

EXCURSIONS AND ADVENTURES

IN

NEW SOUTH WALES ;

WITH

PICTURES OF SQUATTING AND OF LIFE IN THE BUSH;

AN ACCOUNT OF THE
CLIMATE, PRODUCTIONS, AND NATURAL HISTORY OF THE COLONY,
AND OF THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE NATIVES,
WITH ADVICE TO EMIGRANTS, &c.

BY

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*“Quæque ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui.”—VIRGIL.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO THE
ANNALS

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EXCURSIONS AND ADVENTURES

IN

NEW SOUTH WALES.

CHAPTER I.

The Author's Hut-keeper—Spearing of Cattle—Savage attack on a Shepherd—Dangers to be apprehended from the Natives—Murders committed by them—Importation of Sheep—Great number stolen by the Blacks—Retribution—Occupations of the Settler—Crop of Maize stolen—The Author goes in quest of the Thieves—Black Encampment—Astonishing the Natives—Prudent Retreat—The Savages enraged—The Country in a Blaze—A gunya Burnt—The Forest in Flames—Serious Losses of the Settler—Floods in the River—A Narrow Escape—Horse drowned—Ingratitude—A Visit from three young Gentlemen—Some Account of their Adventures—A Runaway Steed—Deprivations in the Bush—An important event in Squatting Life.

ONE of the specials whom I had on loan from the convict barracks in Port Mac-

quarie, was a Roman Catholic priest, and an Irishman, transported, I believe, for sedition. He was rather old and feeble, and not of much use, though he professed to understand dairying. He served, however, for hut-keeper, and did well enough for taleing* cattle, or going for rations. On one occasion, having been on horseback to Innes' Creek for meat, he fell in, on his return, with some blacks, who were not over friendly. He had dismounted, and was sitting on a log, when he saw several armed blacks not far off, and running towards him as fast as they could. He had just time to mount before they approached within spear-throw, but he got a great fright, and, like several other men whom I had at different times, was unwilling to stay, considering the blacks too hostile, and the position too dangerous for his taste.

* The term used to express looking after cattle on foot.

Some little time after this, I was at Inne's creek myself, where Major Innes' sheep-stations were, and at which we got our supply of meat on first settling. While there, one of the men came in from an out-station, and reported having found a cow with several spears sticking in her. The poor beast had escaped from her pursuers, and died in solitude.

This was very bad news for me, as the blacks, when they once begin to spear cattle, commonly go on with it, and originate feuds with the white man, which result in war to the knife, on both sides. They were not so troublesome in this way as I had anticipated.

They made a desperate attack, however, soon after this, on a shepherd of Major Innes, who was stationed about ten miles from us. He was taken by surprise; his gun was wrested from him; and he was transfixed by two spears, and severely injured

by boomerangs. He was not far from his hut, where his wife was, and by extraordinary exertions he managed to stagger into t, covered with wounds. On his reaching the hut the blacks took fright (for they are great cowards), and made off. The shepherd ultimately recovered, though for a long time his life was despaired of.

These anecdotes show the natives on this river to have been a most dangerous and troublesome race; and they were encouraged to be bolder in their attacks, from the impunity with which they had hitherto committed them. It is true that a good many had been shot, both at Towel creek and Wobera, when they attacked those stations. On the latter, in particular, they had made a very resolute assault, and had suffered severely.

On this occasion, they displayed great courage, rushing up even to the muzzles of the muskets, and seizing hold of the barrels which had been thrust out between the

slabs in taking aim, endeavouring to bend them. Many treacherous murders, however, had they committed, without suffering the punishment due to their misdeeds, for, from the state of the laws, the difficulty of capturing them, and the almost impossibility of identifying the guilty, they could seldom be brought to justice, or even summarily punished. They were now, however, to be subjected to signal vengeance for a daring exploit which they performed at some distance up the river.

Several thousand sheep were, about this period, being brought into the district, from the neighbourhood of Bathurst; and it was while they were crossing the M^cLeay, five and twenty miles above me, that the blacks succeeded in cutting off about five hundred of them. The loss was not discovered for some hours afterwards, but by that time the natives had got off among the mountains with their spoil. Some weeks afterwards,

however, a party of six men, mounted and armed, and guided by a black fellow who was admirable at tracking, followed them and slaughtered two or three dozen men. They did not recover many sheep, most of them having been devoured. The natives had managed wonderfully well, one of the gins taking them out to graze every day, and penning them up at night in bush-yards, made by the tribe of stakes and boughs of trees. The remains of the unfortunate muttoms had been very cunningly disposed of, the bones being placed under the skins, which were spread out with the wool uppermost, at small distances from each other, and looked like patches of yellow withered grass.

Much more might be told of the treacherous murders, and the bold and open attacks of the natives ; but what has been said will suffice to show that the settler has a good deal to contend with in that way.

It cannot be expected that there is much

of interest or variety to relate in the life of a squatter in the far bush. One day resembles another, and leaves no mark to point the lapse of time.

Each one who settles must go through the same process as those who have gone before him. He must build a slab hut—fell and clear off timber—fence in his paddock—muster his cattle—and count out his sheep. He must live without society, and without comfort, as regards the luxuries and, sometimes, the necessities of life. It is useless to tell him, that he must make up his mind to rough it. He cannot comprehend this. But he may understand that, if a man of education and civilized habits and tastes, he has probably condemned himself to a life of misery; certainly to one of monotony and solitude: and it will be well for him if he can avoid the snare of rum, into which so many young men fall in New South Wales, with the hope of drowning

their cares and their sighs for the land they have left behind them.

When my small crop of maize was nearly ripe, I had the mortification to find, one afternoon, that the blacks had stolen nearly the whole of it. Their foot-prints I could easily discover, and one of the men had seen them fording the river, each one with a net full on his, or her, back. This was a most serious loss, for winter was approaching, when the grass becomes scarce, and the horses are scarcely fit to do much work without a feed of corn, night and morning. Determined, therefore, to punish the thieves, for I could not hope to regain the spoil, I left one man in charge of the station, and, taking two others with me, set off on foot well armed, in pursuit of them.

By sunset, we discovered the smoke of one of their camps, and, having forded the river, and climbed the precipitous side of a range, we spread abroad so as to enclose

them. We heard their dogs, and even their voices; but they had been on the watch, and when we arrived at the camp the birds had flown. They must have retreated very precipitately, as they left their opossum-cloaks, nets, &c., all of which we piled upon the fire, and started for the place where I supposed the main camp to be. This was a couple of miles further on, and it was quite dark before we reached it.

The natives had been seen the day before by one of the men, and were computed at about two hundred, including women and children; and we certainly saw an immense number of fires, sufficient indeed for that amount of people. We were favoured by the night, and crept very near them, but I did not see that we could do any good by frightening or hurting them, and our position was very dangerous in case of their showing fight. I therefore determined to be content with the punishment we had

already inflicted, though it was with great difficulty I could prevent my men from firing among them.

Indeed, it was only by seizing hold of the musket of one of them, when he had it levelled at the gunyas, that I prevented his firing, and so discovering us. I prevailed, however, and we had turned to leave the camp, when we saw advancing to us, and directly in our path, about a dozen fire-sticks, for the night was too dark to distinguish the blacks who carried them.

My foremost man now spoke to the leader in his own language, and advanced to within twelve paces of him, when he could distinguish him well by the light of his fire-stick. He now, to my astonishment, took deliberate aim at him, and pulled the trigger; but the powder flashed in the pan. This discovered us at once. The blacks threw down their fire-sticks, and fled up the ranges in various directions. The other man now fired. The

report startled the slumbering camp, and a yell arose, which roused a flock of black cockatoos, whose long and dismal screams served to heighten the horror of the scene.

I could see by the light of the fires that the men were picking up their spears and womeras, or throwing sticks, and I gave the word to retreat, congratulating myself that I had reserved my own fire for an emergency. The blacks gave close chase, and we fled as hard as we well could, firing a shot now and then to intimidate them, for I did not like to take aim at them myself.

While in full retreat, I stumbled over a dead bullock, and made the men halt and assist in rolling him over, that I might feel the brand, for it was too dark to see it. Some of my neighbour's young cattle had been dying of blackleg, and I was apprehensive that this might be mine. It proved not, however, and the yells of the savages sounding nearer, we set off again.

The night was very dark, and the enemy, after following, about a mile, gave up the pursuit. We completely lost our way, however; hit the river at last at a deep and unknown place; succeeded in finding a ford; and, after climbing a steep and rocky range, and blundering through some very rough country, guided only by the outline of a hill which I thought I knew, we were gladdened by the gleam of our fires, shining through among the slabs. So ended, on the whole, our successful foray.

Next day, a stocksman called at the station, and reported that the blacks had all crossed the river ten miles down, by daylight that morning. The natives knew well who it was that had disturbed their repose that night, and they were enraged at me for not putting up quietly with the loss of my crop. So much so indeed, that, on falling in with my dray on its way up to the station a month or two afterwards, they

told my men that they would make the "labaun Massa budgerig some day," meaning that they would make the great master good, or comfortable; that is, that they would kill him. This was by no means pleasant news for me; but it served to put me on my guard, so that I frustrated their intentions.

In the end of winter, or at the beginning of spring, it is usual to burn large portions of the grass on the run, by which means when there is rain, and vegetation progresses, young and succulent grass is obtained; and by doing this in proper succession, and at proper intervals, one need seldom be without a small supply of such pasturage. Large tracts of country are also frequently burned by the natives, sometimes in hunting, at others by accident, from the dropping of sparks from their fire-sticks.

The fire runs very speedily along the ground, the dry grass and withered leaves catching like tinder. The growing trees

are not injured by it ; but all the dead ones, both standing and fallen, burn very readily ; and the constant falling of the former, as the fire eats through them at the base, and the superincumbent weight makes them topple over, sounds like quick and distant peals of thunder.

At such a time it is by no means safe, though it may be sometimes necessary, to ride through the forest. The ground is scorchingly hot, the horses are startled by the vehement flames and the crashing timber, and it is quite uncertain that the withered giant hanging over your head, will not fall across your path, and annihilate you. One of these fires spread so rapidly as to approach the station before we were aware, and seized on the men's gunya, which it burned to the ground. The bottom of it being covered with dry grass, for sleeping on, the interior became instantly one mass of flame, and though we soon pulled off

the sheets of bark, and knocked it down, the clothes, rations, and everything else in it were destroyed.

At night, the appearance of the forest was very grand, the dead timber everywhere being in a blaze. One tree, in particular, stood gleaming through the dark night, like a tall pillar of fire, not blazing, but at a red heat, till all at once, while we were looking at it, it dissolved in myriads of sparks. Sometimes, a tall hollow tree will burn in the inside, and throw up a cloud of smoke from an aperture at its top, giving it a very singular appearance, and putting one in mind of a factory-chimney.

Matters had now been going on for some time much in the usual monotonous style incident to this mode of life. A good many difficulties however, arose, which I was not prepared to encounter. I had cleared several acres of the flat; but the soil for the most part proved poor. The corn crop had

been stolen by the natives, while the small quantity of wheat which I managed to grow was nearly all eaten up by the weevil, one of the greatest curses of the country. I had built a dairy, and made a quantity of cheese; but it did not pay the expense and labour attending the operation.

The frequent and large floods in the river, too, had caused great annoyance and inconvenience. These were not always owing to the rains that we had, for on one occasion I remember the M^cLeay rising thirty feet perpendicularly in one night, and without our having one drop from the skies.

The difficulty of reaching any other station on our side of the river, rendered these floods extremely inconvenient; and on one occasion, when short of provisions and hemmed in by a flood, we felled a large cedar-tree, and hollowing it out with adzes, formed a canoe which would take five persons over. This, however, was carried

away by the next flood, and two others that we made afterwards shared the same fate.

Sometimes, we crossed the river on rafts, and sometimes swam, carrying tea and sugar over on our heads for the stockman, who with his hut-keeper lived on the opposite side. Occasionally the rivers and creeks will rise so suddenly as to hem in any one who happens to be travelling at the time, in which case the unfortunate wayfarer will have to choose between the risks of starving, or drowning. On an occasion of this kind, being confined by the river, which rose in the night-time, to the north bank—the same side on which our station was, but at a distance of fifteen or eighteen miles from home—I attempted to make my way along the north bank, but the country was so rugged that I found this almost impossible.

After spending most of the day in a dense brush, where I had the greatest difficulty in

cutting a way for myself and horse with a knife, I became bewildered as to the direction which I should follow, having no compass with me, and the sun not being visible all day. I therefore made for the river, determining to cross it at all hazards. In attempting this, my steed capsized and was swept down, while I, after giving myself up for lost, and, indeed, having sunk once, gained the opposite bank, utterly exhausted. Luckily, I had taken off my coat, and merely laid it across my shoulders. Had I retained that on my person, with the pistol and other heavy articles in the pockets, I must inevitably have gone down.

The difficulty of swimming against a strong current, in boots and spurs, was great enough, and my woollen trousers absorbed so much water, as to weigh me down like lead, and keep me almost in a perpendicular position, instead of lying on my face as in swimming. About the same time, my next

two neighbours down the river each lost a man by drowning. The number who annually perish in this river is large, in proportion to the population; and the frequency of extraordinary and hair-breadth escapes is remarkable.

Soon after the above events, my own stockman, in crossing the river, managed to drown his horse, and very nearly himself. Indeed, he was at the last gasp, senseless, and had been under water for nearly a minute, when I succeeded in pulling him out. Of course, he expressed the greatest devotion to me for saving his life, declaring that he would not leave my service as long as he lived. But he was a ticket-of-leave man, and a good sample of the general population of the colony. In less than two months after, he robbed my dray, and absconded before the expiration of the time he had agreed for!

About a year after I had settled here, I

received a visit one evening from three young gentlemen, who had lately arrived in the colony, and who were visiting various parts of it before deciding upon a spot to locate themselves. They were now on their way up the M^cLeay to New England, and, after spending the night with me, proceeded on their journey, taking with them the best advice and directions I could give them.

They erred, however, on the point on which I had been most careful to instruct them. At that place which I have before spoken of as the junction where the two principal branches of the M^cLeay unite, they deviated from the proper route, and followed the right arm of the river, instead of the left, which we had come down. This led them too far to the northward, taking them into a part of New England, then but little settled. After wandering about bewildered for nearly a fortnight, exhausted by fatigue and want of food, they were com-

pelled to kill one of their horses for subsistence. Fortunately, they were not likely to die of thirst, as has occasionally been the case in the interior ; for, from the number and abruptness of the hills, small creeks or rivers are always to be met with at moderate distances, though in summer all except the largest of the former are dried up.

They were not so well off, however, when they got on the table-land ; but being of good courage and enterprise, they pushed on through New England, wandering about in different directions till they stumbled upon sheep-tracks, which eventually led them to a station. When they got there, they were quite knocked up, having had nothing to eat for a long time except horse-flesh, parts of which they were carrying with them when they arrived. This is one of the misfortunes of the country that, when short of food one can seldom or never procure any root, vegetable, or game, to support life.

The only animal that can be shot is, perchance, a parrot, or a wild duck, and even these are frequently not to be met with. On such occasions no living thing is to be seen ; the atmosphere,

“ ————— Still as night
Or, summer’s noontide air.”

supports not the wing of the chattering parrot, or cooing pigeon ; the water, if there is any, yields nothing for food ; the brilliant berries are either poisonous or unknown ; the very grass is dried up and withered ; all nature languishes, or almost ceases to exist ; and the bewildered traveller sinks under the accumulation of want and despair. This has indeed too often been the case ; and the bones of many a white man who has perished from hunger, or thirst, lie bleaching on the arid plains and mountains of New Holland.

Some time after this, a friend of mine, about thirty miles down the river, got into a similar awkward predicament. Too eager

for the chase, he had followed some cattle which led him far back among the ranges, and at sunset he found himself in a place with which he was not acquainted. Fearful of going farther astray if he wandered about in the dark, he tied up his horse to a tree, and, putting his saddle under his head, composed himself to sleep. His nag, however, anxious for his supper, and not disposed to stand all night, like Tantalus, surrounded by food, without the power to eat it, slipped his bridle, and made off.

In the morning, my friend could not find him, nor follow his tracks to any great distance. Taking his saddle on his shoulders, he set off on his way home, as he thought, but he was mistaken, and wandered for three or four days without any other food than a few mushrooms which he picked up. Several stockmen and others were out in search of him, but were unsuccessful. At last, the wanderer hit upon a creek, which he

followed till it brought him to the river, and so he arrived at a station about fifteen miles lower down than his own. He was in a most wo-begone plight when he made his appearance, but he had never lost heart, and carried the saddle all the while on his shoulders. A day or two after reaching his station, his horse walked up to the stable for his wonted feed of corn.

Such adventures are not uncommon, and the consequences have frequently been dreadful. Exploring parties, and runaway convicts have suffered more from losing their way and from want of water than any others. From hunger men have been reduced to eating grass, and thirst has compelled them to have recourse to most horrible and disgusting expedients. A ticket-of-leave man in my employment told me that when he ran away from Port Essington, in company with another man, they were brought to such extremity by hunger, that

each feared the other might kill him for the sake of a meal of human flesh, and on this account, when they ventured to sleep they climbed up into separate trees.

At length, they reached the settlement, intending to give themselves up, but, to their horror, they found it abandoned; the Government, during their absence, having ordered the penal establishment to be broken up. They did not perish, however, for the humane commandant, Major Smyth, had left provisions for the runaways in case of their return, and had written with chalk on a door directions where to find them. On these they subsisted until a Government schooner called for some cattle, &c., which had been left behind, when they were taken on board, and conveyed to Sydney.

After having occupied my station for nearly three years, and erected a tolerably large house of four rooms, shingled and floored with cedar, I found it would be

advantageous to abandon the station altogether, and remove my head-quarters to the south side of the river, a mile lower down, where there was a rich alluvial flat, lightly timbered, and where I had a year before established my dairy. My former position had been chosen too much with reference to beauty of prospect, and in ignorance of several things which I now understood, and the constant annoyance of the flooded state of the river, which sometimes lasted as long as six weeks at a time, together with the poverty of the cultivation-flat, determined me, after many doubts, to change my location.

As this was an important and troublesome event in my squatting life, I shall reserve an account of it for the next chapter.

CHAPTER II.

Formation of a new Station—Large House built—Fruit Trees Planted—Cultivation of Grain—Indian Corn, or Maize—Sowing the Seed—Care of the young Plants—The Maize Harvest—Operation of Husking Wheat—Difficulty of Grinding it—Barley and Oats—Potato Crops—Melons and other Vegetables—Growth of Tobacco—Olive and Mulberry-Trees—Domestic Animals—Breeding of Sheep—Pigs and Pig Fences—Poultry—Dogs—The Kangaroo Hound—The Bee.

THE operation of moving was very troublesome, and increased the annoyance caused by abandoning a place where so much money had been laid out. We took possession of a small hut in which the dairyman used to live, and erected a bark

which we re-erected
and built a stable, barn,
conveniences. The large house followed
course, and was occupied for the first
about eighteen months after our migration.
It was built of long gum-slabs, lined inside
and partitioned with cedar boards, of which
also the floor was made, and had a good
fire-place faced with bricks, which had been
carried all the way from Kempsey, forty-
five miles down the river. A verandah of
cedar slabs, barked, and overgrown with the



INTERIOR OF THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN, "THE COMMODORE."

to the river, and in a small high ground hut
 which was built for us. The move of the camp
 was made to the river on the canoe which
 was used for the purpose, and deep pool at the foot
 of the mountain, in process of time, the
 canoe, the hut, &c., were spun-chained, or
 otherwise, to the new station.

As soon as I have observed, we had a rich
 and fertile land, highly timbered, which we
 cleared and cultivated, and on
 the river we erected our car huts, kitchen, &c.,
 and built a stable, barn, and other conven-
 iences. Our new house followed in due
 season, and was occupied for the first time
 about a year or months after our migration.
 It consisted of long gum-slabs, lined inside
 and out lined with cedar boards, of which
 the floor was made, and had a good
 fire-place faced with bricks, which had been
 carried all the way from Kempsey, forty-
 five miles down the river. A verandah of
 the same was marked, and overgrown with the



INTERIOR OF THE AUTHOR'S HOUSE AT ELSINEUR.

fruit bearing passion-flower, and looking towards the river, completes the picture of the tenement. A small kitchen-garden to the right, and an orchard to the front, formed pleasing ornaments to a bush house.

In the orchard, I planted vines, peaches, loquats, citrons, figs, lemons, oranges, quinces, pomegranates, &c., some of which bore fruit before I left. The agricultural operations did not go on so well as I could have wished, partly through my occasional absence, but chiefly owing to gross neglect and carelessness in another quarter. While talking of cultivation, it may be proper to say something of its kind, season, mode, and profit.

The most extensively-cultivated grain, and that which yields best in this colony, is Indian corn, or maize. It produces from twenty to sixty bushels per acre, according to the soil and the care taken in its culture, very much depending upon the latter.

The months for sowing it are September, October, and November, many people performing this operation in the first mentioned month, and as soon as the frost has disappeared. Care must be taken, however, not to anticipate this latter event, as one night's frost after the young plant is above ground will destroy the whole crop, and render it necessary to repeat the process of sowing.

When the field has been ploughed and harrowed, furrows are run out at distances of six feet, by means of the plough. Into these the sower drops the seeds, five or six at a time, and three feet apart, while others follow with hoes, and cover the seed. At the time of sowing both maize and wheat, the crows are very troublesome, collecting in great numbers, and grubbing up the seed. The stumps of trees are never taken out on squatting stations; seldom, indeed, to any extent, on private property; and as these,

from their large roots, render it dangerous to go too near them with the plough, the ground immediately round them is broken up with the hoe, and the holes for the seed are made in the same manner.

When the plant has reached the height of twelve or eighteen inches, it is necessary to hill it up, either with the plough, or hoe. If the former implement is used, the bullocks must be muzzled to prevent their eating the young plants, of which they are very fond. Two furrows are run out between each row of plants, so that one lies up against and supports each row. This is a much more expeditious method than using the hoe, though the latter is, on the whole, more effectual, the weeds and grass being more completely killed, and a more perfect hillock being raised all round the clump of plants. The field must be kept free from weeds until the corn has reached the height of five or six feet, when it towers above all such annoy-

ances. Occasionally, pumpkins and melons are sown between the corn-rows, but I do not think it a good practice on the whole.

When the maize is in flower (which will be about December and January, according to the time it is planted), the field presents a very beautiful appearance, the stalks being from eight to twelve or fourteen feet high, surmounted by a large feathery flower, changing from a reddish, or russet colour, to yellow, as the pollen becomes mature. Many people, besides the regular crop, sow maize also at Christmas, or in the beginning of January, on the ground from which they have just reaped the wheat. In this case, single furrows are run out in the stubble-land, and the seed is put in, the intermediate space being ploughed up afterwards, at leisure. This crop, however, often fails, from lateness and dry weather.

The maize harvest is from March to June. Each stalk produces two or three cobs,

inclosed in a husk. The men pass down the rows, breaking off the cobs, and throwing them in heaps. They also break down the top of the stalk, to show that it has been stripped of its golden treasure. As soon as possible after being pulled, the grain is lodged in the barn, where it lies in the husk till wanted. In this state it keeps better for a long time.

The operation of husking it is very tedious, each cob separately requiring to have the husk twisted off. At this business, as well as pulling it, the natives are very expert. If intended for the market, it is then thrashed out with the flail, and cleaned; but, when used on the establishment, it is almost invariably given to the horses in the cob, the husk being frequently just then pulled off, and the horseman commonly shelling a few cobs with the hand, as a treat for his steed, though the animal manages this pretty well for himself, if his teeth are not very bad.

Though maize-meal is served out by the Government, and is permitted as a Government ration to convicts, it is seldom or never used by settlers; for, although very good, the convicts contract a great abhorrence to it, from being forced to eat it in the Government barracks. It is indispensable, however, at every station, for horses, and is an admirable and indeed the best food for pigs, which are always put up and fed on it for some weeks before being killed. There is a kind of maize whose grain and meal are as white as flour, but it is said to be rather less prolific than the yellow. There are also varieties called Cobbet's, or sixty days' corn, and hundred days' corn; and from their occupying short periods in growing and ripening, they are well adapted to those districts where, while the summer is sufficiently warm, the winter is earlier and longer.

Maize requires a rich soil; and as the

alluvial flats, on being first subjected to the plough, are too strong for wheat, making it run up to a great height of straw, with but little head, while they yield the very best maize; and, accordingly, a crop of this grain is always taken before the wheat is sown. Maize will keep very well for six or eight months, but by that time, in spite of all care, the weevil will have begun to commit ravages in it; and, before the next maize harvest, the greater part will have been eaten, most of the grains being perforated, and remaining mere shells.

Next to maize, wheat is the most extensively-cultivated grain in New South Wales. The season for sowing it is from the end of April to the beginning of July, and the harvest is in November and December. This crop often fails, from want of rain. It may be considered in most parts of the colony as being never certain. It is too common to find grain which looked tolerably

well, produce only half a crop on being thrashed; and the colony has never yet grown anything like the quantity it consumes.

On the other hand, I must say that the crops in the Macquarie district have generally proved good; and I have grown wheat on the M^cLeay as fine as any I ever saw. Good crops are commonly grown in New England also, though once or twice they have failed from want of rain. The great enemy of wheat is the weevil, which, unless the grain is thrashed and ground within a month or two after being reaped, attacks it and commits great havoc, eating up the half, sometimes the whole of the grain; and, when any is left, mixing up the grain with dust, filth, and their own bodies, so as to render it uneatable, and, I may add, impossible to be cleaned.

As the settler has, in general, no means of grinding his wheat, except by a steel

mill, turned by the hand, a long time would necessarily elapse before he could get his wheat converted into flour; but he never thinks of doing this. The cost in labour, time, provisions, and perhaps wages, for two men grinding for several months, would be too great. The wheat is therefore thrashed, cleaned, and served out weekly to the men who grind it for themselves. The weevil, however, soon eats it all up, or renders it unfit for use, so that experienced persons have considered it cheaper to purchase flour than to grow it, if it can be got at from fifteen to twenty pounds per ton. The great difficulty, again, in this case, is the carriage. The remedy will be to become more independent of wheat, and use maize, which keeps better, and seems to be, *par excellence*, the grain of the country.

As great dearths of flour occur every now and then in the colony, it has been proposed to store up the grain during times of plenty,

in siloes, or air-tight buildings, or excavations, where it is believed the weevil would not live. This, however, if successful, could only be available on a large scale. The settler must still remain subject to the annual ravages of his great enemy, the weevil.

For barley and oats, the seed-time and harvest are the same as those of wheat, but they are chiefly raised for fodder, both as green stuff and hay. Lucerne is not much grown as yet, though admirably adapted to the climate, on account of its great power of resisting drought. Two crops of potatoes may be had in the year, but they frequently fail for want of rain, and the root is generally small and watery. In New England, the potato grows to a large size, and I have seen excellent specimens from the Port Phillip district, though those most prized in Sydney are sent from Van Diemen's Land and New Zealand. The pumpkin is decidedly the

standard vegetable of New South Wales, growing abundantly, and with little care.

The rock and water melon are very prolific, as also the cucumber and vegetable marrow. The common European vegetables are in general easily grown, except during times of considerable drought. Green peas may be gathered all the year round. The fruits vary slightly in different districts, but frequently in the same orchard may be seen almost all kinds, from the apple and pear of colder climes, to the guava and banana of the tropics.

Tobacco grows well, and is cultivated to a great extent. The climate and soil are well suited to the vine, and vineyards of considerable size have been planted in various parts of the colony. The olive and the mulberry also thrive, and are proper objects of attention here; and it is not impossible that silk and dried fruits may at a future period become staple exports of the

country. The latter, indeed, seems to be peculiarly likely, and it is only the great returns hitherto derived from sheep and other stock, which have diverted attention from this and other objects of industry.

All the domestic animals thrive uncommonly well. Some of them, indeed, I think, are less liable to disease than in the mother country. It is seldom that the cattle give any trouble in this way. They find their food in the valleys and on the hills, and nature is the only cow-leech. Once or twice since the formation of the colony, this kind of stock has been attacked by murrain, or blackleg, or some such disease, which was not understood, and which carried off immense numbers, but this occurs occasionally in almost every country, and New South Wales appears to have suffered comparatively little in this way. In the spring, young cattle occasionally die from being scoured by the young and succulent grass

which springs up chiefly on burnt ground immediately after rain, but this does not occur in general to any serious extent. The horses, too, roam at large among the ranges, or in paddocks, and breed well and safely. Even when taken up, and broken in to use, they forage chiefly for themselves, requiring no stable, and happily, rarely or never seeing the face of a horse-doctor. Those that are much worked are infinitely better for a feed of maize night and morning, but even this pittance they often do not obtain, and I have frequently seen a stockman, after a hard day's galloping, pull the saddle off the reeking horse, salute him with a kick in the belly, or a lash from his stock-whip, and tell him to go and eat grass. Stockmen, however, are generally kind to their horses, though they are frequently fond of riding them too hard.

Sheep, as it is well known, form the staple, and, perhaps, the most valuable pro-

perty in the colony. Some people breed twice in the year from them, but most do not, as the ewes are supposed to be hurt by it, while the lambs obtained are weak. They are subject to several diseases, such as catarrh, foot-root and scab, the first and last occasionally carrying them off in great numbers. Notwithstanding this, they have been in former times a most valuable stock, the wool yielding large returns to the grazier, and even when matters had become very bad, the clip commonly paid all expenses, and left the increase for profit.

Pigs thrive, and breed readily, forming on the whole a valuable stock. They must, however, be allowed to run loose, or they will hardly pay. They are, as may be supposed, very troublesome and destructive, and all cultivation must be defended by pig-proof fences. Each pannel of these fences consists of four broad gum-slabs, inserted in the mortice holes of the posts, so as to form an

almost close wall from the ground, to the height of from four to five feet.

It is expensive, and (where good splitting wood is not found) difficult, to construct fencing of this kind to any extent, and more especially on squatting-ground; people do not relish the cost, so that on this account the breeding of pigs is often relinquished. Where there is either a marsh or a brush in the neighbourhood of the station, they will in general manage to feed themselves, though a little corn, night and morning, will keep them in better order, and prevent their becoming too wild. When there is a dairy in the establishment, they are well off, and a few weeks before it is intended to kill them, they are put up in styes, and fed on maize. They appear to be very free from disease, their principal enemies being the ticks which attach themselves to them in the brushes, and at times kill them in considerable numbers.

Poultry of all kinds thrive very well ; but are not in general much attended to, especially at squatting stations. Dogs abound in the colony, though it is not easy to get hold of good ones. In Sydney, more particularly, they swarm ;

“ Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And curs of low degree.”

The only kinds, however, that are esteemed, are the kangaroo-hound for hunting, the bull-dog as a watch, and the colie, which, when well trained, is invaluable to the shepherd and stockman. They seem to be pretty free from disease ; except, perhaps, the Newfoundland, which becomes lazy, mangy, and suffers from sore eyes, being apparently unfitted for so warm a climate. They are all subject to be attacked by ticks, which, unless picked out, commonly kill them. When a dog is suffering from ticks, he becomes heavy, stupid, and sick, shaky on the legs, and at last loses the use of his

hind quarters altogether. If at this period of the complaint he is not examined, and relieved from the insidious foes that are poisoning him, he dies. Cats are plentiful, and a good mouser is invaluable. Indeed, when an establishment is left for any length of time without this useful animal, it becomes overrun with rats, who devour or destroy everything.

I shall close the list of domesticated animals with one which, while it will hardly be allowed that name by some, is certainly an agreeable and useful servant of man, and perhaps the most industrious and wonderful of all that labour and die for his behoof. The bee thrives admirably in the colony, and produces excellent honey. It is often annoyed by ants, which swarm over the whole country; and to defend it against these, the legs of the frame on which the hive stands, should rest in cups, or troughs, of water. It is said that a line of salt

laid across the entrance of the hive will be impassable to the ant ; and I have seen this practised, apparently with success. Bees are very prolific in this climate, a single hive sending out some six or eight colonies in the course of the year. As might be expected in such a country, it is difficult to secure these swarms, the most of which find shelter, and make a lodgment for themselves in hollow trees. As there is also a native bee, which elaborates its honey in the woods, we may expect, in process of time, to find this delicious article very abundant, an event which will be equally welcome to the white man and to the black.

CHAPTER III.

Duties of a Stockman—Camping-grounds, or Bedding Places—Party of Sawyers—Threatening aspect of the Natives—Their attack on a Gunya—Flight of the Inmate — Hut-keeper Murdered — Another Wounded—Vigilance necessary on the part of the Settler—Voyage to Sydney and Maitland—Obstacles to Cattle-driving—Dense Jungle—Nights in a Hollow Tree—Rugged Country—Torrents of Rain—Valley of the McLeay—Terrible Drought—The Parched Earth—Want of Water—Death of Cattle—A Second Deluge — An Earthquake — Comet — Meteors, or falling Stars.

THE chief duty in an establishment such as mine, was of course to look after the cattle. For this purpose a stockman is necessary, whose only business it is to look

after the stock, and to visit some part of his run every day, being provided with two horses, so that he has a fresh one always at command. But the master commonly takes a prominent part in this occupation, and some squatters manage entirely by themselves.

The valley of the M^cLeay is narrow, and is joined by still narrower dells, formed by the creeks which are its affluents. In these valleys, and on the ranges bounding them, the cattle graze. They have camping-grounds, or bedding-places, generally near the banks of the rivers, or creeks, where they frequently spend the night, and repose during the heat of the day. In the summer, the heat drives them to the low ground and the water, while in wet weather, and in winter, and even during cold nights at any time, they climb the ranges, where they are both drier and warmer.

A good stock-keeper must be an intelli-

gent man. He must be able to follow the tracks of the cattle, and to know where at certain times they are likely to be found. He must get acquainted with his stock, and know the leaders and their haunts. He must know when cows are likely to calve, or have calved, and must bring in young calves to be ear-marked, and their mothers to be milked. He must visit each part of his run in succession, and keep driving the stragglers towards the centre of it, and he must accustom each mob to run to its camp on hearing the crack of his stock-whip. He must attend the cattle-muster of the neighbours, lend them assistance, and take away any of his own he may find among them. He must be able to mend his saddle, and shoe his horse. He must make a good muster of his cattle, and, when they are in the yard, be able to draft them into lots as required, to rope throw, cut and brand; and above all, he must not be afraid to

gallop over any sort of country, to be charged by a wild bullock, or to encounter a tribe of blacks.

A short time after we removed to the new station, a party of sawyers went up Henderson's Creek to saw cedar, and two or three heifer stations were formed at considerable distances up the river, while one was planted on the above-mentioned creek, at about seven miles from its embouchure.

The natives at this time began again to be troublesome, and to assume a threatening aspect. One or two head of cattle were speared by them on Major Innes' run, and they then proceeded to an attempt on life. At sunset, one Sunday evening, I saw a white man divested of all clothing, save his shirt, running towards the station, and coming along the path which leads from Henderson's Creek. Not knowing what might be the meaning of this, I walked towards the house that I might have my

rifle at hand in case of need. On the stranger's approaching, however, I found him to be one of the men who had gone up the creek to cut cedar. He carried in his hand a boomerang and a tomahawk stained with blood, and was so exhausted that he could scarcely stand when he reached the men's hut.

When he had revived a little, he gave the following account of himself. His two mates had gone down the river for rations, and left him in charge of their gunya, which was, of course, situate in the cedar brush, where they worked. Not aware that the natives were in his vicinity, he lay down to sleep in the afternoon, but was by-and-bye awakened by some movement which he felt in the gunya. Opening his eyes, he saw the musket which had been by his side in the act of being drawn out of the gunya, while two blacks were stooping at the entrance. He started on his feet ; it was too

late to secure the musket, or use it to advantage ; but he was a powerful man, and knocked down the black nearest him with his fist.

As he fell, he snatched from his belt a boomerang and tomahawk, with the latter of which he clove the skull of the foremost remaining black, and then took to his heels. The natives gave chase ; he lost his way among the cedar tracks in the brush, and having nothing to defend his legs, and no shoes or stockings on, he was much lacerated by the vines and stakes.

According to his own account, he must have spent a considerable time in the brush, much bewildered, hearing the yells of the savages as they followed his tracks, and afraid to go out upon any opening, or cedar path, lest he should meet his foes full in the face. At length, he got into the open forest, and never ceased running till exhaustion forced him, and he thought himself beyond

the reach of the blacks. He had suffered in the skirmish, but in the hurry and terror of the moment was not aware to what extent.

On examining his person, we found severe contusions about his shoulders, some of them evidently inflicted with the blunt edge of the boomerangs. He staid at the station that night ; the next morning, he was rigged out in some old clothes, and dispatched to the Commissioner's, thirty-five miles down the river, to report the case. Unfortunately, however, as usual in such cases, nothing was done, and the natives escaped chastisement.

Some time after this, the hut-keeper at the station on Henderson's Creek fell a victim to the treachery and revenge of the natives. He came down to my station one afternoon to beg a few charges of gunpowder, that he might defend the maize which the blacks were stealing. I supplied him, and heard nothing more till one evening, when a

native, called "Big-eyed Charley," came to complain to me that "Jamie," the hut-keeper alluded to, had wounded one of his tribe. He demanded Jamie's punishment, but I told him I could not interfere, and he went away much dissatisfied.

Nothing elapsed for some time. The blacks gradually began to show themselves again at the station on the creek in friendly guise. Jamie was thrown off his guard, and one day, while sawing down a tree, assisted by a black, several others standing about him, he received a blow from a tomahawk on the temple, which must have been sufficient to kill him. He was horribly mauled, having his head nearly cut off. The other man fortunately caught his horse, and made his escape to my station. The hut was rifled, and several boomerangs were thrown at a fierce bull-dog which was tied up near the door, but which the blacks neither killed nor dared to approach.

Another attack by the same tribe, on a station some twenty miles up the river, followed in a few days. In this case, an old hut-keeper was left for dead, though he afterwards partially recovered, much to the surprise of every one, for he had some frightful tomahawk-cuts on the head and neck. It was now thought high time that the Commissioner of the Crown Lands, as he is called, should do something with those policemen which the squatters are taxed to support, and which so seldom are of any use to them.

He accordingly turned out with his men, in the course of a few days, but failed, and gave up the pursuit. Two of the policemen, however, were joined by several sturdy stockmen (the true defensive police of the bush), and being led by a black from another part of the colony, they followed in the tracks of the natives for many miles to the northward, over a very scrubby and

broken country, till they came on the black camp, where they slaughtered a good many. Of course, taking prisoners in such a case is almost impossible. A considerable time afterwards, two men, implicated in the attack up the river, were taken prisoners by stratagem, and sent to Sydney, where they were tried and condemned to transportation to Goat Island, in the harbour.

Instances of attacks and murders might be multiplied to a great extent, but enough has been said to show that there is a necessity for constant vigilance on the part of the settler, and for reliance upon himself alone for defence, or redress; the police being for these purposes, and more especially for the former, totally ineffective.

When I had been more than a twelve-month at the new station, I made a journey to Sydney, and thence to Maitland, on the Hunter River, for the purpose of purchasing more cattle. Having already given a

minute account of a similar expedition on a previous occasion, it will be unnecessary to enter into the particulars of this one, as the reader must have a tolerable idea of what is to be encountered in such undertakings. The present one, however, differed considerably from its predecessor. As before, the route had not been travelled by any of the party, and, though more easily followed, was infinitely more rugged and impracticable.

From Maitland to the Paterson River, the road is pretty good; and, indeed, onward to a considerable distance through the Australian Agricultural Company's grant, which lies in the county of Gloucester, is very passable. But, from the Gloucester station to within a short distance of Port Macquarie, the road is a mere horse-track, running over steep and stony ranges, and through brushes and creeks. Indeed, the route is one succession of high rocky hills and deep scrubby valleys and

gullies, composing a country as rugged and broken as any one need wish to see.

It was no easy matter to drive cattle through such a country where one has difficulty often in getting even his horse over a gully, or in leading him up a range.

I was unfortunate in having very wet weather for this expedition, during which I met with some serious difficulties. The River Manning, which is very much like the M^cLeay on a smaller scale, was flooded by the rain, and was the first obstacle that presented itself. This is at the distance of about seventy miles from Port Macquarie, and the worst part of the route lies in that space. As the track runs parallel with the coast, at a distance of from ten to twenty miles, it crosses necessarily all those creeks and deep gullies which further inland have scarcely assumed a form.

The first brush of any magnitude is a dense jungle, through which a track has

been cut seven or eight miles long. In the centre of this is a creek, running across the track, and presenting a very boggy and difficult crossing to the view. On arriving here we lost the track, and the cattle, too restless to remain still while we looked for them, spread abroad through the brush. We spent till sunset in collecting all we could find, and in retracing our steps to the ranges, on the outside of the brush. Here we encamped them all night, but the rain and the unsuitableness of the ground prevented their settling, so that we had to watch them; and, after all, ten or fifteen returned to the nearest station on the Manning, while the rest strayed over all the ranges around us.

For ourselves, we found a tolerable shelter in a large hollow tree, during the night. The next day, having found the crossing-place over the creek, we took the cattle down to it, but could by no means induce them to

cross over. Three days were spent in this way, and, though we had constructed a sapling stock-yard round the crossing-place, still they baffled us, and broke away into the brush. For three nights it poured incessantly, and for three nights we inhabited our hollow tree, the reminiscences of which (though it was of the greatest service to us at the time) by no means induce me to coincide with the country-mouse of old :

“ Give me again my hollow tree,
My crust of bread, and liberty.”

I almost despaired of its ever ceasing to rain, or of ever getting the herd through this horrible jungle ; and really feared that I might have to retrace my steps, and take the cattle round by New England, going over my old track, and performing a journey of immense length. At last, however, the moon showed herself, and a native dog began to howl ; a signal that the rain was

not likely to last long. The following day was fine. We sent back thirty miles to Major Innes' station, on the Manning, for the aid of men and dogs, which we received, and, after several hours of severe work, we succeeded in forcing the herd through the boggy creek in spite of themselves.

We accomplished this by wedging them up into a compact body, and then by shouting and belabouring with long poles, drove those in the rear upon the cattle in front, so as actually to push them in and over. It was no easy matter, for when cattle once refuse a pass, or creek, or hill, it is next to impossible to compel them to take it. We had some very wild bullocks too in the herd, which constantly endeavoured to break out, and charge us. A blow on the muzzle, however, always sent them back, and one must not be afraid to bestow this, for if he fails, or thinks of running, he will find himself in an awkward predicament.

We had now got over the worst of our difficulties, though we encountered more rugged country, and had a good deal more rain. Indeed, after this it poured down in such torrents that we could not keep in our large fire; and, as the ground was a perfect pond under us, we were fain to stand all night with our backs to a gum-tree. On another wet night, we found a hollow tree, into which we were creeping, when, to our horror, a large black snake, disturbed in his apartment, moved off into his hole among the roots of the tree, and within the hollow. We immediately decamped, better pleased to spend an uncomfortable night under the rain, than to run the risk of a visit from the disgusting and dangerous reptile.

After encountering a party of armed blacks, whose bearing we did not relish, but whom we dismissed with some tobacco; and after passing the Nine Gully Brush, a jungle so called from its possessing nine

deep and miry gullies close to each other; after crossing Camden Haven River, and surmounting some very rocky and steep ranges, we descried one of the three hills called The Brothers, near Lake Innes, and two days after arrived at a station within ten miles of Port Macquarie. Thence, we struck up the Hastings, which we crossed at the lowest ford, passed Ballingarra, following the course of the Wilson upwards, till we reached the upper part of the plains, where we struck to the northward, crossing the dividing ranges, and so got into the valley of the M^cLeay.

I found the country here, like that which I had just passed through, burned up with drought, and, as it lasted for six months, after I got home, the cattle I brought with me suffered severely. Being weak and lean from travelling through a country where there was but little to eat, they could not stand the want of food so well as those

settled on the run, and about one-fourth of the number died. In many places, the water was quite dried up, and with "earth of iron and sky of brass," man became weary of the unchanging cloudless heavens, and the everlasting glare of the sun. All the cattle flocked down to the river, or to any water-holes that might be left ;

*"Now feverish herds rush maddening o'er the plains,
And cool in shady streams their throbbing veins."*

And there many of them fell down and died. Too weak to sustain themselves, or retreat, they staggered into the water, and their heads sinking down, they were drowned ; or, at the water-holes, the mud held them fast, and in the night, long ere life had fled, the disgusting crows, and lean, savage, wild-dogs began their repast, the former picking out the eyes, while the latter tore their way into the unhappy animals' bowels.

Even the M^cLeay, which, from its short course, and the propinquity of the moun-

tain ranges and table-land, is commonly a fine, clear, flowing stream, was so dried up that in more than one place I crossed it dry-shod. It was always running under the stones, but at one ford there was a perfectly dry bank of shingle across it, and in the large pools and reaches the weeds flourished so that one would have supposed the water stagnant.

All vegetation seemed to have ceased. The fields bore no crop, and the herbs in the garden shrivelled under the hot winds, as if they had been in a baker's oven. The wonder was, not that the cattle died, but that any of them survived, for all nature was in mourning; the grass was crumbled into dust, and the very insects that had filled the air with their various and discordant humming, seemed to despair in silence.

But it was not in our district that this severe affliction was most felt, for we had

scarcely a sufficient taste of it to let us know what a drought was, in comparison with some other, I believe I may say most other, parts of the colony. In the Bathurst district it lasted for three years, during which time a trustworthy person residing there informed me that no rain fell. It was, perhaps, in Liverpool Plains, however, that it had the most direful effect. These widespread plains, as they had suffered previously from great floods which carried away flocks and herds, so were now to groan more heavily under the contrary evil.

All that extensive country, where thousands of cattle and horses, and hundreds of thousands of sheep were pastured, was reduced to one vast desert. Some of the cattle, of their own accord, left the plains, and made their appearance in New England and other places. Many died during this migration in search of water, and many more dropped down by the muddy, puddled,

and ultimately dried up water-holes, of the Namoi and Mookie.

At one of these, a friend of mine counted no less than nine hundred carcasses of cattle, besides some horses ; and, I believe in more than one instance, a human being fell from the same cause, where the flocks and herds had dropped down before him. Many of the stations were deserted, and proprietors drove their flocks and herds before them, like the patriarchs of old, looking for a place to feed and water them. But this wise step was taken too late, and many left the greater part of their worldly wealth rotting on the plains.

It is hard to say what kind of stock suffered most, but I incline to give the palm in this unenviable rivalry to the cattle. Many distressing cases occurred of persons losing almost every head of stock they possessed ; such as in one instance with which I was acquainted, where, out of five hundred

head of cattle, the proprietor only saved five. The prices of cattle were very high some time before this destruction occurred among them, but they were then falling. Such a thinning might have somewhat revived the market, had not that crisis been fast coming upon the colony which the false monetary system, and the wildness of speculation, combined with other circumstances, had engendered.

At length, the sky that had been glowing for months, was overcast by a cloud, and we began to be relieved from that anxious suspense and fear that there was no moisture in the heavens, and that none would evermore fall to the earth. But, as with Tantalus, the water was around us, and it touched not our lips. For six weeks the clouds gathered in the sky every afternoon, and seemed to hold council with themselves what they should do. Still no rain fell, and we felt this constant disappointment to be worse

than the burning heat of the drought itself.

At length, the unwilling clouds gave forth their treasures. "Then burst the deluge on the sinking shore," and all nature began to smile again. In a few days, the young grass was shooting up as green as ever, and no one could have thought that such things had been.

Soon after this long drought, we were visited by two of the great phenomena of nature, which were connected in the minds of the ignorant with our previous calamity. These were, first an earthquake, and afterwards a comet. At sunrise one morning, I was suddenly wakened by the shaking of my bed and the violent creaking of every part of the wooden house in which I dwelt. Immediately concluding that the commotion was caused by one of those violent gales of wind which are not uncommon, I jumped out of bed, anxious to get outside for fear the beams

and rafters should fall in, but, as I ran along the floor I felt the boards, and the slabs of the verandah, undulating under me. The truth at once flashed across my mind, and I confess accompanied by some unpleasant ideas, though gratified, at the same time, to have had an opportunity of witnessing the phenomenon.

When I got outside, the sun's first rays were gilding the tops of the trees, and a death-like and unnatural stillness seemed to reign over all around. By the time I had reached the garden, the vibrations had ceased, and the earthquake was over. I heard of no greater damage it did anywhere, than the throwing down the plaister of some rooms, the destruction of sundry shelves of crockery, and the turning out of people from their beds. The shock was felt as far south as Newcastle, on the Hunter River, where a similar one had been experienced two or three years before.

The comet to which I alluded was a mag-

nificent specimen of that class of heavenly bodies. It made its appearance one evening at sunset, in the south-west, at a height apparently of about seven or eight degrees above the horizon. Its body was so bright that it could be seen, like a star, with the naked eye. It was also downwards, pursuing its course towards the horizon, under which it set in the course of about three hours. Its tail was one long, straight, and gradually expanding beam of silvery light, of such extent that it appeared to span one-fourth of the heavens. The brilliance of the whole was so great, that the unassisted eye detected it very soon after the sun had hid his face, and ere yet the short twilight of the Australian climate had passed away. We were delighted every evening for a fortnight by this splendid visitant, that, even in the clear, starlight nights, served to light up one portion of the heavens like the new moon. At length it vanished, and seemed

to leave quite a blank in the place where it had appeared.

While on this subject, it may not be inappropriate to mention the meteors, or falling stars, which are very frequent and very brilliant, as they shoot across the face of those beautiful constellations with which the southern skies are studded. We have, of course, no aurora borealis here, and the meteors before spoken of, I have seen equalled in the northern hemisphere. All, however, are insignificant when compared with those I have witnessed near the Equator. Their brilliancy was incredible, and they lighted up all around us as if a blazing torch had suddenly been flung among us.

CHAPTER IV.

General appearance of New South Wales—Level Belt of Country—Course of the Rivers—A good part for the Settler—Arid Region—Hot Winds—Absence of great Rivers—The Morumbidgee—Terrific Visitations—The Climate and Soil—Refreshing Nights—White Mists—Terrific Hurricane—Buildings Unroofed—Storms of Thunder and Lightning—Geology of the Country—Sandstone Rock—Extract from Sir Thomas Mitchell's Work—Vein of Limestone—Metals—On Exploring the Exterior.

HAVING NOW devoted sufficient space to a description of the monotonous and toilsome life of the settler, I turn to subjects likely to be more interesting to the gen-

ality of readers, perhaps to all, unless, per-adventure, the intending emigrant. I propose, then, to treat as concisely as possible of the general appearance of the country, taking notice of its peculiarities, or, if I may be allowed the term, eccentricities. The minerals, and geological formation, will naturally follow this. I shall then advert to the aboriginal inhabitants, after which I shall consider all that is included in the animated nature of that region ; and lastly, the productions of the soil will engage our attention.

First, then, of the general appearance of the country. It has been remarked, and not without reason, that in New Holland everything is exactly the opposite of what it is in all other regions. And seeing that that country is at the Antipodes, it is not to be wondered at that everything appears upside down. Thus, we have the

mountains near the coast, and the low and level land in the interior, while, as a natural consequence, the largest rivers run inland.

The country within twenty to thirty miles of the sea-coast is almost universally sandy, rocky, and barren, or swampy, and brushy, or jungly, redolent of fevers and agues, and dispersing its mephitic vapours in a summer morning, like steam from a caldron. This belt is commonly pretty level; but, from its edge to the foot of the table-land, which is about some sixty miles further, the surface becomes very rugged, being, in fact, a mass of mountains jumbled together, intersected here and there by rivers and creeks, winding with most tortuous course through very narrow valleys. This belt I consider the best part of the country for settling in. The cattle and sheep graze on the hills and in the valleys, while ground fit for cultivation

is found in the bights of the rivers. In fact, this is the only arable soil to be met with in this tract, the ranges being abrupt, and gravelly or rocky.

The rivers passing through this region are generally well filled, their courses being short and rapid. They are remarkable for the sinuosity of their routes, and the alternate abruptness and levelness of their banks, as was before more minutely explained. Their valleys lie between spurs of the great, or, as it is commonly called, coast or dividing range, which shoot off from the mass behind, and extend almost, and in some places quite to the coast. Towards Moreton Bay, the table-land approaches the coast more nearly.

Ascending the dividing range by one of its spurs, we arrive at an elevated and broad belt of land, taking the name of Manaira in the south, and New England, &c., in the

north. Hitherto, the whole country has been covered with timber ; but here we find fine downs, in many cases consisting of good arable soil, and free from wood, which, however, skirts them on the rising ground around. This is a good part of the country for grazing sheep, on account of its openness, but it is far inland, and the carriage is heavy. Of these matters and its climate I have before spoken.

In this celebrated belt rise all the rivers ; the one set pursuing their rapid course to the ocean, while the larger ones roll sluggishly towards the interior, there to be drunk up by the thirsty earth of that hot region, or to lose themselves in wide-spread marshes. Such are the terminations of those which have as yet been explored, except in one or two instances, where the waters run across one corner of the continent, and find an exit in Lake Alexandrina, in South Australia. Most of them, how-

ever, are quite unexplored. They stretch out to the interior, and no one knows whither; and the same river has frequently had several names, from its being discovered at different places, and taken for so many different streams.

Descending towards the interior, we arrive at that tract of country which is occupied by Liverpool Plains, and other regions of a similar nature. This part of the continent, as before stated, consists of immense plains, free from all timber, and large masses of wood, frequently very dense, and occasionally growing on slightly elevated ranges. The exploring parties have not penetrated more than from one hundred to a hundred and fifty miles inland from the table-land; and, as far as they have gone, the appearance has been such as described; comprehending also extensive marshes, or swamps, which effectually bar all further progress.

This region is generally very hot and very

dry, although occasionally subject to overwhelming floods.

The hot winds are felt here more than in any other part of the colony, always blowing from the interior, and thence giving rise to the supposition, with many, that there are vast sandy deserts in the interior, in blowing over which the wind gets heated. Others leave the hot winds to account for themselves, unless the inland forests, being burned by the natives, will do so, and hold that the interior must be occupied by an inland sea, into which the rivers empty themselves. I am more inclined to suspect that those rivers which do not find a passage to the ocean, are absorbed by the marshes, and evaporated by the heat of the sun.

It will be seen from the foregoing remarks, that there are two great wants in New Holland, besides that of more frequent rain. I allude, firstly, to absence of volcanic action, or heaving up of the earth; and secondly, to

the want of great rivers, by which communication might be opened from the sea to the interior. Indeed, had the one deficiency been supplied, the other would have been so also. The igneous power prevailing more, the strata would have been thrown up highest towards the interior of the continent. The mountains would there have caught and broken the clouds, whose waters must then have flowed in lengthened courses to the sea. It is strange to consider that the same singular structure of country which causes the absence of great navigable rivers, for inland communication, almost prevents the possibility of making up for the want, by means of railroads, from the impracticable nature of the country between the coast and the interior.

Were this otherwise, however, railroads could not be thought of for ages to come, and never could do for a young country what navigable rivers would. These are

New Holland's great want, in which it surpasses all other lands and continents; and it must be admitted that it holds this bad pre-eminence not only as regards great rivers, but even looking to those tributaries which the rivers it has would naturally be expected to possess.

The Morumbidgee, Captain Sturt states, is not joined by a single stream of water, during three hundred and forty miles of its course. The want of these subsidiary streams is perhaps a greater evil than the absence of navigable rivers; and, though in some places the surface of the earth would admit of the one deficiency being supplied by canals and the other by irrigation; yet these objects would, in almost all cases, be unattainable from the actual want of water.

The periodical droughts to which New South Wales is liable, are its greatest curse. No regular rains are there, as in India and elsewhere. All is uncertainty; and, when

a refreshing shower falls, it is always hailed with joy, for no man can say whether he will see another in a month or a year.

The enterprising traveller, Captain Sturt, whom I before quoted, thus alludes to those terrific visitations :

“ At this time commenced the fearful droughts to which we have reason to believe the climate of New South Wales is periodically subject. It continued the two following years with unabated severity. The surface of the earth became so parched up, that the minor vegetation ceased upon it. Culinary herbs were raised with difficulty ; and crops failed even in the most favourable situations. Settlers drove their flocks and herds to distant tracts of pasture and water. The interior suffered equally with the coast ; and men at length began to despond under so alarming a visitation. It almost appeared as if the Australian sky was never to be troubled again by a cloud.”

This corroboration of what I previously said on the subject, will surely suffice to set the matter in a clear point of view. It remains for me to say something of the climate and the soil. The former I may speedily dismiss, having already touched upon it in several places. It is allowed to be one of the finest in the world, and to resemble considerably that of the Cape of Good Hope. The dryness of the atmosphere is great, and to this is attributed its healthiness, under such a degree of heat. Dr. Lang, a man of great intelligence and veracity, and now a member of the House of Assembly, has declared that he felt less inconvenience in preaching during summer to a crowded assembly in Sydney, than under similar circumstances, at a similar season in Scotland, and this he attributes to the superior dryness of the climate.

Sir James Mackintosh mentions in his Diary, while Recorder of Bombay, that the

thermometer rose one day to 95° , the highest point at which he had seen it, and that the heat was oppressive to the utmost degree. Now, I have frequently seen the thermometer in New South Wales stand at 98° in the house, for several days together, and yet have spent great part of the time on horseback, exposed to the glare of the sun; the scanty foliage of the gum-trees affording no shade whatever, and this without any bad effects.

One Christmas-day, I rode seven miles into Sydney, while it blew a hot wind, and the thermometer stood in the shade at 108° . On the Hunter, I have heard of its reaching 110° . I must confess, however, that when the thermometer has been from 90° to 100° , I have sat in the house reading, while the perspiration oozed out at every pore.

The heat is in general not felt so much while actively employed, especially if one is on horseback, and creating a current of air

by passing rapidly through it. The sun's rays are powerful enough to blister the wrists, or any tender part which may be left exposed. I have known three or four instances of *coup de soleil*; but they are not common. The utmost effects that I have experienced, were occasionally a giddiness and dimness of the eyes.

The greatest superiority of the climate of New South Wales over other warm countries, consists in its refreshing cool nights, which, with but few exceptions, follow the warmest days. There is an anomaly regarding the climate, which is not of very easy solution. Notwithstanding the great dryness of the air, and the long droughts, vegetation is frequently kept alive by the abundant dews, as in parts of Egypt and Peru, where it is said never to rain. In a fine clear night, one can hear the drops falling from the leaves of the trees, and I remarked this, in an especial manner, in the case of some

castor-oil trees which overshadowed one of my huts, and whose broad leaves collected the dew, and dropped it in such quantities as almost to make one think it rained. Frequently, however, clear cool nights occur without any dew; and in summer this is too much the case, leading me to suppose that the Australian atmosphere, usually so dry, is at that season much below the point of saturation, and consequently unable to impart any moisture to the parched herbage.

In Australia, especially in the winter season, thick white mists are not uncommon. These are observed chiefly over flats and plains, and on the surface of rivers. Even on the M^cLeay they are so cold and cutting, as to have obtained the designation of "the Barber," from their effect upon the chin, resembling that functionary's operations.

The winter nights and mornings too are very sharp; a roaring wood fire is a good

companion ; and with four or five blankets over me, I have been unable to sleep for the cold, the houses being of such slight and open construction, that the temperature is the same out of doors as within. This is more than I have experienced even during a Scotch winter. The days are of that pleasant warmth, and delightful freshness, that one would wish them to last for ever.

It may not be inappropriate here to allude to those violent gales, or hurricanes, which frequently prevail in Australia. They are extremely sudden, and of such force as to level the largest trees, and strew the ground with the lordly giants of the forest. I once rode for ten miles through the bush, along the track of one of these hurricanes, whose devastations had been tremendous. Two-thirds of the trees were uprooted, and crashed together upon the ground. The road, which, as usual, was merely a route marked by dray-tracks, was blocked up and strewed

with timber, so that the drays which followed had to work their way along by the most extraordinary sinuosities.

At another time, when seven or eight of us were just leaving the mustering stockyard to go home, a distance of two miles, one of these tremendous gales came on without the slightest warning. We all put spurs to our horses, and galloped as fast as possible, thinking that the safest plan.

About half-way, we found a tolerably open space, where we halted for a few seconds, but finding we were still within reach of some trees, which were nodding to their base, we took flight again, trees and large limbs falling on all sides, and sometimes within a few yards of us, while the startled horses, with glaring eyes and distended nostrils, tore along at the top of their speed. It was only the great rapidity of our movements which saved us. At length, we reached home; and what a home! The

house, with several of the other buildings, was unroofed, and one of them was tottering to its fall, a corner of it having been carried away by a large limb of a tree. Some idea may be formed of the power of the wind, when I state that it blew down and levelled with the ground, one side of the garden paling.

There is one other class of phenomena which I may notice before taking leave of this subject—I allude to the storms of thunder and lightning which, though on the whole not very frequent, are sometimes tremendous in their force. More vivid flashes of lightning, or more terrific explosions of thunder, can scarcely be imagined. It has been supposed that tempests of this kind prevail to a greater extent in sandstone countries than elsewhere, and if so, it is not to be wondered at that they are so terrific in New Holland. The mention of sandstone recalls to my mind the geology of New

South Wales, to which we now naturally turn, and which, from its great uniformity and consequent want of interest, will not detain us long. Sandstone rock is that which abounds most in this part of the world. Wherever it appears, the soil is sandy and barren ; while it is generally fertile, and the grass luxuriant, where limestone and trap occur.

The following extract from a work entitled "Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia," by Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, will show the opinion which he entertains of the soil and capabilities of the colony: "It has been observed, that the soil in New South Wales is good only where trap, limestone, or granite rocks occur. Sandstone, however, predominates so much as to cover about six-sevenths of the whole surface comprised within the boundaries of the nineteen counties. Wherever this is the surface rock,

little beside barren sand is found, in the place of soil. Deciduous vegetation scarcely exists there; no vegetable soil is formed, for, the trees and shrubs being very inflammable, conflagrations take place so frequently and extensively in the woods during summer, as to leave very little vegetable matter to return to earth. On the highest mountains, and in places the most remote and desolate, I have always found on every dead trunk on the ground, and living tree of any magnitude also, the marks of fire; and thus it appeared that these annual conflagrations extend to every place. In the regions of sandstone, the territory is, in short, good for nothing."

Thus we see, at one fell swoop, six-sevenths of the colony condemned as useless, and that by the man who has had the best opportunities of seeing and judging. The greater part of the lime used in Sydney and elsewhere, is made from oyster-shells, which are abundant in the creeks and coves

near the coast, and are also found in heaps a foot or more under the soil, and at some distance from the sea.

Limestone-rocks are found in Argyleshire, Bathurst, and several other places in the interior, in some of which large subterranean caves, and fossil bones of animals now extinct in New Holland, have been discovered. An extensive vein of limestone makes its appearance on Piper's Creek and the M^cLeay river, from both of which places cargoes of this valuable material are sent to Sydney. Many houses in Sydney are built of sandstone, which is the only rock of all the surrounding country.

In sailing along the coast to the northward, one sees nothing else but high sandstone bluffs, crowned with stunted, scraggy gum-trees and underwood, and occasionally a low sandy beach, or an indentation in the coast. On examining more minutely, however, one may discover other rocks appearing

amid the sandstone, at irregular distances along the coast, the strata having by some convulsion of nature been thrown with their edges to the surface. Thus at Sydney we have sandstone-rock; at Reid's Mistake, where a captain went looking for Newcastle, and loaded his ship, we find coal; then sandstone till we reach Newcastle, where the coal almost peeps out again; more sandstone till near Port Macquarie, where a small vein of a white substance, probably magnesian limestone, appears, followed closely by two or three detached strata of serpentine, or greenstone; again sandstone, interrupted only by the stratum of limestone before mentioned, which intersects it near the M^cLeay, but it is not detected for some distance inland.

No metals have as yet been discovered in New South Wales, though ironstone is frequently found on the surface. The want of slate also is very much felt.

Gems and valuable stones are quite unknown. It is to be regretted that more exploratory expeditions have not been made, especially towards the interior. Sir Thomas Mitchell lately was anxious to pursue a route from the furthest west point yet gained, to the settlement of Port Essington; but though the House of Assembly voted a thousand pounds to defray the expenses of the expedition, the Governor put his veto on it, much to the regret of all the intelligent colonists. It seems strange that a country like Great Britain should have so long possessed a colony on the coast of a large continent, without making any great effort to explore the interior. Possibly, little would accrue from such an undertaking, save the furthering of science and the clearing up of several mysteries; but this, one would suppose, would be sufficient. At the same time, immense obstacles present themselves, from the impracticable nature of the country, the

want of water, the difficulty of carrying provisions for a long journey, and the impossibility of sustaining life, in an emergency, by any natural productions of the country. So great are these impediments, that it is questionable whether they will ever be surmounted.

CHAPTER V.

Man in his Natural and Savage State—The New Hollander—His Descent—His Degraded Aspect His great Ingenuity—His Personal Appearance Described—And that of the Women—Tattooing of the Person—Mildness of the Climate—Scanty Clothing of the Natives—The Opossum-Cloak—Number of Tribes—Hunting-Grounds—Huts, or Gunyas—The Stringy Bark—Manners and Habits of the Blacks—Gin's or Wife's love of Tobacco—A Lazy People—Their Cowardice—Diseases prevalent among them.

I SHALL now, as in the order before set down, consider the aboriginal inhabitants of the continent which I have been describing. The contemplation of man in his natural or savage state, is at all times deeply interest-

ing ; and perhaps this may be peculiarly the case in the instance of the New Hollander, connected with whom one or two strange anomalies are met with. He has been most commonly placed at the very bottom of the human scale ; and yet he has invented and perfected more than one instrument, unknown to civilized nations—nay, whose very principles their mechanists and philosophers have been unable to explain.

The New Hollander is ranked by physiologists under the denomination of “ Eastern negro,” comprising the inhabitants also of Papua and Madagascar, and forming a distinct, and the fifth, great family of man. Dr. Lang has written a very able and interesting work, showing in what way the South Sea Islands have been peopled one after another ; and endeavouring, I think with considerable success, to prove that America was peopled by Malays, the course being

eastward, even to the Sandwich Islands, Easter Island, and the coast of America.

New Holland has probably been peopled in a similar manner by the inhabitants of New Guinea, though how the Madagasses come to be of the same family, while the New Zealanders, and all the other South Sea Islanders, are of a totally different race, it is difficult to say. It is well known that the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land, a race of people now without representatives, save a few survivors of those who were removed to Flinder's Island in Bass's Straits, were also of the same class as the New Hollanders. Some who have studied ethnology, in the belief that the differences of climate, mode of life, &c., are sufficient to account for all the varieties of the human species, state that a cross between the South American Indian and the African negro, produces a style of man very like the New Hollander, or eastern negro.

But, if America was peopled by Malays, through the South Sea Islands, we may expect a somewhat similar result from a cross or admixture of the Malay and the negro. It was probable that the Malays, who were an enterprising and maritime people, would reach Madagascar as well as the other numerous islands over which they spread. In fact, they have visited this island in later times, and have driven out of great part of it the less energetic and warlike inhabitants. Here, by an intermixture with the negroes, they would become the fathers of the eastern negroes, who now also inhabit Papua and New Holland. It will be asked, "supposing this were true, how come they to inhabit these countries alone?" To this, it may be answered, that while they were left in quiet possession of the largest and least inviting islands, the warlike and seafaring Malays were likely easily to drive them out, or to prevent their

taking possession of those smaller, lovelier, and more fertile isles, those "gems of the sea," which they inhabit to this day. This is a mere theory, for the supporting or overturning of which it would be necessary to understand the currents and winds between the coast of Africa and the Eastern Archipelago, better than I can pretend to do. It is admitted, however, that these are such as to carry, at certain seasons, Malays to Madagascar. Keeping this in view, the question is whether the eastern negro was carried from Madagascar to New Holland and Papua, or *vice versa*, from these to Madagascar.

The New Hollanders are a strange wandering race, troubling themselves little with the ceremonies which so frequently occupy the attention of savages, and taking thought for nothing but how to appease their appetites. It must be admitted that they are degraded, and hideous in appearance, and

yet it is inconceivable how people can have been so absurd as to believe them to be baboons, or some sort of link between that animal and man. Dr. Lang has thought it worth while to oppose this theory, and asks whether a baboon could make poetry or a song, such as the blacks occasionally manufacture. The fact is, the idea is too ridiculous to be worth contending against. The New Holland savage displays great ingenuity in his weapons and his modes of hunting; he possesses, in many instances, great imitative powers; and, in several cases, where children have been trained while young, they have displayed wonderful quickness in reading and writing, and acquiring that information generally imparted to the children of the whites.

I shall now consider the natives under the four following heads: appearance, dress, modes of life, and hunting; superstitions and ceremonies; dispositions, intellectual

faculties, &c.; concluding with any general remarks that may present themselves. The New Hollander bears considerable resemblance to the negro, and yet he would never be mistaken for him. His skin is not quite so polished and shining; but I have observed it of all tints, from an olive or brunette tint, to the deepest jet. His features are harder, also, and less fleshy. The hair is long, and black; it divides itself into a number of thin screws, or curls, is very different from the crisp wool of the negro, and when wet and combed, looks very handsome. The eyes are invariably black, the part surrounding the iris being frequently of a sickly yellow. The teeth are invariably fine and white. The forehead is low and receding. The nostrils spread over each cheek. The mouth is very wide, and the lips thick. The beard, whiskers, and moustachios are very scanty, in fact, often absent altogether.

The women appear to be smaller in general than Europeans; the men, perhaps, a little so, too. They are commonly not very broad shouldered; on the whole, rather slight, I should say. Their greatest deficiency is in the legs, which are thin, and deficient in muscle. The tibia, or front bone, extending from the knee to the ankle, is bent forward to a great extent, causing in some instances the appearance of a calf before as well as behind. The foot is large and clumsy; there is but little instep; the sole is horny and white, as is also, in a less degree, the palm of the hand. The shoulders, arms, and chest are marked with lines from half an inch to three inches in length, arranged in irregular shapes, and standing out in high relief from the skin. These are so large and high as frequently to look like rolls of clay, the size almost of one's little finger, laid upon the flesh. The colour is the same as the surrounding skin,

though sometimes, from friction I suppose, they become a little lighter. This kind of raised tattooing is performed in youth, by means of bits of shells and bones, with which they make incisions, in which they place small pebbles, to keep them open for a long time, and raise the eminences on the surface. This is the only kind of tattooing (if, indeed, it deserves the name, where the flesh is only raised into spots and lines, and not coloured) which the New Holland savage practises. The dress of the aborigines is so simple and so scanty, that a few words will suffice to dismiss it.

The climate is so mild and equable, that no covering is required for warmth during the greater part of the year. Indeed, except at night, it might be dispensed with altogether. The result of this is, that the men commonly wander about in a state of perfect nudity. The women are frequently found in a similar predicament. There

appears in them just the faintest possible trace of that modesty which has been observed, with scarcely an exception, in all other savage people. If they can procure a small opossum-cloak to cover their nakedness, they wear it ; but if not, they seem in no wise distressed by the exposure.

The men and bigger boys frequently wear a belt of kangaroo-skin round the waist, from which depend numerous strips of the same, or flying squirrel-skin, not all round the girdle, but in front and behind, forming two large tassels. Cinctures are also worn by the males, round the waist, across the chest, and around the neck and upper part of the arms. These are all in one long coil, formed of worsted cord, made from opossum-fur. They are put on in youth, during one of their ceremonies, and must be worn for a considerable time. A small and neatly made net band, formed from string twisted of the sapling called

the *curryjung*, is usually worn across the forehead.

The head is always uncovered, but the hair is sometimes entwined with dry grass, and tied up into a high peak. Notwithstanding the great heat of summer, and the state of nudity in which the blacks commonly are, they frequently pass cold and frosty winter-nights without any covering. They endeavour, however, if possible, to have an opossum-cloak by way of blanket for night—the gins, or women, usually wearing or carrying them. These are made of some twenty or thirty skins of the opossum, sewn together with the sinews from the tail of the kangaroo. The needle used is a long sharp bone of the kangaroo; with this each hole through which the thread passes is made. The skins are prepared merely by pinning them to a tree while fresh, so as to expose the inner side to the sun. When the cloak is made, it is generally

ornamented on the outer or bare side with lines and figures marked on it by means of a piece of cockle-shell.

The natives are divided into an immense number of small tribes, consisting of from forty or fifty to a couple of hundred individuals. There are no chiefs, nor kings, though occasionally, in the neighbourhood of stations, some sturdy fellow will say he is king of such a place, and be very proud to wear a brass plate, if he can get it, bearing his name, followed by the title of king. This gives him no power, however. It is the white man who makes him king. All belonging to the tribe are equal, unless perhaps the *croddy*, or doctor, who appears to be a kind of quack and leader of the ceremonies combined, and is held in some degree of veneration. Even superior prowess in hunting or in war seems to give little or no pre-eminence with the tribe. As the sole occupation of the blacks is to obtain food, and

that food almost entirely consists of game, they are ever on the move. They cultivate nothing, build no huts nor wigwams, and have no resting-place for more than a few days.

Each tribe has a certain beat, or hunting-ground, frequently of not more than twenty miles in diameter, from which they never move, unless on certain occasions, when they visit the territory of a neighbouring tribe for the purpose of a fight, or a ceremony. Sometimes, the tribe will wander about in parties of five or ten ; at other times, all the members will encamp together. Sometimes, the camp will be on a flat, at other times, on the top of hill, or in a brush. In fine weather they lie down without any covering ; but if they intend remaining more than a night, or if the weather is wet, the men strip sheets of bark from the trees, with which they form small open huts, or gunyas, by placing the sheets against one or two sloping sticks.

The stringy-bark is the tree preferred for this purpose. They open the bark longitudinally, after having cut it round below, and above at the required height. They then, with the broad end of the womera, or throwing-stick, work round the tree inside the bark, until the whole sheet drops off. When they wish to have the sheet long, they set a prop sloping against the tree, and then, either with or without notches cut in it, walk up it with the greatest ease.

Each family has its own gunya and fire. The latter is extremely small, even in the coldest nights. Nothing will induce them to make a large, rousing fire, as the whites do. They persist in lighting two or three small sticks, scarcely sufficient to make a blaze, and curl themselves round the apology for a fire, like a snake in his hole.

They are not very early risers. The sun is commonly up an hour, perhaps two, before them. They sleep most soundly towards

morning, and when expeditions have been made against them by the whites, they have always endeavoured to surprise them in the grey light of dawn. At such a time, they never attack each other. They are afraid to move about in the dark, and if benighted, they will never travel without a burning fire-stick in the hand of each. They seem to have some idea of relationship, and talk of mammy, father, or old man, and brother. Sometimes, a man has two gins, or wives, but this is not common ; as women, I think, from some cause or other, are often scarce. Frequently, a man will lament that he has no gin. They appear not often to obtain their wives from other tribes, so that they go on intermarrying to a baneful extent. Occasionally, one man will steal another's gin, when a fight generally ensues.

It is astonishing how exactly the description given by Cæsar of the ancient Britons applies to the antipodal savages, even to the

painting of their bodies, and the having of their wives in common, which may almost be said of them, from the frequent mixtures and changes: “—— frumenta non serunt; sed lacte et carne vivunt, pellibusque sunt vestiti. Omnes verò se Britanni vitro inficiunt, quod caeruleum efficit colorem, atque hoc horridiores sunt in pugna aspectu, capilloque sunt promisso, atque omni parte corporis rasâ, præter caput, et labrum superius.”

The blacks frequently singe off the little hair they have on the face, and are very proud if they can persuade a white fellow, as they commonly call the Europeans, to act as barber and hair-dresser for them. They are very fond of any old clothes they can get, especially shirts, trousers, and handkerchiefs. Shoes, or boots, and hats they do not care for, but a blanket is a great prize. Tobacco is their weakness; they will do anything for that, however bad its quality. An old clay-pipe to smoke, and stick into the

band round the head, is a great bribe. They frequently bore the ears, and the cartilage of the nostril, and into the latter they will stick a kangaroo bone, and sometimes an old clay cutty, or dudun.

When they want tobacco, they say they are *murry dry*, that is, very thirsty for the weed. It is strange how they take to it, as if it were an old accustomed luxury; and how they long for it, as if it were the staff of life. From the picaninny, or brat of three or four years old, to the reverend patriarch of the tribe, and the most withered, baboon-looking old mammy, all whiff away at the clay with the greatest gusto.

These blacks are essentially a lazy people. Hunger compels them to seek food. This found, they gorge themselves till they can scarcely move, and then lie down, there to remain, sometimes, for two or three days. They will even suffer hunger for a day or two, before they will move to help them-

selves. If the settler wants them to pull maize or look for his horses, at one time *surka murry trong* (the sun is very strong), at another time it is *murry* cold.

They suffer frequently from pains, probably rheumatic. They suppose that it is the *debil debil*, or evil spirit, that afflicts them, and burn themselves in various places, with a red hot stick, so as to raise sores by way of remedy.

They are certainly a cowardly, timid race. Their fights often end without any deaths, a few boomerang or spear-wounds being the only result; and this is scarcely to be wondered at, they are so expert in turning aside everything that is launched at them. Frequently, two tribes will meet in hostile array, hold a palaver, dance and yell with rage, and threaten; and after all, the affair will end in smoke, or in a *corrobory*, or ceremonial dance.

They appear to be kindly in general to

each other. If you give meat and flour, or tobacco to one, he will generally divide it equally among several, if not all, who are present. The men, however, occasionally kill their *gins*. I knew of one case, and I believe it was for infidelity. Notwithstanding this, they will frequently offer to lend *it*, meaning the *gin* to the convict-servants, for tobacco, &c. When a *gin* has had intercourse with a European, and produces a half-caste child, they say, "That been *patter* (eaten) white bread."

A certain disease is very prevalent among them, and an aggravated kind, which they term *wambush*, and *wambut*, emaciates and carries off many of them. Judging from appearances, and the state in which the faces of many are, I should say that small-pox was not unknown among them. They themselves, however, attribute these ravages on their beauty to *wambut* also. They are not very fond of half-castes, and generally,

if not always, when it is in their power, destroy the females. The males I have frequently seen them rearing; very few, however, older than seven or eight. They are wonderfully light in colour, and really very good-looking, but the *gins* do not appear to produce them very often.

Weak or deformed children are frequently, if not always, killed by the mothers. This would seem almost unnecessary, for a delicate child could not long survive the rough life and frequent hunger to which it must be exposed. Such is the case, however; I have known instances of it myself, occurring in my immediate neighbourhood.

On one occasion, during the illness of our former worthy commissioner, Mr. Oakes, Mr. Sullivan, who was Commissioner of Crown Lands, within the boundaries, went on an expedition against the Yarraharpny blacks, a tribe notorious for their savage dispositions, and inhabiting the country

between the mouths of the M^cLeay and the Nambuccoo. They had, at that time made an attack upon the sawyers occupied on the latter river, which had ended in the murder of one of these adventurous men, and this was not the first time that their aggressions had so ended.

The commissioner, taking the police with him, came upon their camp, and dispersed them with some slaughter. While standing near their deserted gunyas, Mr. Sullivan informed me, that he heard a noise, appearing like a child crying, and proceeding from the earth. Guided by the sound, he arrived at a pile of pieces of tea-tree bark, which, on being removed, were found to cover a hole in the ground, in which a live child had recently been placed, in an erect position. He conjectured that the child was one of those which, from weakness or deformity, had been doomed to death. But what was done with the foundling, it will be

asked? Whether or not it was left to its fate, I am not able to say.

Sir Thomas Mitchell has painted a very interesting picture of an Australian savage, which is so correct, and so well done, that I make no apology for introducing it here.

“I observed a native on the opposite bank, and without being seen by him, I stood awhile to watch the habits of a savage man at home. His hands were ready to seize, his teeth to eat, any living thing; his step, light and soundless as that of a shadow, gave no intimation of his approach; his walk suggested the idea of the prowling of a beast of prey; every little track or impression left on the earth by the lower animals, caught his keen eye, but the trees overhead chiefly engaged his attention. Deep in the hollow heart of some of the upper branches was still hidden, as it seemed, the opossum on which he was to dine.

“The wind blew cold and keenly through

the lofty trees on the river margin, yet that brawny savage was entirely naked. Had I been unarmed, I had much rather have met a lion than that sinewy biped; but I was on horseback, with pistols in my holsters, and the broad river was flowing between us. I overlooked him from a high bank, and I ventured to disturb his meditations with a halloo. He then stood still, looked at me for about a minute, and then retired, with that easy, bounding kind of step which may be termed a running walk, exhibiting an unrestrained facility of movement, apparently incompatible with dress of any kind. It is in bounding lightly at such a pace that, with the additional aid of the womera (a short, notched stick), the native can throw his spear with sufficient force and velocity to kill the emu, or kangaroo, even when at its speed."

CHAPTER VI.

Specimens of the Natives—The Women—Instances of Maternal Sorrow—Natives invaluable in Tracking—Their great patience—Their sole object of Life—Their Food, and mode of procuring it—Hunting the Kangaroo—The wily Savage—The Paddy Melon—The Opossum—Mode of climbing trees—Dexterity of the Women—Flying Foxes, Flying Squirrels, &c.—The Guano—Vermin and Reptiles—Grub called the Cobra—The Emu and Brush Turkey—Spearing of Fish—Diving for Oysters—Honey of the native Bee—Mode of Hunting—Sugar-Bags—Berries—The Roots Towwack and Cungwoi—The Spear—The Womera—The Boomerang—The Tomahawk—The Copping—The Nullanulla—The Waddy—The Heehaman—The Towrang—Vessels for carrying water—Articles of Dress—Native Canoe.

REMOTE from the settlements of the white

man, where the native becomes vitiated—depends for food too much on the charity or interest of the *pale face*, and destroys himself with ardent spirits—one sees many fine specimens of the race, strapping, stalwart men—“tall fellows of their hands.” They very quickly arrive at maturity. In the course of a year or two, the boy springs up into the man. They decline, however, as quickly as they rise. At the age at which the white man is in his vigour, they are decrepit and worn out.

The women become meagre skeletons, more like baboons than human beings; and the old men, with their frightful faces and grizzled hair, inspire one at the same time with pity and disgust. At all times, the countenances of the blacks are frightful. There is little of the “human face divine” there; but I have seen one or two men whose expression seemed to me good-humoured; and one or two women, in whose

appearance there was something pleasing ; especially in one case, when I and a friend of mine thought we detected an air of sentiment and melancholy, in what was certainly a very interesting countenance.

An old *mammy*, who was much about the farm of another of my friends, was a perfect picture of maternal sorrow. She had lost her son, a grown-up man, I believe in some fight, and she never spoke above her breath afterwards. I think I discovered that this was a native custom, and that it was to last for a certain number of years only, but I am not certain. If peculiar to her, it showed her love ; if a general custom, it must have arisen in kindly feeling. If you spoke of her son, she was dissolved in tears, and answered in whispers ; and I have seen attempts to make her speak aloud, by taking her by surprise, constantly fail.

The women appear to be always kind to their children, carrying the young ones on

their backs, with the head just protruding from the opossum-cloak, and that in addition to other burdens; for the women always bear the burdens, carrying any roots, shell-fish, &c., which they may have, in nets made of curryjung bark, slung round their necks.

The men are, I think, short-winded. They will run quickly for a small distance, but a white man would keep up the race longer. They will walk a long way over hill and valley in the day, and can endure thirst wonderfully; but they will not do this in the heat of summer, though they do not mind exposure to the sun, if they can only lie down. After a little practice, they become excellent riders, and are very useful on expeditions, or at cattle-musters. One whom I know well was a regular stock-keeper at an adjoining station.

Like the American Indians, they can go from one place to another in a straight line,

without any track, or even the sun to guide them. But it is in tracking that they excel most. No mark on the ground escapes their eye. If a beast leaves the impression of its claw, or any other trace of its march; if a twig is broken, or a withered leaf turned over, they at once perceive it. The stones and rocks bear marks for their eyes, which we can never see. I have made them stoop down, and put the finger on the track which they saw, and yet perceived nothing. The creek, or even river, gives no protection against them. They will find your footprint in the sand, or on the pebbles at the bottom of the water, from which your tread has removed the thin coat of mud, or green slime, which was there. This it is that gives them their supremacy, and their food in the forest, where the white man can literally find nothing to eat. They are invaluable on this account for finding horses and cattle, which they seldom fail to do, when all

efforts of the stockman fail. They are also invaluable for tracking other blacks, when the whites are in pursuit.

I have known one of them lead a party of police and stockmen forty miles in pursuit of a hostile tribe who had killed a white man, over an exceedingly broken and scrubby country, through creeks and brushes, over stony ranges and deep gullies, and bring them to the very camp; and this after a lapse of several days, during which sufficient rain had fallen to efface, as we thought, all traces of the route taken by the enemy.

But the black is master not only of the land. He rules the water also, and subjects the finny tribes to his power, and it is interesting and wonderful to note how by his ingenuity, and that most wonderful instrument, the hand, even the most degraded savage, subjects all the lower animals, and makes them subservient to his uses. He is

“lord of the fowl and the brute.” If he fails at all, it is with regard to the former, in capturing which he is not always successful.

Patience is a quality with which this savage is eminently endowed. He will watch his prey for any given length of time. Give him a common musket ; he seldom fails to bring home a bird, or beast, for every charge of shot he took away. He is a good shot ; but he will run no risks. He steals on his game till he might knock it down with a stone, and then will stand with his gun at his shoulder, even for minutes : he will scarcely fire unless he has a moral certainty of killing.

The obtaining food (as I have before observed) may be said to be the sole object of the Australian savage’s life, for his wars and ceremonies occupy him but little. To this object, therefore, he devotes all his energies. As he walks through the forest, he is constantly throwing up his hands to

shade his eyes, and directing his glance to the upper branches of the trees, for it is there that the greater part of his food lies. The opossum, which is his "staff of life," dwells there, and there the bees form the sugar-bag, or hive of honey, of which he is so fond. But the ground is not neglected, and the trunks of dead trees, and the bark of living ones receive also a share of his attention.

Almost every living animal found in the country helps to furnish the table of the natives. As it will be interesting to know what animals they do eat, and how they obtain them, and, as I believe, no accurate account of these matters has ever been given, I shall treat of these subjects at some length, and beginning with the largest animals, will descend to the smallest, taking notice also of the reptiles, birds, and fishes which they devour, and lastly, of the roots, and other productions of the soil. The

appearance and habits of the animals I shall not enter upon here further than may be necessary to elucidate my subject.

The Kangaroo, of various kinds, is the largest beast which the native hunts, or, indeed, is to be found in the bush. When a large number of blacks have congregated together, they hunt these animals in much the same way in which a *battue* is conducted in European countries. They form an extensive circle, each man being at a considerable distance from his neighbour. This circle is gradually diminished, the men advancing towards the centre, and by means of constant shouting, and the barking of their dogs, driving all the beasts of the forest, kangaroos, native dogs, &c., before them. When forced into a small space they spear them, or knock them down with the boomerang, as they attempt to break out. Sometimes, they make the *battue* more complete and productive, by setting fire to the

grass all round. This, as may be imagined, lets nothing keep back from entering the fatal circle.

The black will also steal alone upon the kangaroo, but as it is a very timid and wary animal, it is a difficult operation. If he gets the use of a musket, he has a very good chance of succeeding. In this case, he sometimes ties a bunch of grass on his head: his swarthy body represents the charred stem of the grass-tree, for which he wishes to pass, and in this guise he sallies forth to deceive the beasts of the forest. Having found by tracking, chance, or sagacity, a kangaroo, he endeavours to steal as near to him as possible; scarcely a leaf is rustled, or a dry twig broken under his foot; but the cautious kangaroo is startled for all that, and taking a bound or two, looks all round.

The savage stands, still as a statue, and who is there that would not, on taking a cur-

sory glance, deem it anything but a grass-tree? The animal feeds again, and the same scene may be enacted two or three times. At length, the wily savage is close enough; he raises his gun; gives the slightest possible whistle; the kangaroo is erect on his hind legs, presenting a fine object for a shot. As sure as he comes to this pass, so surely he dies.

The small kind of kangaroo, however, called by the natives "Paddy Mellon," and which inhabits the dense brushes, or jungles, forms a more frequent, and more easily obtained article of food. These are hunted in the brushes, and killed with paddy mellon sticks, with which they are knocked down. These sticks are about two feet long, and an inch or less in diameter. The blacks seldom take the trouble to skin this animal, or to take his entrails out. He is laid on the fire just as he is caught, and cooked in his own jacket.

But it is the opossum which forms the principal food, and is the chief dependence of the New Holland savage. These little animals abound in the forest, and I do believe a black can find one at any time. They are never seen in the day-time, but the natives know at a glance the trees where they are likely to be. They see the slight scratches on the bark of the trunks, indicating that an opossum had crept down to feed the night before, and has crawled back again. They see a decayed branch ending in a hollow, where they have a good guess they will find an opossum, or a flying squirrel; and they tap the trees with the back of the tomahawk that they may find out the hollow ones, and search for their prey.

When a black wishes to ascend a tree in pursuit of game, he cuts a small notch with his tomahawk in the bark of the tree, on a level with and opposite his left thigh, and another higher than, but in front of, his

right shoulder. These notches are cut by two strokes of the tomahawk, one nearly horizontal, and the other sloping down upon it. They are just deep enough to receive the edge of the big toes, and into these notches the toes are inserted. He has thus advanced two steps, and the full height of himself, when he cuts two more notches at similar distances, and in similar relative positions. The strides seem enormous, each notch in its own line, right or left, being about the man's length from the one below it, but, as the black requires only one foot in a notch at a time, and the notches for the different feet alternate, he has only a stride of half this length to make.

In this way, a black will climb the highest, and what is more surprising, the thickest gum-tree, even when it seems to offer to the view little else than a flat surface. The pliable arms and long tapering fingers seem

to cling and wind round objects like the hands of the monkey tribe, while the toes lay hold of the smallest projection with the tenacity of claws.

Frequently the black will stick his tomahawk into the tree overhead, or pass the handle through his belt, so as to hang at the back, while he advances the two steps that he has cut. The gins climb the trees in a totally different manner, and make more rapid progress, though the men advance at an astonishing pace in their own way. Having procured from a brush, a long and pliable vine, of the thickness of a finger, the gin passes it round her own body and the tree she intends to climb, twisting the ends so as to form a hoop of sufficient size to leave two or three feet between her body and the tree. She then leans her back against the hoop, plants her feet upon the side of the tree, and so works her way, jerking the vine up, as

she advances her feet. It is generally in pursuit of honey that the women climb the trees in this fashion.

When a hollow tree is found in which the black thinks an opossum lurks, he will cut a hole, and sometimes two or three, into the hollow trunk, and so pull his victim out. If he finds, on the other hand, a hollow tree which has an opening in the top, or a perfectly dead tree, and sees cause to operate on it, he makes a hole at the bottom, into which he inserts lighted bark and sticks, and so by means of smoke drives the animal out at the top, when he kills him.

One sometimes comes across trees in the bush which have taken fire in this way, and vomit forth columns of smoke like a set of tall chimneys.

The flying-squirrel is taken much in the same way as the opossum. The flying-fox, a large species of bat, slumbers all day in clusters upon the trees, when the blacks

knock them down, or fell the tree, by which great numbers of them come to the ground. The bandycart and kangaroo-rat are hunted and eaten, as is also the Platipus or *Ornithorhynchus paradoxus*. This last they dig out of the burrows which it makes on the banks of rivers and water-holes.

The reader may think that we have now descended sufficiently low for food for the black, but we are to go lower yet, even to the most hideous and disgusting of the reptile tribe.

The guana, and several other lizards, are deemed choice food; and this is scarcely to be wondered at. In the West Indies, guana-soup is esteemed a delicacy, and some as unpleasant looking animals are eaten, even in Europe. But the blacks devour almost all kinds of vermin and reptiles, including the loathsome and poisonous snake. I am not aware whether or not they eat the death-adder and one or two of the more

deadly snakes; but the black, the carpet, and the diamond snakes are esteemed delicacies. They will not, however, taste a snake which they have not killed themselves, being afraid that the animal may have bit himself, in which case they might be poisoned.

A large grub, white, and of the size of a man's finger, is another article of their food. This is called the *cobra*, and is found burrowed in the trunks of trees, especially of the swamp-oak, the stem of which they pierce near the ground. They are considered delicious even by white men, whom I have seen eat them, and are an excellent bait for fishing.

There is yet another *cobra*—in fact, the *Teredo navalis*—which eats into wood, immersed in salt, or brackish water. It is a long white worm, not quite so thick as one's little finger, and is abundant in all the rivers and creeks up which the tide flows, as far as its influence is felt. The blacks both eat it raw, like the grub just mentioned, and cook

it by laying a piece of wood full of them upon the burning embers. They seem to enjoy them very much, as they draw the long, pliable, worm from his tortuous tunnel, and, throwing back the head, slip him gradually down the throat.

The emu and brush turkey are both hunted by the natives, the former being speared, and the latter killed with the boomerang, or paddy-mellon sticks. But they eat almost all birds they can kill; and I have seen them knock them from the trees with boomerangs and light spears.

Fish they commonly procure in the creeks by means of small nets made of the bark of the curryjung, stretched upon boughs, and in size and shape like two large kites, such as boys fly, joined together down one side. They also catch eels in the rivers at nightfall, when these fish go to the side in order to pass the night in shallow water. When the rivers are low, too, in summer, they make

small banks of the boulders and pebbles, slanting across at any fall, or ford, and driving the fish down into one corner, they spear them, or secure them with their little nets.

At other times, they spear fish from a canoe, or from the bank, in which case they use commonly a *mutach*, or smaller spear, having four or five points, and discharged from the hand. On the coast I have seen these, barbed with kangaroo teeth, and used in the bays and inlets. In the interior, on the Namoi, Bogan, Morumbidgee, &c., they frequently spear the cod, which inhabit the inland rivers; one man standing in a canoe to strike them, while others dive towards him from above and below, driving the fish before them. Shell-fish of all kinds, too, are greedily devoured.

In the saltwater creeks, near the coast, it is amusing to watch the blacks diving for oysters. They descend, bring up a couple

of handful, throw them on the bank—dive again ; and proceed in this way for a long time, and a great distance up the creek. In fact, they are almost amphibious, and seem as much at home in the water as on shore. They are very fond of bathing, in the summer time ; and it is well, as I think it somewhat lessens that most offensive and powerful smell which they all and always have about them. I have frequently had men and boys bathing with me in the water, and have been delighted with their agility in that element. They swim fast and long, and dive beautifully. They will float down the river, with just the back of the head above water, so as to look exactly like a dead body ; or they will assume the same appearance by lying flat and immoveably at the bottom for a considerable time, and in such a depth of water, that I could not keep in the same position for more than a second, even though I laid hold of the stones, or weeds.

A grateful article of food with the natives is the honey of the native bee, and their modes of finding it are very curious. The bee is very like the common house-fly, but a good deal smaller; and it has no sting, for I have frequently had numbers of them in my mouth, mixed up with the honey I was eating. As the bees fly along laden with the spoils of the flowers, they frequently lose a small drop of their treasure, which, if it falls upon a stone, or any substance on which it can be seen, will very likely attract the eye of the savage, who is always on the look-out for traces of food. The direction in which the sharpest end of the honey-drop lies, will point the way the bee has taken, and this will often suffice to lead the black to the hive.

There is another mode, however, of hunting for *sugar-bags*, which is more amusing and interesting than this. Having seen a bee alight on any twig or leaf, the

black takes a little bit of the finest down of a feather, and rolling it up between his fingers at one end, cautiously steals upon the bee, and dexterously places the down upon his back, to which the honey makes it adhere. Away soars the bee at once, high into the air, and away soars the savage's eye after it, his head being thrown back, and his whole gaze concentrated upon that one speck in the sky. As the bee advances, the black, keeping as nearly under him as possible, careering along at full speed, stumbling over boughs and bushes, leaping over logs and holes, and heedless of scratches and bruises, and everything else, but the speck of white down which is guiding him to the lofty gum-tree in the topmost boughs of which lies his dinner for that day.

Having traced the bee to his retreat, he procures a quantity of clean string-bark, which he tears up into a mass resembling dried moss, or, more nearly still, the fibres

of the cocoa-nut husk, when torn and teased. This is to place the honey upon. He then, with his tomahawk, cuts his way up the tree, cuts into the hollow branch where the hive is, feasts on it himself, and takes the remainder down in the stringy bark, which, if much adheres to it, he afterwards sucks, so that nothing may be lost.

There are several berries which the blacks eat, but there is nothing very remarkable about them, and they will be noticed in another place. There are but few roots made use of by them. The only two of any consequence, are *towwack* and *cungevoi*. These they dig out of the ground with paddy-mellon sticks and their hands, and often make large holes in search of the former.

Towwack is a small, round, hardish, root, not unlike a potato, both outside and in, and it is about the size of small specimens of that vegetable. It is found chiefly on rich flats, and near brushes.

Cungevoi is the root of a plant bearing that name, which grows in brushes, and most plentifully just within their margins. The plant is not unlike the *Cala*. It consists of six or ten leaves, springing from one base, from six to twelve inches in breadth; from a foot and a half to two feet long; supported on a thick succulent stalk; and standing from two to four feet high. In the season, a flower springs up among the leaves, on a tall stalk, similar to that of the leaves. The flower consists of a greenish leaf, twisted into a convolution, so as merely to inclose a stamen about the size of one's finger, which is covered at first with a yellow pollen, and afterwards with bright berries, not unlike red currants in appearance.

The root of this plant is deadly poison to the white man; causing, when tasted, the throat to swell up, and driving the person who eats it distracted with pain. The juice

of the leaf, too, is said to destroy the sight, if it gets into the eye, though the leaf is said to be of use for curing ulcers. Yet this root the blacks consume in great quantities ; not, however, until it has undergone a certain preparation. After digging it up, they roast it slightly, then beat it with the back of a tomahawk, or a stone, for a very long time, and these processes it undergoes alternately for a day or two, when it becomes fit for use. It appears, however, anything but tempting, looking more like a mass of black and yellow clay than anything else.

The principal weapon used by the natives is the spear. This is generally about twelve or fourteen feet long, made of two or three pieces, the upper end being of light wood, as curryjung, or the stalk of the grass-tree, while the lower end, or point, is of iron-bark, or some other very hard wood. The joints are made by inserting the end of one piece into that of the other, and fixing a

ball of gum around the joining ; sometimes, also, twisting a little curryjung cord about it. The lower end is merely sharpened to a fine point, though I have occasionally seen it jagged with bits of flint, or glass, fixed with gum, so as to form barbs, a foot up the spear.

At the upper end a small hollow, or cup, is made, to receive the point of the *womera* or throwing-stick, with which the spear is propelled, as with a long lever. The *womera* is about three feet long ; flat at one end, and with a returning point, or hook, at the other. When about to be used, the flat end is held in the hand, passing between the first and second fingers, so as to leave the fore-finger and thumb free to take hold of the spear. The point, or hook, of the *womera* is then inserted in a hole at the top of the spear, which is thus launched with great force and precision.

I have seen a black hit a mark of a foot

square, with unerring aim, at a distance of fifty or sixty yards. I have also seen the spear driven through a door. The womera is a perfect lever, added to the efficacy of the human arm; and, to say the least, it is wonderful to find such an adaptation of mechanical power among savages. In the interior, the natives whom I have seen, did not use the womera, but discharged the spear from the hand, and it was shorter, and all of one piece. For fishing, the blacks also use a spear, with four or five points, springing from the main stem, and about an inch apart. These they frequently throw with the hand. The boys use smaller ones, in throwing which they place the fore-finger on the top of the spear. These fishing-spears are called *mutachs*.

The weapon next in importance is the boomerang, or, as the natives pronounce it, *bumering*. This instrument is about two feet, or two feet and half long. It is thin,

flat, and from two to three inches broad; sometimes bending, so as to form a segment of a circle, but more usually with a sharp bend in the centre, somewhat like the top of cocked hat, but with a less acute angle. The boomerang is a truly wonderful instrument, and displays great inventive genius. It is held by one end, and discharged with the concave side foremost. While in motion, it revolves on its own axis, and performs many strange evolutions besides. Sometimes it proceeds straight forward, almost parallel with the ground, then rises in the air, and finishes by vaulting in a semi-circle back to where it was thrown from. At other times, it will fly away to the right, and, performing a large circle, come round by the left, and fall near the feet of the man who discharged it. Again, it will ascend in a sloping straight line, and descend the same line again backwards.

I have seen a black throw a boomerang at

a bird on the top of a tree, and missing it, the boomerang came back to within a yard of his feet. It is this property, by which, when the man misses his aim, the missile comes back almost to his hand, that makes it so valuable; and it is its power of performing so many strange evolutions, that makes it more dangerous and more dreaded even than the spear, for one never knows at what point he is to be assailed. In fighting, however, the boomerang is generally thrown so as to strike the ground ten or twelve yards in front of the enemy, whence it will start up with enormous force, and even pierce a man's chest.

The boomerangs are cut out of the roots of the brush-trees, found nearly of the shape required. Some are made and used for amusement, and are called play-boomerangs. With these, the boys practice a great deal. The men teach them to hunt the kangaroo, with this weapon and the spear, in a very

ingenious way. They cut a piece of strong flat bark of such a shape (being nearly circular) that, when properly thrown, it bounds along after the manner of the kangaroo, and at this the boys are taught to practice.

The tomahawk is a very useful and very deadly instrument in the hands of the aborigines. The *myall*, or wild blacks, use the primitive stone-headed tomahawk, but almost every one who approaches the white man's stations has a small iron one; at least, there are always several in the tribe, and they often find their way even into the hands of the savages further on. The tomahawk and boomerang are generally carried at the back, being passed through the belt.

The *copeng*, or *baddle-ags* (battle-axe), is a flat instrument, cut, like the boomerang, from the root of a tree, which has had a natural bend in it. It forms nearly a right angle; is very broad at the angle and pointed at the shorter end; which point, as well as

the broad rounded corner, is used for striking.

The *nulla-nulla* is merely a club, ending in a large ball, bigger than a man's fist. It has some gum at the upper end, or handle, to prevent its passing out of the hand.

The *waddy* is also a club, but it is distinguished from the *nulla-nulla* by having no abrupt knot, or ball, at the end, but sloping gradually to a moderate thickness over the lower end, and then coming quickly to a point. These are the offensive weapons of the natives; the defensive consist merely of shields, called by the blacks, *heelaman*. These are about two feet and a half long and a foot and a half broad; convex on the side presented to the foe, and concave within. On the inside is a small handle for the fingers, made of a bit of vine, the two ends of which pass through to the front. It is cut out of the side of a tree, which gives it its

rounded surface, and is the outer or soft ring of the wood. I have seen points of spears stuck in it and cut off, but it is used not for catching, but turning aside the missiles. It is generally ornamented with some streaks of black, or red, disposed frequently across its face in the form of a cross.

The *tourang* is another sort of shield, used for causing missiles to glance aside. It is a solid piece of wood from two to three feet long, pointed at the ends, four-sided, with a hole cut through one edge, at the centre, to hold it by, while the opposite edge, or apex, is presented to the threatening spear. It is not used in those parts of the country where the *heelaman* is known. It is commonly carved all over; the boomerang and *waddies* are sometimes ornamented in this way.

The *paddy-mellon* sticks have already been mentioned. These I have seen thrown with such force and precision as to stick in the

bark of a gum-tree. In fact, anything almost becomes a dangerous missile in the hands of the blacks; and in like manner they are able, with the merest bit of stick, to turn aside anything thrown at them. I have seen them merely with a cob of maize divested of the grain, protect themselves from sticks and stones, and everything that could be got to cast at them. Besides throwing common pieces of stick with such effect, a piece of bark or flat wood becomes in their hands a boomerang.

The *coolaman* is their jug, or jar, for carrying water. It is a large knot of a tree cut off from it, and hollowed out, a handle of cord being fastened across it. It is commonly about the size of a man's head.

A small vessel for the same purpose is also made from the brown leaf, or husk, which envelopes the stem of the bangalo immediately under the leaves, and drops off as the tree increases in height. This is

made very neatly and simply by turning up the ends, and passing a handle across, as in the coolaman.

The opossum-rugs, or cloaks, have already been noticed; so also has the worsted-looking cord made from the fur of the opossum. This is formed by twisting the fur upon the thigh with the palm of the hand; and in the same manner very neat and strong cord is made from the inner bark of the curryjung saplings. Of this last, the fishing-nets, and those in which the gins carry their odds and ends, are made; and they are very neatly netted. The bands for the head, too, of worsted cord, are very pretty and correct specimens of netting, which, I may add, is all done with the fingers, without either needle, or mesh.

As I have said before, their thread is the long, thin, and strong sinews from the tail of the kangaroo; and the needle, one of the thin, pointed bones of the same animal. It

now only remains for me to describe the canoe in which the black crosses a river, if he does not choose to swim, and from which he very frequently fishes. Half an hour suffices for the native to make a very good boat, capable of holding several, if he wishes it. To accomplish this, he strips, in the manner already described, a long sheet of bark from a stringy bark-tree.

Across the middle, and towards each end, he thrusts in sticks of a proper length, to keep it open at the top. The ends he makes pliable by exposing the inner and sappy side to the action of fire. He then bends them upwards, puckers or plaits them up longitudinally, and thrusts a sharp-pointed stake through the puckers to keep them in this position. The stern and bow are now formed, and the canoe may be considered finished. The outside of the bark, of course, forms the bottom and outside of the canoe. If there are any cracks, they are filled

up with clay. The ends also are bedaubed with this inside, and some more is laid down as a hearth to place a fire-stick upon. The builder then places his boat upon his head, bears it to the river, and launches it. He stands or kneels in the centre, and propels it with considerable accuracy and speed by means of a pole, which he dips in the water alternately on each side.

CHAPTER VII.

Superstitions and Ceremonies of the Aborigines—The Evil Demon—Charms called Mundy-Stones—The Crodgy, or Doctor—Singular Dances—Redress of Injuries—Cases of Abduction—Mode of procuring Fire—Spirituous Liquors—Language of the Natives—Names of Places—Native love of Freedom—Imitative Powers—Zoology of New South Wales—Varieties of the Kangaroo—The Opossum—Flying Squirrel—Native Cat—Flying Fox—Rats—The Water Mole, or Duck Bill—The Brush Turkey—Mountain and Swamp Pheasants—The Flock Pigeon—Wild Ducks and Teal—The Black Swan—Pelicans—Eagles—Owls—Parrots and Cockatoos—The Laughing Jackass—The Dollar-Bird—The Satin Bower Bird—The Regent Bird—The Cuckoo—The Bell Bird—The Cat Bird—The Coachman.

WE shall now advert to the superstitions

and ceremonies of the aborigines ; and as these are but few, they will not keep us long. The natives appear to have no religion whatever. They have no idea of a Supreme Being. Their only notion of any spirit whatever, seems to be a very vague one regarding an evil demon, whom they call *debil-debil*, a name which they have borrowed in the first instance from the whites, and which has spread abroad among them wherever there has been the slightest contact with Europeans. It is this spirit that they are afraid of at night ; and, as a protection against him, they carry the universal fire-stick. To him they ascribe all malignant influences. It is he who causes the rheumatic pains in their limbs ; and, when the wintry wind howls among the trees, they hear his voice.

The natives have charms which they carry about with them, to protect them against this *debil-debil*, and which are, in fact, their gods,

if they may be said to have any at all. These are bits of rock crystal, which they find on the mountains, and are called *mundy-stones*. They are very valuable in their eyes, for they are scarce and difficult to be found. They are also sacred, and must not be profaned by the gaze of a woman. If any one is so unfortunate as to see them, even by mistake, she is killed.

They have also some ceremonies which they perform in secluded places, and at which they permit neither their gins nor white people to be present. Some parts of them, however, have been witnessed by accident; and, as far as I can learn, the affair chiefly consists in making a strange, humming noise, which is produced by a small and peculiarly-shaped piece of wood, hung by a piece of string from a switch, which is twirled round the head: and this noise is supposed to imitate the *debil-debil*. They occasionally also carry small flat bits

of wood, carved in a very rude manner, wrapped up in pieces of the tea-tree bark ; and these appear to possess a degree of sanctity in their eyes, inferior, however, to that of the *mundy-stones*.

The *Crodgy*, or doctor of the tribe, is held in some veneration, and, indeed, appears to be the only man who claims any superiority over the others. He conducts some of the ceremonies, and is supposed, I believe, to have some medical skill. In one case with which I was acquainted, the *Crodgy* wandered about and encamped alone, for the most part, or attended only by a boy or two ; but whether this was peculiar in his case, or common with that class, I could not discover.

The principal ceremony of the aborigines is that which takes place when they meet to convert, by certain forms, the boys into young men. This meeting is called a *keepara* ; the ceremony goes by that name,

and the youths are called *keeparas*. Two or three tribes adjoining each other frequently assemble on these occasions. The boys have one of the front teeth knocked out, and rolls of worsted, made from opossum-fur, are wound round the waist, arms, and neck, there to remain for a long time, before they can venture to remove them. Besides these *keeparas*, there are also two other grades, *keewaras* and *netengles*, in making whom there is a little variety in the forms. On these occasions, the famous native dance, called the *Corobory*, is performed.

At such ceremonies, the men paint their bodies with red and white clay, and sometimes execute strange devices on their skins, looking not unlike skeletons, when a white line is drawn along each rib. The dancers take their places in a circle, so close as to cross each other's legs, and, with their arms a-kimbo, they jump up and down, yelling, and making a strange noise

with the mouth, which resembles the lighting of a heavy body upon the ground. At one of these dances, a friend of mine saw a personation of the *debil-debil* by a man stuck all over with white feathers and swan's down, who rushed into the centre of the ring, and represented his Satanic Majesty. During the dance, the gins sit by, and beat time with two bits of stick. They also sing in unison, after a rude fashion, and are assisted by the old men in tending the fires.

If one black is injured by another, redress is sometimes sought by means of a duel, when a certain number of spears, or boomerangs are thrown by each party, or the head of each is presented alternately to receive a blow from the club of his enemy; the one who stands it longest being the victor. On other occasions, the malefactor is condemned to have a certain number of spears and boomerangs thrown at him, and he is allowed to defend himself with his *heclaman*

as he best can. In this defence they are so expert, that even their pitched battles often end without much damage being done.

The natives believe that when they die, and are buried, they will by-and-bye "jump up white fellows." Thus they think the whites were all formerly blacks, and an old gin, or a black fellow, will occasionally claim a white man for a son, or brother, whom they have lost. This is particularly the case when a white man is expert at their language and customs; and I have heard of one instance where they insisted on a white man's joining them in battle on this account. They made him use their weapons, too, but they considerably surrounded and defended him. He was a favourite with all the tribe, who firmly believed him to be a young warrior whom they had lost in battle a few years before.

The natives have not often stolen white

children, though I am acquainted with one case, where a respectable family lost a little girl in this way. She was seen in the interior several years after, but in such a degraded state that her family could scarcely have wished to have had her restored. Some instances of the abduction of women by the natives have also occurred.

One of the blacks gave me a strange account of the way in which they obtain fire when have lost it. He said, that on such occasions "a little boy was lost; that all the tribe went out to seek him; that the oldest man in the tribe always found him, and that he brought fire out of the side of the little boy," placing his hand at the same time over his own heart, as the seat of fire. I could not get any clearer explanation from him; but I must add, that I know the natives possess a better way of obtaining fire than this. They take

a piece of the dried flower-stalk of the grass-tree, such as they occasionally make part of their spears of, and inserting one end in a hollow in a piece of decayed wood, turn it backwards and forwards so rapidly, between the palms of the hands, as to produce fire by the friction.

The aborigines are very fond of intoxicating liquors, and are easily inebriated. They delight in obtaining from the settlers the bags, or mats, in which sugar is carried up to the stations. These they soak in water, or, as they term it, *bul*; and one of them, used in this way, will produce liquor sufficient to intoxicate half-a-dozen or more.

The language in which the natives converse with Europeans, is a jargon, composed of a mixture of their own tongue and English. The first thing they learn, is to swear dreadfully; and they constantly use one or two particular phrases, such as, "I believe," "Suppose," &c. Thus they say,

“Suppose you give it plower and bullock, I look out yarraman belonging to you;” that is, “if you will give me flour and beef, I will look for your horse.” And again, “I believe you murry coola belonging to me; bale I been cramem muttai;” which means, “I think you are very angry with me; I have not been stealing your corn.”

Their own language is, as far as I could learn, confined and simple. It sounds, generally, harsh to our ears, being enunciated in grating tones, and with a peculiar jerk in the utterance unknown in European languages. The *r* predominates, and is sounded roughly; *f* is converted into *p*; *s* seldom or never occurs in their own language, and there are a good many other peculiarities in their pronunciation, to which it is unnecessary to advert.

The following specimens of the language of the tribes in my neighbourhood will suffice :

Ya.	Yes.	Curryca dai.	Quick, come here.
Bale.	No.		
Eureka.	Sun.	Myall.	Wild.
Mundai.	Foot.	Togra.	Warm.
Yarraman.	Horse.	Coolk.	Angry.
Dingo.	Dog.	Cobawn.	Great.
Waddy.	Tree.	Gerrand.	Frightened.
Muttai.	Corn.	Boi.	} Dead.
Colly.	Rain.	Barrakeela.	
Cobra.	Head.	Paiem.	To beat.
Jimluck.	Sheep.	Patter.	To eat.
Cobawn mas-		Budgery.	Good.
sa.	Gentleman.	Make him	
Curry curry.	Be quick.	budgery.	Kill him.

When the blacks have separated in the bush and wish to find each other, they call a loud “*cui*,” in a shrill tone, and two distinct syllables. This sound is heard to an immense distance in the woods, and has been universally adopted by the whites as the best alarm, and the sound which can be conveyed farthest.

Many of the native names of places are very euphonious, indeed often far more so than those with which the settlers have replaced

them. The following are a few samples of these :—Illawarra, Cabramatta, Coolongatta, Coolapatamba, Wallala, Woolomal, Yarra, Yarras, Yeerawel, Yerrabundenag, Moorn, Mooniba, &c., &c. Their own names, too, are pretty enough. A boy whom I had with me for some time, rejoiced in the appellation of “Condu-juty-an,” which, being interpreted, means, one who always lies sleeping on his opossum-rug.

I may sum up this notice of the native language by stating that there are almost as many dialects as tribes. Each district of any size has its own tongue, and so distinct are they, that the black from Liverpool Plains does not understand his brother on the Hunter River, nor he of the Hunter, the dweller on the banks of the Hastings, or, the M^cLeay.

Little has been done in the way of attempting to civilize the aborigines. The aboriginal protectors have effected nothing.

Nor do I think this is an end which is ever likely to be attained. The savage of New Holland, however well fed and treated, after a time, longs for the freedom and laziness of his former life, and without a regret for all the comforts and luxuries he leaves behind him, he abandons the clothing, which, while it ministers to his vanity, restrains his freedom of action, and he hastens with eagerness to rejoin his tribe.

This is scarcely to be wondered at, even when leading a life of idleness ; but, when expected or compelled to work in return for food and clothing, it is perfectly natural. He has little to admire in the life of the white servant, toiling day after day for his food and wages ; enjoying no *corobory*, no basking in the sun, in short, no freedom ; so he hies away to the woods, where the canopy of heaven is roof enough for him, and where the hollow trees around him will soon yield

to his eagle glance and agile limb, both food and clothing.

But though the aboriginal inhabitants of New Holland are not likely ever to be either christianized or civilized, it does not by any means follow that they are the degraded and soulless animals, little better than the ourang-outang, or chimpanzee, they have been represented by some writers. Though classed by physiologists, on account of the facial angle, and the form and capacity of the skull, in the lowest order of human beings, it cannot be denied that they display considerable intelligence, and wonderful ingenuity, in their modes of hunting, and in the invention and manufacture of their various implements. Their imitative powers, displayed in mimicking Europeans, and in their drawings with charcoal and clay, are also great ; while their expertness in the use of various European implements, and their aptitude in learning

how to perform many of our domestic operations, &c., go far to redeem their character.

In conclusion, it is matter of congratulation, that, though there is little prospect of civilizing the natives, yet there is no probability of their being extirpated,—a fate which has commonly overtaken the savage inhabitants of those countries where Europeans have planted their colonies. The vastness of New Holland, and the impossibility, from physical causes, of the greater part of it being occupied by the white man, will prevent this; and while in after ages the colonists might skirt the whole continent, forming a belt of civilization, of greater or less breadth, along its shores, the vast interior will still remain an undisturbed inheritance to the descendants of its present dusky inhabitants.

In considering the zoology of New South Wales, I do not intend to enter farther upon the subject, than merely to mention the more remarkable animals which have

come within my notice, and any peculiarities of their habits which I may have observed. Those who wish for more full information, I refer to Mr. Gould's publications, and other works on natural history. This country is instinct with life—

“ The chattering parrot claps her painted wings;
Mid tall bamboos lies hid the deadly snake.”

and the everlasting hum of insects never permits you to forget that you are in a genial clime. It is fortunate, considering the exposed life of the settler, that the country is not infested by any of the ferocious beasts of prey which abound in other warm climates.

The native dog and kangaroo are the largest; and they are harmless. Of the former, I have already treated. There are a great many varieties and sizes of the latter. The *old man* is the largest, and occasionally stands as high as a human being; while the *blue-flyer* is the swiftest, and tries the speed

of the best kangaroo-dogs. The hounds are distanced in going up the ranges, but on level ground they have a good chance, and in descending hills much the advantage, for the very short fore-legs of the kangaroo prevent his descending without much difficulty.

In hunting the kangaroo, many dogs are frequently either disabled, or killed; and I have heard even of men sharing the same fate. When hard run, the female sometimes will drop her young out of her pouch.

* * * * *

Of the various smaller kinds, descending to the kangaroo-rat, it is unnecessary to treat. The opossum is, like the kangaroo, marsupial. He affords good shooting in the moonlight nights, both in the trees and on the ground, to which he descends to feed. When well cooked, the flesh looks and tastes like rabbit, though the male has rather the flavour of the gum-tree leaves. It has a harsh voice. The tail is denuded

of hair on the lower side, and is so powerful and flexible, that the animal hangs with ease from the branches by the very tip of it.

There is a diminutive kind, which I have suspended thus from my finger, when they would turn up the forepaws and climb up their own tail, hand over hand, as a sailor up a rope. The generative organs of these and some other animals of New South Wales, are strangely reversed ; in the males, the posterior and anterior parts changing places.

The flying-squirrel gives good sport also by moonlight. He is as large as the opossum, covered with beautiful fur, and has a wing on each side, composed of a double skin, furred, and extending from the fore to the hind leg. These he inflates with air ; and, in this way, glides gracefully for several hundred yards, from one tree to another. His cry is loud and discordant. His native name is *gurroo*. There is a

small kind, about the size of a mouse, which is called the sugar-squirrel, and is found about the huts occasionally. It has a strange tail, flat and resembling a feather.

The native cat, like these other animals, inhabits the trees, and is shot at night. It is much more rare than the foregoing. It is about the size of a small cat, and is covered with fine grey fur, beautifully spotted with white.

The Flying Fox derives its name from the resemblance of its head to that of our fox, of which it is a perfect miniature. It ought, perhaps, to have been noticed among the birds, but, from its name and peculiarity, I have ventured to place it here. It is of the bat species; has immense bat-like wings, a furry body, and head of a reddish-grey colour, and measures about two feet and a half from tip to tip of its wings. It sleeps in crowds all day on the trees in the brushes, and in the dusk, sallies

forth in great armies of many thousands, to feed on apple-tree blossoms, &c. It makes a shrill, chirruping, and loud noise.

The native Bear is about a foot and a half or two feet high, when standing on its hind legs. It is of the sloth species, and is an almost exact miniature of a bear. It inhabits the brushes, and is seldom or never to be seen except by the natives.

Rats are abundant in the country, and unless a cat is kept they soon become an intolerable pest. There is a kind, also, called the rabbit-rat, which is more harmless, and frequents the bark on the roofs of huts.

The last animal I shall advert to in this section is the *Ornithorhyncus paradoxus*, called also the platipus, water-mule, or duck-bill, and by the natives *warwar*. This strange creature, which at first so puzzled the naturalists, and was, for a long time supposed by many to be manufactured by the stuffers, belongs also, like so many of the

animals of New Holland, to the class Marsupialia. It is covered with a close, fine fur and hair. Its head terminates in a broad, flat duck-bill. Its feet are webbed and provided with claws, and the hind-feet of the males are armed with a long, grooved spur, a wound from which is commonly believed to be poisonous, though I suspect without cause, as the blacks evince no fear in handling them.

They live in holes at the end of long passages, which they burrow in the banks; sunset is their favourite time for coming out, when they swim about, and obtain their food. I have sometimes watched them in the afternoon for an hour or two, while engaged in this way, and I observed that they do not make much progress against a current while swimming on the surface, but they repeatedly dive and advance under water. Their senses are so acute, that it is

difficult to shoot them, the mere levelling of the gun being sufficient to send them down, with the audible splash which they always make in diving. The natives, of course, eat them, as they do almost every living thing.

I shall now briefly notice the more remarkable birds which have fallen under my observation. The feathered tribes of this clime are decidedly unmusical, and the rustic here will in vain attempt to

“Tune his merry note
Unto the *wild* bird's throat.”

while the European sadly, but in vain, sighs for those merry songsters that were wont to “discourse sweet music” to him, on a summer evening. In several instances among the birds, the rule that everything must be the reverse of what it is in the old countries, is excellently exemplified.

Of the Emu I have already spoken.

The Native Companion is a bird occasionally almost as large, but does not appear to be very plentiful.

The Brush Turkey, or, as it is called by the blacks, *wee-lah*, as indicated by its name, inhabits the brushes, or jungles. It is as large as the domestic turkey, though more beautiful, and is most excellent eating. It lays its eggs, which are very large, in immense heaps of dead leaves and sticks, leaving them to be hatched by the heat of the decomposing matter.

The Native, or Mountain Pheasant, called *ngow-oo* by the blacks, is found in the forests upon high ranges, or hills. It is also called the lyre-bird, from its beautiful long tail, the feathers of which are disposed very much in the shape of a lyre. This bird also deposits its eggs in heaps of decaying rubbish, and abandons them to the protection of nature.

The Swamp-Pheasant is not unlike the

female of the British pheasant. It frequents low grounds and flats, and has a very peculiar cry.

A great variety of Pigeons is found in New South Wales. The *wonga-wonga*, and others, which inhabit the brushes, are large, beautiful, and most delicious eating. The bronze-wing is found in the open forest. It is very pretty, and forms excellent food.

The flock pigeon is of a lead colour, frequents the brushes, and is generally found in large flocks of several hundreds, and sometimes thousands. I have frequently stood in the brushes while they have passed over my head, or approached them with my gun, and disturbed their repose, when

“Their rising all at once was like the sound
Of thunder, heard remote.”

In the interior, some very beautiful little doves, crested pigeons, &c., are found.

Quails are in some places very plentiful.

Wild Duck and Teal abound on most of

the rivers and lagoons ; and on the former are also found a variety of Shags and Cranes, together with a large and handsome bird, called from its colour, the Nankeen bird.

The "Cygnus niger" of the Romans was tantamount to an impossibility, for they could not imagine such a monster existed in nature as a black swan. The white swan, however, is the impossibility of New Holland. Here, all are black, and beautiful and graceful animals they are, though, perhaps, inferior in those respects to those of Europe. They abound on some of the rivers and lagoons, but they are very wary, and will not easily let one approach them. When startled, it is beautiful to see them rise on the wing, protruding their long necks before them, and to observe them (as Milton has described a similar sight)

"Ranged in figure, wedge their way"

to some more peaceful pool. Underneath

the black feathers, they are covered with a beautiful white down. In the moulting season, they are unable to take long flights, and can be run down by means of a boat, if pulled by vigorous rowers.

At the mouths of the-rivers Pelicans are found in great numbers. I have three or four times seen one some sixty miles up the M^cLeay, and one was shot at a station in New England, but they are not often met with in the interior. It is a strange thing with regard to this bird, that the natives, who know almost everything about every animal in their country, cannot tell where the pelican lays its eggs, and, in fact, know nothing regarding the production of its young.

Many other birds frequent the rivers, as the red-bill, dragoon-bird, &c.; the latter being very beautiful indeed.

Eagles and Eagle-Hawks are common in New Holland; as are also hawks of various

kinds, as the grey, blue, white, &c. The latter is very beautiful. Its plumage is pure white, while its eyes are large, black, and lustrous, and its bill and legs are of a bright yellow. It is supposed to be an albino, being originally accidental, and not a distinct species.

Owls are found in this country; but they are rare, and not frequently seen.

Parrots and paroquets are very abundant, and there is an immense variety of them, such as the king parrot, blue mountain, lowry, rosella, red shoulder, ground parrot, green leek, &c.

The cockatoo-paroquet is a lovely little bird, possessing a crest, and combining the qualities of the two birds whose names it bears. But perhaps the sweetest and most beautiful bird in the country is the *budgeryga*, a very small paroquet, whose plumage cannot be surpassed.

The common white cockatoo is very abun-

dant, being often seen in perfect clouds, and is exceedingly destructive to the maize crops. The black cockatoo is a strange-looking bird, with red or yellow tail and wings. When it is seen taking long flights, and uttering its loud and discordant scream, it is considered as a pretty sure harbinger of wet, or stormy weather.

Crows are very numerous, and exceedingly bold and destructive, devouring the grain, especially the maize, when put into the ground as seed, as well as when the ear is forming, and the corn is ripe. They are useful, however, in devouring carrion. They are of a glossy, jet black, and have a monotonous, melancholy croak.

The *laughing-jackass*, or *settler's-clock*, is a strange-looking bird of the goat-sucker tribe. It devours small snakes and other reptiles, and should therefore not be molested. It is fond of lingering near stations, and at sunset and sunrise will perch

on a rail or a tree hard by, and attract attention by its strange laughing call, which is best described by its name.

The Dollar-bird derives its name from a round white spot the size of a dollar, on each wing. It is very handsome, and flies in rather a peculiar manner. It is the only bird which I have observed to perform regular migrations; and it is strange that in such a climate any one should do so. But it appears that the dollar-bird does not relish even an Australian winter. It is the harbinger of spring and genial weather; but, before the autumn wanes into the "sere and yellow leaf," it betakes itself to other climes, and, as is beautifully written of the wind, "we cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth."

The Satin bower-bird is very beautiful, and is of a rich deep blue satiny colour. It forms strange bowers, or arbours, in which to disport in the cool evenings, and has the

maggie-like propensity to collect all shining and pretty nic-nacks on which it can stumble.

The Regent-bird and Rifleman are magnificent as regards their plumage; but I must not attempt to describe every fine bird of New South Wales; the ornithology of such a country is a study of itself.

There are a few more, however, which, from the peculiarity of their notes, or calls, it may be interesting to mention. At the head of these stands the cuckoo, which, in accordance with the rule of contrariety, gives utterance to its monotonous cry through the silent, night instead of during the day. Instead, also, of giving, like the British cuckoo, more emphasis and a higher key to the first syllable than to the last, this bird pronounces both with the same force and in the self-same key. There are some birds whose notes seem to the ear strangely to resemble

certain words. It may be that the old proverb, "As the fool thinks, so the bell clinks," is applicable here; but there is one little bird whose notes say to every ear, "There you are; there you are;" drawling it out, and laying stress on the *there*, as if he was pointing the finger of scorn at the bewildered traveller and ridiculing him for losing his way. There is a little bird in the forest, whose voice almost runs up the gamut, giving distinct expression to several notes, and appearing to ascend the scale with great exactitude.

Once, while riding through a brush, I heard the notes of a bird, which were very loud, clear, and ringing, and seemed to me to resemble the tones which would be elicited from several ship-bells, of different calibre, struck at some distance. Though I could not see the bird, I am positive the sounds could proceed from nothing else, and so wonderful and pleasing were they, that I

almost permitted sunset to surprise me in the brush.

The well known Bell-bird is an active little thing, whose note is like a stroke upon a clear-toned silver bell. It is a brush-bird, and frequents those jungles through which a river or some fresh water creek passes; so that travellers, when pressed for water, rejoice to hear its voice, and know that relief is at hand. It was these birds that so astonished a convict servant of mine, who, having heard one when he started to row up the Maria River, and taking notice of another when he got thirty miles up the stream observed that it was very strange such a little bird should have followed him so far.

The Cat-bird is a pretty green bird, inhabiting the brushes, and at night, especially just after dusk, it screams like a cat in the night, but still more, I think, like a child in

distress ; indeed, so like this latter is it, that it immediately arrests the steps of a new-comer, and impresses him with that idea.

The last bird I shall mention is the Coachman, or Coach-whip bird, which gives a loud and sharp crack, exactly like a coach-whip. He also is a denizen of the brush, and “labours in his vocation” during the day, and in the summer evenings.

CHAPTER VIII.

Reptiles of New South Wales—Guanas—Lizards—Venomous Snakes—The Death Adder very Dangerous—Colonies of Vipers—The Centipede—The Tarantula—The Harnild—The Ants—Their Dreadful Attacks—Other Vermin—Plague of Flies—Mosquitoes—The Native Bee—Weevils—The Fire-Fly—Variety of Fish—The Shark—Dreadful Occurrence—Perch, Mullet, and Eels—The Bull-rout—The Tortoise—Muscles and Cockles.

THE reptiles of New South Wales are, unfortunately, very abundant, and form one of the most serious drawbacks to the colony.

Large guanas are numerous but harmless, except that they sometimes make inroads upon the hen-house, and devour the eggs.

Lizards of various kinds, as the jew lizard, one which puffs itself out on being attacked, and another which raises a ruff round its neck, are common ; and there is one called the fan-tailed lizard, which is said to be poisonous, if not deadly. There is also a variety which seems to be amphibious, as I have seen them equally at home on the land and in the water. They are very ugly, and the back is serrated all along like a large saw.

But the snakes are the most dangerous pest of this country, and they are very abundant. The carpet and diamond snakes are the largest, but their bite is said to be almost harmless. They are both beautiful ; and of the former I have killed a specimen twelve feet long. These two kinds chiefly frequent the brushes. The black snake is very common, indeed I think the most so. Its bite causes death, though it may be cured if strong and sudden remedies are at once resorted to.

The yellow and brown snakes are said by the blacks to be very deadly, and the whip-snake, which derives its name from its resemblance to the lash of a whip, also bears this character.

But the death-adder, as it is the most hideous, is also the most deadly. It appears, from well authenticated cases, that men who are bitten by this snake only survive a few minutes. This disgusting reptile is of a brownish colour, between two and three feet long, thick and clumsy in its shape. A small, pointed, and hard process terminates its tail, and with this the ignorant believe it can sting. It is by no means uncommon, and I remember to have killed two in the immediate neighbourhood of my house within the space of a few weeks.

When one considers the abundance of venomous snakes in this country, it becomes matter of surprise that so few people are killed by them. It is true they will

avoid one if possible, but they so often lie upon paths, and get into houses, that one can scarce help coming in contact with them. I have rode over them, stepped, or rather sprang over them when too late to draw back; been pulled back by others when about to tread upon them; seen them fall from the roof upon the floor; killed them in my verandah; seen one creep out of a log of wood brought to the fire; and found the skeleton of one behind a trunk in my bed-room; and yet have had the good fortune never to be bitten. Neither did any of my servants suffer in this way, though I had one man who, before he came to me, had received a bite, but had saved himself by cutting out the piece.

It must be confessed that these snakes are a constant source of terror and annoyance to many. Some wear great boots on account of them, and all wise people look into their beds before they jump in.

There is no place that one can be sure is free from them. The roof, the verandah, beds, curtains, gardens, wells, &c., in each, or all, the deadly enemy may lurk. They abound in bushes, and wind among the branches of the trees. Sometimes they look down from the top of orchard trees; at other times they take possession of your drawing-room. When a house is raised a few feet from the ground, upon sleepers and blocks, be sure that underneath are whole colonies of vipers.

In the swamps, and about their edges, they are very numerous; in the open forest they are also common; and on the tops of the highest and stoniest ranges they are frequently met with. One would suppose from this, that they abhorred or did not care for water, yet the same kind of snake that is seen on the top of the mountain, will be found in the low grounds, gliding across the surface of a creek, or river,

basking in the sun, stretched at his ease upon a pool, or plunging, on being startled, to the bottom of a water-hole.

The curse of Cain, indeed, seems to be upon all this tribe. Except the few which they devour, they shun every animal, and every animal shuns them. I well remember one afternoon when I nearly trod over an immense black snake. My horse suddenly started, and sprang to one side. I pulled up, to see what was the matter, and discovered the loathsome reptile moving off into the grass, while my poor steed (he was a noble animal, and three parts bred) stood trembling under me like a leaf in the wind.

In leaving these pests, I may mention that they leave a peculiar zig-zag track in crossing a road, or flower-bed, and their traces may at once be known in dust, or sand. In this way, in the course of an hour's ride, I have counted the tracks of five or six, which had crossed the road a

short time before. I have elsewhere stated that the natives devour snakes, if they kill them themselves, but not otherwise, lest the reptile should have bitten itself in the agonies of death. That they have reason for so doing, I have had an opportunity of verifying; for having on one occasion pinned a black snake to the ground by means of a forked stick, the enraged and wounded animal, having in vain attempted to spring at me, lashed itself about, and inflicted bites on its own body, with the greatest vehemence and rage. Whether it would have been injurious to eat this snake, supposing one to have no wound or sore in the mouth or throat, I am not aware; but the blacks either think so, or exercise extreme caution, for fear any such sore might exist.

The Centipede, a reptile less dangerous, though not less disgusting than the snake, is frequently met with among decaying

timber. It is three or four inches in length, and capable of inflicting a bite so poisonous as to cause great swelling and pain. Indeed, I have been informed of a case where a lady who was bit on the finger, was compelled to undergo amputation of the arm.

The Tarantula, an immense and very ugly animal of the spider tribe, is common enough in old timber and in the roofs of houses. Many people shun it with horror, and consider it poisonous, but I never met with any person who had been bitten by one.

The Hornet is abundant, and stings most severely. It is fond of getting into houses, and depositing its larvæ in its wonderful nest, which it fixes to the ceiling and walls. These nests are astonishing works of ingenuity. They are made of fine clay, of a whitish-grey colour, and are divided into several cells, at the bottom of each of which one larva is deposited. Above the grub, the careful mother places a store of small

spiders, and other insects, as food for its young, when active existence first dawns upon it. The cell is then hermetically sealed, and nature finishes the work. When the little worm within has exhausted its supply, the instinct with which it is endowed, and the strength it has now acquired, enable it to burst its cerement, and expanding its wings, to revel in the sunshine.

In the marshes and brushes, Leeches abound. They lurk amid the foetid masses of decomposition which overlies the soil in such places; but, when a shower descends, they are all roused into activity, and may be seen crawling about in the manner peculiar to such animals. At such times, a person is very apt to find his clothes all bloody, from the bites of these annoying reptiles, which insinuate themselves so gently within his garments, that they are often undiscovered until they have succeeded in gorging themselves with his blood.

- The most numerous insects in New South Wales are decidedly the Ants, of various kinds. Every square yard of ground, every decayed bit of wood, has its inhabitants. The larger kinds, both black and red, are about an inch and a half in length. The head is armed with a powerful pair of nippers with which they lay hold of their prey, and inflict their wounds. The bite is poisonous and very painful, as may be supposed when I state that one which I got on the point of my finger, made the whole finger and part of the hand to swell very much, and caused pain, even up to the shoulder, for several hours. These ants, either burrow in the ground, or dwell in those large clay coves which I have elsewhere noticed.

A smaller kind, which has a disagreeable pungent odour, is very troublesome in houses, and attacks all sorts of provisions,

especially sugar, from which it is most difficult to keep it.

A still smaller kind, a white ant, devours the rafters, pillars, and sleepers of houses, so as to leave these a mere shell, in consequence of which, such domiciles become very dangerous. It also is very destructive in a store. I have had bags of flour utterly destroyed by them. They bore tunnels through the bags and the flour in all directions, and the whole mass becomes caked and sour. Decayed trees, whether standing or fallen, are commonly filled with ants of this and other kinds.

The large ants I believe to be (to use a sporting term) the gamest animal in creation. They are prodigal of their lives to excess, and will attack any animal, or thing; nay, if you threaten them even with a blazing fire-stick, they will rush upon it without hesitation.

I have already mentioned that Bugs are abundant in the colony. A great variety of them is found in the wood and bark of trees, and some of them are pretty, and look well in a collection. They form one of the great plagues of the houses of New Holland.

Fleas go hand in hand with the bugs; they are more numerous, and a still greater pest; but whether they are indigenous or not, I am not aware.

In the brushes, ticks abound; and they frequently burrow into one's flesh, giving great annoyance, and, if they get into one's head, causing great illness. They kill many dogs and swine, which are allowed to forage in the brushes. The common house-fly often swarms in the houses, and even out of doors. It gives great annoyance by alighting on the face when one is working, or endeavouring to repose during the day.

Blow-flies are abundant, especially in

summer, and destroy everything in the shape of meat within an hour after it is cooked: flesh, fish, butter, cheese; in fact, almost everything edible, becomes alive with maggots. I have even seen them swimming about in milk, which had been boiled in order to preserve it; and the strongest brine is often insufficient to protect the salted meat. They also blow the sores in living animals, thus rendering them very dangerous and difficult to heal.

There is a large horse-fly also, which along with others is very troublesome to horses and cattle.

Mosquitoes are very numerous, and most annoying. They abound most in towns, on the banks of rivers and pools, and in brushes, where a very large variety of them is found. Mosquito-curtains are an absolute necessary in most places; but in spite of these, one must lay his account to lose many a good night's rest through them.

Burning cow-dung in a room has considerable effect in driving them away.

The native bee I have already noticed. It is most valuable to the blacks, and closely resembles a small house-fly.

There are many destructive insects in New South Wales, besides the ant; and it may be called emphatically the country "where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal."

The weevil, whose destructive powers form one of the greatest scourges of the colony, has been already described. Moths and silver fish are excessively destructive to wearing apparel, especially to all woollen articles. Such, indeed, cannot be left locked up for a month or two, without giving evidence of their ravages. I have had many articles of clothing, of flannel and cloth, as completely riddled as if half a dozen charges of small shot had been fired through them.

I do not mean to enter very fully into the entomology of New South Wales. That would be a labour requiring long observation, and a book for itself. That is a department in which nature is here peculiarly rich; and the long lists of mantises, beetles, locusts, grasshoppers, butterflies, moths, &c., which glisten in the sun, and dazzle your eyes with their colours, and din your ears with their sounds, would soon swell out a goodly volume.

I shall only describe one other insect, which is peculiarly interesting. I allude to the Fire-fly. This little insect appears to inhabit the confines of brushes, and makes its appearance after dusk, in calm, sultry evenings. As it flies about, with a rising and falling motion, it closely resembles a spark of fire floating in the air, only that at every descent the light disappears, but is seen again as it ascends. They are very beautiful, and I have occasionally seen great

numbers of them disporting about the edge of a brush; but it is perhaps more beautiful to see a solitary one flitting through the dark night. I have caught and examined them, and found that the light is emitted from the extremity and upper side of the tail; and so powerful is it, that in one which I kept in a phial, I could observe the phosphoric glow even during daylight.

I was informed by Mr. Waterton (a gentleman of considerable observation in natural history, and brother of "Waterton the wanderer" and well known naturalist), that when he was in the Macquarie district, twelve years before, he had once or twice seen a very large and splendid insect, whose native name he gave, but I have forgotten it. He said it was superior to any other he had ever seen; but it was then very rare, and now appeared to be altogether extinct.

The fishes of New South Wales, though numerous, are not of great variety, and will

not detain us long. The one most abundant on the coast is the Snappot. It is very good eating, is about the size of cod, and has a strange-looking head, compressed laterally.

The Jew-fish is also an inhabitant of salt water ; it attains a great size, and is excellent when salted. But the most delicious fish of all is the Guard-fish. It is the size of a small herring, and has a thin sharp elongation of the snout or nose, about a third as long as its body : its flavour is most delicate.

The Shark abounds on the coasts and in the mouths of the rivers ; they are frequently seen of great size in Sydney Cove, and some of them make their appearance every morning at the place where the blood and offal of the slaughter-houses are discharged into the bays. Notwithstanding their numbers, very few accidents occur from them : in fact I only know of one, and that was in the M^cLeay River, about thirty miles up,

where a boy lost his leg and died in consequence. People are bathing at all times in the coves around Sydney; and I have frequently swum a long way into Elizabeth Bay, where the baths are moored, without the slightest apprehension.

I must, however, mention an occurrence, which struck terror to the hearts of many, and for which those voracious monsters of the deep were blamed. A boat had upset in a squall (no unfrequent occurrence, by the way), somewhere near Pinchgut Island, and several people were drowned.

Next day, four young men, natives of the colony and excellent swimmers and divers, as all the *Cornstalks* are, went down to recover the bodies, if possible. Having brought their boat over the spot where the other was capsized, one of them dived, but he never came up; another then went down to see what was the matter, but he, too, failed to re-appear; I am told that the third

shared the same fate, but that the remaining one took alarm, and declined diving. .

Unless they were seized by ground-sharks, I am at a loss to account for this accident ; and even in this case, one would have expected to see blood upon the surface.

The Stingray is a fish inhabiting the coasts, and is armed with a spike which, when thrust against a person, breaks off, and is therefore, very dangerous.

Rock and mud Oysters, are plentiful ; in some situations, and at other places large Cray-fish are obtained ; but it is in the rivers that the fish most abound. They are literally full of fish, and it is not difficult to catch them. The Perch is the most plentiful, and is excellent eating. It is pretty easily caught, and affords tolerable sport. Grasshoppers are the best bait.

Mullets also inhabit the rivers, and a small fish called the fresh-water herring, of a fine flavour, full of bones, and very like the com-

mon herring. The Cat-fish, which I have frequently caught in the M^cLeay, is a large and very ugly animal. Its head is provided with several large tentaculæ, and it has altogether a disagreeable appearance. I have eat its flesh, but did not like it.

Eels are abundant, and are caught by the blacks at night, when they are always found reposing near the shore.

When I first settled on the M^cLeay, a party of natives who were fishing in that stream, which afterwards bore the name of Henderson's Creek, caught a fish, which I named the fresh-water shark, from its similarity in many respects to the shark of the ocean. It was about three feet long, had a mouth extending across the whole width of the head, and was provided with three rows of teeth. The blacks eat it, as a matter of course.

There is a small fish, called the Bull-rout, which inhabits the rivers, and is capable of

biting or stinging in a desperate manner. One young man, who suffered in this way, informed me that the pain was agonizing; that he had the utmost difficulty in getting out of the water; and that when he reached the bank, he threw himself on the ground, writhing with pain, and foaming at the mouth.

The Tortoise ought, perhaps, to have found a place elsewhere, but as it is strictly an inhabitant of the rivers, I shall briefly notice it in this place. It is commonly little bigger than the hand, though I have seen it three or four times that size. On warm days, and towards evening, it mounts upon any log, or rock, which is above the surface of the water, and basks in the sun. It is very timid, and the least sound sends it under water, with a loud splash.

A large sort of Muscle, or Cockle, is found in most of the rivers, and is used by the natives for food, while its shell affords them

an instrument for cutting. The rivers which flow westward to the interior abound in a fish resembling our cod, and bearing its name. It is excellent eating, and is unknown in any other rivers but these. In these rivers, also, muscles, similar to those I have already spoken of, occur. I have eat them, but cannot say I found them good. By a water-hole in New England, I found the shell of a small cray-fish.

CHAPTER IX.

Vegetation in New Holland—The Eucalypti, or Gum-Trees—Their Foliage described—A kind of Manna—The Stringy Bark Tree—The Blackbut—The Bloodwood—The Box Tree—The Forest Oak—The Swamp Oak—The Apple Tree—Beautiful Parasite—The Native Pear—The Cherry Tree—The Native Currant Varieties of the Myrtle—The Bunya-Bunya—The Morton Bay Chestnut—Varieties of the Pine—Mimosa Plants—The Myall Tree—The Grass Tree—The Tea Tree—The Mangrove—Species of Bread-Fruit Tree—Vines and Saplings—The Bangalo—The Cabbage Tree—The Fern Tree—The Fig Tree—The Nettle, or Stinging Tree—Proves the death of the Author's Horse—The Cedar—The Curryjung—The Raspberry—The Passion Flower—Forest Flowers—Grasses.

It now only remains to treat of the

vegetation of New South Wales, and on entering upon this subject, I must premise that it will be quite impossible, and indeed out of the pale, and beyond the object of this work, to do more than briefly notice the more common, useful, and remarkable vegetable productions of the colony.

The trees and shrubs of New Holland are, with few exceptions, evergreens. The Eucalypti, or Gum-trees, are by far the most common. There are several varieties of eucalyptus, as the grey, the blue, the spotted, and the flooded gum, &c. The first three are forest trees, and take their names from the colour of their trunks, while the latter grows in the brushes, and derives its name from being usually found within or near the limits of the great floods. The flooded gum has a smooth and bluish-white bark. Its barrel is tall, straight, and symmetrical, and is more easily cut into billets, and split into slabs than any of the

other kinds. The gum of the spotted variety is a good astringent, and is occasionally used in medicine.

The foliage of all of them is very scanty, and affords no shade. The leaves are hard and dry, of a gummy taste, and aromatic smell. Once every year the forest gums undergo a process of decortication. This occurs about March, which is the first of the autumn months. The outer lamina of the bark appears at that time as if scorched up by the summer sun, and rises at first in blisters all over the stems and large branches of the trees. It then curls up, and peels off in flakes of all sizes, giving the trees a strange, freckled, and piebald appearance. When this thin, dry shell has all come away, and the decortication is complete, one could hardly recognise the trees which have undergone this process, so different do they look.

The trunks, which before were brown,

are now of a uniform bright yellow, or a pale blue, the former being most common and giving a strange and unusual appearance to the forest. As time wears on, they again assume a greyer or duskier hue, till Autumn once more approaches, when they again, as it were, shed their skin.

On the elevated country, inland, as at Bathurst and New England, there is a variety of the eucalyptus, which drops from its leaves an edible substance, called by the settlers "manna." It is white, of irregular form, very sweet and pleasant to the taste, resembling a compound of almonds and sugar, or like the encrustation upon a wedding cake. It strews the ground underneath the tree, in the morning, and, if gathered and laid by, will keep for any length of time; but if allowed to remain where it fell, it soon melts and disappears, "like ice before the sun." The gum-trees, like most others in New Holland, frequently support parasites,

which adhere to them. Some of these are very pretty, like large tufts of grass, growing high up the trees, and bearing a very elegant white flower.

The Stringy-Bark is a most useful tree to the aborigines, as well as to the settler. It affords the best bark for covering houses, and will also, if required, split into slabs. Its bark, if carefully taken off, is impervious to rain, and will last on a roof for two years or more.

The Blackbut is another forest tree, and is esteemed for its quality of readily splitting into slabs.

The Iron-Bark derives its name from the very hard, rough, and thick bark in which it is encased. The wood itself is of astonishing hardness, and quickly destroys any tools that are used upon it. It affords the best shingles for roofing houses.

The Bloodwood is a rather handsome tree, crowned in its season with a pretty white

blossom. It gets its name from the red colour of its wood. A good deal of blood-coloured gum exudes from it. It is supposed to give out more heat while burning, and to remain longer at a red heat, than any other woods, and is, therefore, esteemed for burning lime, &c. But a more valuable property it possesses is its power of resisting decomposition while in the ground ; and, on this account, it is better adapted than any other timber for the sleepers of houses.

Another forest-tree is the Box, of which there is also a bastard species. Its bark is easily stripped, but it very soon rots, and is far inferior to that of the stringy-bark.

The Forest-Oak is a very pretty tree, unlike any of our European timbers. It is much used for shingles, which, though less durable than those of iron-bark, are very good, and much more easily worked and obtained.

The Swamp-Oak is not unlike that of the forest, but it grows by the sides of swamps,

creeks, and rivers. The principal difference between the two consists in the bark, which in the latter species is smoother than in the former. It yields also a good deal more potash when burned than the forest-oak, and from its ashes the settlers make very good soap. Both these oaks burn more quickly, and with a brighter flame than any other Australian wood.

By the banks of rivers, also, grows the Bottle-brush, which produces a splendid scarlet flower, of the size and shape indicated by its name.

The Apple-tree is the handsomest and most European-looking tree of which the Australian forest can boast. It usually is found in good soil; and an apple-tree flat is always expected to be alluvial and rich. The tree itself is picturesquely gnarled and twisted in its trunk and branches, while its foliage is thick and clustering; so that shade may at least here be obtained "under

the greenwood tree." In its season, it is covered with a pretty white blossom, in which many of the feathered tribe delight. Its leaves are much relished by the cattle, and in seasons of drought the working oxen are frequently supplied with its boughs. When used as fuel, it burns very slowly, smouldering away, and retaining fire for a long time.

A very beautiful parasite grows upon the apple-tree. Its flower is yellow, mingled with scarlet, and in shape and general appearance very much resembles common honeysuckle. Parasites are abundant on many other of the trees, especially the oaks, which nourish a stranger exceedingly like the English misletoe. A very abundant shrub, or small tree, is the Logwood. It bears in great profusion a very pretty yellow flower—making the whole forest of that colour at some seasons. The wood emits a very bad smell when burned.

The native Pear is a strange shrub, which grows in barren, sandy places. Its fruit resembles the common pear in some respects, but is exactly the opposite in others. Thus it is of the same size, shape, and colour, but the stalk springs from the large end instead of the small; and it is as deceitful as those apples of the Dead Sea, which, when a man bites them, fill his mouth with ashes. Woe betide the rash wight who tries to bite the tempting mouthful—ten to one, he will break some of his teeth on the solid wood of which it is composed. When dried, the pear splits at the top and down one side, disclosing a thin flat seed in the centre, while the upper points turn over very gracefully, looking like an ornament on a classic capital.

Another strange tree is the native Cherry. It grows to the height of ten or twelve feet, forming an elegant shrub, and bears a scarlet or yellow fruit, rather larger than a

big pea, and of a dry and acrid flavour. The singularity of this fruit is, that instead of having its stone, or seed, in the core, like the fruits of the Old World, it has turned it out of doors, and carries it on the outer and inferior side (that is, opposite the stalk).

The native Currant is a small green, semi-transparent berry, the size of a small currant, and is excessively acid. It grows in the forest on a pretty shrub, four or five feet high. It is not edible in its natural state, but can be made into a very good preserve for tarts, &c.

There is a bush, or tree, that is rare, and which I only once fell in with, closely resembling the common mulberry, both in its leaf and its fruit. The natives have occasionally brought the berries to me, and I could not have known the best specimens from mulberries, either by taste or look.

The Myrtles, which grow upon the banks

of the creeks and rivers, produce a very beautiful, delicate-looking pink, and waxy-looking berry, of an elongated form, and about the size of a kidney-bean. It has a very pleasant acid flavour, is cool and refreshing in the dog-days, and it may be made into a very good jam. It contains a small, hard, white stone.

There is another species, called the black myrtle, which grows in the mountain brushes. Its branches are tough and pliable, and on this account it is used for flails, fishing-rods, &c. It is the only wood which I know of in the colony having any degree of flexibility. It is probably from this paucity of flexible woods, that the New Hollander, who displays so much ingenuity in the manufacture of other weapons, is totally ignorant of the use of the bow. I can in no other way account for the singular fact, that, while the South Sea Islanders, and, indeed, almost all savages, both now and in

former ages, have known this instrument, and regarded it as one of their principal weapons, the Australian has never stumbled upon it, nor on any other implement acting on similar principles.

The Bunya-bunya is a tree producing a fruit of that name, and found in the Moreton Bay district. The fruit is a kind of nut, about the size of a large chestnut, and is much esteemed by the natives as an article of food. On this account, the Governor, on Moreton Bay being thrown open to settlement, issued an order that these trees should not be cut down, nor the land settled on where they were found growing.

The Moreton Bay Chestnut is a handsome tree, bearing a beautiful scarlet and yellow flower, with which, in the proper season, it is most profusely covered. Its seed is inclosed in very large thick bean-pods; but whether it is edible or not, I am not aware.

The Moreton Bay Pine is an exceedingly

graceful tree, surpassing in beauty, because less formal, the admired Norfolk Island pine.

Several varieties of *Acacia* are met with in New South Wales. The common mimosa, or green wattle, abounds, by the sides of creeks and brushes, and when it is in blossom, delights the eye with its profuse and feathery yellow flowers, and fills the air with its rich and powerful scent. Beautiful translucent gum exudes from its stem, tasteless, but pleasant in the mouth, and similar to the common gum-arabic. Its bark is excellent for tanning, and is universally used throughout the colony. It is, I believe, considered superior to that of the British oak for that purpose, and is occasionally exported to the mother-country.

There is a strange peculiarity with respect to the mimosa, which I must not omit to mention. Wherever land has been cleared and ploughed, and afterwards left to itself

for a year or two, it becomes covered with mimosa plants, which spring up in great abundance, and cover the soil. This I have observed in all parts of the country ; and it is certainly a strange phenomenon. It looks as if the seed had lain buried in the soil, too deep for germinating until brought near the surface by the plough ; though, how it got there is a question difficult of solution. It may, possibly, have been blown thither by the wind, floating upon the light wings with which nature has provided it, or been carried by birds ; and from its easy and rapid growth, have taken possession of the soil, to the exclusion of more tardy plants. And this, I confess, seems the more probable solution of the two, as, if I am not mistaken, it will spring up in places which have been only cleared and abandoned, without being ploughed.

The Myall-tree, before alluded to, grows

in the interior, as in Liverpool Plains, and is rather a shrub than a tree, reaching only the height of ten or twelve feet. Its wood is dark brown and yellow, and is much prized for making stockwhip-handles. In times of drought and scarcity, the sheep are fed on its leaves and tender boughs.

The Grass-tree, *Xanthorrea hastilis* is a very peculiar-looking plant, growing to the height of ten or fifteen feet; it consists of a stem, thicker than a man's thigh, surmounted by a large pendant tuft of leaves, exactly resembling strong narrow-bladed grass. From the centre of this tuft rises the long flower-stalk, of which the natives sometimes make their spears. The top of this stalk becomes thick for two or three feet in length, and is covered with small white flowers. The trunk is fibrous, concentric, and in layers, resembling very much, when cut transversely, the section of a fir cone. It is always black

on the outside, from being charred by fire, and yields large tears of gum, near the top, and under the tuft of grass.

This gum is used by the natives for fixing the joints of their spears, and for various other purposes. It has a conchoidal fracture, a glazed surface, when broken, and yields a fine aromatic odour, while burning. The trunk has the property of retaining fire when dry, for a long time, smouldering away very slowly. It grows by the sides of gullies, on rocky, stony, ranges, and in other barren places. Its presence is a sure indication of a poor soil.

The Tea-tree is a native of the swamps, and is also found in what are called holy flats, these being levels, covered with small irregular holes, which, except during droughts, are filled with water. It attains a good size, has a small deep green leaf, and a very pretty white blossom. Its bark is white, and resembles a number of folds of

paper, and is occasionally used by the natives for their gunyas, or for wrapping things up.

The Banks, or honey-suckle, named after Sir Joseph Banks, inhabits the swampy and sandy soil near the coast, and has a very pleasing appearance.

The Mangrove, lines the salt-water creeks, and the banks of the rivers, near the coast. It grows only within the influence of salt-water, being found frequently in such a position as to be half submerged at high tide. In consequence of this, it sometimes bears a strange crop; for I have gathered very good oysters from its roots and stem, and I know no other native tree that produces such good fruit. It is burned to obtain potash for the manufacture of soap, and yields more than any other tree.

The last tree I shall notice, not growing in the brushes, is one the name of which I do not know; but we used to call it the

bread-fruit tree, and the sausage-tree. The first name it derived from its fruit, which resembles a pine-apple compressed into a sphere. It was always green and hard when I saw it, but, when ripe, I believe the blacks occasionally eat it. Its latter name, we used to give it from the extraordinary roots, which, springing from the trunk at a height of three or four feet from its base, reach the ground in a sloping direction, serving as props to the tree ; and from their shape and thickness, ludicrously putting one in mind of Bologna sausages.

This tree grows by the sea-side, planted in the sand, and has a few long, pointed leaves, scattered over it in clusters.

I know not how to account for it, but unless one is engaged in hunting, or has some other object in view, to fix the attention, one is apt, if at all of a contemplative turn, to be oppressed by solemn and melan-

choly feelings, on finding himself in the forest and alone.

“*Ipea silentia terrent.*”

This is found to be especially the case on entering the brushes, whose matted boughs shut out the sun, and whose silence is undisturbed, save by the mournful call of the cuckoo, or the painful scream of the cat-bird. The matted undergrowth of vines and saplings twined together, form a network utterly impervious, unless to the axe and the tomahawk. High above this, tower the gums, cedars, and other timber of the brushes, while the pillars and arches of dark green foliage, formed by the creepers, clinging to the lofty trees, and depending therefrom, give in the twilight to the imaginative eye, the appearance of a ruined abbey. Every here and there immense vines, like ropes and cables, hang from aloft, even to the ground, or hug the trees in their close

embrace, like boa-constrictors twining about their prey, while the bangalo and fan-palm, together with the aromatic odour pervading the air, transport you at once to tropical climes.

The Bangalo, which is a palm, and a native of the brushes, has already been described. Its bunch of large leaves, surmounting a fine, straight stem, has a very beautiful effect. The germ, or roll of young leaves in the centre, and near the top, is eaten by the natives, and occasionally by white men, either raw or boiled. It is of a white colour, sweet, and pleasant to the taste.

The Cabbage-tree, or Fan-palm, with a leaf like the Palmyra palm, on a small scale, is another tropical-looking production of the brushes. It bears in its top a sort of cabbage, which is occasionally eaten, and from which it takes its name.

Of the same eastern character is the arborescent Fern, or fern-tree. It is com-

monly found about ten or twelve feet high. Its trunk is straight and jagged, marking the positions of its former leaves, and its top is surmounted by a beautiful plume of gracefully pendant fern-leaves.

The great monarch of the brushes is the Fig-tree, which is but a little plant at first, but by-and-by spreads out its branches, and overshadows the earth. It appears to be in the beginning a creeper, which clings to some tree, commonly the cedar, and laps it round with its net-work till at last it encloses and smothers it, becoming itself an overgrown giant. Its base covers a very large space, sometimes an eighth or a sixth of an acre. This it does by means of large buttresses, which support it on all sides, and which resemble large boards covered with bark, being only about half a foot thick, while midway between the tree and their termination they reach a height of five or six feet.

There is a beautiful tree of the *ficus* tribe found in the brushes, nearly, if not exactly similar to the *ficus elastica*, from which the caoutchouc is procured. Its leaves are large, dark, and glossy, and altogether it is highly ornamental.

The Nettle, or Stinging-tree, is a dangerous and abundant inhabitant of the brushes, and I would recommend all horse-men to give it a wide berth. It attains a good size; its wood is white and soft; its blossom a beautiful scarlet, and its leaves are large, rough, and dark, inflicting a very poisonous sting. Strange, however, to say, it is the horse, and not man, that suffers most from its effects.

Before I had become acquainted with its terrors, I had the misfortune on one occasion to get bewildered among some cedar paths in an extensive brush. Trying, at the termination of one of these paths, to force my way through the jungle, I got among some

young nettle-trees, and my horse was severely stung. Within ten minutes he began to stagger under me, and at last fell. I sprang off, and myself landed among nettle-trees; but though I was stung, I did not feel it much more than common nettles.

My charger had not lain long, when he started up, plunging and rearing most furiously. He soon fell again, however, when I succeeded in getting the saddle off him. Again he rose, again he staggered about, rearing high in the air, and again he fell. I was now much alarmed for him, and would have bled him with my knife, but he was so furious that it was impossible to do so. I applied my whip, however, and kept him moving about when he was up, thinking that might do him some good, but it was of no avail. He soon became perfectly frantic, dashing his head against the trees, breaking down the young saplings and brushwood, and leaving his hoof-marks on the bark of

the trees around. At last, exhausted, he fell to rise no more.

After rolling and plunging about for some time longer, his limbs became rigid, and trembled violently, while his whole body was covered with lather and perspiration. In this state he remained for half an hour or longer, and then my poor steed was no more. He died in less than three hours after he had been stung. I was now in an awkward position,—forty miles from home, and unhorsed. There was no help for it but to shoulder my saddle and trudge back to the nearest station, where the proprietor kindly supplied me with a nag.

I was at first inclined to attribute the death of my horse to the bite of a snake, but when I heard of similar and previous cases, and remembered how my horse's skin had become covered with lumps after he was stung, I became convinced it was the nettle-tree I had to thank for his loss. It was a

cruel death for the poor animal, and it may be imagined that I eschewed the "surveyor's geranium," as it is sometimes called, ever after.

There is a curious tree found in the brushes, the leaf of which, on the upper side, is so complete and powerful a file that it will scratch or file one's nail very deeply. Not being a botanist, I was unable to give those plants which have been mentioned, their scientific names. I was therefore obliged to distinguish them by any peculiarity they happened to possess, and thus this tree was known as the file-tree.

Another peculiarity it exhibited was, that its fruit, which is like a very small fig, grew with scarcely any stalk, upon the trunk and large branches, as well as upon the tender boughs. It was eaten occasionally by the blacks.

A soft, purple fruit, the size of a small apple, strews the ground in the brushes

during a short time in Autumn. It is insipid, and commonly full of maggots; though much relished by the natives and by pigs.

On the outskirts of the brushes the common Bour-tree is abundant, and bears berries in size and colour like the white currant, instead of being purple when ripe, as at home.

The Sassafras is found in brushes. Its bark has a pleasant odour, and a decoction of it is occasionally used as a substitute for tea.

As before stated, nearly all the trees and plants of New South Wales, are evergreens. The only deciduous trees I remember are the Cedars. Of these there are two varieties, the red cedar and the white. The former grows frequently to a large size, and is the most valuable wood found in the colony, giving employment to many sawyers and labourers. Its wood is soft and porous, of a

light mahogany appearance. It is used for furniture, ship and boat-building, &c., but the greater part of it is exported to Britain.

The white cedar differs a good deal from the red, in its leaf and bark, and in the colour of its wood, which is quite white. It splits easily, running out in long slabs, with the greatest freedom, which the red does not. Owing to this quality, it is occasionally used for paling, but it very soon rots in the ground. It bears a pretty and sweet-smelling flower, very like that of the English lilac. It is found most commonly on the outskirts of the brushes, while the red cedar inhabits their densest recesses.

There are several white woods which grow in the brushes, and which are used for flooring and various purposes. The rose-wood and the tulip-wood, both esteemed for their beauty, are also found there.

The Curryjung, a tall, soft sapling, the tough bark of which is used both by the

natives and settlers, for cord, is found just on the verge of the brushes.

In a similar position, and by the side of sequestered creeks, is found an elegant tree, bearing clusters of beautiful flowers, very like primroses, but varying in hue from a reddish and yellow to a white.

Another tree, or rather shrub, bears blue flowers, and fruit, exactly like the common potato-blossom and plum.

Fungi are abundant upon the trees; and at night, that adhering to the dead wood upon the ground, emits a bright phosphoric light. Large parasites are also seen clinging to the trees.

The Raspberry is occasionally met with in great plenty, in and around the brushes, but its fruit is not good, having a strong resinous flavour.

Here, also, is found a native passion-flower. Many beautiful flowers and berries are met with in the brushes, which I shall

not here attempt to enumerate. I must not omit, however, to notice the native Tobacco, which is found on the outskirts of these shady retreats. It closely resembles the common tobacco in the shape and glutinous feeling of its leaves. Its flower, however, is white, instead of pink, and the top of the pistil blue.

The Burrowan, which grows in a sandy soil, and produces an inedible fruit, resembling the pine-apple in appearance, has already been noticed.

The flowers abounding throughout the country, not only in the forest and the brushes, but in the most arid, sandy soil, are innumerable. As the birds have no song, so the flowers have no fragrance; and, though very beautiful, this quality is much missed by Europeans. The endless variety may be imagined, when I mention that, after having been engaged for five or six months in forming a *hortus siccus* of the plants in

my neighbourhood, I still stumbled on some new one every day. Some beautiful water-plants are to be met with at the water-holes and on the banks of rivers, in which latter situation is found a very large white Lily. In swampy places, a very pretty variety of digitalis, or Foxglove, is met with. On the alluvial flats common fern usually grows, and its abundance is considered a sure indication of a rich soil. The herb called by the settlers "Fat hen," already mentioned as forming a very good substitute for kitchen vegetables, and tasting like spinach, grows by the sides of rivers, and springs up abundantly in cultivated ground.

There are several varieties of Grasses to be met with, each in its own peculiar position. The forest-grass is scattered in small bunches, and does not form a sward. The blady grass is tall, broad in the leaf, and coarse, and grows chiefly in low and sheltered ground. The water-grass is an annual,

and gives great trouble, from its springing up so abundantly in cultivated ground.

The couch-grass is also troublesome, from its great propagating powers, and from the tenacity with which it takes root. It makes a fine close sward, and horses are very fond of it. It is said by many not to be indigenous; but I know by experience the singular fact, that whenever a road or foot-path, or other trodden-down place, is disused, it becomes covered with this grass.

There are one or two other varieties that I have observed, but which it is unnecessary for me to notice.

CHAPTER X.

A glance at the state of the Colony—Want of Society, and other Discomforts—Universal Bankruptcy—Property changes hands—Extraordinary Depreciation in the value of Land and Stock. Settlers abandon the Colony—The Monetary System—A new order of Things—Entrapping the Unwary—System of Credit—A Dishonest Adventurer—Princely style of Life at Sydney—Government Enactments—The Price of Land raised, and the Assignment System—Distresses of the Colonists—Revival of their Prosperity—Pursuits of the Settler.

It will probably be expected by the reader who has had patience to follow me thus far, that before laying down my pen I should say something by way of summing up; and

the intending emigrant, who may happen to read this book, will, peradventure, look for some of that advice, which in such cases is commonly so amply bestowed. For the satisfaction of the former, I shall, before concluding, take a rapid glance at the general state of the colony, and the causes of the unprecedented misfortunes which have of late overtaken it. The latter, I trust, will from the foregoing pages be able to form an idea of what he has to expect; and in these brief and concluding remarks, I shall have an especial eye to his interest and guidance.

People who contemplate emigrating, are apt to consider settling in a new country, more in the light of a gipsying party on a large scale, than as a serious and arduous undertaking, requiring for success more energy and endurance than most men can boast of—

“ 'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.”

A little more knowledge of the settler's life, would go far to dispel this illusion.

The want of society, and all that ameliorates the condition of man, and makes life worth possessing ; the dangers, discomforts, and innumerable annoyances that constantly harass him—are hard enough to bear ; but when, in addition to all this, he finds his property, on which he depends annually, for the means of living and paying his debts, sinking daily in value, without his having the power to move a finger in his own defence, till at length it dwindles to nothing ; no wonder that he loses heart and becomes disgusted with everything around him, and too often, alas ! with life itself.

Seldom or never has such universal bankruptcy overtaken any other country, as that which has occurred during the past three years in New South Wales. Fifteen hundred names swelled the list of bankrupts, who took the benefit, during the first year

of the panic, of the new Insolvent Act, which it was found necessary to introduce.

Many most distressing cases came within my own knowledge ; and when we hear of such things as of an old military officer reduced to the necessity of letting himself out to hire as a bullock-driver ; or of a shepherd suing his master for his year's wages, amounting to twenty-five pounds, and obtaining for that, **at the sheriff's sale**, the whole flock that he had been tending, and which in former times would have fetched from five hundred to a thousand pounds—the pass at which things had arrived may be imagined.

There was little real money in the country. Paper money had become of no value ; and business was at a stand-still. Every one who was in debt (and almost every one was so, for credit had been universal) was immediately sued ; his stock, or other property, was seized, and put up to auction by the

sheriff's officer. As there was little money, there were few bidders; and frequently no offer was made at all. Thus many a man who had large flocks and herds, and even thousands of acres to boot, was in a manner reduced to beggary, for he could sell nothing, nor obtain any more credit; or if he did compass this point, it was but a step to ruin.

Thus the largest stockholder was often in the worst plight, for he had not the means of paying the men required to look after his property; and some let their cattle run wild, while others neglected their business altogether.

A great portion of the property in the colony changed hands, at a merely nominal value; and, in many cases, the servants became the masters, receiving large quantities of stock in lieu of their unpaid wages.

A gentleman with whom I was acquainted, being forced by his creditors to sell, obtained

less than five hundred pounds for land and stock which, not eighteen months before, cost five thousand. Sheep that had been worth a pound a-piece, were now sold for a couple of shillings; cattle, that produced four or five pounds, now fetched but seven or eight shillings; and horses, for which one could formerly obtain from fifty to eighty pounds, were now valued at one pound. But this malady was not confined to the country. The villages and towns alike partook of it; and especially, and most righteously, Sydney—whence emanated the plague-spot, that spread over the length and breadth of the land, and caused this desolation.

Every week the failure of some well-known mercantile house was announced, to the horror of many a settler, whose own ruin ensued; adventurers who, a few months or a year before, had commenced with little or nothing, appeared as insolvents for many thousands; while the stoppage of some of

the more respectable banks completed the lists of distress.

Very many persons left the colony altogether, while many more would have done so, had they possessed the means. Ship-loads re-emigrated to South America, China, India, &c., flying from New South Wales as from a sinking ship. All building and improvement were at an end ; and, in Sydney alone, I was informed, there were no less than six hundred houses uninhabited, where formerly it was difficult to hire a house, even at an almost incredible price.

Those who heretofore kept their carriages now walked, and Sydney was indebted to this crisis for her stand of hackney-coaches, which at present line the barrack-wall, and make a most respectable appearance, seeing that they were all formerly private carriages.

Fortunately, the tide has turned, and the colony is now in a fair way of recovery.

But, lest we should be carried off our feet by the full tide of returning prosperity, let us glance for a moment at the causes of the late overwhelming adversity.

In the first place, it will be admitted by every one who knows anything of the colony, that the whole monetary system was egregiously wrong. I do not mean to enter fully upon this subject. Those who wish to do so, I refer to the evidence given before the House of Assembly.

Suffice it to say, that the unlimited credit and wild speculation which were universal, were enough to bring ruin upon any country. By hook or by crook, credit was obtained by everybody. Most of the property in the colony was mortgaged, and those who had no property to give as security, obtained the use of the names of their friends.

In this way, crowds of purchasers came into the market, and live stock, land, and bank shares (comprehending nearly the

whole property of the colony) rose to a most preposterous price. This was all very well, as long as the men who obtained credit could renew their bills time after time. But at length one of the banks took fright, and drew in its horns, or rather its purse-strings, refusing to discount, or to renew any more. This was the first step towards arresting the old system, and bringing about a new order of things in the colony. Interest to the amount of 10 and 15 per cent. was easily obtained at all times, and now, such was the value of money, that it rose to a much higher sum.

Few circumstances tended more to consummate the crisis than the land mania, which prevailed at this time, and exceeded all examples of the maddest Exchange gambling that ever were heard of. Fortunes were made and lost in a day, or a week; and allotments in paltry townships sold for more than the best ground in London is worth.

To what higher pitch could infatuation go ?

Every one who had a few acres of scrubby sand, near the coast, or by a creek, or river, forthwith dubbed it a town, with some most euphonical name, to catch the unwary. A magnificent plan of it laid out in squares and streets, and abounding in churches and other public buildings, was then exhibited, and the allotments were put up to public sale. Will it be credited that they were greedily bought by people who had never seen them, and scarcely knew where they were ?

The description of that Eden where poor Martin Chuzzlewit bought his allotments, would closely apply to many of the Australian townships, and, alas ! a similar paradise many of them proved to the deluded victims. There was one allotment on a sandpit at the mouth of a river, which was under water six months in the year, and the assets of an insolvent on one occasion, when published,

were found to consist of "some allotments in the township of Victoria, which could not be found."

It was an unfortunate result of the universal system of credit, that no business could be done without it. Bills at three months were considered equal to cash payments, and were tendered and received as such. The misfortune was, that as most of the people with whom you dealt were rogues, they always managed to bolt, or fail, (apparently) before the money was due; or they forced you to keep renewing their bills, and in the end, managed to do you (as they term it) out of your money.

Those who discovered this by dire experience, if they wished not to be cheated, were obliged to desist altogether from selling their stock or other produce of their land.

The number of adventurers who arrived in the colony, and settled both in town and

country, by no means tended to improve matters. This was, of course, previously to the grand smash. The credit they obtained, and the avidity with which they were run after, would have been amusing, if the matter had not also been melancholy. One of this kidney, of whom no one knew anything, but who was afterwards supposed from his appearance, to be of Jewish extraction, visited Port Macquarie; and was made so much of by one family in the neighbourhood, that several of the youngsters of the district (for I do not suppose any others were influenced by this cause) were foolish enough to trust him, and, as may be imagined, paid the penalty which might have been expected. This adventurer had established himself in Sydney as a wine-merchant, beginning with forty pounds, and failing in six months for about twelve thousand.

He bolted at last to Hong Kong, and tried, it is said, to steal the horse and saddle

on which he rode down to the quay. I have only mentioned him as an example: similar cases fell under my eye, both at Port Macquarie and Sydney.

The old settlers used to be blamed for taking in, and ruining all the young men who arrived with money in the colony, by showing them great hospitality and keeping them at their houses, till they managed to get all their cash out of them, for scabby sheep, or stunted cattle, but it would appear that some of the young arrivals, at least such adventurers as before alluded to, have been too much for them. It cannot be denied that the great and unwarranted extravagance of the people, was one main cause of the subsequent depression of the colony. The ease with which money, or rather credit, was obtained, conduced chiefly to originate and foster this state of things.

In no town in the world, I believe, were there so many equipages in proportion to its

inhabitants, as in Sydney, while few private men built such handsome villas, or lived in such princely style, as its merchants. Even the remote dwellers in the bush fell into the same snare ; and, while some sent champagne up, to their squatting stations in the interior, others visited the metropolis every now and then, keeping their horses at livery, and putting up at those comfortless but extravagant hotels which Sydney contains. The luxuries of life were made paramount to a provision for the necessaries.

There was surely

“ Something rotten in the state of Denmark—”

when the value of rum alone imported exceeded that of the staple export, wool ; and that at a time, too, when it is doubtful if the wool paid the cost of production and transmission ; and when the colony had not (as it never has done) grown bread enough for its own consumption.

Though the country might not exactly be

strewn for miles round Sydney with broken champagne and other bottles (as was, I believe, stated in one of the despatches), something very suggestive of the idea was to be seen, without the necessity for very close observation. This reminds me of what a friend of mine witnessed at Port Phillip; namely, the boatmen drinking champagne with tin pots, out of a bucket. One is reminded by this of the tendency to squander money which is easily obtained, as well as of the false position in which young communities are apt to find themselves, the necessaries of life being sometimes barely attainable, while the luxuries may for a time become valueless.

Owing to the glut in the market, from speculators having poured immense quantities of all kinds of goods into the colony, and from the necessity to expose most of these at public auction, to realize little or nothing, prices varied and fell in the

strangest manner ; and it was almost impossible to say what an article was worth, or that it would fetch anything.

About the time when these pastoral, agricultural, and commercial distresses were "beginning to begin," two Government enactments came into force, which certainly tended to augment and hasten the crisis. I allude to the raising of the price of land, and the abolishing of the assignment system.

From five shillings per acre, the minimum price of land was raised to twelve and sixpence in the first instance, and ultimately to one pound ; and, notwithstanding this great advance, it was still put up to public competition, before a purchase could be effected. This was in the bush. The town and suburban allotments being acres and half-acres in and around all the villages and settlements, were raised to a hundred pounds or more per allotment, of course putting a stop to all improvement in that direction. When it is

considered that five-sixths of the land in the colony are not worth sixpence an acre, while from half-a-crown to five shillings would be enough for the remaining sixth, the mistake of such a regulation will at once be evident. Instead of filling the colonial chest, it left it empty; for who could buy waste land at a *pound* an acre?

It is true, as the money was to be spent on importing emigrants from Britain, the colony would be benefited in that way, at the expense, however, of the purchasers of land; but such purchasers were not found, and as emigration (though of a bad sort) was carried on, the Government incurred considerable debt. There was no inducement, either, to purchase land for the sake of convict servants. Formerly, men purchased land, which they never made use of, merely to obtain Government men, the numbers assigned being in proportion to the land bought, but now there was not this induce-

ment, for the assignment system was abolished.

Those who already possessed land, now thought each acre worth a pound ; but they were woefully mistaken, and, when at last compelled to sell in order to defer the evil day, which was approaching with giant strides, they found that the Government regulations had not in any degree enhanced their property.

When we contrast the obstacles thrown in the way of the emigrant to this colony, with the state of things in America, either in Canada, or the United States, we cannot but wonder at the short-sightedness displayed in this matter. In America, good land may be had for a dollar an acre. In New South Wales, a pound is demanded for what is too often found to be bad land. In the former, you choose your land, pay your money, and it is surveyed for you. In the latter, after selecting, at great expense of time and money,

the location you wish to occupy, you must first submit to the delays of surveyors (as bad as "the law's delay"), and then await the advertised public sale, with the probability, nay, in many cases, certainty, of being run up to an outrageous price, or of having it snatched from you by some greedy land speculator.

Under such circumstances, can we be surprised that men should decline emigrating to the antipodes, with the prospect of an almost hopeless banishment, incurring, too, so long a voyage, with its numerous expenses, besides the heavy passage-money, and the vague uncertainty which must ever hover over so distant a land, when America, that "land of promise," which has so often sheltered the exile and the wanderer, lay but a fortnight's sail from their native land?

This is a most serious consideration. I often thought that the inscription over the portals of Dante's *Inferno*, "Leave hope behind, all ye who enter here," might not

inappropriately have been engraven on the heads, or bluffs, at the entrance to Sydney harbour. Alas! to how many whom I know was it too applicable!

As before mentioned, the assignment-system ceased a little before the commencement of the difficulties of the colony. This change was effected chiefly in the first instance through the influence of some of the large proprietors of stock and land, who, having already by means of grants of land and convict labour, acquired large possessions, wished to enhance their value by confining those advantages to themselves.

This enhancement they hoped to derive from the higher tone and character the colony would obtain as a free instead of a penal colony, and the consequent security and increased value of property. The demand and necessity for emigration and free labour they justly supposed would be of considerable advantage in attaining their

object. It was, however, unfair to those whose inducement to emigrate or settle had been the obtaining of labour without the necessity of paying wages.

Many settlers suffered severely from the change. Wages were at that time exorbitantly high, ranging from twenty-five to forty pounds for common stockmen, shepherds, &c. These high wages were eventually the ruin of many people, while, as the convicts obtained their tickets-of-leave, or became free, the agriculturist could not work his farm to advantage, nor the grazier do justice to, nor increase his flocks.

It remains only for me to mention two more causes which operated unfavourably upon the colony. For several years, and especially when the disturbances in Canada rendered it not desirable to settle there, a considerable tide of emigration set in for New South Wales. Many emigrants arrived with capitals of various amounts, and

this circulated money in the colony, and, owing to the competition that ensued, raised the price of property even to a false and exaggerated amount. The paralysis which would follow this sudden and forced action, when the moving power ceased, from the resumption of emigration to America, and other causes, may readily be imagined.

The other adjunct to the catastrophe was the way in which the colony was drained of its money by those who, having sold their property on credit, retained a lien on it, returned to Britain, and drew every year from the buyer the interest of the purchase-money, while many, or most of the shareholders, in banking, loan, agricultural, and other companies, resided in England, and had remitted to them annually from the colony the profits which they made in it.

With so many evils at the root, it is no wonder that the tree withered and died down, almost to its base. It is now, how-

ever, shooting forth again new boughs and fresh leaves; and, while we regret the effects of the scourge which passed over it, it is a matter of congratulation that, being purged from many of its inward diseases, it is likely to flourish in sounder health and integrity than it ever enjoyed before.

It will probably be of use in this place, to glance cursorily at the different pursuits which must occupy the settler, and at the various modes of making money when money is to be made.

Though gold is not to be picked up in the streets of Sydney, as was supposed by many, nor yet in the wilds of the bush, yet doubtless, now that the colony is beginning to revive, industry and common sense will go far to achieve a livelihood, if not an independence. Speculation may again rear its hundred heads, and again be overtaken by a crisis, "sudden and quick in anger;"

for, alas! "wisdom crieth out in the streets, and no man regardeth her." But the intelligent settler, who perseveringly follows his legitimate calling, will not have so much to fear as heretofore.

CHAPTER XI.

New South Wales a Pastoral Country—Little adapted to Agriculture—Hints to the Squatter as to how to invest his Money—Productions of the Country—Value of Hides and Tallow—Salt Beef—Advice to the Grazier—Some Account of the Squatter's Life—His position in Society, and the Laws under which he Lives—Heavy Taxes imposed upon him—Commissioners of Crown Lands—Fines—Strange Administration of Justice—The Border Police—A Black Hung—Scarcity of Servants—Precocity of Girls and Boys—State of Morals—Absence of Education—Want of Books—Solitude of Bush Life—Future Prospects.

NEW SOUTH WALES is emphatically a pastoral country; and so it must continue. But a very small portion of its soil is fit for

culture, and that small portion must, on account of the climate, often be unproductive. Irrigation would doubtless do a good deal for it ; but this seems not likely to be resorted to—at least, for a long time ; and, indeed, the facilities for it are not great.

So little is the colony adapted to agriculture, that even now, in its fifty-seventh year, it is unable to supply itself with the staff of life, and is dependent for much of the flour consumed in it, on Van Diemen's Land and South America. To grazing, then, the emigrant must turn his attention ; and he may either embark singly in the breeding of horses, cattle, or sheep, or he may purchase stock of each kind, as many do.

Much might be said both *pro* and *con.*, regarding each sort of stock ; but, as no man should embark largely in any department, until he has had at least a year's experience of the colony, he will probably be able to judge by that time which it is

best to purchase, and which he is best fitted for attending to. He will do well to take care how he sinks his money in profitless land, or fritters it away, and that on no small scale, by renting an agricultural farm.

Grain has no doubt been very dear. I have seen both wheat and maize at ten shillings a-bushel, and flour at a hundred pounds a-ton ; but again, I have known the former of these grains at three shillings, and the latter at one, and even less ; while flour could be had for six or seven pounds per ton. To such fluctuations are the prices liable ; and, while at one time flour was so scarce and dear, that the Governor issued a proclamation declaring rice to be a legal ration for issue to the convicts, at another time they expected and would use none but of the best quality.

The expense of working farms has always been great, and they have commonly ruined at least those who had to pay any rent.

Of late, some attention has been given to the grape, and some good-sized vineyards have been planted in the colony. Excellent wine has been made in some instances, resembling burgundy and some of the Rhine wines; and though it will not be a profitable pursuit for a long time to come, there is no doubt that the colony is well fitted for a wine country, and will at a future period be known as such. The natural productions which are exported are four; but they are not obtained in any great quantity. They are:—the bark of the mimosa, used for tanning; its gum, resembling gum arabic; kangaroo-skins for boot-making; and the oil obtained from the whales killed off the coast.

One unfavourable point regarding New Holland, and in which it is inferior to most countries where settlements have been formed, is that its natives have nothing to offer in exchange for European manufactures

and other commodities. In this respect, they are utterly destitute.

Before taking leave of the industrial productions of the colony, I must briefly refer to two which necessity called into notice, and which are likely to become staple exports. I refer to tallow and hides, which have already been shipped to England in considerable quantities. The process of boiling down, resorted to during the panic, when stock was nearly at zero, was a very happy idea, as it not only at once made sheep and cattle worth the price of their hide and tallow, but acted beneficially by thinning the stock. The process, itself was very summary. Large cauldrons were provided; the beasts were skinned, cut in four, and thrown in; and the fat skimmed off, strained, and put in casks.

The heads, bones, and refuse, were all thrown away, as valueless in a country where manure is not used; the land tilled

being of the richest, and not yet exhausted. The waste, however, was great, for much might have been made of gelatine, hoofs, horns, &c. The tallow, of both mutton and beef, was in many cases excellent, and commanded high prices in the London market; while the hides were cured very well.

This was a grand epoch in the history of the colony, because these two articles are always saleable, and stock must always be worth, as a minimum price, the value of the hide and tallow in the London market, deducting the freight.

A good deal of beef was salted during the winter months; that being the only season at which it can be done; this was not so successful as the boiling down, the art was not yet well understood, and the meat did not always keep well.

As grazing is the best pursuit, and as land is, of course, indispensable, land must be

obtained. But it would never do to buy it for this purpose, and therefore the grazier must squat. To this end, he may either go far south, or north, or towards the interior; choose a run for his stock, with a suitable place on it for a station and cultivation paddock; and then drive his stock thither and erect his buildings, or what is far preferable as being much less expensive, dangerous, and troublesome, he may purchase a station ready formed, or, as is frequently the case, pay a little more for his stock, and have the run on which they are, given in. Above all, he must not lay out all his capital at first, trusting to the expected returns. It is this want of a reserve to fall back on, that has ruined two-thirds of the settlers.

Lest the reader should not have formed a clear idea of the squatter's life, let me place it concisely before him. Removed from society, and the refinements of life, he

becomes careless of his appearance and manners ; nay, he becomes heedless even of those comforts of life which are within his reach. With hundreds of cattle, he has no butter, or cheese, and very often no milk ! With a rich soil around him, he has no garden ; not any vegetable or fruit to drive away the scurvy. With grain, he has no poultry ; with a gun, he has no game ; with hooks and grasshoppers, he has no fish. Make a hole with your toe and throw a peachstone in, or drop one on the ground, and in three years it bears fruit ; stick a vine-cutting into the earth, and in fifteen or sixteen months, clusters of fine grapes are hanging from its boughs, and yet the squatter seldom does the one or the other.

He certainly has good reasons for not making his station too attractive, but it cannot be denied that his life is often much more cheerless and comfortless than it need

be. Few of the stations are adorned by a female. Wherever this is the case, a great improvement is perceptible.

The squatter's dwelling is frequently a hut no better than those of his men ; with a bark roof, an earthen floor, a hotbed of vermin, and a narrow berth fixed in one corner. The track through the forest leads up to his door, before which stands a bit of paling, or a couple of hurdles, to sun his blankets on, if he takes this trouble to dispel the vermin.

His mode of life is uniform to excess. When he arises in the morning, he smokes his short black clay pipe ; breakfast tardily appears, consisting of tea, damper, and a huge pile of mutton-chops, if his is a sheep-station, or salt beef, if a cattle station. After breakfast, he lights his pipe again, and sallies forth on horseback. His dress consists of a broad-brimmed straw hat, a blue shirt, fustian, or some such trousers, supported by a belt round the waist, and ankle boots; his

heels are armed with spurs, while in his belt, or in holsters, he probably has pistols. In his hand he carries the universal stockwhip, the handle a foot long, and the lash twelve or sixteen feet, and giving forth sounds that startle the silence of the forest. During the day, his pipe is re-lighted at every hut, or fire-stick he passes, or if he sees none of these, he has recourse to his flint and steel.

Probably he is out till sun-set without eating anything, and when he returns he sups, as he breakfasted, on damper and mutton-chops, or salt beef, not both, but on one or the other, according to the stock he breeds. If at home to dinner, his fare is the same; and even if he calls on a neighbour ten or twelve miles off, he finds no variety. Ten to one, he has no books, or no taste for reading; therefore, he smokes his pipe till bed-time, and then turns in.

The next day is only a repetition of the one that went before it, and so——

“He eats and drinks, and sleeps; what then?

He eats, and drinks, and sleeps again.”

The squatter, however, has his merry-makings, at branding cattle, or shearing sheep, when he has rum and brandy up for himself and men; and, on these occasions, both masters and men assemble from the neighbouring stations.

He has also his holidays, when he goes down the country, either to Sydney or to some other town or settlement, when, like a sailor ashore after a long cruize, he runs into all sorts of extremes, and endeavours by extravagance and dissipation to make himself some amends for his solitary privations in the bush.

Behold him now, living at comfortless, but most extravagant hotels, keeping his horses at livery, and drinking his burgundy, claret, or champagne. It is then that he forgets the solitude and cares that are past,

and those that are to come. It is then that he "dashes care aside, and bids it pass."

Having now described the squatter, it may not be amiss to glance at his position in society, and the laws under which he lives. The squatters form, perhaps, the largest, most educated, and wealthiest body in New South Wales; and, under these circumstances, it is to be regretted that because they dwell beyond the so-called bounds of the colony, they have no voice in the election of Members of the new House of Assembly, which the colony has of late obtained. It is for want of this that the Governor has been able, within the last twelve months, to proclaim new regulations which will soon come into force, and by which their taxes will be considerably increased. The whole people have risen as one man, and petitioned against these regulations, though, whether with effect or not,

remains yet to be seen. They certainly have reason with them, for what time could be worse chosen for imposing new taxes than the season of the greatest depression ?

At present, the squatter pays for a yearly licence to squat, ten pounds per annum ; and, besides this, he pays an annual assessment of sixpence per head on horses, three pence on horses, and one penny on sheep.

I believe these demands to be quite heavy enough, for I have known one half of the poor squatters in a district unable to meet them.

Perhaps the worst part of the system is, that the squatter is only a yearly tenant, and he may be ejected even through the ill-will of the Commissioner. He has not even, as in America, the right of pre-exemption ; nor, if his station were declared within the bounds of the colony, and bought over his head to-morrow, could he claim anything for the improvements he has made. Thus,

he has no spur to improvement ; in fact, a strong inducement is held out to him to refrain from it, for the more attractive his station, the less likely will he be to retain it. And so in every way these squatters, these pioneers of civilization, instead of being fostered and cared for, are depressed and held back.

But the Commissioner of Crown Lands is the great incubus that spoils their rest, and in every sense of the word presses on their chest. He has a large salary, but he must raise it by taxes and fines in his own district ; and, as in one case with which I was acquainted, if he screws the settlers to the utmost, he may get his salary raised. He has mounted police to protect the settler, but he is seldom or never " in at the death." He is very active, however, in ferreting out wretched sawyers who may have cut a little wood, or poor settlers who may have sold a little meat, without a licence.

Woe betide the squatter who omits to brand a few head of cattle, or having branded them, omits to report them! His cash must go to swell the list of fines, which the Commissioner bends all his energies to obtain. Woe betide him who has not his licence or assessment-money ready to the day! His stock will be put up to auction, and sold, though they fetch but a shilling a-head. Woe to him against whom the Commissioner's spleen rises up, for many evils will befall him! Of course, there are gentlemen among the Commissioners, as elsewhere; I speak only of cases I know, or have been informed of.

Too much power by far is placed in the Commissioners' hands; and when these are improper or incompetent men, they are certain to abuse it. They are magistrates of the territory, and perform all the judicial functions within their own district, but, alas! in such a way as reminds one of the *justice's*

justice, which has of late been so ably exposed in England. Unfortunately, they are too often unacquainted either with law or with justice.

What will be thought of a Commissioner trying (no, not trying, nor hearing either, but deciding) a case between two squatters, one of them having spent the previous night in his house, gone down with him to the court-house, and sat on the bench during the *farce*; while the other was not more than half heard in the matter! Yet this I have known occur, not a hundred miles from my own residence.

Again, fancy two squatters summoned eighty miles down the country, for the petty offence of omitting to report half a dozen cattle, which had not been found. They arrive at an expensive settlement, after great risk from crossing flooded creeks and rivers. There they are kept for some days through the negligence of the Commissioner.

At length, he appears. On being asked, he states that his clerk is informer and prosecutor ; but he never ordered his clerk to attend, not thinking it was necessary. His non-appearance is urged as an objection, and you suppose the case is quashed. But you are vastly mistaken. Your Commissioner has changed his mind, and now states that he is informer ; and straightway he gravely proceeds, sitting on the bench, to enact in this solemn farce the parts of both prosecutor and judge, until a brother magistrate, with a little more sense, or love of fair play, brings him to his senses !

Here is a case that I happened to witness, and the persecutor (I beg his pardon, prosecutor) was too successful, for he obtained his fine ;

“ 'Tis true, 'tis true, 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis, 'tis true.”

but, nevertheless, 'tis too true, that in the colonies, one is apt to get less law and more

of *justice's justice* than is generally liked by Englishmen. Men would stare in England to hear a magistrate stop the mouth of a defendant with, "Well, it's of no use talking," or, "Well, you may go on if you like, but my mind's made up."

Yet such judicial wisdom have I heard in a New South Wales police-court: nay, this "Daniel come to judgment" will have barely sat down on the bench, from which should emanate nothing but even-handed justice between man and man, than he will inform his audience that it is unnecessary to go into the case, as he has heard all he wants to know (out of court, mark you), and his "mind is made up."

It is forgotten that though it is excellent to have a giant's strength,

" 'Tis tyrannous to use it like a giant."

Thus justice is in danger of falling into disrepute;

"For every pelting petty officer will use her heaven for thunder."

And thus it is that,

“Man, vain man, dressed in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep.”

From what has been said of the border police, as the Commissioners' mounted and armed convicts are called, it will be seen that the squatter must trust to himself for protection against the natives, and for redress, too; for though the laws are now more stringent, it is not in the nature of things that the abuse should altogether cease. Occasionally, black malefactors are apprehended and punished, but it is usually in such a way, and after such a lapse of time, that it is doubtful if good flows from it.

In the beginning of 1844, a black fellow was hung at Port Macquarie for aiding in the murder of three or four men a few years before, at a farm thirty miles up the country. One man who was left for dead on the occasion, but who recovered, identified him

after this lapse of time, from his being a cripple. He was called "Turramidgy," which means "crooked leg."

Up to the last moment, he thought the threat to "give him curryjung," that is, to hang him, was "all gammon." None of the blacks in the neighbourhood would go to see the execution, looking upon it, no doubt, in the light of a cold-blooded murder, which called for reprisals whenever opportunity should offer.

The want of labour has been a serious drawback to the prosperity of the colony. Servants have been all along too scarce, and consequently too dear; and now that no convicts are imported, emigration on a large scale is loudly called for. It has been carried on already to some extent, but its material has not been of the best kind. It has consisted too much of the worst and lowest class of Irish, shipped indiscriminately, and huddled off like pigs going to market.

The system has been ably exposed in a pamphlet by Dr. Lang, and it is to be hoped will be amended.

It was proposed at one time to supply the labour market with Hill Coolies from India; an excellent expedient, as they are frugal and industrious, and would have made capital shepherds and labourers. The scheme, however, was vetoed in the Council, and Coolies were forbidden; and thus the settlers were still doomed to be ruined by exorbitant wages.

There is an effect of the climate of this colony upon the young white natives which I have hitherto neglected to notice. In one generation, even, they shoot up after the fashion of the Americans, and the young "corn-stalks" and "currency lasses," as the youth of each sex are called, can generally be distinguished from children born in Europe. It is probable that in this respect, as in others, they will in a few generations

strongly resemble the Americans. The girls are frequently very good looking, and arrive at maturity at an early age. I have seen them marriageable at fifteen, and have known them married even at thirteen.

The boys, also, are too precocious, and seem up to all sorts of devilry and mischief at an age when they would be scarce out of petticoats in England. There is but one more subject that remains for me to touch upon before closing this chapter and this book, and that is the social and moral state of New South Wales.

Those who have read the preceding part of my narrative, must be aware that in the country there is no society which deserves that name. In a few favoured parts, men may get a peep of another house, or clearing, from their own door, or be within two or three miles of a neighbour; but the greater number of settlers, and especially squatters, are many miles removed from any ha-

bitation, and are entirely cut off from female society ; no wonder, then, that all is dull beyond endurance, and rugged and unrefined *usque ad nauseam*.

In all pastoral countries this thinness of population must exist. In Sydney, which is the only town of any consequence, excellent society is to be found, with proper introductions. Besides the civil and military officers, who reside there in considerable numbers, men engaged in mercantile pursuits, and endowed with the most polite and hospitable qualities, are to be met with. The beautiful villas which dot the country for several miles round Sydney, are frequently the scenes of elegant entertainments ; and, in addition to the Birthday Ball, and others at Government House, public subscription, and fancy-balls occasionally take place.

It cannot be supposed that New South Wales, which has long been a receptacle for

the refuse of society in England, can rank very high in the moral scale. With such a large convict population, this would be impossible ; but it is to be regretted that the free population have done so little to counteract the effects of their bad example.

The extent to which the labouring classes of emigrants become contaminated is immense. On their first arrival, they are abused and contemned by the prisoners, or, as they delight to be called, Government men. They are considered as interlopers, who have no business in a country which the convicts deem exclusively their own. Very soon, however, they become as of the same class, rivalling in vice even their instructors. So much is this the case, that I have frequently heard experienced settlers declare that they much preferred the convicts, as being the most easily managed.

There is one serious fault which is prevalent in the colony, and which is not confined,

as is supposed to be the case elsewhere, to the fairer part of the creation, but extends its influence apparently to nearly all males as well as females, high as well as low. In no other part of the world have I observed such a *gusto* for scandal and all sorts of reports.

The want, or variety of social intercourse, and of literary and intellectual amusements, may be some excuse for this; but it is really melancholy, and yet sometimes ludicrous, to see the avidity with which the wildest and most absurd tales, are listened to, and discussed; and the eagerness and pleasure with which some racy bit of gossip and calumny is bandied about.

Education, in most cases, is in a most lamentable state. In fact, in the greater part of the country there is none, except what parents themselves can bestow, and this too often amounts to little or nothing.

The children are, however, in general,

sufficiently initiated into all sorts of evil ; nor is this to be wondered at, when it is remembered that they are surrounded by convicts, and are frequently nursed by the worst women which the prisons of London, Dublin, and other large towns can produce.

The tastes and habits which such a state of things engenders, may be readily imagined. When I first entered the house of a family to which I was introduced, I found the two sons (lads of fourteen) quarrelling who should have the Newgate Calendar to read ; while, on the drawing-room table, lay the immoral rhymes of one, and the infidel productions of another English poet ; and this in a house where there were four ladies, and two of them young ones !

It is astonishing that the pursuit of knowledge and the luxury of books, which would be such a solace in the loneliness of the bush should be so little cultivated. Settlers will be found without a book in their pos-

session ; and I remember to have once been benighted at a station, where I could find nothing to read, except the aforesaid Newgate Calendar, which appears to be quite a colonial favourite.

From all I have stated, it will be readily inferred that New South Wales is not the El Dorado which it has been too often represented to be. Still, fortunes have been made, and will be made again there ; and those who now settle in the colony will have the advantage of buying property under its real value, instead of much above it, as was the case with those who have been ruined by the last panic ; while they will have the certainty, that matters will be in a much healthier state, and on a sounder footing than heretofore.

There is one blessing in the land, of which the mother country may well be envious. There is, and can be, no such thing as starvation. The raw material of life is

always abundant, and it is commonly people's own fault that it is so very raw, as it often is.

Ennui, and the solitude of the bush, combine to form that *hydra* which there rears its

“Hundred heads in triumph.”

To combat this successfully, he who sits down in the bush,

“In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,”

must possess many resources within himself; and, above all, a cheerful and contented spirit is most necessary.

The man of refined and sensitive mind will have much to lament and endure; and if he “pines in thought,” if any “hidden grief,” “like a worm in the bud,” feeds on his heart, the solitude he must endure, will indeed, “sit heavy on his soul;” for there melancholy, as the poet beautifully sings, has double power—

“ Black melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose ;
Her gloomy presence saddens every scene,
Shades every flower, and darkens every green ;
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a *browner horror* o'er the *woods*.”

Solitude was to me ever the most painful condition imposed upon the dweller in the bush ; nor could I ever appreciate the line—

“ How sweet, how passing sweet is solitude !”

but fully sympathized with the two which qualify it—

“ Yet grant me, heaven, a friend in my retreat,
To whom to whisper “ solitude is sweet.” ”

The monotony of bush-life may be varied in several ways. Hunting, shooting, fishing, and gardening, may each of them serve in turn, to kill time ; while the excitement of cattle-hunting and branding, and the exploring of new paths and hidden valleys will be interesting, and give a pleasing sense of adventure to many.

One's horses and dogs, too, to which one becomes much attached, and which, indeed, are one's sole companions in the wilderness, occupy much of a kind master's time and attention.

With these resources at his command, together with a good stock of patience, perseverance, and fortitude, there is no doubt that, notwithstanding all that has been said and done, the settler may yet do very well in New South Wales.

THE END.

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