of the disagreeable discovery he had made. The *soi-disant* Lord Lascelles affected a well-assumed surprise, and begged that he would not distress himself, for that it must originate in the fact of his remittances having been longer on the voyage than he had anticipated. That it was true that this was a bank that hitherto had had no transactions with him, but that his agent had advised him that to that bank his remittance was sent. The money could not possibly be long before it arrived; and he advised the poor man to retain the cheque, and present it again shortly.

In a fortnight, during which time the unhappy man, devoured with anxiety, and dunned by his creditors, had restrained his impatience, he again rode down to Sydney, once more with trembling nerves presented the cheque, and this time received the prostrating answer, that not only had the so-called lord no money there, but that he was now known to be a most arrant swindler, and that there were sharp inquiries after him, both by Government and a host of his dupes in every quarter of the colony. The wretched man hastened to his inn, mounted his horse, and rode up homewards, frantic with rage and mortification, and vowing to murder the villain the moment he set eyes on him.

He rode with such rapidity, thinking only of his own villainous treatment, and not of his horse, that he could scarcely make the poor brute hold out to the end of his journey.

Covered with dirt and perspiration, haggard with excitement and the fatigue of his desperate ride, he at length saw his own home,—flung the reins on the staggering horse's neck, sprung down, and rushed into the house, exclaiming wildly, "Where is the villain?"

His wife, alarmed at this frightful apparition of her usually quiet husband, asked what villain? "Why," he replied, "that villain who has been here so long; who gave me that cheque, that base ——"

"What!" exclaimed the wife, "Lord Lascelles?"

"Lord Lascelles! Lord Devil," shouted the infuriated husband, "he is no lord! He is a swindler! a thief! a convict! a murderer! a devil! Where is he? for I'll kill him. He shall not live to play his games on honest men again. Where is he?"—snatching down his gun with the air of a maniac.

The wife thought he was one. She was greatly alarmed, and with tears and agitation, begged him to calm himself.

"Where *is* the monster?" again fiercely shouted the husband.

"Where is he?" replied the wife, "why, he is only gone to ——, about twenty miles off; he has been gone these three days, and said he should be back to-day. Do, for heaven's sake, my dear, calm yourself, he will soon be here."

"Gone! gone!" said the gentleman, "how did he go?"

"Why," replied his wife, "in the gig, as he has always done."

"In the gig!" again shouted the poor man, trembling from head to foot, "in the gig! oh Lord! and that's gone, too! the villain! the villain!"

"But he'll soon be back," said the wife, "he always has done so, and why shouldn't he now?"

The distracted husband stood as if he were about to go into a fit. His mouth was open to speak, his eyes rolled wildly, every muscle of his face twitched convul-

sively; and the poor wife, more than ever alarmed, exclaimed, "Gracious God! speak! speak! what is amiss?"

The poor fellow gasped for breath, seemed actually suffocating, but a moment afterwards, said faintly, as his spasm seemed to relax, "He's gone! he'll never come back; he's no lord, but a real devil; his cheque is a cursed cheat, and now he's got my horse and gig,—oh Lord! oh Lord!"

"No, no," now cried the wife as frantically as her husband, "he will come back, he must come back, for he had no money to travel with, and was obliged to get 30*l.* of me to make some purchases at —."

On hearing this, the husband gave a short outcry, half shriek, half groan, and sunk speechless into his chair, perfectly overwhelmed by this finish to his misfortunes.

The shameless impostor was taken and brought to trial at Sydney. He was there readily identified by the police as a well-known convict, but he still persisted that he was what he assumed to be—Lord Lascelles—and refused to plead, because he neither was nor could be, in the colony, tried by his peers. Spite of his assertions, and his unabashed and dogged persistence in this declaration, however, he was convicted and condemned to the chain-gangs of Norfolk Island.

The last phasis of life here, is not that of convicts enacting nobility, but nobility enacting the merchant. Lord Charles Churchill, a son of the Duke of Marlborough, came out hither in his yacht, with a cargo of boots and shoes, but too late for a profitable market; the real merchants having long ago glutted the market to extremest repletion. Lord Charles, I hear, has therefore set sail for Hobart Town, whither, as a desperate punster observes, he will, at all events, not make a *bootless* errand.

## LETTER XLI.

## VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

Entrance of new Governor to Melbourne.—Passage to Launceston.—The Tamar.—Launceston Coach to Campbell Town.—Views on the Way.—Ben Lomond.—Western Tiers.—Campbell Town.—Country Life here.—Young Lady House-painting.—Mona Vale.—The Stout Gentleman and the Bushranger.—Female Factory at Ross.—Ride across the Hills to Swanport.—Execrable Road.—Primitive Gates.—Lost in the Woods.—Fine Views of Mountains and Southern Ocean.—Oyster Bay.—The Merediths.—Lovely Country.—English-looking Farms.—The Schoutens.—Maria Island.—Animals, Birds, and Flowers.—Tasmanian Wolf and Devil.—Fine Climate of Tasmania.—Social Security.—Natives extinct.—Convicts mostly gone.—Pressing Want of Labourers.—Free Passages given by Government.—Statistics of the Island published by Government.—State of Wages.—Prices of Provisions.—List of all Kinds of Working People wanted.—An excellent Opening for Emigrants.

Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, July 5th, 1854.

I RETURNED to Melbourne in good time to witness the arrival of the new Governor, Sir Charles Hotham. A triumphal arch was erected on the bridge over which he had to pass into the town, where, of course, the kangaroo and emu cut a prominent figure with the Hotham arms, and the union Jack, indicative of Sir Charles being an admiral, and over all a grand motto "Victoria welcomes Victoria's choice;" on which the *Argus* put forth a mischievous paraphrase, "Victoria welcomes Hobson's choice;" having a double allusion to Hobson's Bay, in which the new ruler lay at anchor, and to the colony having no choice but Hobson's in the matter. A clerk in a Government office, also, being requested to sketch a design adapted to the embellishment of this arch, humorously sent in a *hot ham* smoking on a dish.

But these were only the jocose ebullitions of fun and good humour. The whole population were most cordially disposed to welcome their new viceroy, and to hope all sorts of benefits from his administration. The train which attended his entrance seemed endless. Liardet's beach, where he landed, is about three miles from the town, and the throng of carriages, horsemen, and people appeared to fill the whole way. There was no lack of banners and evergreen garlands, showy rugs, and lengths of carpet hung out of windows in continental style; and the streets and house-tops exhibited thronging thousands.

I posted myself on a rising ground near the town-hall to wait the advance of the procession, and had the interval amusingly filled up by two young people close behind me, who, unconscious of their next neighbour, were discussing my own visit to the colony. The young gentleman informed his *chère amie*, that I had been all over the colony learning all about it; been at all the diggings, and if I had not been actually digging, I had been "doing as the diggers do," — going amongst them, talking with them and learning all about them; and he did me the honour of assuring her that now we should soon know all about the colony. The young lady asked if Mary Howitt had come too, which, to my great surprise, he assured her she had, saying, "that is quite characteristic of the woman, you know."

What further characteristics I might have learned, the sound of a brass band and a great stir and hurraing of the people put an end to. The band sounded on, all necks were stretched from upper windows, roof gutters and parapets; everybody below was literally standing on tip-toe, and every one endeavouring to catch a peep at the expense of his neighbour behind, when suddenly off went all hats, round they swung in a thousand hands, white handkerchiefs were also fluttering and flopping most vigorously, like the wings of a legion of pelicans; out burst a stunning

hurrah, and up galloped — not Sir Charles — but a merry digger in regular digger costume, acting the new Governor, bowing right and left, as he galloped up the street, waving his old wide-awake most gracefully, and grinning from ear to ear, at the grand take-in that he had accomplished, by coming briskly up immediately after the band. Everybody fell at once into the jest, and renewed cheering, mingled with peals of laughter, accompanied the wag all the way up the street.

The band by some means had got half a mile at least a-head of the real procession, so that a long time elapsed before the genuine Simon Pure rode up, accompanied by a number of the colonial officials on horseback. Then succeeded about a mile of carriages before that of Lady Hotham arrived; and as a faithful historian I must say honestly, lest I lead some painter or historian on this side of the globe into an error, that nine-tenths of these carriages were carts. Good honest carts they were, crammed with loads of honest, hearty people, some of them to the amount of a baker's dozen; and as joyously loyal as they could have been in the most elegant carriages that could be constructed. I suppose any vehicle that boasted as many as two wheels, had been pressed into the great occasion, for I waited till I began to think the procession was like the Irishman's rope, and had the other end cut off, for no end came. The cannon began to thunder forth the announcement of his Excellency's arrival at the government house, and I took my way down to the steamer, and embarked for this island.

The passage from Melbourne to Launceston is about sixteen hours on an average; and the charge for this in the first cabin, is 6*l.* 10*s.*, only a pound less than to Sydney, averaging a three days' voyage. This, compared with the passage from London to Ostend, which I have made for 10*s.*, shows the difference between European and Australian cost of travel.

The "Ladybird" was soon steaming up the river Tamar to Launceston, Captain Robertson, the commander, beguiling the tedium of the passage with alternate performances on the guitar, the accordion, and his own voice, so that no syrens on any saline rocks would have had any chance with him; and as all was smooth, and the track as beaten as that between your dining and your drawing-room, we were well satisfied to leave the vessel's course to the trusty mate.

The view of the coast as we approached it, was fine, consisting of hilly ranges, well wooded; the more distant mountain heights of Ben Lomond, and the Western Tiers peeping over them. The town lies forty miles up the winding Tamar; the banks of which are very pleasing, with woods, rocks, and patches of cultivation.

Launceston is enclosed in a sort of amphitheatre of hills of some elevation. The population is about 10,000; and the buildings are a good deal spread over the flats near the river and the slopes of the hills. A few ships were lying at the quay; but the river here is shallow and muddy, with a wide stretch of marshy land on its banks, which cannot, one would think, be very healthy for the town thus shut in. One consequence is, that during the winter season, dense fogs settle every night on the town, and frequently hang there through the day. They have beautiful water, however, supplied by the South Eske, which, on the west side of the town, breaks through the mountain ranges from a fine cataract in its escape from the gorge of these hills.

The mail for Hobart Town leaving at five o'clock in the morning, I set out with it, leaving my chance of a more particular survey of Launceston to the future. At this early hour of departure, I was vividly reminded of the old coach times of England. At the inn door stood a well-appointed and well-horsed stage coach, with coachee and guard all in orthodox costume, and with the genuine



old smack about them. Crack went the whip, and off we started along as finely a macadamised road as England can present, and which runs with a directness of a Roman road all the way across the island to Hobart Town—120 miles,—the product of convict-labour. Victoria, with all its gold, has nothing of the kind to show.

The old feeling of coach travelling was heightened by the fact of a severe frost, which the sun during the whole day had not power to disperse. We had a steep pull up the hills, and then came out into a pleasant country, with large tracks of cultivation, farms, and gentlemen's houses. As we advanced, the richness of the land and the extent of cultivation decreased considerably. The country was flat, for a sort of valley runs all the way across the island, dividing the mountains of the east from the west. The woodlands near the road were covered with a rank sedgy grass; and a good deal of the land at this season was lying soaked with wet. This portion of the road, however, exhibits the worst part of the country bordering it; for not only is the country round Launceston very fertile, but as you advance, the land seems to improve in richness and pictorial beauty all the way to Hobart Town.

On either hand, east and west, towered lofty ranges of mountains at some distance from the road. On our left, Ben Lomond showed his huge bulk, rivalling his namesake in Scotland, but of very different shape. Instead of the conical form of that, this mountain displayed a long range terminated at the southern extremity abruptly, and in the most extraordinary fashion that I ever saw in any mountain. It appeared rounded off in a rather quick bend, and the outer edge of the circle deeply ploughed out into very regularly-shaped bead-work, as if done by art. It is basaltic, and took that form in passing from a molten to a solid state.

On our right, what are called the Western Tiers rose with equal boldness and greater variety of form. They

are heavily wooded, and the woods upon and amongst them are far denser than anything which can be found in Victoria. A gentleman assured me that he had traversed fifteen miles of forest, at no great distance from Launceston, where not a blade of grass was to be seen. This is a rare case in Australia.

In a statement presented to me by his Excellency Sir William Denison, and of which more anon, this character of these hills is given:—"About forty miles from the west, and the same distance from the north coast, a table-land of about one and a half million acres in extent rises about 3000 feet above the level of the sea. On this elevated land are numerous lakes, which form the heads of the principal streams flowing to the south, the west, and the north; and from it a spur or mountain range runs in a direction a little to the east of south, and separating the valley of the Derwent from that of the Gordon and Huon rivers, has hitherto proved an almost impassable barrier to the progress of the population towards the west coast.

"A mountainous range of less decided character, and broken through at one point by the valley of the South Esk, separates the central and more settled districts from those on the east coasts. The principal portion of the population of the island is thus, at present, confined to a narrow strip of land between those two ranges of hills."

This is the tract that we are now travelling. In about forty miles we reached Campbell Town, standing in an extensive plain surrounded by distant hills. Campbell Town is a village of about 600 inhabitants, with two or three good inns, and the houses in general good substantial residences, scattered about in their gardens. Opposite to Morrison's excellent inn, where I got down, I observed over a little shop the following inscription, giving evidence of the abode of an eccentric:—"Napoleon and Liberty's Little Emporium. By the Old Squire. Dieu et mon Droit."

By the kindness of an old friend, long established here, Dr. Valentine, I was enabled to see a good deal of this fine neighbourhood. With him I drove over to Mona Vale, a good stage further on the way towards Hobart Town; and saw, with much pleasure, the many fine country houses, and fertile farms in this rich and agreeable valley. Here the proprietors reside in all the comfort and elegance of English country life. Grants and purchases of tracts of excellent land at the commencement of this century, are now become valuable enclosed estates, on which good houses, with gardens, conservatories, and every requisite of rural luxury and abundance, display the old English aspect and character in a finer climate. Labour is the one great desideratum, however, required to crown the good fortune of these enviable proprietors. The irresistible attractions of the Victoria gold-fields, and the cessation of the transportation of convicts hither, have made labourers and workmen of all kinds pressingly scarce. We found the daughter of one house, a young lady with all the accomplishments and acquirements of her station, actually finishing, in despair, the work of the house-painters, which they had left in the middle, six months before, and could by no possibility be lured back to. This spirited damsel, reminding one of the independent life of America, was going through her task with great success, with her step-ladder, her brushes, her pots of paint, and bottles of oil, all about her, in a most workmanlike style, and was only puzzled a little to make her paint dry, a difficulty of which we readily suggested the solution.

At Mr. Kermodé's, one of the most liberal and able members of the Legislative Council, where we dined, we saw the portrait of his father, the original settler, a Manxman. This gentleman, as his portrait showed, was a very powerful man, and he displayed his vigour in a singular manner. At that time the island was infested by swarms of felons of the most desperate character, who had escaped from

their masters into the bush, and become the terror and scourge of the country. Robberies, burglaries, and murders of the most frightful description were their daily or nightly work.

As Mr. Kermode was driving along the road in his carriage, a fellow ordered it to stop, opened the door, presented a pistol to Mr. Kermode's head, and demanded his money. Mr. Kermode, observing that he was alone, seized the pistol, wrenched it from the fellow's grasp with one hand, while with the other he dragged him into the carriage, gave him a good pummelling with the stock of his own pistol, and flinging him down into the bottom of the carriage before him, told him to lie there, and to lie still or he would blow his brains out. In this manner he drove on to Hobart Town, and delivered him up to the authorities.

This same stalwart gentleman purchased Battery Point in Hobart Town, as I have been told for 800*L.*, now one of the most valuable properties in the island, and a few acres of which his son, the present Mr. Kermode, informed us he had recently sold for 20,000*L.*, with which he had bought 40,000 acres of land in New Zealand, which he expected ere long would realise three or four pounds per acre. He is said to possess also on this paternal estate upwards of 50,000 acres. Such are the opportunities which did and still do, especially to the capitalist, present themselves in this austral region.

On our way to Mona Vale, we paid a visit to what is called the Female Factory at Ross, a neat village on the banks of the Macquarie river. This female factory is a depôt of the female convicts who are not consigned to particular persons, or who are sent hither by an order from the magistrate for one cause or other. It is at once an house of asylum and correction.

We found a considerable number of women, chiefly young, in this place, which has all the discipline of a prison. The women have separate wards and separate

cells, according to the causes or offences for which they are confined. There are solitary cells to which the refractory are consigned, and the strictest discipline is maintained. They have a chaplain, and a chapel is included within the walls, and the inmates are kept as much as possible employed on one thing or another. The greatest part of the women seemed to have been sent there to be confined in more senses than one, for nearly every one of them had a child in her arms, or by the hand. No part of the island, rich as its valleys are, certainly showed more fertility than this factory at Ross. The morals of the inmates were not so apparent as their fruitfulness. For the rest, everything was maintained with a neatness and extreme cleanliness, which do the utmost credit to the magistrates and managers, and the deportment of these prisoners was quiet and modest. I was glad to hear that owing to the cessation of transportation, the necessity for these factories was diminishing, and that this was soon to be given up, and the inmates removed to Hobart Town.

At Campbell Town I procured a horse, and having the good fortune to meet with a gentleman going thither, I proceeded across the country to the east coast to pay a visit to my old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Meredith. The distance was about forty-five miles across the ranges, and certainly presented such a road or rather track as I had never yet, for the same continuous distance, attempted in one day. Soon after leaving the plain on which Campbell Town stands, we ascended into the hills, which are 2000 feet above the level of the sea. The frost was so strong here that the ice in many places would not break under the horse's feet. Every night, indeed, while in this neighbourhood the frost was very severe, the thermometer standing occasionally eighteen degrees below the freezing point, and not thawing at all in the daytime for a week.

The woods extended nearly the whole way, presenting a continued succession of stony ranges and swamps, so that it was impossible for the greater part of the way to go

more than a foot pace. Over the loose stones of the road you were obliged to let your horse stumble along and pick his way as well as he could. Once off these, you were wading in black boggy mud up to the mid-leg of the horse, and at every step breaking the ice. Out of the bog you were on the loose stones again, and then again into the bog, and then into a mixture of both, bog with stones at the bottom, some loose, some standing up in points and knobs which required all the care that both you and your horse were possessed of to keep him on his legs.

My companion, who had traversed these "Delectable Mountains" before, at every expression of wonder on my part at the dreadful state of the roads, kept comforting me with the cheering information, that "this was nothing yet; there was far worse ahead. Why, we were neither come to the tea-scrub swamp nor the peppermint scrub."

With these animating assurances, we thus crawled forward, like a couple of Job's own snails, through scenery precisely like hundreds of miles which I have seen "on the other side," as they call Victoria, and as the Victorians call Van Diemen's Land. Endless extents of tall gum-trees, and especially gigantic stringy-barks, now diversified by swamps, through which we had to ride with the ice crashing below, and the thick bushes of the tea-scrub raking our sides. The woods were heavily strewn with fallen, dead timber. In some places the desolation of the scene was indescribable. Huge wildernesses of rocks and great stones thrown one upon another in melancholy disorder, and all overgrown with grey lichens. Vast quantities of dead timber lay tumbled and decaying upon these crags. Shrubs sprung up out of the crevices of the stones; and, in other places, the ground was bare and damp. Then, again, we came to places where millions of young trees, like poles, had grown up in closest array, and had been killed by the wet and frost of winter. There they stood, a forest of death, or half dead, half alive, and burnt black with bush fires. The deep, boggy mud, the huge prostrate

trunks of trees rotting in it, the excessive sensation of cold and damp, so rare in Australia, and the silence of these unbroken forests, were all made the more gloomily sensible by our slow progress.

To add to this slowness, we were ever and anon stopped by a gate; for, unlike the country "on the other side," all these bleak, and often most barren mountainous roads, were fenced off in immense enclosures; and everybody seemed to have contrived to run their fences, not along the sides, but right across the road; so that you had continually to dismount to open a gate that would not consent to be pulled open by any person on horseback, and which had generally a pool of mud under it, into which you had to wade mid-leg deep. Yet upon every one of these obstructions there was written the request to "shut the gate after you;" sometimes politely, "Please to shut the gate!" but more often brusquely, "Shut the gate!" And these gates, that neither liked opening nor shutting, had the most original hinges! I never regretted so much not being an artist as I did on seeing these Anakim hinges, which consisted each of a slab about three inches thick, ten wide, and five feet long, which was laid horizontally over the gate-post and the back of the gate, with a hole for the top of the gate-back to work in.

For the first twenty miles we saw only one house; but then we came to two: one the hut of a stockman, and the other of a constable. Here we refreshed ourselves and our horses as well as we could, and then went on. But very soon we came to what is *par excellence* called the Bogs on this road, but which are really no bogs at all. They are merely low marshes, overflowed at this time of the year with water, but perfectly sound and covered with turf; affording, as I understand, in summer the most luxuriant pasturage, and where the flocks and herds are chiefly brought for the season. Nay, so well do the creatures know these fat pastures, that, if they are missing out of any other part

of the run,—that of our friends the Merediths—they are sought for, and are almost sure to be found.

Here, however, occurred a considerable difficulty. All through the woods the track was plain and unmistakable, but here, where for the greater part of the year extend only grassy plains, every one is accustomed to take his own way, and there is no track at all. To add to the uncertainty, there are long lines of posts and rails running about alongside and across these swamps, and the least mistake of a turning through a gateway, or getting on this or that side of the fence, may thoroughly perplex and mislead you.

My companion, who had professed to know the way well, on approaching this place became evidently nervous and anxious, and at the huts engaged the constable to go and point out the right direction across the water, which was about two feet deep and half-a-mile wide. Spite of his directions, we missed the true defile through the opposite hills, and rode on for some miles along the foot of the ranges without any prospect of a track. Numbers of people before us have missed their way here, and galloped round and round these intricate swamps, which occur one after another, with belts of wood between them, till they are completely confounded and bushed.

As I perceived that we were totally wrong, and as the sun was already sinking behind the hills, I refused to advance any further, and told my guide that we must return to the stockman's hut for the night. To this he readily consented, and our horses, as well pleased, cantered back in very little time. We obtained, to our great surprise, good beds and excellent entertainment; and the next morning made the attempt to thread the swamps under better directions from the people here, with complete success.

When I saw through what woods and stony ranges we had yet to travel for upwards of twenty miles, I was right glad that we gave up the idea of proceeding in the evening. The low boughs of the forest would soon have swept us



off our horses in the dark, and the descent from the hills was so steep and so stony, that we found it quite enough to get down them leading our horses in the daytime, much more in the night. Besides, we should have lost the view of much magnificent scenery, which the nearer we drew to the coast of the Pacific burst upon us.

Fine descents of solemn forests stretched from our feet to the plain below,—deep ravines near us, and noble heights and forelands of the hills at various distances right and left, all grandly wooded, stood up in a solitary majesty; and out before us shone the glorious Pacific, leading on the imagination to many an Indian isle, and to the giant rivers and mountains, and myriad peoples of Eastern Asia itself.

Oyster Bay, enclosed by bold rocky mountains, the Schoutens, and Schouten Island, a magnificent bay, washed a region of level fertility at our feet, in which lay Swanport, the place we were seeking,—the residence of the Merediths. The moment we began to descend the hills on this side, we seemed to have reached a more genial climate. Great quantities of the beautiful epacris were in flower in the woods, and shiacks in abundance mingled with the native myrtle and beech gave a new character to the foliage.

The whole of this delicious neighbourhood has been so livingly described by my friend Mrs. Meredith, that I need only touch its scenery passingly. I found my friends in a charming retirement,—the bold, forest hills behind them, the broad expanse of Oyster Bay—some ten miles wide, I believe, and hemmed in by its boldly varied barrier of sea-washed rocks—before them; while all round lay farms of a most English aspect, and the Swan and Cygnet rivers giving their life to the fertile lands around Swanport.

Splendid hedges of English furze enclosed the approach to Mr. Charles Meredith's house, in blossom even at this winter season, and diffusing in the sun its familiar odour.

I found my friends, whom I had last seen at the time of their marriage in England, surrounded by a flourishing family of fine boys, and enjoying all the pleasures and amenities of English country life in a more genial climate. Of the flowery beauty of these scenes in summer, Mrs. Meredith's "Home in Tasmania" tells us amply; and I can conceive that, at that season, this part of Van Diemen's Land must be a perfect paradise.

I accompanied my friends in various rides into the woods, and amongst the farms. On one occasion we climbed up the forest hills till we reached a pile of stones commenced by the unfortunate Sir John Franklin, when Governor of this island, and upon which every visitor of course deposits his tributary stone. I laid mine there with a sorrowful inward conviction that the worthy originator of this modern cairn was sleeping somewhere where the snow of the north, and not the flowery turf or the grey stones of the south, would be his monument.

On the farms we found a whole colony of the Amos family, mentioned in Mrs. Meredith's work as excellent neighbours. Their fields were enclosed with hedges of blooming furze or sweet-briar, and to their capital houses were attached ample farmyards, barns, and buildings, with all the wealth of cattle, pigs, poultry, and pigeons that you are accustomed to see about the richest farms of England. It might have been a favoured nook of England, and the clear streams that wind through the fields, added force and pleasure to that impression.

Farther off, we visited the abode of the Rev. Mr. Dove, who now occupies a pleasant residence, once the home of the Merediths, and whose name I recognised as having met with in West's History of the island as prominent amongst those who exerted themselves, but in vain, to civilise the natives previous to their deportation to Flinder's Island.

In another direction we followed the coast down till we got a good view of Maria Island, so named by Tasman after his beloved Maria Van Diemen, and which has been

used as a stronghold for the detention of convicts, or political exiles, being at one time the appointed residence of Mr. Smith O'Brien.

Mrs. Meredith, whose "Wild Flowers of England," under her maiden name of Twamley, are well known, has painted beautifully the principal wild flowers of this island, which resemble those of Victoria for the most part, but present some species which I had not seen there. The birds and animals of Van Diemen's Land also vary in some degree from those of the opposite shores of the mainland. They are said to have here no leatherheads, no grey magpies, no wild turkeys, and only the smaller laughing jack-ass. The warbling crows came and fed at the very door like so many pigeons, and enormous flocks of green parrots everywhere were committing wholesale depredations on the springing corn. The dingo does not seem to have ever prevailed on this island; but, on the other hand, they have an animal peculiar to it—the Tasmanian wolf, or hyena, as they call it here. It is a long, smooth-haired animal, of a greyish-brown, with black stripes across its back. A specimen may be seen in the Regent's Park Zoological Gardens. It rarely, I believe, attacks men, but is as destructive to the flocks as the dingo. Another animal peculiar to the island, and a terrible destroyer of lambs, is called the Van Diemen's Land devil. It is of the size of a small dog, nearly black, with a white stripe across its rump, and another on its chest. It has a thick ugly head, great goggle eyes, and is of a most ferocious nature. It burrows in the ground, and preys on small animals; and is of that brutal nature, that, like the wolf, if one of its own species is wounded or killed, the others will come and devour it. I believe there is no specimen of this creature in England, but a portrait of it may be seen in Gould's Australian animals.

The climate of Tasmania is much cooler than that of Victoria: the severe and continued frost which I found here of more than a week's continuance is a convincing proof

of it; but the gentler heat of summer is a recompense for that; and the moister atmosphere gives the climate a greater resemblance to that of England. Perhaps no climate could be found more agreeable to English constitutions; and the beauty of a great deal of the scenery, the abundance of flowers, and the quietness prevailing here, so different to the present state of things in Victoria, render the island extremely agreeable to those who enjoy country life in its most tranquil and favoured condition.

There was a time when the state of the island was far different, and when the most terrible atrocities were everywhere taking place. At one period the hostile spirit of the natives, a much more vigorous race than that of Victoria, and the numbers of desperate convicts who had escaped to the bush, made the whole country a pandemonium. The natives resented the injuries which they were constantly receiving from these banditti, and also from a low class of settlers; and, led on by Mosquito, a Sydney native banished hither, made indiscriminate raids on the country people who lived at a distance from neighbours. In 1830 seven weeks of destructive war on the natives were made. The convicts pursued alike black and white with a wild and licentious ferocity. The names of their leader, Michael Howe, and his associates, Whitehead and Watts, will long remain words of terror in Tasmania. Outrages and murders of the most frightful description were everywhere occurring; and in vain the Government endeavoured to suppress them. But at length, by the exertions of Mr. Robinson, since Chief Aborigines Protector in Victoria, the natives were persuaded to exchange Tasmania for Flinder's Island; and the gold of Victoria has been equally persuasive with the convict race. They had made their way over thither to the amount of 9000 in eighteen months; and the island now is as quiet and secure as any country in the world. Numbers of people in the most isolated parts of the island never fasten their doors at night; and you may

travel alone in any direction with the most perfect security. Such is Tasmania; and perhaps it is never likely to be very populous, the good land being comparatively small in quantity, and the bulk of that already in the hands of old grantees or purchasers, — unless gold should be found in any considerable quantity, of which, however, there is no immediate prospect. A reward has been offered for the discovery of an available gold-field; and numbers of prospectors have been traversing the island. But though they have found gold, it is in quantities too small to pay. A few diggers are at present at work at Fingal, on the coast, but only with indifferent success. I saw no traces of quartz in the ranges I passed.

The pamphlet already referred to, issued by order of his Excellency, says, “A large portion of the Island is owned by or rented by persons of established character, many of whom are retired officers. The great majority of these persons have been long settled on the land which they occupy. Their possessions are of various extent, from, perhaps, 70,000 acres downwards. The settlers are engaged in agriculture, in sheep and cattle farming, and the cultivation of hops, &c. The country is studded with their mansions, houses, and farm buildings, which, in many instances, are of the most substantial description.”

Therefore the statement continues, “Those who desire to fix themselves on the populous and improved parts of the colony, must purchase land from the present owners at the current price, for in such situations all that is valuable is private property. To do this to any considerable extent, it will be necessary to wait for favourable opportunities; but persons possessed of various amounts of capital may thus obtain farms on which improvements, more or less extensive, have been made; and there is nothing to prevent an industrious and careful mechanic, or working man, from becoming in a few years the proprietor of a cottage and garden.”

Moreover, for those who may desire to become squatters, Government publishes the following statement: "Any person, by the Regulations of July, 1848, whose respectability is certified by the police magistrate of the district, can rent any of the unoccupied lands of the Crown, from 500 to 5000 acres, at 1*l.* per annum for every 100 acres; but solely for grazing, not for cultivation."

For labour there is, owing to the vast draught of the working population to the gold-fields, a universal and pressing demand; but unless there was a more alluring prospect of ultimate settlement on land, there can be no great inducement for the working classes who wish to settle on land to emigrate hither, if Victoria, as it is to be expected, should "unlock its lands," which are both extensive and rich.

The Government pamphlet states that the island contains 16 millions of acres only, that 3 millions of these are private property, and that of the 13 remaining millions of Crown lands, two are occupied by squatters under grazing licences, so that only 11 are yet unoccupied, and of these a very large proportion are barren stony ranges, which the same authority admits "will not for many years be susceptible of cultivation or improvement."

I have been assured that the most promising portion of the island for fresh settlement is on the western coast, particularly on the banks of the river Mersey; and this official pamphlet seems to confirm that idea:—"The larger portion of the land to the west of the Tamar, and between the lofty plateau before alluded to and the sea, is covered with a forest of heavy timber; but the land is of the best quality; and the timber, in consequence of the demand which exists in Victoria for building and other purposes, is most valuable, and repays, by its sale, not only the whole cost of clearing the land, but the land itself. There is a similar district, though not, perhaps, so extensive, on the west shore of D'Entrecasteaux's Channel, at the south side of the island," &c.

To supply the urgent demand for labour the Government has engaged to pay for the passage of emigrants of the working class, for every adult from the United Kingdom 20*l.*, from other parts of Europe 16*l.*; for every child from three to fourteen years of age 10*l.*, and for every child under three years 8*l.* Besides this, the different denominations are forming associations for bringing over labour; and Mr. Bonney, the agent of the St. Andrew Immigration Society, has already sailed for Scotland with 3,500*l.* to bring over 5000 people. The following is at present, as given by the Government statement, the

“ RATE OF WAGES.

“ Good carpenters, 18*s.* to 20*s.* per day.

“ Bricklayers, stonemasons, stonecutters, blacksmiths, copersmiths, and brass-finishers, moulders, good hands, 14*s.* to 20*s.* per day.

“ Wheelwrights and millwrights, 14*s.*, 16*s.*, and 18*s.* per day.

“ Engineers and fitters-up, 12*s.* per day and upwards. Good engineers, almost any wages.

“ Cabinet-makers and upholsterers, 11*s.* per day. Some of these can make 5*l.* to 6*l.* per week by piece work.

“ Sawyers can earn in Hobart Town 7*l.* per week. Sawyers at the Huon River, where sawing is largely carried on for home consumption and exportation to Victoria, receive from employers at least half the market price of the sawn stuff, which at present sells on the spot for fully 14*s.* per 100 feet. It is considered that a pair of good sawyers can thus earn, with ease, 10*l.* per week. In general, sawyers prefer sawing on their own account, paying 2*s.* 6*d.* a week for liberty to cut timber on Crown land, or making agreements with owners of land for the same purpose. In this manner they are able to earn much more than the amount above stated; and, in whatever mode they are employed, many of those who work steadily accumulate large sums of money. Persons employed in splitting shingles and paling also realise large amounts in similar manner.

“ Shoemakers work by the piece, and are paid about the following rates:—  
 for making and cl losing strong boots, 7*s.* 6*d.*;  
 for bottoming, 4 ots, 21*s.*; women's shoes,  
ots, for bottoming, 5*s.*

Light blucher boots closing and making, 10*s.* Good hands may earn 5*l.* per week.

“ Tailors are also paid by the piece, and a fair workman can earn 4*l.* 10*s.* per week. From 3*l.* to 5*l.* per week is made, according to abilities.

“ Painters and glaziers, ordinary, 8*s.* to 12*s.* per day.—Good ornamental painters are so scarce that no rate can be named for them. In this trade there is not so great a demand for labour as in others, as painting is very generally deferred till a cheaper time.

“ Seamen receive, for short Colonial voyages, 8*l.* per month and provisions. For longer voyages they receive even more, and no certain rate can be mentioned.

“ Married agricultural labourers obtain from 35*l.* to 70*l.*, or upwards, according to the qualifications of both persons.

“ Single agricultural labourers, 30*l.* to 40*l.*

“ Men servants, domestic, receive from 30*l.* to 40*l.*, according to ability.

“ Female domestic servants, from 18*l.* to 30*l.*, according to qualifications. Ordinary and useful domestic servants, 20*l.* to 25*l.* Good cooks, 25*l.* to 30*l.* Good needlewomen, who will be otherwise useful, 20*l.* to 25*l.*”

With these prices, and with provisions, though much dearer than they used to be, through the all-absorbing market of Victoria, yet still more reasonable than in that colony, and with a delicious climate, most congenial to the English constitution, it is clear no workers of any of the following classes can make a mistake in coming hither; on the contrary,—

“ There is ample and most profitable employment for labouring people of all kinds. Agricultural labourers, shepherds, stock-keepers, gardeners, carpenters, joiners, cabinet-makers, sawyers (of whom almost any number might, at present, realise enormous profits), blacksmiths, farriers, quarrymen, stone-cutters, stonemasons, brickmakers, lime-burners, bricklayers, shoemakers, tanners, saddle and harness-makers, painters and glaziers, ship and boat-builders, sailors, boatmen, fishermen, coach-builders, tin-workers, basket-makers, iron and brass-founders, grooms, compositors and pressmen, brewers, maltsters, coopers, rope-makers, sail-makers, paper-hangers, gilders, working jewellers, colliers (there being excellent coal-beds on the



island), soap and candle-makers, butchers, bakers, a moderate number of working engineers and engine-fitters — and, in fact, all kinds of labouring persons and mechanics.

“The pressing occasion for domestic servants, coachmen, grooms, and servants of all kinds, both male and female, must be particularly adverted to. Large numbers of these persons would obtain immediate and very advantageous employment in every part of the Colony.

“It is scarcely possible to express too strongly the great want which exists of female servants and needlewomen. Some families cannot obtain any female servants; others, which would employ several, have only one; many ladies of property are obliged to do the work of servants. There is a most urgent demand for housemaids, cooks, nursery-maids, needle-women, laundresses, and general servants; and large numbers of such women could at once find employment at high wages, and in situations at least as comfortable as those usually obtained in England.”

Firmly believing from all that I saw, that this is a true statement, it is satisfactory to know that our surplus population at home have thus extensive fields of enterprise in our southern colonies — for all our colonies out here are equally urgent in their demands for labourers — where, by steady conduct, they can not only live, but save ample funds to invest in lands, when the day of free and abundant land comes, as come it must.

With much regret, I quitted the hospitable and intellectual abode of my friends at Swanport, and retraced my course over the forest ranges to Campbell Town, whence I pursued my journey to Hobart Town.

## LETTER XLII.

Journey to Hobart Town.—Increasing Beauty of the Country.—Villages, Villas, and Pleasure-grounds.—Scene of a strange Murder near Bagdad.—Bridge.—New Town.—Orphan School.—View of Hobart Town.—Mount Wellington.—Harbour.—Public Buildings.—New Market-house.—Beautiful Estuary.—Noble Site and Aspect of Hobart Town.—The Domain.—High School.—Smith O'Brian just liberated.—Macdouall omitted in Royal Pardon.—Wainwright.—Jorgen Jorgenson, King of Iceland.—Singular Exchange Defaulter.—Hunt, Accomplice of Thurtell.—Spitting at the Inn.—Kind Friends.—Good Society.—Sir William Denison, his Eulogy by West the Historian.—Monuments of Sir Eardley Wilmot and Governor Collins.—Glover the Artist.—Journey back to Launceston.—Dram-drinking by the Coachmen.—Cataract on the South Esk.—Visit to Mr. Gunn.—Scenery of the Neighbourhood.—Spread of Sweet Briar and Gorse.—Fruits in Tasmania.

Launceston, Van Diemen's Land, July 8th, 1854.

THE country, the farther we advanced towards Hobart Town, increased in beauty. The valley along which we drove became narrower, the hills more lofty, and much more varied in their outlines than any Australian scenery which I have yet seen. The valleys were rich and, for the most part, as well cultivated as in England. Owing to the difference of tenure here and in Victoria, a very different state of things has been the result. Here the occupiers of the land are the owners, not mere squatters, who have no sure tenure of the land, and, therefore, do nothing to it. Here, then, instead of mere isolated wooden huts, standing in the unappropriated forest, we have a constant succession of towns and villages, bearing the singular medley of names which colonists delight in,

Ross, Oatlands, Green Ponds, Brighton, Bagdad, Jericho, Jerusalem, and, of course, the river Jordan.

All round these villages, which consist of substantial and even elegant houses, extend the richest fields all enclosed, with hedges generally of sweet briar, or furze, or broom, but also a good many of honest English hawthorn. There you see cattle, sheep, pigs enormously fat, and abundance of poultry of all kinds, feeding and flourishing in their several resorts, the meadows, the woodland slopes, or the farm-yards. It is England all over. Everywhere you descry lovely country houses, with all the earthly blessings of fine gardens, well walled in, with their conservatories and forcing-houses, their extensive shrubberies, verdant parks and lawns, fields in pasture or under the plough, and woods peeping down solemnly from the hills with a very tempting aspect.

Many of the hills are remarkably steep, and even conical, yet so rich and smooth are they that the farmers have ploughed them to their very summits, and grow splendid crops of corn where you would hardly have supposed a team could support itself.

The coachman pointed out a very steep wooded hill near Bagdad, where, some years ago, a most revolting murder was committed. It seems that a number of convicts, who had taken to the bush, had conceived a suspicion of a sawyer, who lived at the foot of the hill. They suspected that he had got an idea of their haunts by coming into the woods to look out timber, and they determined to destroy him. They set about this with every aggravation of cruelty that they could think of. They came to his hut one evening, and seizing on a bag of flour that he had, of about half a hundred-weight, they first compelled him to carry this upon his back up to the very top of this lofty and steep hill. When he had accomplished this by severe exertion, and under the fellest threats if he failed to do it, they then made him sit down

on a log and ordered a boy that they had with them to shoot him.

The poor fellow begged piteously for his life, asking them what he had ever done to injure them. They replied, that he had done nothing, they only wanted to put it out of his power to do anything. In vain he protested that he contemplated no injury to them, and never would do anything of the kind. They bade the boy fire. He pulled the trigger, but the powder only flashed in the pan. Again the poor fellow entreated in the most moving tones for his life. He might just as well have addressed the trees or rocks around him. They poked the touch-hole of the gun with a pin, coolly reprimed it, and bade the boy fire. Again he drew the trigger, and again the piece refused to go off. This scene is said to have continued at least a quarter of an hour; the villains in ruthless immobility endeavouring to make the gun go off, and the poor victim all the time continuing his pleadings. At length the gun went off, and the man fell dead.

Some of the ruffians were afterwards taken and brought to trial, amongst them the boy who had fired the gun; and when he was asked why he did that, he seemed astonished, and replied, "Why, the men told me if I did not shoot the man they would shoot me, and rather than be shot myself, I would have shot my own father."

At Oatlands, where the coach stopped to dine, the inn and inn-keepers presented a singular contrast to those at Campbell Town, where Mr. Morrison maintains a most comfortable establishment. Here everything was cold—the day was bitterly cold, the room was cold—there was no fire in it,—the dinner was cold, and the people were cold. Chilled through, I marched into the bar where the host and hostess sat basking before a blazing fire; but at my entrance, as a great intrusion, they both gave me a freezing stare, got up, and without a word vacated the apartment.

On approaching Hobart Town, we passed over an

immensely long bridge and causeway, more than half a mile in length, erected across the head of the estuary of the Derwent, on which Hobart Town stands. Still as we advanced, the scenery right and left augmented in grandeur and beauty. Hills of every varied form rose lofty and splendidly wooded, with smiling villages and cultured fields at their feet, Mount Direction lifting its singularly abrupt and isolated head on our left, and Mount Wellington swelling ever more in his splendid mountain mass, on our right. The mountains on the other side of the estuary appeared finely broken up. New Town on a beautiful slope running down to the estuary on this side, where the villa and grounds of Bishop Nixon, immediately overlook the water—the splendid building, the Orphan School, on a lovely elevation at the foot of Mount Wellington on our right—and the view altogether of hills, woods, and verdant fields, and the flashing waters of the broad Derwent, presented an unrivalled spectacle.

Passing over an ascent beyond New Town, a still nobler view burst upon us. It was Hobart Town, situated on the margin of the bay, with hills beyond hills rising round it. The mass of the town lay on the plain, or rather in the hollow formed by the hills, with the river or estuary of the Derwent at its feet; and beyond the estuary extended a region of low hills, partly wooded and partly cultivated, called oddly the Clarence Plains.

Perhaps no town can boast a more superb situation than Hobart Town,—not even Sydney. The Derwent is no way inferior to the bay of Sydney in appearance, though it is greatly so in the depth of water near the town; but the surrounding scenery is on a grander scale here than that around Sydney. The environs of Sydney are lovely and varied in the extreme, but there is a want of elevation in its hills. They are too uniform, and too inconsiderable in height, to give a feeling of majesty and greatness. There is nothing there like the magnificent mountain mass of

Mount Wellington, which looks down upon the town here in cloudy or in clear grandeur, of which you never grow weary. Forever as you turn that way, it falls upon you with a feeling of a sublime, vast, and solemn presence.

The height of Mount Wellington is 4500 feet, and beyond it, and, in fact, a portion of it—Mount Nelson—overlooks the estuary on the right at a lower elevation, and has a signal station upon it.

The main mass of the town stands on finely swelling ground, on the right bank of the estuary, and contains 23,000 inhabitants. It is well built of a fine freestone, which abounds here as at Sydney. The streets are wide and well paved, abounding in excellent shops, and good churches, chapels, banks, and other public buildings.

Ships of 1200 tons can come up, close under the town, to a good quay. This harbour has been made by the present Governor, Sir William Denison; and where, some years ago, people used to wash their horses' legs from the convenient shallowness, vessels of the burden mentioned now lie. Had not the Anti-Convict League cut short his operations by depriving him of the labour he employed, Sir William says he should by this time have constructed as much more extent of dock.

Everything that we see around us—the docks, the custom-house (including the council-chamber), the Government-offices and courts of justice, the barracks, the prisons, the town, the streets, the very road we have travelled hither—all are the result of convict-labour.

Near the estuary Sir William has erected a handsome market-house, which, I am assured, that he not only erected, but planned himself. The market-house is an excellent one; but has one great defect—a splendid fountain is locked up in a small apartment in front. It looks cramped and quite out of place, the ample centre of the area of the house being obviously the position which it ought to have occupied. On expressing this impression,

I was informed that it was intended to belong to the fish-market, and was obliged to be enclosed with iron gates, for fear of mutilation; a poor compliment to a certain class of the population.

The Government House occupies a commanding ground, just above the harbour and close upon the town. It is only of wood, and principally of one story; but contains some spacious and excellent rooms, and beautiful views across the river towards Clarence Plains, and of the fine slopes and woodlands to the left, belonging to the Domain.

Just above the Government House stand the Government-offices, police-offices, &c., included in a fine block of building; and a little below stands, facing the wharfs and the high ground of Battery Point, the noble range of building, including the custom-house and chamber of the Legislative Council.

Standing in any elevated part of the town, you behold it extending its ramifications far around, occupying the various valleys and extensive, and sometimes steep slopes, which run up to the foot of the mountains. The *tout ensemble* is extremely striking; and is a noble evidence, taken in connexion with the general cultivation of the island, of what Englishmen can accomplish in half a century, even where there exist none of those stimulating and hurrying causes which have affected Victoria. All here has been quiet, but steady progress, presenting you already with a miniature England, which you cannot contemplate without a proud pleasure.

In my peregrinations to call on Mr. Dry, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, Captain Smith, the Postmaster-General, and to inquire after my old friend, Bishop Willson, at the house of the Catholic Fathers, I ascended long streets up towards the foot of Mount Wellington, which presented many pleasant villas and gardens finely situated. I observed in the kitchen-gardens peas in blossom, potatoes, and other vegetables, as well as trees in blossom,

none of which appeared in the least touched with the frost, though it had been so keen in the places I had been travelling through; a proof of the mild and sheltered position of Hobart Town.

In the Domain to the east of the town a new battery was erecting, overlooking the river, the alarm of the Russians having communicated itself even here. This Domain is like a fine English park, and is a great recreative advantage to the city. At the top of it stands a singular piece of architecture — the High School — resembling a huge square mass of building, with three church towers reared against its front; one at each end, and one in the centre. It is certainly a style quite unique; and may, without fear of any other country putting in a prior claim to the title, be styled the Tasmanian. The interior, however, I was assured, is extremely commodious.

As at Launceston, so here, I observed various bands of convicts in their close dresses of yellow flannel and leathern caps, working in different places about the streets, some of them wearing chains, some dragging trucks, and others helping to throw up the new battery, under the care of a keeper. The worst of these fellows are confined to Tasman's Peninsular, where they are guarded by sentinels and savage dogs; and there are, or were, also *dépôts* for the more desperate characters at Port Arthur, the Cascades at the foot of Mount Wellington, and other places.

Just at this moment, came the Queen's conditional pardon to several of the exiled heads of the last Irish rebellion. Mr. O'Meagher of the Sword had broken his parole, and escaped to America; but Mr. Smith O'Brien, who had once or twice unsuccessfully attempted to escape, was now set at liberty, and his Irish friends were in high glee at the circumstance. Mr. O'Brien appeared to have conducted himself in a very quiet and gentlemanly manner during his banishment, and had condescended to dissipate the *ennui* of his sojourn by giving private tuition. There was



much wonder and sympathy excited by the fact, that Mr. Macdouall, one of the conspirators against whom no exclusive charge existed, had been overlooked in the royal pardon, and left here alone. Mr. Macdouall is an excellent artist, as is evinced by his portrait of Bishop Willson in full canonicals, at the Catholic House.

Amongst the convicts for life, who died here within these few years, was that Mr. Wainwright, so celebrated many years ago for taking off his relatives and others with strychnine, and whose case Bulwer, in the "Children of the Night," and Talfourd, in the "Life and Letters of Charles Lamb," have made so well known. Till Talfourd's book arrived here, very little appeared to be known of this man's past career and the intensity of his crimes; and Janus Weathercock of the London Magazine, who was in his day the familiar associate and co-*littérateur* of Charles Lamb, Bowring, Procter, Hazlitt, etc., and who, on subjects of art, used to talk over the head of Hazlitt as over that of a schoolboy, had practised as a portrait painter, and given lessons in drawing in the highest families of Hobart Town.

This book excited a great sensation, and must have done this miscreant substantial damage, for any person of the least feeling and regard to the moral security and purity of domestic life must, thenceforward, have carefully shut their doors against him. He appears to have sunk into the lowest grade of degradation; took great quantities of opium to deaden the whispers of his uneasy bosom; and the man who attended him on his death-bed in the convict hospital, declared that his end was the most horrible thing that he could possibly conceive, and infinitely beyond anything that he had ever witnessed. He declared, without knowing his history, that he must have a score of murders on his soul.

Another singular convict who used to figure here, was Jorgen Jorgenson, the King of Iceland. The man who

bore this title was a Dane, who in the old Viking spirit made a voyage to Iceland; and finding it quite defenceless, made a descent upon it, took possession of it, and declared himself King and the island independent. A Danish fleet, being sent to size this modern Viking and restore order in the island, he made a timely escape, and came to England, whence for some offence or other he was banished hither, and appears to have been a strange, bold, speculative character.

Another remarkable prisoner here was a Mr. Smith, a brother of Sir Sydney Smith, who had been a clerk in the Exchequer, and who made a voluntary confession of having robbed it of 500,000*l.* It does not appear that he was detected; but that his conscience, or sense of public duty, would not allow him to go further than he had gone,—certainly to a most extraordinary length, and one which speaks volumes for the opportunities of peculation in Government offices of that day.

He declared that he had never touched a farthing of the money himself; but had managed the embezzlement for various members of the nobility whose names he would never consent to disclose, though he was offered his pardon or a great mitigation of his sentence. He might often be seen here attending and carrying the luggage of those who had formerly been his intimate friends.

A gentleman also told me, but I am not certain whether it was here or in New South Wales, that dining one day at a gentleman's house, he heard some one singing very merrily in the kitchen; and on looking in, saw a very jolly-looking fellow sitting in a very easy attitude, and there carolling in great self-enjoyment. It was the cook; and this cook was Hunt, the crony of Thurtell, and coadjutor in the celebrated murder of Ware.

Steamers are constantly plying to and fro on the river, and carry you to various points of interest, perhaps the most so to the new and flourishing settlement of New

Norfolk, up the water, and to the Huon downwards; the latter place celebrated for its magnificent timber and for the forests of the beautiful and peculiar pine, which grows on the banks of the Huon river, and which is thence called the Huon pine; a wood very much resembling the American maple in appearance, and which, like it, is used for various articles of furniture, picture frames, fronts of cupboards and cabinets, and the covering of beams, as well as doors, merely varnished.

But if the wood resembled American wood, I thought the people at my inn, the Ship, very much resembled a certain class of Americans. In the common news and smoking-room where I used occasionally to go to read the papers, I found the company, especially in an evening, all smoking, talking, and spitting all over the carpet, or rather oilcloth, in a style which no part of America can exceed.

Hobart Town, however, commands a very different class of society. Amongst the members of the Government, the officers of the army, and the trading inhabitants, you find no lack of intelligent people, who have seen much of the world and are possessed of no less refinement than hospitality. I could only regret that my limited visit would not permit me to enjoy to a greater extent the courtesies offered me. Especially am I indebted to the kindness of Captain Smith, the Postmaster-General, and his family, for their cordial endeavours to put me in possession of a good knowledge of the place and its people; and to the cordiality with which His Excellency, the Governor, and Lieut.-Col. Last, his private secretary, not only extended their hospitality, but in the frankest manner gave me every information regarding the island and its *status quo*.

Having been accustomed to hear Sir William bitterly denounced in Victoria, for his leaning to the continuance of transportation, I was agreeably surprised to find in him so candid, unprejudiced, and evidently patriotic a person. He struck me as by far the most able man that I had

come in contact with, amongst the official gentlemen of these colonies; and his ability was not the less remarkable than the frankness, and the evidently sincere spirit, with which he discussed the present position of the island, and what he was endeavouring to do in the promotion of its interests. On the subject of transportation, which had made him so unpopular with the people of Victoria, he observed, that he no more admired a convict population than they did, and was ready to admit that the straying over of those men, who were, or had been under sentence of transportation, to that colony since the diggings commenced, must be a great nuisance. But the question with him was, Was Tasmania to have any labour at all? Though the anti-transportation agitation was of old standing, and though Sydney had got rid of it in 1840, yet the great Anti-Transportation League here was formed almost coterminously with the discovery of the gold; and as every soul that possibly could, was rushing over to Victoria, for his part, he had not been able to see how the colony was to be supplied with any labour at all except through this channel. And what had been the result of this cessation of transportation? While, whatever we saw done in Tasmania—roads, bridges, docks, public buildings, drainage, fencing, and the general cultivation of the country—was the work of convict hands, since the discontinuance of that species of labour all these works had ceased, the new harbour, which he had projected, remained a new idea; and every one, the whole country over, was at his wits' end for labour. He did not deny the moral objection to that class of labour; he fully admitted it; but this had appeared to him a question which involved the entire stoppage of the life's business of the island; and on that ground he had acted.

It is not my intention to descend into the fiery vortex of this fiercely agitated question. For myself, I am too deeply convinced that the worst possible basis of a new

country is a foundation of felony ; and I have seen too much of the moral leprosy and social outrage which the escaped felons of Tasmania have carried with them into Victoria, to sympathise with the advocates of transportation. Still it is but justice to Sir William Denison to give his view of the case, in which I believe him to be thoroughly sincere. And nothing can more strongly support this opinion than the testimony of many of his most zealous opponents. Mr. West, the able historian of the island, and one of the most active and efficient founders and agitators of the League, states how strongly, till a very late period, were the bulk of the inhabitants inclined to the continuance of the system. In 1830, a rumour having reached Van Diemen's Land that transportation was to be discontinued, the papers broke out into wild lamentations, declaring that the country would be ruined, and threatening to quit the colony. This view, however, had greatly changed ; and Mr. West notices Sir William's resistance to this change, but, at the same time, pays a most handsome tribute of justice to his general merits.

“ The opposition of Sir William Denison to the colonial will on this subject ; his injustice to the Judges ; and his sarcastic delineations of colonial character, have narrowed the circle of his friends. In future times an opinion more favourable to his reputation may be expected to prevail. It will be remembered that he promoted the advancement of science, fostered liberal education, increased the facilities of commerce, abated the practical evils of the convict department, advocated the principles of legislative freedom, and by a respectable private character, sustained the moral dignity of Government.”

As is my wont, I wandered into the cemeteries to catch some records of the past, which you do not always find elsewhere. In one, I think that of St. David, I came upon several curious monuments. The one to the memory of the unfortunate Sir Eardley Wilmot, was the

finest and in the best taste. It was in the form of an ancient cusped cross, much in the style of one of Queen Eleanor's crosses. A large heavy monument to Lieutenant-Governor Collins, bore this inscription:—"Sacred to the memory of David Collins, Esq., Lieutenant-Governor of this colony, and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Royal Marine forces.

"On the first establishment of the colony of New South Wales, he was employed as Deputy-Judge Advocate, and in the year 1803, he was entrusted by His Majesty's Government with the command of an expedition destined to form a settlement at Port Phillip, on the south coast of New Holland, but which was subsequently removed to Van Diemen's Land. Under his direction, as Lieutenant-Governor, the site of this town was chosen, and the foundation of its first building laid in 1804. He died here on the 18th of March, 1810, aged fifty-six years; and this monument, long projected, was erected to his memory in 1838, by Sir John Franklin, K. C. H., K. R."

Thus, the good Sir John, after eight-and-twenty years' neglect of the founder of the colony, had thus cared for his memory.

Close to these monuments was one which asked "who had not heard of the immortal fame" of one Gideon Lewis and his family, ending in the illustrious name of Thomas Stump, his grandson!

Mr. Glover, the well-known landscape painter, I believe, died here, but I did not discover his tomb. Possibly it was cast into the shade by such overwhelming splendours as Gideon Lewis, or the illustrious Stump; but in most good houses of Hobart Town, you encounter Glover's drawings and water-colour landscapes.

In travelling back by coach to Launceston, I was struck by a strange exhibition of the besetting sin of all these colonies,—the enormous drinking of spirits. The distance of 120 miles is divided into twelve stages. In

Each of these stages there are, on the average, three public houses, at which the coach regularly pulls up, and the coachman and guard as regularly go into the bar, and take their "nip of brandy;" that is, half a glass. So that about thirty-six times in the day they took off, without any apparent effect, a considerable dose of brandy, generally neat; that is, equal to eighteen strong tumblers of brandy and water, or the brandy itself used for that quantity, or a glass and half every hour! A considerable number of the passengers, too, drunk quite as much of the same fiery liquor.

Well may the better classes here be at their wits' end on this subject, as in all the colonies, and agitating the introduction of the Maine Liquor Law; nay, one party going farther, and agitating for a complete interdiction of the importation of all fermented liquors whatever into the island; the population of which, I presume, is about 50,000, and the annual duty on spirits 90,000*l*.

At Launceston I climbed to the cataract of the South Esk, to the westward of the town. I found it, not a cascade, but what the Americans call a rapid. The river has broken its way through the hills of trap rock of 700 or 800 feet high; and a rapid shows itself bursting from the gorge of these cliffs, and descending a fine, stony glen into a large pool. It then cuts through other intervening rocks, sweeping to the left, and thence descending a more precipitous declination, foaming and roaring down towards the level plain, when it falls into the Tamar.

The hills around these rapids are boldly and finely thrown up, with various wooded glens running up between them, the trees everywhere striking their roots amongst the rude crags that everywhere project. If you climb a ridge of rocks close upon the cataract, you have it directly under your feet, and the scene there is truly fine, especially of the steep, craggy hill opposite, and the deep defile through which the river escapes to the harbour below. Some

cottages are scattered in the glens near the falls, apparently the abodes of washerwomen, whose linen is plentifully hanging out; and their gardens and enclosures run along the steep hill-sides. A quiet spot!

There was a fine view of the town from the hill near the cataract. The town, lying in light, was of the usual hurdle pattern; the low green hills over which it spreads also lit up, its few ships showing themselves along the quay, and the still river winding away to the left. All beyond were ridges of hills as far as you could see, lying in deep purple shadow, and the clouds hanging on the sombre blue ranges of the distant mountains. Many good houses, interspersed with pleasant gardens, filled up the map of the outskirts of Launceston, and the great swampy flats below the town reminded you whence come the prevailing fogs of this place.

The only day I had to spend here I devoted to a visit to Mr. Ronald Gunn, who lives a little way out of town. Mr. Gunn is a distinguished naturalist,—a correspondent of Sir William Hooker and Professor Owen,—and has furnished various specimens of birds and animals to Mr. Gould for his great zoological work on Australia.

Mr. Gunn's house lies in a fine park merely enclosed from the native forest, and exhibiting not only fine native timber, but splendid steeps and most picturesque glens. The country round is extremely beautiful. We made a long ramble during the afternoon, getting some rich views of cultivated valley on the North Esk, and of a peculiarly fine glen, where the perpendicular masses of basaltic rock, relieved by noble trees, presented a specimen of bold beauty rare on the other side of the Straits.

In our ramble Mr. Gunn said that the apples here are better flavoured than those of England, but not such good keepers; that their pears are excellent, and the plums grown from stones unrivalled in flavour. That the peaches and nectarines are good, but apt to be shaken off with the winds.



Their grapes he considered suffered from the want of thorough rest in winter, the cold not being sufficient at that season completely to check the circulation of the vines, and that they were also affected by summer frosts. That gooseberries, currants, and raspberries were excellent and abundant, but that the climate was too dry for strawberries. I understood him that by sowing the seeds of various fruits, and selecting the best trees that grow from them, they had obtained new and splendid varieties, especially of apples and plums. In our walk Mr. Gunn drew my attention to a particularly rough and scrubby shrub, with short sturdy boughs striking out on every side, and said that the botanists had classed it amongst the violets. In the glades of the woods, and even in the cultivated fields, I observed enormous thickets of sweetbriar, covering in some places whole acres of land. The sweetbriar, the furze, and the thistle—the two first introduced for fences, and the latter coming over with the seed-corn,—have propagated in this climate to such an extent, that not only the thistles but the sweetbriar and furze are beginning to be regarded as real nuisances. The birds disperse the seeds of these plants everywhere, the winds assisting to disseminate the thistles all over the island, and the cattle, which are very fond of the hips of the sweetbriar, spreading that shrub in the woods and pastures. The Government has called upon the settlers to destroy the thistle diligently on all their lands; but it is a hopeless case now it has established itself almost everywhere on the open forest and waste.

After spending a most agreeable evening at Mr. Gunn's with a party of friends, early this morning I came on board the steamer, and find amongst my fellow-passengers Mr. Smith O'Brien, and once more, the Rev. Mr. Poer, who had been making a very successful campaign in Tasmania in favour of the Independent Church, having, as I understand, collected 9000*l.*, with funds for the establishment

of nine scholarships for the education of as many young men as ministers to come out here. He tells me that he has already sent home for thirteen ministers for Australia. And thus on the 8th of July, 1854, we bid adieu to Tasmania, but not without a reminder that we had been in a land of convicts. Both here and at Sydney, we were not allowed to put to sea before a thorough search had been made through the ship, to ascertain whether any convict had secreted himself or herself in it, or was attempting to pass under a false name or disguise. The names of all persons taking passages from the ports of these colonies, are obliged to be exhibited in public for at least twelve hours before the vessel can be cleared. Officers, therefore, came on board, who called all our names over, and made very free examinations of the steerage passengers,—in each case taking away one or two with them. At George Town, a little port at the mouth of the Tamar, where this operation took place, a young woman, who had been very gay and talkative, was thrown into great consternation by the officer doubting her clearness, and her husband having gone on shore with their clearance in his pocket, she continued in an agony of tears and excitement till he came back, when all was found right.

It is singular that while the Victorians are complaining of the facility of convicts escaping over from this island to them, and even of the Government favouring such transit, these apparently strict measures are daily in operation to prevent it. One thing, however, is certain,—that immense numbers do get over; and probably manage it by getting on board small vessels at solitary parts of the coast—being, in fact, smuggled away. The passage of the Straits at the nearest points is only about 140 miles, and therefore easily effected.

## LETTER XLIII.

## CONCLUSION.

**Concluding Remarks.**—Climate of Australia.—Future Amelioration of its Evils.—Easy Mode of destroying its Flies.—The Land Question.—What is really wanted at this Moment.—Gold or no Gold, all will be right with Cheap Land.—Navigation of the Murray.—Judge Boothby's grand Scheme of a Trunk Railway.—Probable Effects of Discovery.—Inevitable future Greatness of Australia.—Its Growth in the Hands of a native Anglo-Australian Population.—Their different Regard for the Country.—Concluding Sentiment.

London, March 28th, 1855.

ON the 16th of August, 1854, I once more passed the heads of the bay of Port Phillip, and pushed out into the great ocean, on board the ship "John Banks," for England; leaving Australia with the fullest conviction that it is destined to become one of the greatest and most flourishing countries in the world. God has done his part. He has planted her amid the southern seas in genial latitudes, and in a position calculated to develop all her resources through unlimited commerce. He has given rich lands for the plough and the pasture; mountains and prairies for the flocks and herds; forests and minerals for her arts; a bosom ample enough and rich enough to nourish myriads of inhabitants; and it depends alone on man whether her progress shall be slow or rapid.

In the course of these volumes I have so fully and so frequently discussed all the chief topics connected with the colony more particularly under notice, that but little remains to be said here, and that rather concerning the general interests and prospects of Australia at large.

The climate, which is a point of great importance to the intending settler in a new country, varies, of course,

according to latitude in different parts of the continent, but may be pronounced, spite of all that has been said in interested eulogy, or in the depreciation of disappointment, a fine and genial climate. Van Diemen's Land is the coolest; New South Wales and South Australia are generally warmer than Victoria; but Victoria during the summer months gives you rather the climate of Spain than the promised one of Devonshire. That is what the emigrant should bear in mind. For those who shrink from the winters at home, the winters of Australia will be a delightful change: for those who luxuriate in heat, its summer will prove no oppression. But to numbers the summer heats ought to be well expected, to be cheerfully borne, especially by those who have to labour in the sun.

No doubt, as people grow up in the country, the climate will become a natural fact, which will agree admirably with the native constitution. It is probable that a climate which excuses its inhabitants the rigorous hardening of English winters, may also refuse that remarkable longevity which is found in England. There appears already an obvious tendency in the Anglo-Australian to run up into height, and with a slightness of frame like the Anglo-American; and it is observed that the bloom of youth, as in the United States, more rapidly fades: but if the term of life should prove a little shorter, its general current will run under a pure and a cheering sky. I do not mean to insinuate the nonsense which has been so widely propagated, that in breathing Australian air you seem to be breathing oxygen or drinking champagne. If such effects are ever felt, they were never felt by me, nor by any one that I ever came in contact with. But there is, without question, a wonderful continuance of fine genial weather in these colonies; and when they shall be more settled, the woods reduced in extent, the marshes drained, the land cultivated, and the insect tribes banished to the mere wastes, or destroyed;

when good houses shall offer all the comforts, defences, and ameliorations of life as in the old countries; when the earth shall yield its abundance of food and the refreshment of its fruits; when the variations of temperature during the day, and especially the cold of the nights, shall be familiar and prepared-for things; and when the exciting causes of disease shall have unveiled themselves to the searching eye of the physiologist, — Australia, as a whole, will become one of the most enviable homes of the human race.

Its dust-winds and its hot-winds, understood and guarded against, will be but very brief and trivial evils. In the country the dust-winds are scarcely ever known; and towns have it in their power to extinguish them by economical measures, by watering streets and roads, and keeping in pasture any dusty and sandy spaces north of towns from which the nuisance blows. Lastly, those little black flies — that present, real, and intolerable curse — may, as population advances, be utterly annihilated.

There are peculiar states of the atmosphere, electric ones, and generally just preceding thunder-storms, when these vermin pour down in legions, and with blind desperation, upon any animal matter. They are then careless of attack or death; and a boy with a good large fly-flap, or even a leafy branch, may knock any amount of them down by merely rubbing a little grease on a table or a bench. He has nothing to do but to keep striking all day long, and all day they will continue darting down upon the same place. A boy set at every door in a tolerably populous state of a colony, or Mr. Bowering's powder, would soon rid the whole country of this pest.

But the land is the great question. On this topic I have never ceased throughout this work to depict the prevailing mischief, — to utter, with every energy that is within me, remonstrance and appeal. On this greatest of all topics as it affects this New England of the South,

I now say one more parting word. God has given us plenty of land, and fine land; man only, in his perverse folly, can withhold it, and paralyse the grand career of a great nation.

And what is wanted at this moment? *Nothing* more than for the British Government to grant to New South Wales and Victoria the constitutions which they have framed for themselves, leaving only the land question on the basis which the Duke of Newcastle's despatch has placed it. We may assure ourselves that this great trust once put into the hands of the colonists, they will discharge their duty faithfully to themselves and their posterity in it. We may safely leave it to the sense and interests of the public at large to guide the colonial policy into the right channel. We are not to suppose that the body of the community will surrender their birthright to a little guild of shepherds and herdsmen, or that a legislature including a fair share of these bucolic patriarchs will madly injure one of the greatest sources of colonial commerce, comfort, and revenue by any rash or unjust attack on the real rights and claims of the squatters.

Land for the public as fast as it wants it, and their runs for the squatters as long as they are not wanted for the settlement of the people, will be the two rules and maxims of Australian policy, too self-evident in their justice and benefit to all parties to be mistaken or misused. This knot once cut; land once free and plentiful as God and nature made it, then will the colonies run side by side a glorious race. Van Diemen's Land will flourish throughout its Lilliputian domain with the prosperity of its more gigantic sisters. Adelaide has already made vigorous progress by a wise policy. By sale of land at reasonable rates to its small capitalists, and by furnishing a good escort for the gold of the diggers who went thence to Victoria, she has secured them as cultivators on her soil; and while Victoria could furnish no produce from her own

bosom for her fast accumulating people, she has been able not only to supply herself, but to send a surplus thither.

Gold or no gold, give but Australia the free use of her own lands, and nothing can resist her progress. And yet gold unquestionably will still be found over thousands of square miles which hitherto are unknown or untouched. Travellers beyond the Murray report enormous stretches of country where quartz, and schist, and sandstone proclaim the existence of gold. The very desert of Sturt, exhibiting the same features, proclaims itself a desert of gold.

New discoveries will open up immense regions where the grazier, the agriculturist, and the miner will alike find fresh treasures and fresh homes. The navigation of the Murray opens up at once, as it were, a whole kingdom of territory, and bids the squatter boldly advance into the wilderness, promising to carry down his wool and his cattle, and to carry up all that he needs. Nay, wonderful visions, thereupon, of mighty railroads stretching from Adelaide, through Victoria and New South Wales, to Sydney itself, rise before the imagination of my old friend Judge Boothby, and he bravely asks no less than *twenty-one millions* sterling to construct these magnificent works, with all their necessary docks and stations; to be refunded out of the sale of lands and the profits of its traffic. He sees no less than 100,000 tons of timber and building materials trotting down this highway of nations annually; 50,000 tons of hay and straw; 3,000,000 quarters of corn; 200,000 bales of wool, tallow, &c.; 50,000 horses and fat cattle; 40,000 sheep and pigs, very fat; 10,000 tons of copper; 2,400,000 ounces of gold—that is, all the gold got in Victoria, for not more than that is now getting; saddle-horses and carriages travelling with passengers, at the charge of 18,000*l.* per annum; and a million and a half of people. He sees wine and dairy produce, poultry and fish, and all that man can create or desire, rushing

along with a velocity to the cities, as if they were going to eat and not to be eaten. A most magnificent scene, yielding a return of 800,000*l.* yearly. A magnificent scene! but rather of the future than of to-day. Some day such august machinery will be in motion, resounding through the wilderness—a wilderness no longer,—from Lake Alexandrina to Sydney Cove; but at present neither Sydney nor Melbourne will be very anxious to see Adelaide armed with the advantages of a railroad in addition to that of the Murray stream. Already they see with alarm that the great river draws naturally every thing downwards—wool, fat cattle, and whatever the squatter has to send,—to its terminus near Adelaide. That is the natural, and, as concerns them, fatal tendency of the stream. Sydney and Victoria will, therefore, hasten to construct counteracting railways to draw the fatness of the interior also towards them. But Adelaide will also hasten to increase the attraction towards herself by rail as well as steamer, and thus the great scheme will be eventually realised by the rivalry rather than the co-operation of these colonies.

Discovery will generate discovery. The expedition planned to explore the West will probably define the boundaries of Sturt's Desert, and show that it is of no great extent. Leichhardt, by drawing a diagonal line across the continent from Moreton Bay to Port Essington, has shown that no desert reaches that line. River after river, washing vast and fertile lands,—the Burdikin, the Clarke, the Lynd, the Nicholson, the Calvert, the Robinson, and the two Alligators, crossed his track. Already there is a strong tendency of population from Sydney northward, and the projection of a "Northern Australia." And thus, from without and within, encompassing the coast and advancing from all sides towards the centre, a vast career of centuries of planting and peopling is before us on this island-continent.



England, in fact, is here re-producing herself on a larger scale ; but the immigrants of to-day only feel the tumbings and rushings together of the yet unexplicated chaos. To us this is a strange land, to the next generation it will be the native land. Born, therefore, to love it, they will push on its growth to greatness. The sons and daughters of the soil will grow up amid all the endearing associations of a mother country. To them the inverted seasons will possess no inversion. To them the gum-tree and the wattle will assume the place of the oak and the elm. The warbling crow and the laughing jackass will be their blackbird and hereditary rook. To them the smooth outlines of the Australian landscape will appear as charming as to us the more abrupt and picturesque scenery of the northern hemisphere. New interests, new histories, and new hopes will surround them with the genuine charms of existence. They are the after generations who will feel the comforts and enjoy the glories of the advancing creation of an austral world. In their hands, and by the vigour of their genius, Australia in its totality will rapidly, and by the clear design of Providence, advance into one more august section of that race which from England—the ancient heart of Christianity, freedom, and civilisation,—is encompassing the earth. Westward, America ; eastward, India ; southward, Africa ; and in this scheme far greater than Africa, Australia, are organising the grand future of humanity, whose ultimate triumph of religion, liberty, science, brotherly unity and happiness, will blend themselves into the broad day of the distant millennium.

Therefore, while gazing down this glorious vista of progressing certainties, let us cordially cry, “ Advance Australia ! ” and so treat her in her infancy that she shall remember us with grateful affection in the power and splendour of her maturity.

THE END.

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