

LAND, LABOUR, AND GOLD;

OR,

TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA.

VOL. I.

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LAND, LABOUR, AND
GOLD;

OR, TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA:

WITH

VISITS TO SYDNEY AND VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO
GODFREY HOWITT, M.D.

OF MELBOURNE,

THESE VOLUMES,

DESCRIPTIVE OF A COLONY OF WHICH HE HAS WITNESSED THE

EARLY INFANCY AND THE MIRACULOUS GROWTH,

ARE INSCRIBED

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE BROTHER,

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E .

MY object in the following work has been to place the reader, as much as possible, in my own position whilst collecting the material for it. To let him see, feel, and draw his conclusions, as far as I could enable him, as fully and fairly as I did myself. I found myself in one of the most noble dependencies of England,—in a country which one day must become a great and populous one, and that at a crisis unexampled in history,—new, strange, and without an exact precedent. I saw that the position into which I had thus stepped created a great national duty; and I determined to discharge it faithfully. As I had no interest in the questions involved,—except such as are the interests of every British subject,—and no purpose to serve but a patriotic one, I resolved to state simply, fully, and without fear or favour, what fell under my notice. If, therefore, my plain speaking shall, as it probably may, give pain occasionally to individuals, I can only plead a most sincere desire to avoid such annoyance; but that, without an honest and candid exposition of prominent parts, I could not give to the whole portraiture that truth

which the most vital interests, both of the colony and the mother-country, demand at this moment.

The condition of our Australian colonies is singular and anomalous beyond conception; and what is not the less extraordinary is, that it is almost totally unknown at home. Nothing has so much surprised me as to find how little aware were the majority of people, well informed on subjects in general, of the actual state of things in Australia; nothing has surprised them so much as my statement of the administrative system in Victoria especially. As new constitutions for that colony and for New South Wales are at this moment under the consideration of the Imperial Legislature, it is of the utmost importance that accurate information regarding the singular condition and position of these colonies should be as widely and as rapidly diffused as possible.

On the adjustment of these constitutions to the real wants of the Australian colonies, and to the well defined wishes and opinions of the colonial public, depends whether we shall long regard our Australian settlements as dependencies, or independencies. Strong as beats the British heart in those distant lands, warmly as the thousand ties of birth, kindred, and national pride, incline the Australians to their alliance with us, yet the questions, whether these new and immense countries shall be cramped and crushed in their growth by the most absurd restrictions,—whether old and ruinous routine shall defeat all the elastic buoyancy of a young national spirit,—are questions of such moment as admit of no alternative but freedom at any cost.

Whilst writing this, I see that Lord John Russell has called upon Parliament to sanction constitutions for New South Wales and Victoria, more or less in accordance with those framed by the Colonial Legislatures themselves, and has obtained leave to bring in a bill regarding the waste lands of these colonies. If, as I presume, these waste lands are to be consigned to the Australian colonies, to be dealt with by their Legislatures under these new constitutions, the battle betwixt the colonial public and the squatters and landowners will be at once transferred from the mother-country to those colonies; and that battle will be fought out with much pugnacity and heat. Owing to the very partial population of Victoria and New South Wales, and consequently the imperfect state of their representation, the squatters and landowners will be able to make a bold and vigorous stand against the people. We shall not be long before we hear the first rolling thunders of this gathering campaign; and I trust that these pages will enable my countrymen to comprehend fully the features and bearings of the contest as it proceeds. That the people will eventually triumph is certain; and as certain that, from that triumph of the enfranchised land, will originate an emigration from this country, which will only broaden and deepen with years, and a prosperity which will be equally felt in those colonies and the mother-country.

London, May 20th, 1855.

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TWO YEARS IN VICTORIA.

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Melbourne, September 23. 1852.

AT sea, on the 9th of this month, I wrote, “ To-morrow, if the wind is favourable, I trust we shall cast anchor off Melbourne, after a voyage of 102 days ! ” This morning, at ninety miles from land, on opening the scuttle in my cabin, I perceived an aromatic odour, as of spicy flowers, blown from the land ; and going out to announce the fact, I met a gentleman coming into the cuddy, who said, “ Come on deck, and smell the land ! ” People could not at first believe it ; but there it was, strong and delicious, as Milton describes it from the coasts of Mozambique and of Araby the Blest. The wind is blowing strong off the shore ; and the fragrance continues, something like the scent of a hayfield, but more spicy. I expect it is the yellow mimosa, which my brother Richard said we should now find in flower all over the valleys.

A very amusing fellow-passenger, who was always ambitious to be the first to suggest anything, said, eagerly, “ It is the scent of cowslips ; mind ! I say it is cows-

lips; and we shall see when we get there. Remember that!" On my observing that I did not believe that there was either cowslip or primrose in the country, except they were in a garden, our amusing friend exclaimed, "Oh! I say it is cowslips, or something *like* them. It is *mimosa*, or something with a honied smell. It is something of that kind. I say it is that." On which there was a general laugh, our sagacious comrade widening his assertion so as to include everything.

This evening another sign of our approach to land—a hawk, for all the world like an English hawk. It is wonderful what excitement so small a circumstance occasioned after a three months' absence from land. Warned by what Miss Bremer had said of the cruelty with which a wearied bird was knocked down, that settled on the rigging on her way to America, I determined, if possible, to prevent the like here. A sailor was instantly running up the shrouds, to knock it down as it sate on the crosstrees of the mainmast; but I called to him to let it alone. The captain shouted to him, "Let it alone till it is dark;" but I said, "Why till dark? why molest it at all? Let it alone." The man came down; and after a while the little Australian herald sailed away again. In the evening another bird, a species of fly-catcher, came on board, and made itself quite at home in the rigging, pursuing a small species of Harry-long-legs, which came also on the breeze.

But a still more exciting indication of the approach to land was the light on Cape Otway, the cape before we turn up towards Port Phillip Bay. The captain after tea took a stellar observation, — the elevation of one of the fixed stars, called in the Nautical Almanac "lunar stars." After this he said the light must be thirty miles a-head of us, on the lee bow, and placed himself to watch for it. The chief mate, and a sailor called Big Sam, went aloft; and they immediately cried, "Light a-head!" There was a stunning shout. The captain said, "Thank God! we have

made no mistake then." The great deep was passed, we were within sight of land if it were daylight, and were getting into still water.

The next morning we found ourselves skirting the lofty coast of Cape Otway forest. We could see the hills cleft with ravines and hollows, the whole covered with wood, and the thickly-ranged stems of the tall white-gums lit up with the sun. By ten o'clock we were within sight of the heads of Port Phillip Bay, a bark coming coastward behind us, as if from Adelaide, and three more a-head of us were going off in the direction of Sydney.

In the evening we arrived in port, and cast anchor. Our voyage was accomplished. We found, by the daily account kept on board, that, including the circuitous route which all ships are obliged to make to avail themselves of the proper winds, our course had been only 13,000, and not 16,000 miles as commonly reckoned.

The fine stretch of woody hills on our left hand had gradually sunk down as we advanced, into flat land; and when we reached the Heads, as they are called, of the bay,—that is, the opening into the bay,—about two o'clock, we were amidst perfectly flat scenery. The opening into the bay is, I suppose, about a mile wide; but there is a reef on each side which contracts it still more. At this place the pilot comes on board; and it is very necessary, for no less than four wrecks lying outside the reefs show that it is a very dangerous spot. There is a light-house on the left-hand hill, on a piece of somewhat elevated land, containing the enclosure of one or two fields, which looked very neat and homelike after our long voyage at sea. On the opposite side were wild sand-banks covered with tea-scrub, showing to our eyes vastly like gorse-bushes.

But what a moment of excitement is that in which the pilot steps on board! Every soul is brimful of anxiety to learn what is the news about the Gold Fields. The

pilot, a tall, grave-looking personage, steps on board, and is instantly surrounded by the eager passengers as by a swarm of bees. A hundred questions are put to him at once. "What of the Diggings? Do they keep up? Is there plenty of gold? Are they likely to last? Do people really make fortunes in a few weeks? How deep are the holes? Can we get easily up the country?" &c. &c.

The grave, leisurely-looking man, no doubt internally enjoying their impatience, says: "Put no questions to me: I must attend to the ship." That is a damper, and the taciturn Palinurus proceeds to lay down on the deck a basket of flowers that he has brought with him to take to the town. In those flowers there is an answer to one question; they were magnificent stocks and geraniums, at once beautiful and fragrant as if they had grown in Paradise. There was an end to the assertion that flowers in Australia have no scent.

But the gold! the gold! Burning with impatience, the passengers still pressed round the pilot with devouring looks: the imperturbable man only looks aloft, and cries, "Lower your topgallants!" and to the man at the helm, "Keep her full!" The passengers on the poop stood silent; the intermediates, in a dense crowd, stared up in blank disappointment. But at this trying moment a small green vessel, "The Wild Irish Girl," comes gaily brushing by, and the master shouts, "Come along! we'll show you the way to the Diggings!"

"Hurrah!" burst forth the delighted crowd of emigrants. "There *are* Diggings then! It is no hoax!" And all brightened up, and all began to talk and laugh together. For how natural is the feeling! Wordsworth only has not thought that "Lucy might be dead!" Thousands on thousands, when they have neared the Land of Promise after months of voyaging and much endurance, have felt their hearts sink at the sight of the strange

shores, and fears have strangely stolen across their bosoms. "What, and if the whole story should prove untrue! What, and if they meet us here with jest and laughter!"

But the old pilot, now seeing that the secret was taken out of his hands, began with a knowing smile to lug a huge roll of newspapers from his pocket; and crowds rushed round him, seized upon them, and you saw half-a-dozen hands holding one paper, and a dozen heads peering over the others, devouring the all-important columns. The news oozed out rapidly. There was a moment's deep silence; then a brilliant paragraph was read aloud; then another, and another. — Abundance of gold; — New Diggings discovered; — High market price of gold; — Wonderful instances of good luck! Hurrah followed upon hurrah.

Then came inquiries about the price of provisions; of freight; of carriage; of horses and bullocks; and all looked blank with consternation. Horses which had been declared in English newspapers, quoting former prices, worth from 10*l.* to 15*l.*, selling at 70*l.* and 100*l.*; pairs of bullocks, said to be worth 5*l.*, selling at 40*l.*; and so on! Freight to Melbourne from the bay 3*l.* per ton. How in the world were many people to get out of the ship even! Now was felt, in all its horrible force, the mischief of making floating grogshops of passenger ships, in defiance of a dozen stringent Acts of Parliament. Where was the money of scores and hundreds of intermediate passengers, which would have carried them with ease through this costly Melbourne, and up to the Diggings? All vanished in rum, beer, and tobacco-smoke! Where were those valuable orders on Melbourne banks which careful parents had entrusted to uncareful sons, so that they might not be able to spend their all on board? Cashed by the captain, and all evaporated in smoke and alcohol too!

Anon there shall be seen troops of those jolly young fellows who have been on the voyage so jocund and so

jovial; who have sung, and danced, and gambled on the sunny deck, and drunk in the lamp-light below; who, in the merry blood of youth, elated with the merry fire of rum, have put the pigs down between decks night after night, and tied tin-kettles to the tails of unoffending dogs, and chased them amongst the berths of the sober and the sleeping,—of those who had more years, more cares, and more little children, and far less riotous spirits of all kinds than themselves, and who have dashed pails of sea-water into the beds of others. Anon shall these prodigal sons be seen opening their boxes and exposing to sale on the knee-deep mud-banks of Melbourne their shirts and their best clothing, for cash to carry them on their needful journey.

Careful parents of uncareful sons, go yet a step farther in carefulness, and send your order on the Australian banks to meet them by post, not even telling your hopeful scions what is the amount of your “small order,” but merely giving them an authority to receive your remittance of a certain date. Better trust to the honour of colonial bankers than to the seductions of floating grog-shops.

Melbourne, Sept. 23rd.—Here we are, and have been these ten days. We find all our friends well, and heartily glad to see us. On our return to the ship to see about getting off our effects, we found that all the sailors had decamped, and started for the Diggings,—a rather unfortunate event for our early starting. But all the sailors do the same; and nine of the soldiers sent out here to keep guard on the ships and prevent this, have deserted, and gone off in the same direction.

The charge for everything here is monstrous, and the good people of Melbourne seem to understand perfectly the art of playing into one another's hands. The town, by the river, is eight miles off; by land, nearly three. There is not the slightest shadow of a shade of any quay,

wharf, or warehouse at the harbour,—no work of man, in fact, to facilitate the landing and secure stowage of goods, any more than if the bay and the country were still in possession of the savages, and not of a civilised and mercantile people, with streams of gold flowing down the country, and streams of people and of valuable merchandise flowing into it,—except a single jetty, leading to a single public-house on the naked beach, three miles, as I have said, from the town. Thither you are obliged to take a boat, the charges for which are frightful.

The boat to take you to the beach, called Liardet's Beach from the public-house there, charges 3*s.* each, whence you must get to town by omnibus, 2*s.* 6*d.* If you are alone, they will ask you 10*s.* or a pound; and if you are obliged to go out to a ship, and they know it, or if the water be somewhat rough, they will charge you what they please. A gentleman tells me that, one evening, being obliged to go on board of a ship about to sail, the boatmen *only* charged him 12*l.*! If you go over to William's Town, at the mouth of the river, in order to get the steamer which runs thither from Melbourne, you pay 2*s.* 6*d.* if there are several of you, 7*s.* or 10*s.* if only one, the distance in either case perhaps half a mile. You then pay 5*s.* each for the steamer up the river. As there are only two of these steamers, they are very independent, and play into the hands of the boatmen, and *vice versa*. They could, with very little trouble, put you down at the vessel on returning, but they will rarely do it. I have already seen them refuse to go alongside a vessel lying in their very way, though a dozen people wanted to go on board of it. No; they will carry you to the pier at William's Town, and hand you over to the boatmen. There is a regular system of fleecing the arriver.

The freight from London hither is 3*l.* per ton; from the ship to the wharf, eight miles, it is just half that sum, 30*s.*, and thus, with the system prevailing at the wharves, and

the enormous charge for cartage thence into the town, the whole cost of transferring your effects from the vessel to your lodgings is actually more than of bringing them the previous 13,000 miles, including the cost of conveying them from your house to the London docks.

What I witnessed at the wharves may give a pretty lively idea of the way of doing things here. I landed my effects at a wharf, the owner of which is reckoned one of the most honourable, straight-forward men in the colony. Yet this I saw, and saw it done over and over. People whose effects were landed—remember, these people were utter strangers there—hired a cart to carry their effects up into Melbourne. The cart is admitted into the yard, is loaded, but the goods neither measured nor weighed. A clerk says, off-hand, "Those things are 3*l.* or 4*l.*," or the like. The astonished people exclaim at the astounding sum; declare that there is not a ton of them. "Oh, yes," replies the busy clerk, "there's much more; that's the price."—(To the gatekeeper)—"Don't let those things pass till they are paid for." And away he hurries to fresh booty, and the people grumble, pay, and pass on.

When my own turn came, and I had one cart loaded, a pert youngster, with a pen behind his ear, surveying them, said, "They are 4*l.*"

"But, my good fellow," I observed, "how do you know that? You have neither weighed nor measured them."

"Oh, don't tell me," said he, with cool effrontery; "I can guess to a pound."

"But, my friend," I replied, "I don't choose to be charged by guess. There is the list of all my effects, with their weight as taken at the docks, and charged for. By that I shall pay."

"Don't let the dray out till paid!" shouted he to the gatekeeper, and was moving off.

"Stop!" I said, seizing his arm, "there is 3*l.* for you; the rest we will settle when the remainder arrive, accord-

ing to the ascertained London weight, and not a penny more."

"Don't you believe it," said he, trying to escape from my grasp. "Don't let 'em out!" he shouted again.

"Then," I observed, coolly, "come along with me to your master, for I happen to know him, and I will tell him that you have neither measured nor weighed these things."

"I will swear," said he, without a moment's hesitation, "that I have measured them all!"

This fine young fellow, however, on second thoughts, preferred taking the 3*l.* to appearing before his employer; and allowed me to pay for the after-load by the London measurement. But to what an awful extent must the ever-pouring crowd of immigrants—strange, bewildered, and confounded by the din, bustle, dirt, and jostling on these wharves—have been plundered, during the whole tide of this gold immigration! Well may Melbourne wharfingers make enormous fortunes.

The carriage up to the Diggings is on a similar scale, owing, however, in a great measure, to the total want of roads. It is now 70*l.* a ton, and has been 120*l.*, for about seventy or eighty miles; at the lowest rate 1*l.* per mile.

Advancing into the town, you find the same extraordinary scale of prices prevailing. The charge for everything in the shops is about 300 per cent. on the prime cost. The importers sell to the retailers at cent. per cent. on their invoices. Such are the astonishing crowds pouring into the country, that there is the utmost difficulty in getting lodgings at any rate. Two small rooms, wretchedly furnished, let for 4*l.* and 6*l.* a-week. Two empty ones, of the very meanest description, for 2*l.* The innkeepers here have turned their stables into sleeping-places, and a man gives 5*s.* a night for a third of a horse's stall, good straw, a blanket, and rug. One Boniface entertains

nightly seventy of these five-shilling recumbents, netting the pretty sum of 17*l.* 10*s.* nightly for stable room.

Hundreds and hundreds even cannot procure this accommodation, but camp on the waste outside of the town in their tents, the place having thus acquired the name of Canvass Town. The Government charges 5*s.* per tent weekly for this occupation of the waste lands, or at the rate of 12*l.* a year. This is the first evidence of a Government in the country; for, furnishing no quays at the harbour, and no roads up the country, nor any light or pavement in the streets, but mud up to the knees, you naturally think there is none. If there be a Government in a country, however, and you fail to discover it in the shape of improvement, you are pretty sure to run your head against it in that of taxation. The Canvass Towners are, I imagine, the first inhabitants of these colonies who have had the honour of paying a land-tax.

LETTER II.

First Sample of Scenery.—Appearance of Melbourne.—Pleasant Environs.—Extraordinary wooden Suburbs of Collingwood and Richmond.—Price of Land and Rents.—Artificial Obstructions to Colonization.—A new Colony only a Government Pinfold.—Glut of Merchants' Clerks.—Wages of Servants.—Want of Labour.—Weedy Gardens.—Great Nugget—Appearance of Emigrants coming from Sydney and Van Diemen's Land.

Melbourne, September 28. 1852.

HAVING effected a landing in this country bristling with hostile steel pens, and where they come down upon you with tremendous charges,—not of cavalry, but of city train-bands, all furnished with an awful artillery of prices,—let us endeavour to get some idea of the features of the place.

We landed at Liardet's Beach, a low sandy shore, where there was a shabby sort of inn, looking English but slovenly, before which stood a shabby sort of long waggon meant for an omnibus, the driver of which generously offered to convey us the three miles to Melbourne for half-a-crown; but, having been locked up in a floating prison for 13,000 miles at sea, we preferred stretching our legs on *terra firma*. We marched on amid a wildish scene of sand, fern, odd sorts of shrubs, dusky evergreen trees with broken heads, and other lower trees the leaves of which seemed cut out of dingy green paper, and the stiff scrubby boughs stuck over with bottle-brushes. These, we found, were Banksias; the trees like battered, wind-torn willows, were gum-trees; and besides these were others like great trees of broom,—Casuarinas, or Shiacks. All around us stood plenty of stumps of other trees cut

off about a yard high, American fashion; and amongst them, here and there, was erecting a new wooden hut. The scene was not especially paradisiacal, for a first glimpse of this far-famed Austral Eden. We advanced along this level amid lagoons resounding with bull-frogs, and began to enter on green meadow land of a richer aspect. Then we arrived at a green eminence, called Emerald Hill, on which was an encampment of immigrants waiting for the roads drying that they might get to the Diggings. The tents to our eyes looked thin and white for out-door life, and in front women were frying and boiling at fires. Farther on in the tents we heard singing and merriment.

At some distance we saw a great stone bridge spanning the Yarra, and, on the farther bank of the river, Melbourne, covering a largish range of gentle eminence. It reminded us strongly of the situation and appearance of Nottingham, only it wanted the castle on its precipitous rock at the end nearest to us. We hear that this resemblance has struck many.

Now, some weeks ago at sea I had a dream of being at my brother's at Melbourne, and found his house on a hill at the farthest end of the town next to the open forest. His garden sloped a little down the hill to some brick buildings below; and as you looked from the house, there were conservatories on the right hand by a lofty wall. As I looked from the windows I saw a wood of dusky-foliaged trees, having a somewhat segregated appearance in their heads; that is, their heads did not blend into one mass, like those of our woods.

"There," I said, "I see your native forest of Eucalyptus." This dream I told to my sons and several of the passengers at the time, as we gossiped on deck. As we now walked over the meadows, long before we reached the town, I saw this very wood. "There!" I exclaimed, "is the very wood of my dream. We shall find Dr.

Howitt's house there ;" and we did so. It stands exactly as I saw it, only looking newer ; and there over the wall of the garden, is the wood precisely as I saw it, and now see it as I sit at the window writing. When I look on it, I seem to be looking into my dream.

Melbourne is a considerable town, well situated except that it is too far from the bay. As I have observed, it stands on rising ground parallel with the river, and has a valley running across it occupied by Swanston and Elizabeth Streets. Towards this valley the town falls each way, and affords every convenience for drainage, when the age of drainage shall arrive ; at present, it is the age only of gold digging, speculating in town allotments, and making hay while the sunshine of unheard-of prices lasts. At present, to use the language of the Chief Justice in a pamphlet which he has published on the gold fever, "It is a capital that is neither lighted, paved, nor drained." But all in good time. When we recollect that the place is not more than seventeen years old, it is a wonder. As might be expected, it has a straggling and unfinished appearance, with a considerable number of churches and chapels, standing in open waste places, which spaces one is astonished to find lying idle where building land is so high. But, no doubt, the proprietors are comfortably watching a rising market for it. The streets are left of a noble width, and run at right angles, much on the principle of a hurdle ; but I look in vain for those open spaces left for squares and public gardens, which every new capital should jealously preserve, and which, once lost, can never be recovered.

The houses, at present, are many of them merely of wood, of only one story, and where they have attained to two, have still a dwarfish look ; but this, I presume, is inevitable in a new settlement. When these streets are, as they will be in a few years, bounded by large and handsome houses and rich shops, they will present a

striking aspect. What is most striking now is the number of wild backwoods-looking fellows, in broad hats, rough coats, and dirty boots, riding about the town, almost all at a canter, on very rough-looking animals. Whether the riders with their long wild hair and shaggy beards, or the horses, look more colonial, it were hard to say.

But the country round Melbourne is pleasant. The site is elevated ground, round a good part of which the Yarra winds. At this time of the year, the grass is green, and the gum-trees scattered over it, give it a park-like appearance. These trees, as most people are now aware, are evergreens. The greater proportion of them are of the genus *Eucalyptus*, and have foliage something resembling the willow, but of a dusky hue, which creates a monotony. Some of these are now covered with small white flowers, while the broom-like foliage of the shiack, and the yellow flowers of the acacias, or as they are here called wattles, now in full bloom, vary in some degree the monotony, but do not present the vivid and tender variety of hues of an English spring.

All the swampy and watery river flats are filled with the wattles and the tea-scrub, green and dense. These latter resemble low woods of cypress, arbor vitæ, and juniper, with here and there tall naked stems, with round tufted heads standing up above them.

I have been to pay my respects to the Governor, whose residence, for there is yet no government house, is merely a small wooden cottage, but elegantly furnished, and standing in spacious grounds, exhibiting a great variety of native trees and shrubs. I have also driven with my brother several miles into the country another way, beyond the river. Everywhere there is the same park-like look, the same erection of new houses of all kinds, from the gentleman's country seat, differing in little from the same class of houses in England, down to the little wooden hut,

with tents pitched near it for accommodation which the house is too small to afford.

Just over the hill beyond the town, there meets you an extraordinary spectacle. It is that of an immense suburb, stretching parallel with the town, from the high land to the north down into the vale of the Yarra, some two miles in extent. Standing on the hill, near the Bishop's palace, a new and heavy-looking erection of trapstone, the vale of Yarra lies at your feet. The opposite banks of the river, at half a mile distance or more, are somewhat elevated, and well wooded; and over the woods show themselves, at a distance of twenty miles, the blue ranges of the Dandenong hills, the last spurs of the Snowy Mountain chain in this direction. But the scene which arrests your attention, lies in the valley at your feet. It is that of an enormous extent of ground, covered all over with thousands of little tenements, chiefly of wood, and almost every one of them of only one story high. These extend as far as the eye can command the vale, the upper portion being called Collingwood, and the lower Richmond. These suburbs contain a population equal to that of Melbourne itself; and they have sprung up from the vast influx of population, chiefly since the gold discovery, and from the prohibition by the Town Council of the further erection of wooden buildings in the city.

This is one of the first things which has impressed me with the reality of the rapidly running torrent of immigration. Here is a new settlement in all its newness. The houses are some of them complete, others are just erecting. A balder and more unattractive scene cannot meet the eye of man. Every single tree has been levelled to the ground; it is one hard bare expanse, bare of all nature's attractions, a wilderness of wooden huts of Lilliputian dimensions; and everywhere around and amongst them, timber and rubbish, delightfully interspersed with pigs, geese, hens, goats, and dogs innumerable. The streets, so

called, which all run in the true gridiron or rather hurdle style, are not roads but quagmires, through which bullock drays drag fresh materials, with enormous labour ploughing the muddy soil up to their very axles. There is not the trace even of the idea of a garden amongst the whole of them. These diminutive tenements are set down on the open field, as if they were the abodes of a race of squatters, but they are all built on purchased allotments.

But why so small? why no gardens? Simply because the ground is so preposterously dear. Here you have immediately a proof of that ingenuity by which men contrive to defeat the intentions of Providence. Providence has given vast new lands, on which the overflowing population may settle; but selfish and purblind governments immediately lay hold on that which was meant to be a free gift of God, and dole it out in such modicums that the pressing necessities of arriving immigrants compel them to bid up at auction against each other, till the land of these new countries lying with millions of miles of unoccupied soil, becomes far dearer than the dearest of that which they have left.

It is amazing to what a price this peddling and wicked system has forced up land round Melbourne. We think 1000*l.* or 2000*l.* per acre near London high, but here it fetches from 4000*l.* to 6000*l.*! Houses are frequently pointed out to me in the outskirts, as having recently been sold, with a garden, for 10,000*l.* or 12,000*l.*, which in the finest suburbs of London would not fetch above 2000*l.* Little houses in the town which in London, in good streets, would let for 40*l.* a year, here let for 400*l.* My brother has built two good houses near his own, which would not let in London for more than 70*l.* a year each, or 150*l.* together; he lets the two for 1200*l.* And there is a single house near, worth in London or its environs perhaps 120*l.* a year, for which the modest sum

of 2000*l.* a year is asked!—a sum that would purchase it at home.

When God gives to his children new and ample countries, what a pity that the devil should so instantly show himself in these fresh paradises, and totally spoil them! The devils of Government cupidity and trading speculation are the curse of all new colonies,—of none so much as this. An artificial barrier is instantly erected where people show a disposition to colonise a country; the country itself is cut off, shut out, and literally ceases to exist for the crowd of immigrants, so long as it pleases Government. Till then, the ever-pressing throng is enclosed, as it were, in a pound, till they ramp over and tread down each other, grow frantic and furious, and purchase the little trampled modicum of standing-place under each other's feet, at the most fabulous prices.

It is true that not only the price of land, but the price of labour, and of all materials which labour has to procure and prepare for so sudden an inundation of population, as bricks, hewn stone, lime, wrought-timber, slabs, &c., must create a high scale of prices. The price of skilled labour ranging from 5*l.* to 9*l.* per week, and of unskilled from 10*s.* to 20*s.* per day. But had Government made the preparations which an able and Christian Government should—had it said, “A great, an unexampled crisis has arrived; a mighty population is pouring in upon us; equivalent preparations must be made; and, above all, there must be land cheap and abundant for the people to settle upon”—though in the first-rate localities for business and in the immediate vicinity of the town, land must have a relatively high value, it could never have reached its present preposterous scale, the present madness of land-gambling could never have originated.

As to the demand for labour, in one department there is already a glut. Merchants' clerks and shopmen are a drug. There is, of course, but a limited demand for

them, and it is fourfold supplied. If you make any inquiries on behalf of young men of that class, merchants exhibit to you lists of an appalling length, of such as have come with introductions to them. As you walk about the town there appears no lack of men and women; but gardeners, grooms, and footmen, with their 70*l.* or 100*l.* a year, and their board—housemaids with 30*l.*, and cooks with 40*l.* or 50*l.*, indicate the proportion between demand and supply and the independent conduct of that class is another like evidence.

When you advance into the country a few miles too, you find the want of labour stamped on the face of everything. The gardens and pleasure-grounds of gentlemen, as well as the gardens of an humbler description, are regular wildernesses for the most part. They have literally nobody to cultivate them; and I see arums, such as we cultivate in the house, now standing, putting up their white, marble-like, spathal flowers; with jonquils, splendid cacti, the native indigo, prickly pears, roses red and white, stocks as tall and large as shrubs, yellow jasmine, date-trees, tobacco-trees, India-rubber-trees, and a host of strange shrubs and curious flowers, which stand the year round in the gardens here, and may thus give you an idea of the mildness of the winters—all these choked by a mass of weeds up to your waist. It is strange to drive up to a good house, with its English look, its English approach, and English fields all round, and on reaching its shrubbery, finding it looking as if the place were deserted. The walks all overgrown, and the most gorgeous flowers and beautiful tropical plants and trees lost in a desert of weeds, whilst among them the cockatoo, parrots, and paroquets, flit about with strange voices, and the honey-bird, a bird covered with longitudinal black and white streaks, is busy sucking honey from splendid orange and scarlet flowers.

We find it a most difficult thing to get our effects up

out of the ship. There has been some dispute between the captain and the men employed to discharge the cargo, and they have struck work. This is no trivial matter for us; for, independent of the delay it occasions us, not being able to prepare for an inland journey till we have these out, including our tent and cart, it costs us 32*s.* each time we make a visit to the ship. Meantime the number of people pouring into the colony from all quarters, is perfectly astounding. They arrive by 5000 and 6000 a week, and the issue of licences at the Diggings increases in equal proportion. Mrs. Gilbert, the wife of Mr. Gilbert the gold commissioner at Bendigo, tells us that at that Digging, a few months ago, the monthly licences were 6000, then 8000, then 10,000, and now they are 20,000. Yet there appears gold enough for all, and gold keeps up its value. A gentleman from Bendigo describes that Digging as like a country fair five miles long; men, women, and children all mixed amongst tents and huts of all sorts, with horses, and bullocks, and drays, and butchers' shambles, and the earth turned upside down everywhere, and vast quantities of gold got.

The great nugget of 28 lb. was dug there. Mr. Gilbert did all he could to persuade the man who found it, to entrust it to the care of the Gold Office till it was disposed of, and then to let him get the money invested for him—but in vain. He soon began to drink; got a horse, and rode all about, generally at full gallop, and when he met people, called out to inquire if they knew who he was, and then kindly informed them that he was “the bloody wretch”—that was his phrase—“that had found the nugget.” At last he rode full speed against a tree, and nearly knocked his brains out. He is a hopelessly ruined man; and I fear that will be the fate of hundreds, if not of thousands, who will stumble precipitately on more gold than they have sense and prudence to deal with.

Meeting his Excellency in the street, he asked if we

had yet seen this 28 lb. nugget; and, replying in the negative, he said if we went up at once to the Government Office, we should find Major Campbell there, who, on using his name, would show it to us; but that it was on the very point of being removed to the Treasury, to be packed for England. The Government here have given 1600*l.* for it, and presented it to the Queen. We were just in time, and had a good examination of it. It is a very singular mass, but will look well amongst the treasures of the royal palace. It has several small pieces of quartz and ironstone sticking in it. Just at one edge is the mark of the pick where the digger struck it; and it is supposed that, had he not just caught the edge, it was so far at the side of his hole that it might have been missed altogether. Another was found some time ago as large, but not so handsome in form.

Having satisfied our curiosity, the Major called two young men belonging to the office, wrapped the nugget simply in his handkerchief, gave it to one of them to carry on his arm, and he and the other clerk attended him as guards. He purposely avoided having any policemen, their presence being likely to attract undesirable attention. The Treasury was not far off; but what a prize, had some of the "old hands," as they call convicts, been aware of the transit! Not long ago several of these escaped Van Demonians, or Penton-villains, made a rush into a gold-broker's shop who had great heaps of gold exhibited in his window; knocked him down, and attempted to carry off the gold; but the people passing outside saw it, and seized them. A cleverer set of these gentry lately, as you would see by the newspapers, went on board the *Nelson* in the bay, tied up the few people on board, and carried off 2000 ounces of gold, and have never been heard of.

The old lags, another name for convicts, are flocking over from Sydney and Van Diemen's Land by thou-

sands,—there is no exaggeration in the word. And what subjects they would afford the sketcher! Yesterday as we went down to the ship, the steamers were coming in from those colonies. They were densely packed on the deck of the steamer, as you have seen Irish emigrants on the decks of vessels setting sail from Liverpool for America. What men! and what costumes! Huge burley fellows with broad, battered straw or cabbage-tree hats, huge beards, loose blue shirts, and trowsers yellow with clay and earth, many of them showing that they had already been digging in Sydney, where there is much gold, but according to fame, not so abundant or so pure as in this colony; almost every man had a gun, or pistols in his belt, and a huge dog, half hound half mastiff, led by a chain. Each had his bundle, containing his sacking to sleep upon, his blanket and such slight change of linen as these diggers carry. They had, besides, their spades and picks tied together; and thus they marched up the country, bearing with them all they want, and lying out under the trees.

Every day this scene is repeated; thousands follow upon thousands in the same style, and take the road at once towards the Diggings. Bands of others attended by bullock drays loaded with provisions, go overland all the way from Adelaide. They are wonderful times!

Sept. 28th.— Still we cannot get our goods up from the ship; but we have spent a good part of the leisure time in receiving and paying visits. The chief people here have been very polite. I have had calls from I suppose nearly all of them, from the Governor, the Chief Justice, and members of the Executive and Legislative Council, the Mayor, and Town Councillors, downwards; and it has cost me no little time to return the courtesy, some of them living several miles out of town. We now grow impatient to be on our march up the country.

LETTER III.

SCENES IN MELBOURNE.

Rage for Gain in Tradesmen. — Sending a Parcel. — Price of Provisions. — News from the Diggings. — Prices there. — Land Mania. — Mad Prices and amazing Rents. — Flower Show at Botanic Gardens. — A Walk into the Woodlands. — A new Abbotsford. — A Gentleman's House and Grounds at Brighton. — Melbourne Scenes and Characters. — Luggage Thieves. — Destroying a fine Site for a Town. — River-side Slaughter-houses. — Earth sown with Bottles. — Caution to Women emigrating. — Street Scenes. — Successful Diggers breaking a Horse. — Independence of Servants. — A Gentleman as Groom. — Spring. — Appearance of Gardens.

Melbourne, Sept. 29. 1852.

WE have sent off a parcel and letters by the Australian, which sails to-day. But heaven preserve us! What a piece of work it has been to get it off. The rage for gold here is not confined to the Diggings; it seems to pervade everybody and everything in the colony; so the agent of the steam-packet company only wanted to charge me *two guineas* instead of ten and sixpence for the parcel to London. Fortunately, I had the printed terms of the company, and showed them to the man; here, they take care to keep these terms out of sight, and to put into their own pockets the modest sum of three times the amount they take on the company's account. At first, the man refused to take the proper sum, and declared that he would not take the packet at all. "Be so good," I observed, "as to say that again, for I am writing to-day, and shall be glad to address a note to the packet company, to apprise them of the happy style in which you execute their business."

On this he took the parcel, but with the scowl of a thunder-cloud, and not deigning to give me another word. I left Alfred, to fill up the required bill of lading, but the amiable fellow was resolved to put me to all the trouble possible, in revenge for my mulcting him of his guinea and half booty, and insisted that Alfred should come and send me down again. Accordingly I had to march down again nearly a mile through their terrifically muddy streets, after a shower, for they have not yet a single square inch of *pavé*. Arrived, I got all arranged, though with very few words, and very crusty ones, and with very surly looks.

This rapacity seems to run through everything here. In the shops the prices they ask are actually amusing from their enormity, and if you seem to acquiesce in them pretty easily, they seem immediately to accuse themselves of having done themselves a serious injury by not asking more, and we have frequently found before leaving the shop, that they have quietly determined to lay on another 50 per cent. on articles the price of which we asked.

I saw in the newspaper this morning, a thing which a good deal surprised me,—it was an instance of another person besides myself actually remonstrating against paying anything that the people here are pleased to ask, for really the fever of high prices appears to me to affect everybody, both payers and receivers, and that the payers gave themselves up as a matter of course to be victimised, hoping, probably, to victimise others in return. The case was this. A cabman had only demanded 4s. for driving two hundred yards in the rain, instead of 2s. 6d. the settled fare; and some one was really found to object to an extra eighteen pence. Well, thought I, I was not so unreasonable after all, in objecting to be “chiseled,” as they elegantly term it, out of two guineas instead of ten and sixpence.

But why does not some patriot pull up a boatman or a wharfinger or two?

Why should poor cabmen alone be confined to a tariff where plunder is the order of the day?

Provisions are very high, and it is feared there may be a dearth of flour, unless brother Jonathan brings in a good deal of his surplus, and the merchants here have hitherto played him such tricks that he is afraid to bring it. When he has brought it in, they have dropped the price to below the remunerative scale, and Jonathan has come by a loss; if, therefore, the people have now to suffer, either in price or quality, they have their merchants to thank for it, for Jonathan has plenty and to spare, and could have poured abundance into their warehouses and their bakehouses, if he had not been too 'cute to be bitten twice by the over 'cute "gum-suckers" as the native Victorians are called.

The value of houses and lands is running up here alongside of the value of labour and of all articles of food. The land allotment mania bids fair to surpass what it was previous to the disastrous 1842. A piece of land bought a few months ago for 120*l.* was resold for 1,120*l.* Every day the same thing occurs. A short time since a house and garden were bought for 4000*l.*, and would have been dear at that price in London, and to-day they were resold for 12,000*l.* Thus, whatever be the value of gold elsewhere, it is here only of one third the value it was a few months ago. That which now requires twelve thousand sovereigns then was purchaseable for three thousand. The prices of all things are in proportion. Flour is now 36*l.* per ton, and is expected shortly to be 40*l.* Bread, the 4 lb. loaf, is now 2*s.*; hay is 40*l.* per ton, actually more than sugar! Oats, 15*s.* per bushel; we have ten bushels in our cart, which cost us 4*l.* in London. All tools and the like, which we brought out with us, are 100*l.* per cent. higher, whilst long mining boots,

for which we paid 1*l.* 15*s.*, are here worth 9*l.* per pair. A. could sell his minié rifle for 30*l.* Butter is 3*s.* per lb.; cabbages, 1*s.* each; cauliflowers, 2*s.* 6*d.*; onions, 8*d.* per lb. B. could sell his house and garden—a good house, it is true, with stables and green houses—for 12,000*l.* The government rents a flour steam-mill in the town for barracks, which cost 6000*l.* building, for 4500*l.* a year. These evidently are prices which can only be maintained during the scarcity of labour: so soon as there is a surplus, as there must be some day from the enormous influx of people, they will as rapidly fall to the proper value, and the property thus purchased will prove dear and in many cases ruinous pennyworths. It is amazing to hear of the property which has been made here within a few years; and every one says that no person who is active, industrious, and careful can do otherwise than make a fortune in a short time, if he will.

30*th.*—No lighter up yet with our effects. How the poorer passengers, who have to wait in lodgings at the enormous price of everything, will hold it out, I cannot say. And all the time such news from the Diggings! The following is the news from the Oven's Diggings in this morning's paper:—"One man found 20 lbs. in one pocket; another party of four got 84 oz. in one day, value 294*l.*; a party of two 60 oz.; another of three 30 oz. There is not a man amongst them who is not averaging from 15*l.* to 20*l.* per week." Everywhere the yield continues very large. There is a report of a nugget 100 lbs. weight found at Mount Alexander. We are naturally impatient to be off, but the roads as yet are very bad. You are not to be alarmed by the accounts of robbery and murder. These only occur to solitary individuals. We shall go up a large and powerful party, so there need be no fear of attack, and we can help one another with our horses at any bad place. A large party of us shall always encamp near each other.

The following are the prices of things at the Diggings, as quoted to-day:—Flour from 9*l.* to 10*l.* per bag; butter, 5*s.* per lb.; sugar, 2*s.*; carting stores for three or four hours, from 8*l.* to 10*l.* It is said that a man with a horse and cart at the Diggings might make 1,000*l.* a-year by merely doing job cart work. Indeed, I see here gentlemen who came out as first-class passengers, very coolly going about with a horse and cart each, dressed in thorough carter style, who, however, say that they are making their 4*l.* per day, and don't trouble themselves about what anybody may think of them. They say, "Every one does as he likes here, you know."

The land mania rages here increasingly. The people of Melbourne are very mercurial in this respect. Recollect the mad speculations terminating in the crash of 1842. It is quite as bad now. I saw a gentleman yesterday on the other side of the Yarra, who told me that land there, two miles from the town, was selling at 700*l.* per acre. The same gentleman quoted to me the rents that were paid around him. For a little wooden cottage of one story, consisting of two rooms, and which in England might be let for 4*l.* or 5*l.*, he gets 150*l.* Small villas in the same vicinity, chiefly of one story, and with a garden and perhaps a paddock, let for 600*l.* a-year, and so on. This is perfect madness, for it bears no proportion even to the high price of labour, and when labour is so dear that they cannot get their gardens cleaned, it appears doubly ridiculous. *Punch* could hardly have conceived a more absurd idea than of a man giving from 8,000*l.* to 12,000*l.* for a small place, and yet be too poor to pay for a gardener! But you see this every day. They would be much offended at the case being put in that form; they would say that no gardener is to be obtained, he is gone to the Diggings. True; but if they would pay him as well for gardening, he would stay; therefore it comes to the point, that when they have given a thousand pounds for a place

more than its value, and to which natural value it must return the moment that labour comes once more into the market, they cannot afford to keep a gardener.

Yesterday was the Melbourne Flower Show, at the Botanic Garden. The Botanic Garden is situated beyond the Yarra, on the south-east of the town, and by the nearest way, down the meadows and across the river, by a punt, or, as we should call it, a ferry boat, not much more than a mile off. The garden is finely situated at a bend of the river, so that it slopes up to a considerable height above it in a fine sweep. These slopes are laid out in very good taste in walks, including large beds planted with all kinds of native and foreign shrubs, trees, and flowers that will flourish in the open air. Many of these were in flower, and were not only very beautiful, but loaded the breeze with a delicious fragrance, perceived at a great distance before reaching the place. We did not go the nearest way, but by the town bridge, and round over the hill on which the Government-house is to stand. Our approach was through the native forest, resembling a walk through some old English park, both from the antiquity of the trees and the appearance of the forest turf under our feet. The trees, however, were the universal eucalyptus and shioc, interspersed with young wattles, a name here for the acacias, many of which resemble in form and foliage the sensitive plant. As we approached the gardens, we saw a number of flags displayed over the small tent or booth which contained the show of flowers and fruit.

Of course I did not expect a Chiswick show, nor even a Regent's-park Botanic Garden, with their mile-and-half of splendid equipages ranged side by side, and 10,000 gaily-attired aristocratic ladies and gentlemen as in England, but there was a good number of carriages nevertheless; and 2,500 people making as handsome an appearance for their number as you see in England; and there were

many beautiful and truly elegant women among them. There was also a band of music, which played at intervals, though its pauses were somewhat of the longest. The Governor and his lady were there, the Mayor, and most of the influential people of the town; so that altogether it was well worth seeing. The show of flowers was small, the fruits and vegetables being the finest part of the show. There were some splendid apples, and a dish of St. Germain pears which were quite magnificent, one of which I have no doubt weighed fully two pounds. The vegetables would have done honour to any of the market gardeners of Fulham and Battersea-fields. The rhubarb was poor and small, but I am told that later in the season it is really fine and large. The leeks were some of the finest I ever saw; the beet-roots and potatoes very fine. It was not the season for grapes, which, I am told, are splendid, but are not much cultivated yet in greenhouses, so as to have them *out* of season.

The gardens themselves were, as Lord Castlereagh would have said, the most prominent feature of the show. To me the walks about the garden were a real delight. One was the more obliged to walk from the paucity of seats, but that was of less consequence as the natural charms of the place induced one still to walk on. The sun was bright, the air delicious, the shrubs and trees all around us were full of flowers and fragrance; the lake, or lagoon, at the bottom, covering some acres of ground, looked wild with rushes and aquatic plants, and a good portion of it occupied with a jungle of tree-scrub. A loud chorus of frogs, in which the bull-frogs were the bass vocalists, and the strange cries of the hidden water-fowl, of various kinds, came thence in concert with that nightingale song of the bird which I heard before, but always near water, which makes me suspect that it must be some kind of reed-sparrow. There were two black

swans sailing amongst the flags and bushes of the lagoon, giving it a true Australian look.

The gardens include 120 acres, a splendid extent, of which as yet two only are cultivated. The walks, the longest of which extends along the banks of the Yarra, are said to measure four miles in length. Among the shrubs in flower were the yellow wattles, mimosas, proteas, a fine, luxuriant, and tall plant, with dark red flowers, the melianthus, and a most deliciously sweet one, with pale purple flowers, of the pea-blossom shape, the podaliria.

The walk over the hill to the Botanic Garden was very fine. You see lying above you, when you are coming towards the town, the whole of Melbourne stretched before you on the opposite banks of the Yarra. To the right the woody heights of the Police Barracks, and on the left the Yarra winding down towards the Bay. When you turn the other way, you have the Bay, covered with a whole forest of ships, and to the left of them St. Kilda, a favourite resort on the beach, embosomed in its trees. Over the Botanic Gardens you see sweet country villas on the slopes of rounded and wooded hills, and beyond, over an extent of forest country, the bold, blue range of the Dandenong Hills, part of the Australian Alps in the direction of Gippsland.

On our return, we called on a gentleman who has a charming one-storied house, with garden and vineyard, which produces splendid grapes. Last year they sold for 6*d.* per lb., this year no doubt they will fetch 1*s.* Opposite to him, a gentleman has a large vineyard on the slope, which is in as good order as any in Germany, spite of the want of labour. He made, I hear, 200*l.* by his vineyard last year. There had been a wedding there that morning, and the party was just leaving the house as we arrived, but insisted on turning back with us. It is a beautiful situation, with a fine view of the town, and over

the forest to the Dandenong or Corn-Warrable Hills, and yet they are tempting even him to sell his little paradise.

Friday.—The lighter is not yet out of the Bay. It is really too bad that the authorities have made no better arrangements for the transit of passengers through the town. They complain of the excess of numbers, yet they detain them here, and that sorely against their will.

Sunday, Oct. 3rd.—Still here, waiting for our effects from the lighter. This “slowest of all coaches” is, however, at length on its way, and we are promised it in the morning. On Friday afternoon we took a walk of about three-and-a-half miles, to look at some land which Mr. B. is about to sell. It lies beyond the new town of Collingwood, of which I spoke as lying north of Melbourne. It is a piece of native woodland, lying on the steep banks of the Yarra, which is a very winding river, and where the land is all hilly and picturesque. We crossed by a floating ferry—here, as I have observed, called a punt. On this side of the river, lying within a sweep, are two farms, one called Abbotsford,—its proprietor, of course, a Scotchman,—and the other St. Helier’s, its proprietor being, of course, from Jersey. They both had a very pleasant, home-like look; both were one-storey houses, surrounded by their green enclosures and large gardens and vineyards, with cattle and horses grazing, and children at play. A mass of weeping willows near the river gleamed out like a mass of sunshine, from the lively green of their foliage amid the dusky hues of the native trees. There were a couple of wooden farm-houses on the other side, amid the woodlands, looking very much like, as one imagines, such places in the American backwoods. One of them had a large kettle boiling on a fire of logs in the open air, and an abundance of children about them; one child having a splendid dead parrot in its hand, of brilliant yellow, red, and purple hues.

Our walk was up a fine solitary woodland of the usual gum and shioc-trees, with here and there a *Banksia*, or, as they oddly enough call them, honeysuckles, the trees being like a stiff pine, with short, stumpy leaves, and something like cones, but which, on close inspection, are more like heads of teasles. In fact, almost every tree, shrub, and plant here look to our eyes like what it really is not. You see a tree which you would declare was a willow, and it is something from Sydney or the Cape, with a long botanical, but no household name; another, which should be a poplar, but it is only a fig, and a fig which is like anything but a fig. What you take for a barberry is not a barberry; or for a currant, is not a currant; or an oak, is not an oak; and so on through the whole chapter. This, however, is the time for flowers, before the hot weather comes, when they are all gone. We gathered many beautiful flowers, a great variety of their orchises, but, of course, no more like our orchises than possible. There was a beautiful crimson pea-shaped creeper, a *Kennedy*; a lovely flower like the hepatica, but, of course, not one. None of these flowers have much, if any, scent: it is the bushes and trees which possess the fragrance. The mimosas, or wattles, are now in their glory,—one, that fragrant acacia which is cultivated in our green-houses in England; some of them bushes, others trees, now all covered with their yellow blossoms and shedding their fragrance through the forest. Then there are the tea-scrubs, which grow in the swamps, one species in the salt lagoons, another in the fresh; these, too, are now all covered with their white flowers, and are very sweet.

We enjoyed the walk very much, and admired the spot which Mr. B. has reserved for his own house. It stands above the bend of the river and commands a forest slope of great beauty, and which would afford charming woodland walks, if paths were made through it and it were

appended to the pleasure grounds. Thus is the Englishman converting the wild forests of the most distant regions of the earth into homes of beauty and taste, and making them, as it were, a portion of the mother country. Everything receives so completely the English stamp, that spite of the totally different vegetation, all looks like a piece of England.

Yesterday we made a visit in another direction, to Brighton, about eight miles down the coast of the bay. We were to dine with a gentleman who resides there. We drove through forest land, fast giving way to cultivation. Everywhere huts, and in many places good country houses, springing up, and everywhere the stumps of the gum-trees left in American fashion breast high. The road was mostly the beaten track over the sandy soil, guiltless yet of Macadam, soft and pleasant to the horses' feet, but intersected every now and then with bogs and channels that tried the wheels and sometimes even compelled us to alight and put the shoulder to the wheel. But the day was very fine; the gum-tree and wattles were in all the beauty of their bloom, and bathed us in their fragrance, while the bull-frogs in the lagoons between us and the sea kept up a noise exactly like that which the wheels of the Blackwall railway used to make, or which the steam engines make when they stand and are allowed to give free vent to their steam, — a loud sort of boiling sound which never ceased.

The house to which we were going stands beautifully, overlooking the bay and catching views of the Dandenong hills and Mount Macedon. It is, like so many others, of but one story, on account of the strong winds from the sea; but it is built nearly round a court, and has a good deal of room in it. There is a large extent of shrubbery, flower-garden, and vineyard surrounding the house. The shrubbery consists for the most part of the native forest, with paths simply winding through it. At each side of

the drive in front grow several huge aloes; and the native box and tea-scrub in flower closed in the drive as you proceeded down towards the beach, as laurels and other evergreens do in England. In the garden you were surrounded by trees, and shrubs, and flowers, that would only grow in our conservatories; whilst one side of the garden was bounded by a hedge of *Licium barbarum*, which you call the tea-tree in England, mingled with masses of scarlet geraniums at least fifteen feet high. They grow here the year round. It was such a scene of luxuriance and beauty as you can scarcely imagine. In the fruit-garden and vineyard, which is six acres in extent, we proceeded down a covered walk of vines precisely the length of the Great Britain steamer. The vines and quinces and other fruit-trees appeared most vigorous; the quinces just in blossom. Quinces here grow to several pounds weight; figs, peaches, and almonds are especially fine and abundant. We were shown the Australian cranberry, which produces its berries *under* the creeping plant, and which, though well tasted, have stones in them. We also ate the Australian cherry, which has its stone, not on the outside, enclosing the fruit, as the usual phrase would indicate, but on the *end*, with the fruit behind it. The stone is only about the size of a sweet-pea, and the fruit only about twice that size, altogether not unlike a yew-berry, but of a very pale red. It grows on a tree just like an arbor vitæ, and is well tasted, though not at all like a cherry in flavour. The most odd thing that we saw was a winter cherry; it is a plant which grows in England in old-fashioned gardens, but is never eaten. This species, however, has not a red, but a pale yellow fruit, and has a fine, somewhat acidulous, flavour; it is commonly eaten at dessert.

We gathered a number of very curious flowers in the garden. The scarlet and crimson misembryanthemum

grows wild here at the foot of the gum-trees, but is always closely cropped by the cattle, if they can get at it. In the garden it spreads over an extent of many yards its fleshy leaves and splendid flowers, seeming to say, "here I am at home, not cooped up in your little pots and conservatories!" This splendid flower is called here by the absurd name of pig's faces! We took some spines from a thorn called the camel's-thorn, a Cape shrub, which are at least four inches long; and we walked over a plant something like ground ivy, and which grows abundantly in the sandy soil here, and which in hot weather emits the most inconceivable stench.

Altogether, such places as Mr. W.'s make one cease to wonder that intelligent men like to spend their lives in these distant colonies. There is a wild, fresh beauty and novelty about them, that affect the imagination agreeably. You have wood, and sea, and a wild vegetation around you that can only be cultivated at home under glass and at a great expense. Within doors there is a rural abundance; and all is English, with the addition of fruits and vegetables which only such a climate can furnish in the open air. We were waited upon at dinner by a Chinese servant; we had salmon-trout of the country,—a very tolerable fish,—fine Australian mutton, and the very best Rüdeshheimer that I ever tasted out of Germany.

But the gold has disturbed the pleasant quiet and the prolific abundance of even these charming spots.

"This used to be a pleasant, quiet country," said the lady of the house; "but it is all over now!"

And I soon found that the enormous sums offered for such property were making the owner consider whether he ought not to secure such an opportunity for the realisation of a large amount. The golden apple of temptation is here continually ejecting the children of Adam and Eve out of their paradises. The mania grows every day. Everybody is calculating what his place would fetch;

and every day purchases are made at more and more exorbitant prices.

You know that I expected to see a fine collection of the scum of the earth here, including Sydney and Van Diemen's Land convicts and Californian adventurers; but I did not, and do not apprehend any danger from them. There is no denying that crime has already reached a height which is awful. The vast mass of rude fellows who flock here from all quarters of the world, and then get extraordinary sums of money, such as they hitherto have had no conception of, makes this no wonder. Here, too, they mingle with the worst escaped convicts, and receive a *finish* to their education in all depravity which they could not have obtained elsewhere. The number of drunken fellows which you see about the streets is something fearful; and their language is still more so. Successful diggers! (that is the phrase) are everywhere, either galloping along, rude figures as they are, on rude horses, or standing about the doors of public-houses. Everybody gallops here, or at least goes at a canter—which they call the Australian *lope*. Boys who take horses to water go at a headlong rate over steep gullies, torn out by the rains, and amid everywhere-standing stumps. I often wonder that they are not dashed to pieces; but I suppose the young rascals are reserved for another fate. I see them go right into the river at this pace, and never stop till the animal stoops his head to drink. The streets here, spite of the fine weather drawing off immense numbers daily to the diggings, are crowded with rude-looking diggers and hosts of immigrants, with their wives, their bundles, and their dogs. All down, near the wharves, it is a scene of dust, drays and carts hurrying to and fro, and heaps of boxes, trunks, bundles, and digging-tools. Here you see ships unloading all kinds of goods, and scores of drays fetching them away, making it almost impossible to pass

among them without being crushed; and the fellows are not at all mindful of you. It is every man's business to take care of himself here. They are just as independent in their speech as in their actions. It is a wonderful place to take the conceit out of men who expect much deference. The Governor was yesterday riding along among this crew, attended by one soldier; but not the slightest notice was taken of him, not even by a touch of the hat.

They are just as free in helping themselves to your property. All seem bent on fleecing their neighbours to the utmost in their power. Shopkeepers, innkeepers, boatmen, draymen, wharfingers, all get all they can out of the unfortunate gold-adventurers. My effects will cost me more in getting them up to the town from the ship than they did in bringing them hither from London; and to do this a fortnight has been consumed,—thus detaining the whole ship's passengers in the town at a terrific cost, and away from the gold-fields, where they might be reimbursing themselves. Surely never had colony made less preparation for what it must have foreseen twelve months ago.

Everybody ought to calculate that the fortnight he will probably be detained here will cost him as much as the whole voyage, and make his arrangements accordingly; besides which, without the strictest watchfulness on his part, his luggage will be plundered; for the thieves proper are a very active class of gentry here. One of our fellow-passengers has had his boxes regularly gutted; and we ourselves have had our mining boots and other boots and shoes stolen. The mining boots are indispensable to us, and cannot be replaced here at less than 9*l.* per pair, of their quality. Last night the expert thieves which England has transported to these regions, and who have flocked hither from Sydney and Van Diemen's Land, and who are every day exercising their conveyancing talents, robbed

the stable-yard of a gentleman just by. They took his horse, his harness, and stripped the premises of most valuable booty, the groom sleeping in the room adjoining the stable all the time. The police here are supposed to consist largely of these very thieves. In fact, two policemen the other day were convicted of robbery.

But the one great principle of the colony is the Dutchman's maxim:—"Get honestly, if you can; but at all events get!" People avow the principle. They come here, in fact, as they go to India, to make fortunes, and then—"go home." That is the phrase. Everybody talks of England as home. They are all going home some day. This and that person are selling their property, and going home. Others are going home for a visit; but in any case it is towards home that their thoughts tend. Hence so little is done for the colony, this splendid colony! Every one thinks of himself, there is no patriotism, because no man looks upon this country as his home. All are in a sort of temporary exile,—the servants of mammon, that they may spend "golden earnings at home."

Here is a fine situation for a town, which circumstances will probably make the principal seat of Government; but I question if there is any general plan laid down for building the town so as to make it a splendid and befitting whole. While there is the opportunity, the future capital of a great country should be sketched out, with its squares, its terraces, its public walks, its parks, and its gardens. They have long wide streets, alternating with long and narrow ones; and the only plan perceptible is that of a chess-board. There is, in front of the house where I am writing, a noble situation for a noble park, which might be adorned with public buildings and public walks, and which is now scattered with fine native trees; but I fear that a few years will see this superb space covered with unmeaning masses of houses,

and thus one of the great advantages and adornments of a great city irrecoverably lost. This space lies high, and at present resembles a fine old English park. It slopes down towards the river, which at some distance sweeps round more than half of its circumference. It is already surrounded by buildings, including the suburbs of Collingwood and Richmond; and if the Government had but taste and forethought, scarcely a yard more would be built upon. What a noble site for a Parliament House some day! for a great gallery of fine arts and similar public buildings, surrounded by public walks through this superb park! This would be seen far and wide, from one side to another, and produce an imposing effect, whether contemplated in proximity or at a distance. But the 1000*l.* per acre, the 10*l.* per yard, nay, the from 150*l.* to 220*l.* per foot for building frontage, and the absence of pure, high taste, and the fatal idea of "going home," will, I greatly fear, as effectually nullify or annihilate all the advantages which nature has offered as if they did not exist. There was an excuse for the Italian peasantry building pigstyes in the ruins of the ancient Romans, because they were poor; but the excuse which will exist for the present influential people of Melbourne—a people living in an inexhaustible region of gold—will, at least in the breasts of their posterity, be of a different kind. If one may be allowed a pun on this occasion, it may hereafter be said of the present rulers here, that they were thinking so much of their golden heritage, that they entirely forgot the *capital*. What enormous sums is London now spending in making parks where nature had made them already, could our ancestors have looked into futurity. Here, however, the future is so palpable and positive that none can miss seeing it.

The most revolting sights which I have seen here are the slaughter-houses, which are placed exactly on the river side, so that any one coming up by the steamer is

treated to a view of them. They are wooden buildings, with a fenced-in yard on one side, in which stand the poor wretched victims, amid mountains of the heads of their predecessors, from which a host of pigs are rending the flesh. On the other side, and half in the river, are equal heaps of entrails and garbage, which other swine are rending. Altogether, the filth, the blood, the piles of heads of cattle, either stripped of their flesh or in process of it, and the crowd of poor animals standing in the midst, patiently awaiting their fate, is one of the most shocking and disgusting scenes that can be conceived. In the hot weather the stench and danger of contagion must be of no ordinary kind. If they make a railway by the short cut from Melbourne to Liardet's Beach, across the plain, this nuisance will be put in the back-ground. At present it is in the very front and prominence of the approach to this El-Dorado capital. Nor is the matter much mended on any side the town. I have not yet been able to find a walk into the open forest without having to run the gauntlet of heaps of dead horses, that make the most horrible stench. People seem to regard worn-out horses as criminals, that must be executed at cross-roads; and this might be forgiven if they would only *bury* them there. But they are, in fact, in far too great a hurry. They pride themselves on fast assuming the American type; and in that they are not mistaken. They go ahead in everything excepting order, cleanliness, effective police, good taste, and security of property.

I remember seeing a statement in the former speculative era of 1842, and thereabouts, that the whole country was scattered with champagne bottles. I believe poor Sir John Franklin made the statement. And now, likewise, for miles round the town. I have scarcely seen a tree under which do not lie the remains of bottles which have been dashed against it, as they have been emptied. Nay, I see whole bottles lying thrown out all about the outskirts of

the town, which not a soul thinks it worth his while to pick up. I am convinced that if any one wanted to bottle off a pipe of wine, he need only take a light cart round Melbourne, and pick up plenty for his purpose. The bottles, however, are passable, and only show a recklessness of expense; but the dead horses and bullocks are disgusting. The other evening we saw a bullock's head, with a large pair of horns, lying on the road, as if the animal, according to Milton's description, were just created and rising out of the earth, having as yet only got its head free.

I do not know, of course, what — and — have determined on about coming out. But I question if it would suit either of them. Female servants are wanted and get good wages, about 30*l.* per year. But I do not see that pressing want for them, in the town at least, which I expected. And as to the prospect of getting married, that is become a very critical matter since the influx of adventurers. They are in a great measure extremely rude and vulgar. To marry any stranger here is a most hazardous affair; for many of these men have left wives at home. Nobody knows anything of them or their history, and numbers of them marry girls and go off to the diggings, and never are heard off again. One girl lately married a man who left her the next day. But — would not like living here after London. Of course, if they have come out, they may do very well; but it will require care; and it always must be remembered that if wages are high, clothing and everything they may want are four times the price that they are in England. Joiners, bricklayers, tailors, shoemakers, labourers, gardeners, grooms, tilers, carpenters, plasterers, and most handicrafts cannot too numerous come out. They get their 1*l.* and 1*l.* 10*s.* per day, and are snapped up instantly. Commercial clerks more and more are a drug.

Oct. 7th.—We have now got all our packages from the

ship, and, with the exception of our boots and shoes, and a few dozen coloured shirts, all safe; and even in this case we are lucky, as Captain Cole, the owner of the lighters, from under whose care they were stolen, behaves very well, and promises to pay something towards the loss. The thieves are more than suspected; but they are off to the diggings with their booty.

We set up our tent yesterday in the garden; and as it rained heavily last night for many hours, it was a good trial of its water-proof quality. It stood the test well, not admitting a drop of water; a great satisfaction, for nothing could so affect our health and comfort.

We are somewhat divided as to whither we shall steer our course. Bendigo, twenty miles beyond Mount Alexander, was what we had concluded upon, but the news from the Ovens district is so extraordinary that we are strongly advised to go thither. The number of diggers is as yet small there, owing to the distance; and there is plenty of water there the year round. We must, however, carefully weigh several particulars,—the roads, the supply of provisions up, and the company that joins us,—as we certainly shall not go so far alone. At the same time Mount Alexander and Bendigo are producing extraordinary quantities of gold. There came down from Mount Alexandria alone this week 44,000 ozs. Bendigo produces most nuggets; the 20 lb. nugget was found there, and I yesterday was shown a nugget of 5 lb. which came thence.

Yesterday, I was watching the “successful diggers” in Bourke Street. At the top of this street there is a large yard, only railed round, which seems to belong to a horse-dealer. There are various carts also standing there for sale to diggers. You can rarely pass this ground without danger of being galloped over, for the diggers are always trying horses there, and come headlong out of the yard into the street, and gallop and rampage about the street in

a famous way. The whole street swarms with diggers and diggeresses. Men in slouching wide-awakes, with long untrimmed hair and beards, and like navvies in their costume. Some have heavy horsewhips in their hands, and are looking at the exploits of other diggers on horse-back with a knowing air. Others are swearing about the doors of pot-houses; where others, again, are drinking and smoking. Others, with a couple of bundles or a pair of huge boots swung over their shoulders, are lighting their pipes at a candle or cheapening digger apparatus. The whole street abounds with second-rate shops, which supply tools, kettles, tin-ware, boots, clothes, and so on. You are amazed at the price of every article

Meantime the diggers are trying their steeds along the streets. Most of the horses which I have seen are bush horses, which have been brought down to Melbourne, and never had a bridle on or been in shafts before. You may therefore imagine the scenes that take place. I saw one man on a stout bay horse, a very good and powerful half-breed. He took a span new saddle, and a double bridle, having both snaffle and curb-bit,—for here they are not content with a single bridle, but seem to stuff as many into a horse's mouth as they can get there, and have a whole handful of reins in their gripe. Well, this man was trying this horse, and it was running round with him as if it were in a mill. He was a tall, active fellow, in a green plaid shirt and fustian trowsers, with a wide-awake on his head, and a short heavy dog-whip in his hand. When he had tried to no purpose to make the animal go, he dismounted and lashed it furiously about the legs, then mounted it again, but only to make it spin round again, and plunge and start so as to endanger every one near him. Another digger, also with a short, heavy dog-whip in his hand, pushed past me, saying, "Aye, it's that snaffle; it would be quiet as a lamb without it. These bush horses won't bear a snaffle." The man, however, finding

all his efforts vain to make it go, dismounted, handing it over to a boy, who seemed to be a younger brother, and who led it up the street; the digger marching off, followed by his diggeress, a tall, slim young woman, who strode on like a trooper, and appeared on the eve of becoming a mother. Just where they made their exit was another crowd, in the midst of which a digger was trying a young horse in a break. The horse was as resolute not to draw as the other was not to carry. In answer to the whip, it only reared, plunged, kicked, and seemed disposed to break everything and kick everybody near it. But about a dozen diggers seized the reins on each side, and attempted to drag it forward, while others pushed at the wheels, but in vain; the animal only stood doggedly still, or recommenced kicking and plunging. At length it shook off all its holders, and made one of those extraordinary vaults that they call *Buck-jumping*. I had not yet seen this feat, and certainly it was a most marvellous motion. The horse at once sprung up into the air with all its four feet, and at the same time made a writhing movement forwards, first with one shoulder, then the other. Had it merely been saddled, it would have got clear. As it was, the man, after this display, let it stand quietly awhile, smoking like a furnace and wet with perspiration; and in awhile, to my surprise, after a good deal of patting and coaxing, it trotted quietly away with the break. These scenes are continually going on. Amid all this there were open carriages driving about, crowded with diggers and their diggeresses, at the rate of 1*l.* per hour. Diggerdom is gloriously in the ascendant here.

Our relatives here are again without gardener or groom; one of these *gentlemen* having gone off to the diggings. You may imagine that the word gentlemen is a joke, but wait a wee, as the Scotch say. In the first place, every servant in this Austral Utopia thinks himself a gentleman, and really is far more independent than his

employer for the time-being. He engages on his own terms; and, if he be at all a decent fellow, said employer is only too glad to catch him. He does just as he likes while he condescends to stay with you, and takes care not to hurt himself with work. His doctrine is that of old Matthew Clay of Mansfield, a half-witted pauper that I used to know, "Hard work would kill a man;" and he is a philosopher who carries out his theory to perfection. If you object in the smallest degree to his theorem or his praxis, he says, "Suit yourself, for I am off;" and he goes in all the dignity of independence, and leaves you dependent on your own exertions. He is, out and out, a more independent gentleman than you are. Each of these gentry asks 150*l.* a year for his services, and lives in the house, and will live well, too. Like the butler in *Punch*, who, when his master complained that his dinners had been but so so of late, replied, "Well, really, sir, I think when we have anything good in the servants' hall we always send you a little of it up," these independent fellows would rather patronise you, if you complained.

To-morrow morning we mean to black our own boots, as to-day we put the horse into the cart, and rode down to the wharf in it for the rest of our goods. Well, the sons of the Chief Justice have had to do the same for him and themselves,—black boots, and harness horses to the carriage,—and why not we? Alfred and his cousin will sleep in the harness-room to-night, with a revolver, and Prince for a watch-dog, as horse-stealing is a very favourite amusement here.

But I must do the last groom justice. He was a real gentleman, a gentleman by birth and education. His father is a clergyman of high standing. He himself was educated at Oxford, and used to ride with the Melton hounds. One of the many real gentlemen who came out at the first successful account of the diggings, he had been up and found no luck at the El-Dorado; so, being

very knowing in horseflesh, and liking horses, he engaged with my brother; and never was there such a groom. Steady, orderly, attentive at all hours and all points, invulnerable in his good humour, he was the perfect groom, and yet the perfect gentleman, and in nothing more so than in that he never presumed upon it. He sunk all *pretensions* to an equality of rank; he set himself to be the groom and nothing more, while he occupied that situation; but he was never more a gentleman in spirit and in manners than when grooming his horses or driving out his master. When importuned by his old mates, as the term is,—his old comrades,—to make another trial of the diggings, he told the Doctor that he should be obliged to go, but that he *would not* go till he was suited. This was the only instance of such true politeness which our relatives have met with since diggerdom commenced, for the general announcement is “I am going to-morrow!”—and they go. Richard, however, kept his word, and did not go till his master *thought* he was suited.

While you in England are declining into the autumnal fall of the leaf, here we are just in the pride of spring. From the window where I am writing, I behold a beautiful garden scene. Our European trees are in full blossom; the pear blossom, indeed, is nearly over, but the plums, cherries, and hawthorn are in full flower. An abundance of flowering shrubs, large masses of arums, beds of misembryanthemum, and borders of thyme, are all brilliant with florescence. The cacti and cereuses are in full blow in the conservatories, but are later in the open air, where, however, they bloom vigorously,—especially the *Cereus speciosa*, that splendid flowered one. Tall clusters of bamboos, the tobacco-tree, the native indigo, the date-palm, and various tufts of primulas, flourish side by side. The arrow-root plant, African and French olives, the prickly pear, the fig, the guava, the New Zealand flax, the pomegranate, the oleander, and the English haw-

thorn grow in other parts of the garden; while multitudes of beautiful Cape heaths, roses, geraniums, and strange-looking native shrubs and plants from the Murray and Plenty rivers, flourish luxuriantly. The honey-bird comes to the honey-plant in numbers, and swallows with cinnamon-coloured breasts build under the eaves.

Oct. 9th.—In a day or two we shall now be off, but as yet it is uncertain whether to Bendigo or the Ovens. Alfred has just had a letter from a friend of his at Ballarat. He and his party are getting on well, and speak in the highest terms of what is doing. One party, he says, cleared 2000*l.* out of one hole. We are all well. Charlton is acting as groom to-day, driving out the Doctor on his visits to his patients. He complains of being much persecuted by the mosquitos. Alfred is busy stitching away at an awning for the cart, and at a temporary tent, to save us the trouble as we travel of setting up our large one every evening. We shall spread our tarpaulin on the ground, so that no damp can ascend; then throw our tent-sheet over a rope suspended between two trees, hang a curtain fore and aft, spread our mattresses and blankets on our tarpaulin; and then all will be right. Our fire will blaze cheerily in front, our kettle sing beside it, our pot of meat or our frying-pan be at work, and—do you think you will be better off at home? We shall take flour, tea, sugar, hams, potatoes, &c. enough for the journey, and buy beef and mutton on the way at stations. We shall have a good many horses in the party, and, if we come to bad parts of the road, help one another through.

LETTER IV.

STILL MELBOURNE, AND GLIMPSES OF ITS
NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Projecting our Journey.—People a Month in getting their Effects from the Ship.—Bank of England Notes at Twenty per Cent. Discount.—Expert Thieves.—A Tailor's Stock stolen from the Lighter.—Clerks and delicate Men at Discount.—Governor wonders what People are coming for.—Visit to a Farm.—New Settlements.—Rude Fencing.—Primitive Forest.—Fruits fine, but little cultivated.—An English Character on everything.—New Birds.—Trianlelopes.—New Plants.—Our London Harness ridiculed.—First Taste of a Dust-wind.—A Wheelwright's Bill.—The new Aristocracy or Hairystocracy.—Cabmen refuse to drive Gentlemen; only take Diggers.—Bushranging Feat in the Suburbs.—Alarm in the Night.—The drunken Tanner.

October 13. 1852.

WE have delayed our journey a little to obtain more precise information respecting these Ovens Diggings, as they are quite new, are 150 miles distant, and especially as five or six parties seem determined, go where we will, to follow in our wake. We hear from private sources, as well as from the newspapers, that they are yielding a most extraordinary quantity of gold; that it lies very near the surface; that there is plenty of good water there all the year round; and that it is a beautiful and healthy country. These diggings lie on the Sydney mail road, so that there are inns and stations all the way, at which we can procure necessary supplies. At the same time, as the distance is so much greater than to Mount Alexander and Bendigo, we hope that it will be a good while before there is that rush and crush there which are now over-

whelming those earlier diggings. The alarming numbers which are pouring into the colonies from all countries and quarters are certain to produce much distress. They cannot all be supplied at once with food, except at a frightful price, in a country which produces nothing itself but meat and wool; and they will literally cover the present digging-grounds. In a while they will be extended; for there is no doubt but that the gold will be found far and wide. Some was found here the other day, on the hill on which the Government offices stand; and the hill would speedily have been all turned up had it not been prohibited. The district on the Plenty river, not far from Melbourne, is confidently declared by some of our friends to be a gold country. Well, at all events, if there be plenty of gold, there are plenty of people coming for it. The arrivals this week are from 7000 to 8000. But already numbers are flocking back again from Mount Alexander, who are disappointed, but chiefly, it is asserted, because they are unfit for labour, have knocked themselves up on the journey, and exhausted their numbers. What is truth and what is not, we cannot yet pretend to say. We depend yet on report; in a while we shall be able to speak from experience. The wet weather, which has continued an unusual period this season, has also, it is said, filled the digger's holes, and stopped their work to some extent; yet last week there was sent down from Mount Alexander more than 100,000 ounces of gold. The roads have been fearfully bad, too; and all these circumstances have contributed to keep us here. Besides, we only the other day got our last things from the ship.

Only think of people being detained a month in this fiery furnace of expense, simply to get their luggage out! I have seen some of them, respectable people, obliged to shelter themselves in such dogholes as would astonish their friends at home. Though we have been in the best and kindest quarters, yet our patience has been woefully tried.

Many highly respectable people have been obliged to work as porters on the wharves to enable themselves to exist during this cruel delay. No few, too, of those jolly fellows who spent their cash on board in spirits and tobacco, have had sharply to suffer for it. Unpopular as I was obliged to make myself on board, through my determination to keep down the sale of spirits, especially after we had had more than once every sailor in the ship drunk at the same moment,—the very man at the wheel letting the helm go out of his hands,—and once the drunken crew coming to open mutiny, I am, I now find, just as popular with the same persons for having done it. “Oh,” they say, “if Mr. Howitt could have had his will all the voyage, we should now have our money in our pockets.” I often encounter them in my walks, and their cordial, respectful recognitions are quite touching. I have had various applications from them, to assist them in getting places, and I have done what I could; one young fellow who used at night often to come into the front of the cuddy, and shout, “Bring out those cuddy passengers, and let us fling them overboard!” This youth went ashore in the same boat with us. We had three miles to walk, and I had a valise in my hand containing a change of linen. The moment we stepped on shore, he sprang forward, took possession of my valise, and would not allow me to carry it one foot of the whole way. “What?” said I, “is that you who used to wish so kindly to give us a nocturnal sea-bath?” “Ah,” said he; “but we know better now; we now know who are our friends and who are not.”

I have written a letter to the newspapers at home, to warn people against bringing out Bank-of-England notes, as they charge 20 per cent. for cashing them here! This loss of a fourth of all such money is a very serious item added to all the rest of the plucking that immigrants experience here. I felt it my duty to expose this extortion

the moment I could; and I trust it will at once prevent all persons in future bringing out anything but gold, or orders on the Banks, and thus force the Melbournians to reduce this preposterous discount, or render it useless. One of our fellow-passengers was victimised to the extent of 40*l.* by these charges, and most of them to some extent, we amongst the rest.

People coming hither should reflect that they are coming into a colony abounding with the expert thieves who have been transported from England to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land, and have assembled here to dig for gold in the pockets and coffers of the immigrants. There is no safety for goods coming from the ships even in the lighters; for the lightermen are, almost to a man, of this same class, who "have left their country for their country's good." The lighters come dawdling up the river at a snail's pace, taking two or three days to make this eight miles; and on the way these lightermen amuse themselves by exploring the interior of the packages entrusted to them, and selecting what best suits them. They appropriated upwards of 20*l.* worth of our boots and shirts, finding them particularly good; and they are extremely discerning fellows. About half-way they lie to for the night, and they are met by their accomplices, who receive on shore the selected goods. The banks of the river are there covered with a dense scrub, and they can readily conceal themselves and their booty till it is conveyed away. One poor fellow, a tailor, who meant to set up in the town, had all his stock of goods cleared out of his packages, and is obliged in consequence to march off to the diggings, leaving his family here. He could not recover the value of his property, as we did, because he had entrusted the transfer of the packages from the ship to the lighter to those on board, and could not swear that he saw his goods safe into the lighter. To enable him to ensure this security, he must have gone off daily to

the ship for a month, at a cost of 16s. per day! Let future arriviers profit by this loss.

Once that goods are out of the lighters and have paid smart wharfage rates, as already described, the carters only ask you 1*l.* per cartload for taking them into the town!

Such are a few of the realities which meet the adventurers on the threshold of the Land of Gold. These, I begin already to perceive, are followed by hardships and severity of labour for which men bred in offices and banks are totally unfitted. Hence the number of failures, and the miserable objects which you see coming down again from the diggings, in total destitution and dejection. I trust these obverse features of the golden medal of Australia Felix will be soon and well made known at home. From what I hear, even regular labourers and navvies will require all their energies, their bone and muscle, to endure their ordinary degree of labour under the *extraordinary* force of the sun for six months in the year,— a fact which should enter into the calculations of every one who means to wield the pick and shovel.

I see that the home Government has published a second Blue Book, containing some more marvellous statements from the despatches of the Governor here. There is certainly no man who has done so much to turn the heads of people all the world over, regarding the gold here, as Mr. La Trobe by his official statements; and yet, when he hears of the crowds coming, he affects to wonder at it! “What are all these people coming for?” he demanded of me. “What?” I replied in astonishment; “why, simply to gather the gold that you tell them lies everywhere and all over the country.” Surely never were there such Arabian Nights’ stories as those of Mr. La Trobe’s despatches. He rides up to Mount Alexander, and the first two men that he sees at work he pauses to watch. In two hours he sees these men dig out 5 lbs. weight of gold! He sees other two men

wash out of two tin dishes of earth, I think, 8 lbs. weight of gold! He pokes the moss away from the foot of a tree, and picks up a piece of gold! He sees gold everywhere; and winds all his wonders up by declaring in his despatch, that "the whole country is of the same character." After this, is it not rather cool to profess astonishment at the avidity of the millions at a distance to witness some of these miracles of affluence for themselves?

We have purchased a couple of good horses and a lighter cart than the one we brought out, that being pronounced too heavy for the boggy country. On Tuesday morning, the day after to-morrow, we set off. We have laid in a sufficient stock of tea, coffee, flour, rice, hams, sugar, oats for our horses, &c., &c.; so we shall not starve. While we have been obliged to wait, we have made an excursion about twelve miles into the country, to the estate of our friends the Bakewells; and our visit there may give you some idea of the abodes and mode of life of the settlers in the country round Melbourne.

Our road lay through a partially reclaimed country. First, at a distance of two miles from the town, we crossed a small stream called the Merri Creek, where there is a new bridge which nobody will use, because the road is a little round, but persist in passing over a ford constructed at a cost of 200*l.*, but which the first winter torrent tore up, leaving a confused mass of huge round stones in the water for the wagons and carriages to lumber over. There is a piece of good macadamised road beyond the ford for about a mile, the only piece of such road in the colony; but beyond the bridge there is no road at all. So we had to cross a wild tract of land for a mile or more till we reached the road again.

The rivers here have all the same character. They lie deep between their banks, or they run through narrow deep gullies, as they call them here, — that is, water-

courses. The moment that you catch sight of them, running deep in their hollow ravines, you perceive abundant traces of violence about them. Huge dead trunks of trees are lying in wild confusion; some of them on the banks, some in the stream, and others hanging suspended from the precipitous cliffs and slopes above them. Heaps of round, porous and ferruginous-coloured boulders lay about, and lines of dead twigs and leaves at some distance from the stream, told a tale of headlong torrents in the wet season.

After crossing the bridge we made our way as well as we could for boggy ground, dead trunks of gum-trees, and the huge stones just mentioned, which in some parts of the country cover hundreds of acres. They are basaltic, their surface honey-combed, and rust-coloured. They look as if they had been roasted in subterranean fires. They are more or less round, as if they had been rolled in agitated waters, and require immense labour to heave them out of the soil and carry them away. They will hereafter be excellent material for building and roads, when labour is more abundant. At present the farmers here do not seem to have any notion of piling up these boulders into stone fences for their fields, as the Scotch do, when they clear them from the land; but they drag them together into heaps, and leave them lying. On our left hand we had a number of settlers' huts, built of wood, and covered with sheets of the ruddy-brown bark of the stringy bark-tree. These are kept upon the roof by poles fastened along them; and altogether the huts have a very rude and settler-like aspect. They are almost always guarded by two or three huge, savage dogs, and have gardens exhibiting patches of cultivation, and rampant crops of weeds, out of which gigantic crimson stocks lift their heads conspicuously. The fields are enclosed by what they call brush fences, that is, simply the trees as they are felled thrown along in long lines, and their

branches piled upon them. That is the first rude fencing of a new country, and we passed plenty of it. After these come posts and rails; and finally, as cultivation and wealth advance, will planted hedges succeed.

The whole of our way lay through the primitive forest, exhibiting occasional openings of cultivation, and primitive abodes. Here and there the woods were fenced off with posts and rails in large extents; and these sections of woodland are called paddocks, and kept for grazing. They are thinly scattered with the uniform timber of these forests, the eucalyptus, the shiacks, and Banksias, with wattles wherever the ground is moister. Wherever the eucalyptus is cut down and the ground is burnt, the wattles spring up, and, it is said, the better for their seeds being roasted. All under the trees lie immense quantities of fallen timber. You see huge trees which have snapped off like carrots, probably having become hollow at the bottom. A few miles from town they drag these fallen trees together by bullocks into heaps, and burn them to clear the land; yet any that they condescend to cart to town they charge 2*l.* and 3*l.* per cartload for! There seems no bounds to the charges in Australia for everything. They ask what they please, and people give it without a remark. It must be a settled matter that nobody shall say that anything is dear. We saw plenty of places where the owners of the land might, by a cartload only per day, at 3*l.*, by the mere labour of cutting into lengths and carting away the fallen timber, clear 18*l.* per week, or nearly 1000*l.* a year.

The country grew pleasanter as we advanced, of a gently undulating character. There were, here and there, good houses of wealthy settlers; the woods were enlivened by parrots, warbling magpies, and other birds, whose notes are generally clear and pleasant, though not aspiring to the rank of song.

The Plenty farm is very agreeably situated on a high

swell above the river of that name. It has a considerable extent of cultivated fields, and the house is one of those wooden ones brought out of England, and which seem as good now as on the day they were set up. They certainly have answered well. To this are added extensive out-buildings, generally of wood, and some of them roofed with sheets of stringy bark. We found a hearty welcome from Mr. Robert Bakewell, who chiefly resides here. From the brow of the hill on which the house stands, on a lawn of rich Kangaroo-grass, the bank descends steeply to a flat of from four to five acres, which is laid out in a garden, orchard, and vineyard. The river runs round this flat in a semicircle, coming up at each bend near to the foot of the hill on which the house stands. The river is not a large one, not wider than a good high-road. It is, like all the Australian rivers, deep between its banks, and is incumbered with an extraordinary number of fallen trees. From the hill near the house you have a full view of the whole garden. The fruit-trees were nearly all in blossom, and the vine-plots were well dressed and kept. They cut their vine-stocks here generally much shorter than in Germany, little more than a foot from the ground, and give separate sticks to each. Mr. Bakewell's are an exception. I was surprised to see the flat of this garden planted with the vines, and the sloping sides of the hills only partly planted with them. But as they grow the grapes chiefly for market, no doubt they obtain much heavier bunches, but they would not produce so finely flavoured a wine. The apples, pears, and plums here flourish and bear immensely. They have plenty of gooseberries, which do well in places shady and not too dry for them, and I am persuaded that they would succeed here well on the plan of the market-gardeners near London, that is, grown under the fruit-trees, especially in cherry-orchards. Currants they have, too. All other fruits flourish beautifully. They have the finest and most

abundant peaches, where they are cultivated; but this is yet but rarely. I read, as I came along on the voyage, of peaches and all sorts of fruit being as abundant here as in America. They *would* be so, if they were as much cultivated as in America; but this is by no means the case land is too high, labour too dear, and the people in too great a hurry to make fortunes, with the favourite and universal idea of "going home." Therefore fruit is very rare and very dear. Their apples and pears are superb, and of a large size and good flavour. Plums, apricots, melons, grapes, and almost all kinds of fruit are as fine as can be grown, where they are grown. Almonds and figs abound on the trees, the latter producing two crops a year: the quinces are gigantic in size, and make the most admirable marmalade. They have oranges and lemons in the open air; but they succeed much better at Sydney, whence Melbourne is chiefly supplied. I saw filbert-trees, and they say they bear abundantly. English cherries are splendid; and I am told that, as on the continent of Europe, they are obliged to prop the branches of the apple-trees, the crops are so heavy. The Japanese fruit, the loquat, which grows on a tree very much resembling the medlar, is frequent. It resembles a yellow plum about the size of a pigeon's egg, with a peculiar acidulous flavour. All kinds of kitchen vegetables do well. Peas now (the 18th of October) are in flower, and they have long been cutting asparagus. The sea-kale crop is over. I observe that the rhubarb here grows nearly flat on the ground, instead of upright as ours does, though brought from England. I hear of very large rhubarb, but I have only seen very small. The scorzonera, or *Schwarz Wurzel*, is finer than any I saw in Germany, the roots being as thick as your thumb, and very tender.

All these things you see growing amid the strangest and most foreign-looking things, especially the loquat, the date-palm, great fleshy prickly pears, with their oval leaves stuck one on the end of another, and their purple fruit;

cacti and cereuses, which with us only flourish in the conservatory. But, spite of foreign vegetation, the English stamp and English character are on all their settlements. They are English houses, English enclosures that you see; English farms, English gardens, English cattle and horses, English fowls about the yards, English flowers and plants carefully cultivated. You see great bushes of furze, even by the rudest settlers' cottages. There are hedges of sweet-briar around their gardens, bushes of holly, though rare, and, what is odd, the finest holly-trees I have seen, were grown from seeds of the fine old trees about our own house at home. There are hawthorns and young oaks in the shrubberies. There are cowslips and oxslips now in flower in the gardens, but no primroses that I have yet seen. There are lots of snapdragons of various hues, roses and lilacs, looking very English. England reproduces herself in new lands; and how feeble seem the native races against the sinewy, plucky, pushing, predominating Englishman. The hunter races of the earth, the forerunners of the house-building, ship-building, ploughing, busy, encroaching white man,—they who occupied the wilderness, and sat under the forest-tree, without commerce or ships, living easily on the animals of the chase,—they who lived with the mammoth and the mastodon, the kangaroo and the emu,—have perished with them, and are daily perishing before the civilised and artistic tribes, indomitable in the spirit of the conqueror and the possessor.

One thing pleases me here,—the old English dog in the fire-places of the country houses, instead of stoves. Wood is the chief fuel; the fires it makes are very warm and cheerful; and at the Plenty we found them very acceptable, for it came on heavy rain, followed by a south wind, which is always cold. I don't know when I felt colder than when we arose at five o'clock in the morning to return. The valley was filled with white fog, and the grass glit-

tered in the rising sun with a frosty dew. But the sun speedily chased away fog and dew, and all was bright and warm. All night the quails in the corn-fields near had kept up their plaintive cry, which would make us fancy that their name was but an ancient pronunciation of the word "wail." Towards morning they were superseded by a host of other birds with strange voices, many of them clear and bell-toned.

The woods, which at a distance surround the place, looked very duskily pleasant in the morning sun, and the voices of birds thence came mingling with the more familiar ones about the house. These were the singularly deep, sonorous, piping notes of the magpie, or, as he is often called, the whistling crow; and truly, whether he be crow or magpie is a question. He has the black and white, or pied plumage of the magpie, but he has a shape and habits more resembling those of the crow. He has none of the hops, the starts, and flirts of the long tail of the magpie. He is a plump bird, with a rather short tail and small head, and flies steadily and heavily, much in the manner of a wood-pigeon. He is a great ornament of the woods, and there is something irresistibly amusing in the creature's voice. You would fancy often that you heard the distant call of your old friend Punch, when he carols lustily to collect an audience. It is in the same falsetto key, and there is a kind of quiet waggery in it. Several of the birds get upon a dead tree (for they are numerous), and make the oddest, half-talking, half-singing chorus, like a parcel of boys whistling in a deep, sonorous key. In another quarter you are startled by a loud, sudden cackling, like flocks of geese, followed by an obsteporous hoo! hoo! ha! ha! ha! of the laughing-jackass (*Dacelo gigantea*), a species of jay. The leatherheads utter their settled phrase "Off we go! off we go!" in the woods, or they come to suck honey from the *Melianthus major*, which stands up like a huge artichoke plant,

tipped with dark red plumes of flowers. Then you have two or three birds, which, if you could squeeze them into one, would make a very good nightingale; for one has the true "jug, jug!" but nothing further, and another the plaintive piping note, and another some other characteristic of the nightingale. There is a tree-creeper, which keeps up a perpetual pee! pee! pee!—never stopping for a moment, apparently, to take breath, as it runs up the loftiest tree from foot to summit, searching all the way for insects. I thought once I had discovered the bell-bird, but it turned out only to be a bell-bullock.

The boys amused themselves with fishing, and caught what they call black-fish and trout, to us quite new fish, and a brilliant blue crawfish, with prickles all down each side of its tail. I amused myself with watching the huge spiders, which the common people here will persist in calling, not tarantulas, which they are, but triantelopes, and examining the, to me, equally new vegetation on the banks of the river: the tea-scrubs; a Michaelmas daisy growing on a shrub; another shrub, with flowers and leaves like buckwheat, which they oddly enough call the native currant, &c., &c.

On returning to town, we found that his Excellency had left a quantity of introductory letters to squatters, commissioners, &c. up the country, which will be very serviceable; and to-morrow we are really off. We have had, however, some little obstacles to overcome. Our cart we found was too heavy for the roads, or rather no-roads, of this colony; and what I am now about to say is worthy of the serious attention of all emigrants to Australia who intend to go up to the diggings. The wheels of our cart were four inches or more wide; and every one told us that, though admirable for the macadamised roads of England, here they would sink in the bogs, and, the stiff mud closing over them, their very breadth would make it impossible for the horses to pull them out. That the

wheels should not have tires of more than two inches and a half, which would cut their way through. This was clearly sound advice. We sold our cart, and procured a colonial one, though one of Ransom and May's patent ones, of this width of wheel, would have been much more to depend on than a colonial one.

But this was not the worst. We had purchased our harness of an outfitting trader, of Bishopsgate Street, who supplied us with the hardware articles for the expedition. This harness was not forthcoming till the very last day before sailing, and had to be packed without our seeing it; our worthy outfitter, however, assuring us that it was good useful harness; the only kind, according to his printed list (which I retain), and highly approved. Imagine our consternation when we unpacked it. It was in size fit only for ponies or donkies. Instead of being of good horse-leather, it was of slight cowhide, unblacked; and the collars—so the saddlers there said—were merely covered with sheepskin leather. As the collars would not go on to either horse, and the cart-saddle sat like a little log of wood on the horse's back, we sent the harness to the principal saddler's, to see if it could possibly be altered. It was received in the saddler's shop with fits of laughter. "What, more of that abominable harness!" the saddler cried, holding his side. "More? Have you had any of it before?"

"Any? Plenty; you may see dozens of sets hanging at second-hand shop doors, which may hang there till asses become the fashion."

"Can you not then alter it at all?"

"Certainly not," said the saddler. "It is not worth it. See here!"—and he laid hold of a collar, and showed us what material it consisted of, and that it was merely stuffed with hay. The end of the matter was, we flung the rubbish aside and bought a fresh set.

Besides this, the tools of hardware,—shovels, picks, dip-

pers, working cradles, &c., which had been puffed off to us in London, as being on the true Californian principle, we should have been infinitely better without. The cradles, like the harness, were the laughing-stock of the diggers; and many of our fellow-travellers broke theirs up and burnt them. Indeed, whoever purposes to make a journey to the Australian diggings, if he be wise, will load himself with nothing in England, except it be a good light, waterproof tent, and a patent Ransom's cart, with narrow wheels. All that he wants he can procure of the true construction, much better, and in the end more reasonable, *on the diggings*, sparing himself the most serious labour of trailing them up the country: The wisest man is he that has the lightest load.

Kind as our friends here are, we shall be glad to be out of this Melbourne. While I am writing, the wind has shifted to the north, and brings along with it the most astonishing dust-storm conceivable, as it invariably does. The accounts I have read, speak of this nuisance occurring about twenty times in the year. It occurs about every third day, so far as our present experience goes. Whenever the wind is in the north, there it is! You hear this wind the moment it commences. It howls about the doors and windows like a winter's wind at home, and the air is immediately darkened with one vast, driving volume of dust. Sometimes in summer it is so thick that you cannot see your hand before you. Even now it blows through the sash, and covers me and everything in the room. I dare say this paper will be gritty with dust when it reaches you. In the streets you cannot walk without a veil over your face, or your eyes and mouth are speedily filled. So far as I have seen, it is the worst thing they have; and a terrible drawback to the climate it is. That of itself would drive me out of the town; for up the country they say there is little or nothing of it; but near the roads, which are neither macadamised nor scraped, it is a

perfect pestilence. It would drive your English ladies mad to see their houses, and all their beds, sofas, and beautiful furniture every few days literally buried in fine dust. But it is admirable with what patience the ladies here get to endure the inevitable evil. How coolly they wait till the storm is over, and then set about to have all cleaned up, shook out, and put in order again.

So a hasty good-by for awhile to this odd, but extravagant Melbourne, which every day becomes more droll—actually that is the only phrase for it—droll in its extravagance of all sorts. My brother amused us this morning by reading some of the contents of “a little bill” from his wheelwright. “To greasing his cart-wheels, twice 1*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.*,” or 10*s.* 3*d.* each time. “To putting a nut on one of the cart screws, 15*s.*” a really sixpenny job! And the diggers actually, in their folly, encourage these harpies in this style of charge. One of them the other day asked the fare of a cab for the day. “Perhaps more than you’d like,” said the Jarvie, for the digger was a very common looking fellow. “What is it?” asked the digger. “Seven pounds for the day.” “There is ten,” said the fellow; “you can light your pipe with the difference.”

A gentleman, high in government, told me the other day that he was about to take one of these carriages for some distance; but the man said, “We don’t drive the likes o’ you, now-a-days.” “Well, but what is the fare? My money is as good as another’s, I suppose.” “Oh!” replied the fellow, hesitating, “I don’t know,—in fact, we don’t drive the likes o’ you now!” And that was all he could get out of him. The diggers are styled “The New Aristocracy;” and the shopkeepers flatter them with the title in their advertisements. Here is one:—“TO THE NEW ARISTOCRACY. If you want the best article of any description to be had in the city, you can be supplied by De Carle and Co., Gold Diggers’ General Provision Stores, Little Bourke Street.” Whilst this new aris-

toocracy, or more properly *hairystocracy*,—for hairy enough they are in all conscience,—thus encourage their own plundering in the town, the bushrangers are practising at its very gates. Four fellows, last Saturday, armed with guns and pistols, stopped successively twenty people, and tied them under a tree on the most frequented highway to the very next village, St. Kilda, and that in the broad day, at half-past three o'clock in the afternoon. This game they kept up till half-past five, or two full hours. Numbers of wealthy merchants go out that way about that time of day, and some of them were caught. There is a report that the Governor himself was on that road very nearly at that time. The fellows having finished their work, then went off towards the Dandenong ranges, “sticking up,” or “bailing up” in colonial phrase, that is, stopping and robbing every one that they met. Government has offered a reward of 2000*l.* for their apprehension.

As for ourselves, we had a little alarm the other night, which, upon the whole, however, was rather amusing. I had sat up writing. It was one o'clock. I had thrown down my pen and jumped into bed, but was not asleep, when Dick, a little funny black and tan terrier, who sleeps on the rug by the door in the hall, began to bark furiously, and became every moment more and more angry. There had been some daring burglaries just lately in that immediate neighbourhood. I got up, and the Doctor came out of his chamber. We went down stairs, I armed with a double-barrelled gun. We heard somebody treading about in the portico, but could get no answer to our demands of who was there. Still there was a great trampling attended with the vilest smell of a tanyard I ever smelt. It poured through the door into the house like a pestilent steam. Dick grew more and more violent. At length we got to learn that it was a drunken tanner, who very freely said he wanted a bed, and should pay 5*s.* for it. It was useless telling him that

he could have no bed there. He was too drunk to reason with ; and if he stayed there Dick would not let anybody sleep. So Alfred got his revolver, and he and the Doctor set out on the dubious adventure of discovering a policeman. They sallied forth by another door through the garden, and traversed the streets in vain for half an hour ; for the police here are just as discerning fellows as yours at home, and greatly prefer warm beds, or warm pot-house firesides, to rambling about cold streets at midnight. Their last hope was in the central police station ; and there they found two officers, who, however, held a long colloquy in the Dogberry style, as to whether the house lay in their beat. When at length they were put in motion, they had many discussions whether they should go up this street, and whether they should not avoid that, which one asserted was *dangerous*.

At length they arrived, and, by the aid of a bull's-eye, discovered the scamp, a most filthy villain, dead drunk, and lying almost naked in a bed of prickly-pears. Apparently he had fancied that he had got a bed, and had undressed himself, as far as his muddled brain had allowed him. If he had one spine of the prickly-pears in him, he must have had thousands ; and any one who has been punctured by them well knows how painful they are. But the wretch appeared totally insensible of them, though he had crushed the whole bed down. The policemen had enough to do to raise him, shake him, try to make him walk, and finally hawl him away with his shoes off. One of the policemen was actually sick with the fellow's stench. He was an Irishman, and had all the look of a debauched digger, tanner as he was, and smelling worse than the vilest tan-pit in Christendom.

LETTER V.

ON THE WAY.

On the Way. — Many Counsellors about the Roads. — Riley's Swamp. — First Encampment. — Spectral Aspect of the Forest from the great Bush-fire on Black Thursday. — Paddy Burke's Bog. — A grand Take-in by an Irishman. — Watch and Ward. — Terrible Journey. — Heads of the Plenty. — Burning Heat. — Lose our Horses in the Woods. — Grand Pursuit. — The Doctor lost all Night. — News from a Bullock-driver. — A Chase into the Hills. — Wills's wild Mob. — The Horses recovered. — Part Company with our Fellow-travellers. — Opossum and Wild-cat hunting. — A Sample of the Pleasures of Bullock-driving.

Heads of the Plenty, Oct. 28. 1852.

WE are now really on our journey. On Wednesday last we left Melbourne. There was a train of three carts, attended by thirteen men, well armed, and, therefore, not very likely to be attacked by bushrangers. Our blue cart, well loaded, and drawn by two capital horses,—the shafter a bay, whom we named Ben, and the leader a handsome gray, whose name too was Gray,—led the way, the articles it contained defended from any rain that might overtake us by a good tarpaulin. Our party consisted of myself, Alfred and Charlton, and my nephew Edward. The next party was headed by the surgeon of the ship we came over in, and Mr. L., our fellow-passenger, and was completed by several young men, whom they had engaged from amongst the intermediates. The third was headed by a Captain Nolusbolus, who chose to follow without asking any one's permission, and was made up of his ship associates. We led the way, because we

had possessed ourselves of most information regarding the route.

We had made all possible inquiries on this point, from parties most likely to know, both as to the best route to the Ovens, and as to the state of the roads; and, as in all such cases, we found no two persons of the same opinion. One said we must go one way, and another, another way. One said the road lay through Flemington and the Mooney Ponds, and so on to Kilmore, where we came upon the great Sidney mail road, and should have a good road ever afterwards. All agreed that the direct Sydney road from Melbourne to Kilmore, a distance of 40 miles, was execrable; but this was the extent of agreement. We were to take a side road by an inn called the Young Queen, to avoid the horrors of the main road. But here, again, a fresh set of counsellors declared against the Mooney Ponds and the Young Queen; protested that that road was perfectly frightful, and recommended to us the vale of the Plenty. One day we were assured that this road was very good, and the next that it was impassable. Then, again, that it was quite passable, and far better than any other. To settle the matter, we resolved to go by the Plenty; and as it has turned out, if the other ways were worse than it, they must have been awful indeed.

On Wednesday about noon we got under way, and with such a show of big dogs, rifles, pistols, and bowie-knives, as must have daunted the most heroic bush-rangers. Several of our friends accompanied us a few miles on our way, and one experienced servant of one of them went also to see us safe over the Merri Creek. There was good need, for the moment that we left the town, we found ourselves on the margin of a celebrated bog called Riley's Swamp. Here we had our first taste of what we were destined to encounter; and we agreed that if we came upon Bunyan's Slough of Despond within a single mile of Melbourne, we were very likely

to meet with something rather extraordinary farther off. It gave us at once a very lively idea of what swamps in a new country are ; and we must do the government the credit of admitting that they had not, by any well-meaning interference, done the slightest thing to diminish our idea of it.

Riley's Swamp was not merely a place deep in mud, but in mud as stiff as unbaked paste and as tenacious as glue. This was ploughed out, by the force of ponderous drays drawn by a dozen bullocks each, into deep trenches, and thrown up with ridges of a yard high. In the midst of this slimy chaos lay holes a yard deep, perpendicular in their sides, and filled with more fluent mud. It was a desperate-looking place. But through these oceans of viscid mud, and these slime-pits or mud-kettles, beautifully interspersed with huge masses of stone, the colonials plough their way, with their ponderous bullock trains, with the utmost nonchalance, though the ponderous vehicles tumble and reel about, bang, jolt, and jostle, as though they would every moment be knocked to pieces. But oh ! ye good people travelling smoothly over the macadamised roads of England, how little do you conceive of travelling in Australia, even in the immediate vicinity of the principal towns. If you could but even see Riley's Swamp, with its mud, its deep holes, its huge stones, the deep gullies torn by torrents through it, and with sides as abrupt as walls, you would, like us, stand appalled, and wonder how any mere horses and carts were to go through it. But they did go through, under the cool guidance of Mr. Bakewell's carter. These men are like eels in skinning, they are used to it ; and though our suffering vehicles rolled, bounced, and thundered through the holes and over the stones, they went through, and we advanced with some anxiety to the first encounter of the Merri Creek. But here, what was our pleasant amazement, to find that there were actually so many men in the

colony, that half a dozen could be spared to bring this ford into some degree of order. Accordingly, where a few days ago we saw a chaos of huge volcanic stones obstructing the stream, and carts and carriages leaping, bouncing and splashing amongst them in a most extraordinary manner, we went over with ease, and proceeded well enough to the Plenty, where we took up our quarters for the night, and turned our horses into Mr. B's paddock. The very night before a horse had been stolen out of this paddock; but as the negro, who in the sea-fight stuck his head into the hole in the ship's side through which a cannonball had passed, saying it would be the greatest miracle in the world if another were to hit the same place, so we did not much fear another visit of the kind so immediately.

Our fellow-travellers made their first encampment at about a mile distant in the forest. In the morning we joined them, and pursued our way. The road, or rather track, continued for some miles dry and good; and we seemed to be journeying through a pleasant park. If there were a bad place in the road, we could turn out—there were no fences; and we found many such winding tracks, all leading back again into the main road. As there was no underwood, and the trees were only thinly scattered, we had a clear view of our way before us. All was green and grassy beneath. So far we have no dense woods, such as the beech-woods of Germany or the oak-woods of England, where the tree-tops make a continual shade,—in the former country often for scores of miles,—and all below is brown, bare earth, scattered with leaves. Here the eucalypti are so thinly scattered, and their foliage is so thin, that they afford little or no shade in sunshine, or shelter in rain.

Everywhere the traces of fire in these parts are universal. The great bush-fire of what is called Black Thursday, or Thursday the 6th of February, 1851, which

extended over a large part of the colony, and destroyed many people and immense property, raged fiercely in these parts. On all sides you perceive the signs of its ravages. Some trees are totally killed, and stand black and spectral objects. Others have been severely scorched; their bark is black and charred; and yet they have put out again fresh foliage. Beneath them lie countless giant trunks, many of them of the wildest and most grotesque shapes; while others still stand, although bleached, naked, and as it were bony, pointing their skeleton branches to the sky.

If you traverse these woods in the dusk or in the moonlight, your imagination has abundant scope for exercise. All the old blackened stumps, or fallen trees bleached to whiteness, assume characters many of which never really existed in these lands. Others recall the past of these forests themselves. Some appear like dark images of the natives, who have been pushed from their hereditary seats by the white man. In one place appear dark women carrying their infants, black as ebony, on their backs; and often they are followed by a little troop of other children. Here are dark figures standing as if in deep consultation, or in an attitude of indignant resentment at the encroachments of the stranger. There are grotesquely-shaped trees, which assume the forms of all kinds of animals,—kangaroos, iguanos, huge crocodiles, and serpents of enormous size and tortuous length. But far oftener these dark masses appear in the shapes of your own native regions, and your own history. Kings of lofty stature, and in flowing robes, sit on ebony thrones; bishops and abbots stand arrayed in stole and mitre; silent women, seated with their heads stooped on their knees, seem lost in profound grief; and hollow stems of trees, broken off at some six or eight feet from the ground, present the appearance of strange orators in some historical scene, with elevated arms, from which fall their robes in

picturesque volumes to the ground, their whole aspect eloquent with an earnest and mysterious enthusiasm. I do not know that these objects affect others in this manner; but I cannot avoid seeing them thus continually in the twilight or the moonlight. But to return to daylight realities.

It was not long before the difficulties of our way began to present themselves. We were soon called from the easy and pleasant, though slow, career along the woods, listening to the pleasant voices of the magpies and the laughing-jackasses, to encounter roads enough to make any stranger stand in horror. So long as we were in the open country, all was pretty well; but we now came to enclosures,—those huge paddocks of hundreds or thousands of acres, simply divided from the open country by bush-fences or posts and rails. Here we were compelled to keep to the road, whatever it might be; there was no facile divergence into the more solid forest; and difficulties now multiplied rapidly. In one place a gigantic tree, which had stood in the very centre of the road, had been burnt by fires made repeatedly against it, till it had fallen, its huge limbs tumbling on each side entirely across the road, and its blackened bole still standing aloft in sooty grandeur. Here it was necessary to trespass on the adjoining paddock, as those who had gone before us had done, for a short distance. Scarcely were we well past this obstruction, and past an inn called the Plough Inn, where they offered us brandy at 7s. and beer at 3s. a bottle, than we came to a piece of road utterly impassable.

It was a bog of such frightful character and dimensions as left us no hope of forcing our horses and loads through it. It had been ploughed up and worked into such a slough by the bullock-teams, that our horses could find no bottom, and absolutely refused to advance into it. Two respectable-looking settlers who came up, and whose

horses, without carts, could but just manage to wade through it, called to us not to attempt it, for that we should certainly stick fast. They advised us to take a rail out of the paddock fence, as we had done just before, saying the proprietor, they were sure, would not object to it if we replaced the railing. We did so; but scarcely were our carts on the greensward, when up came, riding furiously, a fellow in a shabby cabbage-tree hat, and wanted to know what business we had trespassing on his paddock? The consternation of the greater portion of our valiant party was quite amusing; and I have no doubt that this encouraged the fellow to a greater air of assumption. I was at some distance; but near enough to see and hear what passed. I therefore hastened up, and told him that surely, looking at the road, as they called it, outside, and as there could be no real damage done to this wild paddock—mere uncultivated forest—by passing over a few hundred yards of it, carefully replacing the rails, there could not be found a man barbarous enough and inhospitable enough to object to us, as strangers, taking the slight liberty that we had been advised to.

But this fellow, whose name he said was Burke, was if so a worthy inheritor of the name, not of the orator, but of Burke of the firm of Burke and Hare; and he was determined to Burke us. He was one of those low, hectoring, rowdy Irishmen, whose violence and want of principle have done so much to ruin their own country, and who carry their depraved and dishonest character with them to the world's end. The man was determined to rob us; and therefore, when we proposed, if it was not agreeable to him to let us pass, to go out again, he declared that we should neither go forward nor backward till we had paid 3*l*.! I laughed at his demand, and asked him if he thought he were likely to get it from a dozen stout and well-armed men. He was taken rather aback by this; but while we were ex-

plaining that if he thought himself aggrieved he could summon us for trespass before the next magistrate, and see what he would get, up rode three other men, all well armed with pistols in their belts. Several of our party were very much frightened, and said to me, "Pay him! pay him! they look like bushrangers." But I replied, "Never, unless awarded by a magistrate." I then turned to the man, and demanded to know what proof he could give that he was really the *owner* of the paddock; that there were many bushrangers abroad, and, for aught we knew, he might be one. To this he replied, pointing to an elderly man on horseback, "That is my brother; and he can tell you that." The old man, however, sat very quietly, and said nothing. He certainly looked neither a dangerous nor an insolent character. Here my nephew whispered me that he recognised the old man, that his name was Burke, and that the property was his.

On this I said to the old man, "Though most of us were strangers just arrived in the colony, a gentleman here was from Melbourne, and knew well both the settlers in the neighbourhood and the people at Melbourne, and that he might depend upon it that their treatment of us would be made very publicly known." On this the pretended proprietor's tone changed; he dropped his demand of 3*l.*, but said, "However, you won't find your way through the paddock, and the road all along outside is just as bad as here; give me *one* pound, and I will be your guide, and will take you to where the good road begins."

This was reasonable enough; we accepted his offer, and moved on. But the man, true to his scoundrel character, led us down to the end of the enclosure, and, pointing to a track down a valley, said, "That is your way," and disappeared in the wood. We pursued the direction indicated, but soon found ourselves involved in bogs and swamps. All traces of the road disappeared, and, as night was coming on, we began to be anxious

for the upshot. So onward we pushed, now plunging through deep bogs, our carts up to the axles, and now bouncing and reeling over volcanic boulders, or blue-stones, as the people call them, till our carts jarred again, and threatened to smash to pieces. At length two of our carts were so completely bogged that we were obliged to join our teams to drag them out, and were not able even to do that till we had dug away the clay from the wheels, which was as tenacious as glue. As for the third cart, by the time the two were extricated, it was sunk still deeper, and, in trying to drag it out, one of its shafts was broken, and it was not extricated till after an hour's digging, and hauling with ropes and chains.

At length we managed to reach a dry mound, and discovered that the river Plenty was not far below us. Here, therefore, we encamped, and made *our* first experiment of sleeping in a tent.

The mount lay pretty high and dry; we drew up our carts so as with our tents to form a semicircle in front of the fire. The fire, as is customary, we made against the foot of a tree, which, itself burning, increases the heat and throws it back towards you. But, with the inexperience of young travellers, we did not reflect that the bulk of the tree was not proportioned to the size of the fire which we needed for the warmth and the cookery of so large a party, and would therefore fall before morning. This once perceived, there was great alarm, every one declaring that it would fall upon *his* tent. In the end, however, we were brought to see that it would fall on *no* tent; and therefore all went to bed contented, except the two who were to take the first watch. Like all young travellers in the Bush, there was a constant fear of bush-rangers; and great was the arming and vigilant the watching,—the latter a most onerous and most unnecessary infliction on people who have to undergo the severe labour of a daily march over a new rough country, and

which they very speedily grow sick of, and abandon to the dogs, the best watchers after all.

Our watches were to extend from ten to one o'clock, and from one to four o'clock, when it began to dawn. At four o'clock, just before the second watch quitted its post, the tree fell with a thundering crash, which made every one start up in alarm; but the tree had fallen very innocently away from us. I arose and strolled down to the river. It lay in a deep valley, amid rocks and high slopes scattered with crags and trees. Winding amid this scenery, and the solemn woods hanging on picturesque slopes along its course, it was fine enough for an English nobleman to be proud of in such a park. I returned, and Charlton and I took down the horses, and then washed them from the mud of yesterday's bogs, and cleaned out their hoofs, after which I had a delicious bathe in the clear, rushing waters of the river. From a settler near, we purchased a side of excellent veal and plenty of milk; and from him I learned that the pretended Burke, as I suspected, was an impostor, and not the proprietor of the paddock at all, but a good-for-nothing fellow trading up to the diggings.

This day's journey was the most terrible that we had yet had. It was up a country which was all either bog or stones. No sooner were we out of a bog than we were bouncing over these round, great stones, which, as hard as iron, protruded from the earth as thick as plums in a pudding. No one but those who have travelled over them can conceive the shocks they give to loaded carts. Mile after mile we bumped along over these horrible stones, two of us holding each a horse, and the third driving; for, besides the stones, which we did all in our power to avert, we had to guard against contact with stumps and with standing trees, between which, frequently, there was barely space to pass. No sooner were we out

of the stones, than we were again in bogs that were awful to see. Wherever these had been passable, bullock drays had ploughed them up into a frightful state. As one track had ceased to be passable another had been attempted; and it was often our business to go on before the carts and carefully explore the ground for some possible passage. Often we were at our wits' end, and when we did get through, it was only by dodging about in all sorts of circuitous routes. Ever and anon we came to deep, defying places, where we were compelled to join our teams and tear through in desperation. The only way to accomplish a passage we found was to dash into the thick of it at full speed; all shouting to the horses at the same time, a man at each horse's head, flogging and cheering, and clamouring, and away they went. On! on! tantivy, neck or nothing, hurry scurry, we tore through the deep abysses of mud, tough and viscid as bird-lime, the loaded carts heaving and reeling first one way and then another, threatening every moment to go over, crash down, or stick fast up to the axles!

It is an easy thing to say, "I'll go to the diggings;" but no one knows what it means till he has tried it. The voyage itself is no trifle; Melbourne, with its delays and its expenses, is no trifle; but when you begin to go up the country, you soon get some idea of the Herculean labour that you have undertaken. For three days we thus laboured on, every evening having only time to pitch our tents, attend to our horses, and cook our suppers. At Barber's Creek, which in England would be called a brook,—but here there are no such things as brooks,—we had to cross such a place as at home would have been pronounced impossible. The water lay steep down between two banks of several yards in depth. The horses had to plunge precipitately into the water, and then drag the load up an almost perpendicular wall, as it were.

We put our horses all together, and drove through, luckily, without sticking fast, as carts and bullock drays often do, though it tried them severely.

Before passing this creek, whom should we see but our old acquaintance of the paddock, with a loaded cart and three horses, endeavouring to force his team into a bog that they had too much sense to enter. To compel them, the wild Irishman stripped off his coat and ran from one horse to another furiously, lashing them about the legs and shrieking hideously, but' in vain. I went up to him and observed to him that he appeared to be in as great a fix as he found us a few days ago. After informing him that we had discovered his pitiful imposition upon us, strangers in distress, I told him that the bog he was attempting was a mile wide and utterly impracticable; that I had been ahead to reconnoitre the road, and could now show him the way without charging him a pound for it. Having done that, I left him, and saw, as I looked back, that he had quietly donned his coat and was availing himself of the information I had given him. Ireland has had many sufferings, but none greater than from such worthless sons, who, as I have observed, having ruined her at home, go to the ends of the earth to disgrace her.

The day after we advanced to the Heads of the Plenty, that is the sources of the river Plenty, which is but a small river, falling into the Yarra near Melbourne. These springs lie amongst ranges of hills, almost approaching to mountains. They cover a considerable space of country, and go back nearly to the river Goulburn. It is a fine country on this side of the ranges. There are some cultivated farms on the flats between the hills, but the greater part is still wild, boggy, and swampy; but in the summer time ranged by great herds of cattle. They are surrounded by fine slopes, and grassy swells and uplands, formed by the feet of the hills, resembling an immense and splendid park. Indeed, we seem to be travelling all

the way through such a park, so much so that one cannot, every now and then, help fancying that, on some height or slope amongst the trees, we shall catch sight of some gentleman's seat, or perceive a carriage, with all its finished appointments, rolling downward to the road. But a moment's reflection reminds you that all is solitary wilderness; that there is no road in reality; and that such houses and carriages lie, perhaps, hundreds of years in the background. Even where human life has yet enlivened the waste wood, it is only in a few widely-lying farms, and in huge, lonely, and wholly unfenced sheep and cattle-stations.

The day that we reached the Heads of the Plenty, the heat was intense, but it was not an oppressive, but a *burning* heat. The sun was more like a burning-glass than the old, genial sun, and scorched our hands till they smarted as if they were scalded, and compelled us to defend them with gloves. It gave us an inkling of what we were to expect in summer, if this was a touch of early spring.

We encamped on a mount near an inn, Heffernan's Inn. At our feet lay a broad, grassy water-meadow, as we should call it in England; it was, in fact, a flat, flooded by the winter rains. Our horses here luxuriated in the rich grass, wading in the water for it; and we had plenty of fallen timber for fires. We resolved, therefore, to spend the Sunday here. We could see our horses grazing in the flat below us, encircled by the woods, having hobbles on their feet to prevent their straying; and we procured good mutton, butter, and milk from the settlers. For a whole sheep, 10*s.*; butter, 2*s.* 6*d.* per lb.; milk, 1*s.* per quart.

We passed a pleasant, quiet time at this encampment till four o'clock on Sunday evening. We had cooked some of our mutton, and made a roll-pudding; and at that hour, as we went into our tent to dinner, we could see our

horses quietly grazing in the swamp. When we came out, after dinner, they were not to be seen. Alfred and Charlton set off to see where they had strayed into the woods, and, to their consternation, could not find them. Alfred came back in haste, and I set off with them. As the inn is a central spot, where many travellers, bullock-draymen, horse-dealers, and others meet, it was looked on by our party as a dangerous spot, and we were alarmed lest they might be driven off. The thieves of these colonies are, as I have had occasion to show, accomplished thieves, and none more so than the horse-stealers. A drayman had just told us, that as he had stopped to refresh at a roadside public-house, and tied his saddle-horse to a post before the door, where he had a full view of him, he saw a man ride up, untie his horse's bridle from the post, and gallop off with it before he could run out and stop him. Pursuit was vain, and he never saw the horse again. These fellows plunge into the woods, and make their way where no stranger can follow them. They will creep on their hands and knees up to a horse on the off side, leap upon him, and ride him away from the very presence of spectators. Dr. Howitt, when he used to ride his rounds in Melbourne, commonly tied his horse at the door of the house where his patient was. One day, on coming out, it was gone. Some one wanted a saddle and bridle, but the horse was too well known, and it came home minus the aforesaid articles.

Well, alarmed for the safety of the horses, we traversed the woods all round the swamp till it was dark. Nothing of them was to be seen, and it was inconceivable that they could have strayed far with their feet hobbled. After tea, as it was moonlight, we posted away again; and this time Doctor. C. accompanied us. We went different ways, and roamed about for hours, but with no success. Considering the unlimited extent of the woods, we thought, with well-founded dread, of the distance which they might

have strayed by morning, if they had merely strayed. We returned weary and dispirited; it seemed such a bad commencement of our expedition. The horses could not be replaced under 120*l.*; and Alfred would have to walk down to Melbourne to get them advertised, with a description, and bring fresh horses up. Meanwhile we must be sticking on that hill alone, a melancholy group, full of vexation and anxiety.

But our anxiety for the horses soon gave way to anxiety for Dr. C., who had not reappeared from the woods. It was now near midnight; the moon went down, it was pitch dark, and there was no appearance of him, nor any sound of his call from the woods. As nothing is so easy as for people completely to confuse themselves in the bush, we felt sure that the Doctor would go wandering about all night, and only get further off. Three men mounted on horseback, and others set out on foot, to seek him. We ourselves were completely tired down. We heard them shouting far away in different directions in the forest; but hours went on, and at length they returned, one after another, having found no trace of the missing Doctor. Here was a fresh cause of anxiety. The Doctor was only clad in a very light summer dress, and the night was extremely cold, and the question was how he could possibly get through the night without being quite perished. If he walked to keep himself warm, he would probably only walk farther and farther away. The whole night passed, and he never found his way back; to a certainty he was bushed, as the phrase is, that is—lost!

With the first peep of dawn we were all up, and preparing to seek the Doctor; but just as we were setting out, we beheld him coming out of the woods in an exactly opposite direction to that by which he had entered them. He had made the entire circle of our camp. He had had the precaution to carry a match-box with him, and when he found himself lost to make a fire, and, stretching him-

self under the side of a fallen tree, out of the wind, with his blazing fire before him, had passed the night very tolerably. Fortunately for him, it was a country without lions and tigers.

Alfred, Charlton, and I now traversed a wide range of hills and valleys in quest of the horses from this early hour till noon; and some of our party mounted their horses and aided in the search. One of these, however, had gone, half famished, to a station in the woods, and had been well entertained. After riding away and hunting about till near evening, he came to another house, as he supposed, and entered, to request another refreshment, when, to his astonishment, he found himself in the midst of the same hospitable family, having made the circuit of the house, as the Doctor had made that of our camp. However, he was only received with a burst of good-natured laughter, and again well entertained.

We now gave the horses up for stolen, and sat down to dinner, dejected, and without appetite. Alfred, tired as he was, would set off to Melbourne that night, lest the horses might be too far gone to give any chance to an advertisement. In the midst of our dispirited silence, we heard a boy say in a neighbouring tent, "Mr. Howitt's horses are heard of." We sprang up simultaneously, and encountered the boy at the door. He told us that a bullock-driver who was at the inn had seen the horses up amongst the hills seven miles off. Away we hastened; found the man, a dark-complexioned, black-eyed, bearded fellow, who in England would have been taken for a gipsy or a tramping potter, and who probably was of gipsy origin. He was quite confident that they were our horses; had passed us on the road, noticed them then, and now described them. He said the hills where they were, still in their hobbles, were intricate, and would be difficult to trace, but offered to go with us for a consideration. A pound note put amazing activity into him; and once more

we were off on a seven miles' tramp, and seven miles back that night, if possible.

The man went on at a round pace, the neck of a bottle of beer peeping out of his coat pocket, showing that he had thought of a refresher on his long run; and we speedily struck into the woods. A young man of the party accompanied us. Our guide led us up amongst lofty and solitary hills, silent and solemn as night. We ascended and descended amongst the tall, white columns of the white gum-trees, and the brown, rugged, and huge stems of the stringy-barks, on and on, saluted only by the voices of the birds above us. The laughing-jackass seemed to jeer us, as if in pursuit of a false hope; and the magpies treated us to their indescribably comic, and yet musical, chorus. Mile after mile we went on through the hills and the woods, getting ever deeper and deeper into their intricate glens; the drayman, as we reached an eminence, pointing to the lofty ranges which we had seen from our camp on the other side of the valley, and telling us, for our comfort, that the highest range there was Mount Disappointment; that, if our horses got into that labyrinth of hills, they were lost for ever; that in the valleys between those hills there are scores of horses that have escaped, and in time grown wild and irreclaimable; that one valley ran into another, and that into a third, and so on, in such a network, that it is exceedingly difficult for any one going in to find his way out again; and that a gentleman, some time ago, who attempted to explore them, never was heard of till his bones were found. He said, three months before, a horse of his escaped thither, and he had tried to recover it in vain. The herd is called "Wills's wild Mob," and they range at will, knowing the defiles of the hills better than any human creature. In those valleys, he added, the wood is so dense that it is almost dark at noon. Fern-trees grow there to a great

size, and close so thickly above your head that you cannot see the sky.

Listening to these stories, we went on into the heart of the hills, till we reachèd a post-and-rail fence, called Macdonald's Paddock. Here the man said he had seen them not many hours ago, and that they were following the fence, as if desirous to get through. But here they were not now. The young man, who accompanied us so far, now touched me on the elbow, and gave me a sign to follow him a little aside. He then asked me "If I was not suspicious of the man? If I did not fear that he was leading us into this lonely and desolate region for some purpose of his own? Whether it might not be to some haunt of robbers with whom he was in league?" I laughed at his fears; but he only shook his head, and said I might laugh, but for his part he should go no farther. He did not like the man, and could not trust him; so here he turned back. We, however, had no such fears. The man was evidently one of those who have lived much in the bush, and on the roads, and by the alehouse fire; who had seen much of that sort of life, and had knowledge and instincts that belong to that kind of experience. He had a merry twinkle in his dark eye, and his round, dusky face, and somewhat upturned nose, was full of knowingness. Presently he pointed out the hoofmarks of the horses in the soft mud. They were clearly those of our missing horses: we were sufficiently acquainted with the peculiar size and shape of their hoofs; and they were still clearly hobbled, as the two fore feet were always put down together. Inspired by the sight, we followed the track for a mile or more, then lost it in the hard ground, then sought it in a different direction, but in vain. Night was now fast falling, and here it falls quickly. If we did not recover the horses that night, ere morning they might have escaped into the Mount Disappointment ranges, and then good-by to them. Our anxiety returned, and we

proposed to follow on in the direction that they had last been taking. In a few minutes, we met a Stockman on horseback, and in answer to our inquiries, he said, "Yes, those horses are in the next flat."

Imagine the effect of these words! Weary as we were, we hurried on, and there, sure enough, in a large, swampy meadow, with a great herd of bullocks, the two wretched vagrants were grazing. The gray had already reached the foot of the very hills we had to dread; and the next morning we might have sought them in vain. The guide appeared as much pleased as ourselves; and the more so as he had caught the sound of bells in the woods, which he recognised as those attached to some bullocks which he had lost, and which he was seeking when he came upon our horses. Our return to the camp with the horses was regarded with astonishment; for the young man who went back had carried a dismal story of our wild-goose chase, and the party expected little else but that we were already murdered.

The next morning, wearied as we were with the extraordinary exertions of the two past days, we struck our tents with the rest, and advanced on our way. But the time was approaching when it was necessary to make a new movement, in fact, to quit our travelling companions, and assume a more convenient independence. We have said that the so-called Captain Nolusbolus was by no means a desired member of our company. On shipboard his associates had been of a class not at all to our taste; and his party consisted of men of this description. The Doctor and Mr. L., highly respectable and agreeable men, had unfortunately made up their party of fellows stout and active, but in other respects as little agreeable to us as the comrades of Nolusbolus. The system of watch and ward we began to perceive was utterly unnecessary. By tethering our horses for the night near the tent, they were perfectly safe; and our dogs were certain to give the

alarm if any one came near us. We were all wearing ourselves out by daily fatigue and nightly watching; and though the heads of the parties, when they watched, kept silence, the rest of the men made a point of talking, laughing, and making all the noise they could over the fire. Rest, therefore, was impossible; and the language which you were obliged to overhear was of a description which no decent person would willingly submit to.

This was our nocturnal annoyance; our daily one was that of seeing our poor horses made the drudges of the whole party. Strong enough to pull our own load through, they were at every difficult place called upon to do the same for the other parties. They had thus three times their proper work to do; for though we had protested against the company of Nolusbolus and Co., he and his party made just as free as the rest, and even more so, in constantly fetching our unfortunate leader to drag them through the bogs. Everything admonished us to draw off, and proceed, as Jonathan says, "on our own hook." With our dogs and our fire-arms we had no fear of bushrangers; in fact, the danger from them weighed much less with us than the daily contact with the vulgar portion of our present party. To-day brought this decision to a crisis.

The road was so swampy that, with the perpetual demands on our horses, in the afternoon we had advanced about five miles, and found ourselves at the foot of a steep hill, along the side of which for three miles the track ran. The steepness of the declivity along which we should have to proceed, and the state of the road, full of swampy hollows and stony ridges, made it necessary that we should here divide our loads, and take them at twice. Even then we should have to keep the cart from rolling over and down the hill by hauling in with ropes on the upper side. Our horses were perfectly able to convey our effects in this manner; but as the Doctor and Mr. L had a very stout shafter and a very poor little leader, I pro-

posed that we should unite our leader and their shafter, and take up our goods at four times, proposing to go no further that day. This they gladly agreed to, but, just as we were about to take our first load, we heard that the Nolusbolus party, without even saying "if you please," had unceremoniously taken possession of our leader. I therefore sent and reclaimed him, representing that we were ourselves ready to set out. This produced a volley of execrations from these amiable fellows, who immediately began to flog their own horses up the hill without dividing their load, and in a few minutes were stuck fast up to the axles in a slough, where we left them to curse and unload.

We proceeded and took the goods of our friends first; and what sort of an achievement it was may be inferred from the fact, that it took from eight o'clock in the morning till two o'clock. And now, at this hour, returning to fetch up our own cargo, the companions of the Doctor and Mr. L. advanced, and informed us that we could not have the shafter. We told them that we had nothing to do with them, but with the two gentlemen whom we had assisted; but they laughed at the idea, and said they had as much property in the horses as the Doctor and Mr. L. On hearing this, I despatched Alfred to learn from these gentlemen, who were remaining by our cart and effects, whether this were so; and these gentlemen very soon made their appearance, extremely annoyed at the occurrence, but obliged to confess that the horses and cart were the joint property of the party. On learning this, I took these gentlemen aside, and told them that, knowing this, we should quietly drop behind, for, however much we regretted being obliged to part with them, we could hold no partnership with these men, who were all under the influence of Nolusbolus. They candidly confessed that it must be more agreeable to us, but were excessively annoyed by the occurrence, shaking their heads doubtfully

when I expressed my own fears on their own account: and I may here antedate my narrative sufficiently to say, that these gentlemen were themselves very soon obliged to get rid of their free and easy *mates*, to use the colonial phrase, who, amongst other feats, all the way up the country, persisted in using our names at the squatting stations, declaring that they belonged to my party; and obtained all sorts of good things—meat, vegetables, milk, butter, and fruit—by that ruse, most commonly at free cost. They were delighted beyond expression at what they called “this capital lark;” the two nominal heads of the Doctor’s party being proportionably annoyed. Luckily these fellows “went on their way, and we saw them no more.”

From this time forward we travelled along independently, dropping all care of watching, leaving our dogs to do that, only keeping our horses near the tent. We slept soundly, arose every morning refreshed, went as far as the roads permitted us, and, freed from the daily contact of rudeness and vulgarity, first began to enjoy ourselves and the country. After fetching up our cart and goods, we encamped about a mile onward, near another party who were in the same predicament that we had been, namely, having lost their horses, or rather horse; for one they had recovered. It was a splendid moonlight night, and we went out with two of this party to see them shoot opossums. They had some good dogs, which hunted up the opossums into the trees, at the feet of which they stood and barked till their masters came up.

The animals are about as big as good large rabbits, with a thick gray or brown fur, and a long and black bushy tail. They are sometimes difficult to spy out amongst the leaves; but at other times they sit on the dead branches, the very plainest of marks; and you may shoot at them two or three times, if you do not happen to hit them, before they will move. You have only to

get them between the moon and yourself, and you are pretty sure of them.

The next morning these men came to borrow an axe to cut a wild-cat out of a hollow tree. These cats make their nests generally in the hollow trunks lying on the ground, or in the hollows at the feet of the trees. In this case there proved to be a nest of young ones about the size of rats. These cats, as they are called, much more resemble ferrets or polecats, and are about the same size. They have cats' tails with rats' feet, and sharp snouts of a red colour. They are of different colours, but principally brown or gray, sometimes black, but invariably covered with large round white spots, about the size of a fourpenny piece. They have pointed teeth as sharp as needles, and fight furiously, giving the dogs severe bites. The young ones were taken alive, and they showed their ferocity by instantly fastening on the sleeves of their captors, where they hung all the way to the tents like so many leeches.

Several days have passed, and we have heard by people coming up the road that this party have not yet found their horse. It may be imagined what an almost hopeless thing it is to lose a horse in this huge, unfenced wilderness. Once out of sight, who shall say in what direction the strays are gone? If the ground is hard where they start, so that you cannot discern their footmarks, you may traverse the whole circle of the horizon, and never come near them. There is nothing to prevent the animals going hundreds and thousands of miles, if they are so disposed; and many horses, once at liberty, seem to have a frantic desire to make their liberty permanent. Hobbles on their feet are very little security, for they learn to canter in them almost as well as without them. Two feet up and two down are quite compatible with hobbles. The only safe thing is to tether and watch them: they require often shifting; but that is better than

to lose them. The straying of horses appears one of the grand anxieties and universal accidents of the Bush.

Bullocks are equally addicted to straying. Wherever we have gone, we have met men inquiring after their bullocks. We have already heard of at least a dozen teams being loose in one quarter or another. We saw one man who had been camped by the roadside on his way to the diggings for ten days, and had not then recovered his bullocks. How men like to drive bullocks is to me inconceivable; and yet these drivers say they would have nothing to do with horses.

The teams consist generally of eight or ten bullocks, drawing two abreast under heavy yokes. The drays have only one pair of wheels, like a common cart; so that going down hill there is a tremendous weight on the necks of these poor wretches, enough, one would think, to break them. The drays generally take a load of two tons or more, and the wheelers are yoked to a stout pole. The difficulty of driving them is this, that you cannot lead them by a bridle as you can a horse. They are obliged to drive them by the whip and by the voice, aided by a plentiful amount of swearing. It is an absolute article of faith here that bullocks won't go at all without swearing. The whips are generally young wattle-trees, tough as whalebone, with a thong of bullock hide. You often see them carrying a bundle of these young wattles in their drays, which they have cut in the swamps. They wield the whips with both hands, and lash the animals unmercifully, accompanied with loud cries and oaths, calling out the particular names of the oxen, which are for the most part fine, large, and powerful creatures.

We saw one drayman going up a difficult road through the woods with his team; and an idea may be formed of the difficulties these men have to encounter in going up to the diggings, from what here took place. In driving up a steep road, hanging all on one side, amongst a chaos

of growing and fallen trees, his dray caught against a gigantic trunk lying with its end to the road. In calling back his bullocks sideways, to get clear again, they all ran into a confused heap, heads and tails mingled; and there he was for hours, whipping, shouting, and swearing, but without being able to bring them into any order.

Another dray coming up, the man brought his team and harnessed them in front of the refractory team; and again began the whipping, cursing, and hallooing, all to no purpose. After another hour, the whole sixteen bullocks had tangled themselves up into a still more confused heap; and night came, and they were obliged to set them at liberty, make a fire and camp, to begin again the same attractive labour in the morning, with what success we did not remain to see. On these occasions they sleep on a rug under their drays, or, if they have an awning, under that upon their goods.

LETTER VI.

Break down. — Encamp in the Woods. — A Sailor turned Shepherd. — Rainy Weather and leaky Tent. — In quest of a Wheelwright. — Humorous Reception by a Squatter. — Kilmore and its Mud. — Squatter Life. — Chase after a lost Writing-case. — Whitehead's Station. — How we spent the Fifth of November. — Enter on sterile Country. — Vernal Flowers. — Leatherheads. — Laughing Jackass. — Thrushes. — Warbling Crows. — Wattle-birds. — Not true that Australian Birds have no Song. — Black Trout and Blue Crawfish.

Encampment near Kilmore, Nov. 7. 1852.

WE had not proceeded many miles before we found the linchpin of our cart was broken, and that it was necessary immediately to stop. We had to ascertain where there was water, which we found not very far off.

On examining the extent of the mischief, we discovered that the terrific jolts that our cart had made over stocks, stones, and roots, had broken one of the bushes of the wheels; and this in its turn had broken the linchpin. Here was a situation! alone in the woods, and uncertain how far it was to any place where we could get a smith or a wheelwright.

Scarcely, however, had we encamped, when we saw a man coming whistling up the wood, clad in a blue shirt and trowsers, and without a hat. "That," said Alfred, "is one of the Kent sailors." And sure enough up the man came, merrily calling out "Well, Mr. Howitt, how are you?" It was a jolly sailor of the name of Wright, who had gone off in the captain's boat. He could not tell what had become of the rest of his companions, except Smidt, the Dane, who he said was at Mr. Broadhurst's sheep-station near. They had all dispersed on landing, so as the better

to get up the country ; for, as he observed, seventeen of them together could not get supplied at the same farmhouse ; and as they had come away without their wages, they could not afford to go to inns. He himself had lost all his clothes, except what he had on his back. He supposed that, in the hurry of escape, they had been thrown overboard in the dark, instead of into the boat. He had engaged himself as hut-keeper on the Messrs. Broadhurst's station ; and his business was to cook and keep house for the shepherds. He professed, like Mark Tapley, to be very jolly, and to have plenty to eat and little to do ; but it is quite clear that a fellow of his spirit and activity only means stopping here till he has earned money enough to proceed to the diggings. He made himself very free and easy, assisting in making a damper, and giving us various hints for camp-life. All sailors are cooks, more or less. He moreover informed us that we could get our damages repaired at Kilmore, about five miles off, as he calculated.

In the night it came on to rain heavily. We had been obliged to encamp rather in a hollow, not being able to get the cart in its crippled state up the slope ; and all at once we found torrents pouring down upon us from all sides. We were compelled instantly to commence digging a trench round the tent, and another ricket, enclosing the cart and the fire. This had the desired effect ; but we soon found the water coming as briskly in upon us in another direction ; and this was from above. When the tent had been set up in my brother's garden at Melbourne, it appeared quite waterproof ; but the rain here was far more violent, and it came through at the seams. The canvass appeared good ; but the Messrs. Richardson of the New Road will find it necessary to dress their seams with some waterproof preparation, or to sew them tighter, to maintain their credit as tent-makers. That done, they would be excellent. Till we got this done, we

were miserable. We were obliged to draw our beds into the centre, the drip descending through the seams and falling about a yard within the tent all round. The nuisance was inconceivably great. The rain also penetrating the cover of our cart, obliged us to bring many of our things into the tent; and there, spite of all our precautions, it was continually soaking into our salt, our sugar, our flour, amongst our clothes and ammunition.

It continued to rain heavily all night, and all the next day. Poor Alfred was, notwithstanding, obliged to mount a horse, and proceed to Kilmore about the cart. Wright, the sailor, came to put him in the way, which is a very intricate one through the woods, with scarcely any track, and over the Messrs. Broadhurst's station the whole way.

Whilst preparing to set out, up came a whole troop of people on their way to the diggings. They had walked seven miles that morning, and were as thirsty as fishes. They very soon drank our kettle dry, and marched on, leaving us to prepare afresh for breakfast. Scarcely were they gone, when up came a foot-sore sailor, who had run away from some ship, and was also as thirsty as a fish, and hungry too. We managed to squeeze him out a single pannikin of tea and a biscuit, and sent him on, only to behold the arrival of a whole family from the Isle of Skye—father, mother, and children—just as famished and thirsty. They were on their way to Dr. Lumsden's station, as shepherds.

All these hindrances, owing to our proximity to the high-road, kept Alfred a good while; and scarcely had he set out when it began to pour down in perfect cascades, attended by the most awful thunder and lightning. We sincerely hoped that he would turn back; but he did not, but through the whole pouring, drenching day, he threaded the woods, and reappeared only as it was growing dark. A terrible day he had of it, such as we could have no conception of till we went ourselves.

However, he had succeeded in finding a wheelwright, who promised to do all that was necessary, but declared that the cart must come to him. But how? With a shattered bush and a nail for a linchpin, we were aware that it was a hazardous enterprise; and it was in reality more so than we imagined. Charlton and I set out the next morning. We found the road running over steep rocky ranges, and down again into deep valleys, over abrupt gullies, and through abrupt creeks. This sort of road soon jolted out our nail linchpin. Luckily we had supplied ourselves with a few extra nails; but we were soon come to our last one, when we managed with a stone to turn up its point, which prevented its escaping (it was an oversight that Alfred had not brought a temporary linchpin, but it had not struck him); and now we got along better.

But heaven help us! what a day it was! The rain fell as heavily as the day before. The way, instead of five miles, was ten, if it were a yard; and just before we came to the Messrs. Broadhurst's home station, we had to descend a steep hill and cross a torrent, out of which stood up ridges of stone which threatened to dislocate effectually our failing wheel. Once through, we had again to drag our wretched cart up another hill as steep, and then found ourselves at the gate of the Messrs. Broadhurst's residence, the track leading through their yard.

Here we had an encounter at which we have often laughed in recollecting it. As Charlton was opening the gate for us to pass through, a tall gentlemanly man with a moustache approached from the house, and said in a stern tone, "What has brought you here?"

"Why, sir," I said, "this admirable equipage that you see."

"But what business have you here?" added the gentleman as gravely.

"Nay, that is more than I can tell," I rejoined; "but I can tell you what business we have at Kilmore, if we

can find it, which I hope in heaven we may, for they told us it was five miles off, and we have come that already. If we are ever lucky enough to get there, we are bound to a cart-doctor, our cart having dreadfully broken its constitution on your beautiful roads."

An incipient smile began to dawn about the corners of the gentleman's mouth; but he suppressed it, and said, "Well, you are quite off the road. You have no business here; the road goes right round yonder," pointing over the woods, "and I don't allow any one this way."

"We are off road, sure enough," I added; "and have been ever since we have been in this colony. A road is a thing that we should be rejoiced to get a sight of; but I trust you won't insist on us turning back, for this is all the track we have seen anywhere; and, once out of your neighbourhood, I'll promise you we will never come again. But still, if you wish it, we'll try back."

Here Mr. Broadhurst,—for one of the brothers it was,—laughed outright, and said, "No, sir, you shall go on; and I beg you will come back this way too, for it is the best, and you might not find the other; and so now, pray come in, and take some refreshment."

We thanked him, and begged to be excused, and took our leave. After passing this house we passed over extensive flats, through the drenching rains. The track, instead of a road, was a rushing river; and we ploughed our way through bogs and rotten ground as well as we could, and near fresh creeks and gullies, till we reached Kilmore, where the wheelwright, after examining the cart, declared he could not finish it that day. Here was another weary journey for the cart before us! But there was no help for it. The wheelwright lent us a saddle. Charlton mounted behind me, and we jogged back through the rain, the bogs and the woods, the horse often sinking up to his chest in the rotten ground. It was dark long before we reached the tent, and the waters were out; so

that we were afraid we had lost our way; but we trusted to the instinct of the horse, and he brought us safe home.

This was Saturday night; and we spent Sunday, another drenching day, in our tent. A miserable day; the rain dripping in as fast as ever, and the floor all round us soaking mud; though upon our tarpaulin carpet, which was turned up at the sides, it was tolerably dry.

On Monday morning Charlton and I set out again for Kilmore. It was fair, and we enjoyed it. Ben trotted away, and we were soon at Messrs. Broadhurst's station. The sailors Wright and Smidt had told them who we were; and the brothers met us at the gate, and begged that we would come in as we returned, which we promised.

We were soon at Kilmore, a place with the most abominable road through it, and the most mud all about it that I ever saw in all my life. It lies in one of those volcanic valleys which consist of deep black earth, which in wet weather become like so much printers' ink, and a profusion of those huge masses of trapstone that we have so frequently mentioned. There were holes in the streets deep enough to swallow our cart, and mud enough to bury all the carts in the colony; and, in the abysses of mud, a good quantity of these stones of several feet in diameter, enough to knock your wheels to pieces; yet Kilmore is on the great mail road to Sydney.

It must have been settled by some Irishmen, and abounds with Irish, and has an Irish look; but, strange to say, had neither a potato nor an onion in it. How should it, when they fetch at the diggings 2s. a pound? It boasts a couple of well-built inns, a number of huts and new houses scattered about along the roadside, and in new plots of enclosure.

We met here with numbers of our old shipmates, who were on their way to the diggings, but were so daunted by the appearance of the roads that they were waiting

till the advancing season dried them. If they wait till Kilmore streets are passable, I fear they may wait six months. You would not believe it,—but we know that it is true, we have it from the most direct authority,—that a young gentleman, Mr. Curr, actually lost his horse, staked on a bullock's horns in these streets. The bullock had been sunk in one of the mud-holes in the middle of the street, and was suffocated. Its head rested on one of the great stones, with the horns erect; and as Mr. Curr was riding along, his horse plunged suddenly down into the same slough, struck its chest on the bullock's horns, and either killed itself or was obliged to be killed on the spot.

But you will say, why don't they mend these streets? Ay, that is a question, the answer to which is that everybody is too busy, and the Government too careless. I understand that the Government has voted 16,000*l.* to make these roads; but it takes no trouble to see it done; and all those most concerned are too busy. It is so everywhere and in everything. We were astonished to see in large letters "GENERAL POST-OFFICE" painted on the fronts of no less than four houses here. What, four general post-offices! that was too Irish: four post-offices in such a village! On inquiry, the mystery solved itself thus. The post-office had been successively removed from one to another of these houses, and nobody had taken the trouble to put out the name from the disused ones. No doubt many a stranger had gone the round of the four, before he discovered the right one.

Just so on the roads. A tree falls across one, and completely stops it. A few strokes of an axe would clear it away; but, rather than stop to do it, everybody will go quite round through the bush, and give themselves three times the trouble. We have frequently filled up holes on the way with our spades, before we have gone over them; but I never saw this done by any one else. They bolt

over fallen trees, or stones, or anything that they can; and when they cannot, they travel round it. They are much too busy to stop a moment to smoothen a difficulty for themselves, much less for another.

On our return we made our call on the Broadhursts, and were very courteously received. The house was of wood, as most of these stations are, with various out-buildings around it. It stands on a fine lofty mount, surrounded by woods and hills. Within were books, and other signs of refined life, and plenty of good cheer, as we found. We were surprised to see the number of people that made up the establishment: two gentlemen, a lady, children, and men and women servants. Some of these seemingly solitary stations in the Australian woods are not so solitary after all. I have no doubt that to men fond of rural affairs they are very pleasant. They have their people about them, and their tens of thousands of sheep and cattle to look after. They are the lords of wide domains, often large as an English county; and occasional shooting, and visiting their neighbours some ten or twenty miles off, varies their existence.

On the Sunday morning, we were on our way again; but such a way!—over the spurs of a range of hills running out right across our path, and in such quick succession, that for two days we were doing nothing but struggling up hills and plunging down them,—rushing into deep gullies and creeks, and sticking fast. We had repeatedly to unload to extricate ourselves; and in our violent jolts across those delectable places we had various articles sent flying out of the cart. Now a frying-pan took flight, now a tea-kettle, then a leg of mutton, and so on; but I believe we recovered everything but a capital water-keg which was slung under the cart. One loss had like to have been irreparable—that of my writing-case.

We had gone on some distance in the morning to reconnoitre the road that we had to pass, and found it so

formidable that we concluded to take our load at twice over the difficult part. As we were on the way with the first half of the load, an old man overtook us, and asked if we had not lost something like a writing-desk, for he saw some men with a mob of horses, and who had a cart also with them, pick such a thing up, just as we had passed. He had, he said, told them that it must be ours, and that he saw us come from a tent by the road, which he showed them, and told them they had better ask there. We saw at once that the writing-case was gone; and thanking the old man heartily for his information, we took out one of the horses, stripped off his gear, clapped on him a rug, tied it with a rope instead of a girth, and tied up another rope into a pair of stirrups, for we had no saddle with us on the spot. The news was startling. The case contained all my writing materials, my memoranda, all our letters of introduction, besides small articles that I did not want to lose from old associations. There was nothing for it but decisive action. If the fellows had not left it at the tent, they did not mean to leave it: in that case I must pursue them; and if they refused to give it up, then my only chance was to ride to the next magistrate, who, I expected, was no nearer than Kilmore. I was determined, however, to recover it, if possible.

I therefore mounted at once in this primitive style, and away I cantered. The fellows had not made any inquiry at the tent where my nephew was, in passing; on the contrary, he observed that, to his surprise—for he was at the door—they had kept themselves as much as possible out of sight, going on the other side—the wrong side of the dray and horses. It was evident that they did not mean to restore it, if they could help it. Away I went after them, but did not overtake them till I had ridden about seven miles. Here I found them stopping to rest, and to let their horses graze. They were sitting very composedly on the cart shafts, when I rode up.

“ Good day,” said I.

“ Good day” replied one of the fellows, gruffly.

“ You picked up a writing-case of mine on the road ; I will thank you to return it to me.” No answer.

“ I am quite aware that you have it, and therefore I beg you to let me have it without delay, for my party are detained by the accident.” No answer.

“ An old man saw you pick it up, and advised you to leave it at my tent, which you passed directly after. So pray do not detain me ; I am ready to pay you any reasonable sum for your picking it up.” No answer. They were three as sturdy and dogged-looking fellows as you would wish to see, or rather not wish to see in a solitary place like that, in a country infested by “ old hands.” I began to think that I should have to extend my ride to Kilmore, for nothing seemed to move them ; and it was evident they did not mean to confess that they had the thing. Had I been on foot, I should have expected that they would just have seized me, taken me a little way into the wood, and tied me up to a tree, while they went off ; but being well armed, I had no apprehension on that score. An idea now occurred to me. The case contained a number of introductory letters from the Governor.

“ Now, my good fellows,” I said, “ you had better be obliging, and not detain me. The writing-case contains letters of his Excellency the Governor ; and I give you fair warning that, after this demand, if you oblige me to proceed to a magistrate, it will go hard with you.” This took effect at once. They exchanged looks with each other, and one of them went to the cart, fetched out the writing-case, and handed it to me without a word.

“ What am I in your debt ?” I asked.

“ D—n the debt !” said the fellow who handed it to me ; “ if I had known that it belonged to such a high and mighty person, it might have lain in the road for me ; and the next time I see anything it shall lie,”

“By all means, my friend,” said I, turning my horse’s head for a retreat; “do so,—the thing may then chance to fall into honest hands. Good morning to you.” And away I galloped. On examining the case, there was nothing missing; but the fellows were knowing ones. They had opened the little secret drawer, expecting to find money (there was none in the case); and in closing it again they had let a number of steel pens fall into it, which betrayed their search.

We halted a day at Whitehead’s Station, now held by Dr. Lumsden, who, with Mrs. Lumsden, were extremely kind and courteous. Since then, we have been travelling on, with splendid weather and good roads. The night before last, “THE FIFTH OF NOVEMBER,” we encamped in a very charming place. It was a fine, grassy country, and yet we had scarcely seen a herd of cattle or sheep for twenty miles or more. There were splendid meadows, up to the knees in grass, down which the Sunday Creek ran; and all around were the finest slopes, descending into the valley from the wooded hills, like the slopes of some beautiful old park, green and smooth as if mown for pleasure grounds. Our horses revelled in the richest herbage, and below us lay a valley up to the middle in grass; a considerable lagoon, surrounded by giant red-gums; and beyond, the creek, or little river, running amid a mass of thick trees.

After we had pitched our tent, I went down to the creek, and had a delicious bathe. Trees of stupendous size and height overshadowed the stream, deepening still more the advancing twilight. I could not help thinking how impossible such an ablution would have been in almost any other wild country in a similar climate. Lions, tigers, or boa constrictors, would have made free to wait upon you, or serpents would have dropped from the trees above. Here there was nothing to fear; and I saw the rapid shades of evening falling around me before I got

dressed again, having been annoyed by nothing but a few mosquitoes, and the dissonance of a large flock of white cockatoos, which came to roost there, and extremely resented my intrusion, flying from tree to tree with the most grating cries. Surely, of all birds in creation, these cockatoos have the most harsh and rasping voices.

On my return to the tent, we sat down on the grass, and took our tea-supper by a blazing log, at the foot of a magnificent white gum-tree, in great jollity. The sky above us was cloudless, and of the deepest blue. My old acquaintances, the Southern Cross, the splendid Scorpion, and the Magellan Clouds, bright as at sea, called back my thoughts to the days of our voyage. On the hill opposite to us were three other tents belonging to parties going the same way; and their fires lit up the trees around in all their azure foliage most beautifully. Our horses were tethered near in great luxury of grass;—and thus passed *the Fifth of November, 1852!*

Yesterday we entered on a new kind of country, more sterile, and already burning up. It seems to consist of a sandy clay, which bakes in the sun as hard as stone. The grass upon it is poorer, though the trees are still very large. The roads look by places as if they had been burnt with fire, the small stones upon them being hard and brittle, as if they had been in a fierce heat. On our right hand stretched hills almost amounting to mountains,—part of that hilly district which extends from the Goulburn river, near which we now are, to the Heads of the Plenty. Amongst these arose conspicuously the hill of Tallarook, on the station of Mr. Horden.

On the driest places of this dry region grow immense quantities of the yellow everlasting,—two kinds, the many-flowered and the single-flowered,—the latter having a disc as large as a half-crown piece. You have both kinds in England. On all the dry flats near the rivers grows, too, as common as sloe-trees in England, the acacia fragrans,—the

sweet-scented acacia of our conservatories. The flowers of this colony, so far as we have gone, are often very lovely and sweet, but small, and so sparsely scattered in the grass, that they produce very little effect. I have nowhere seen the same masses of flower-colour which I have seen in the fields in England; but there are two flowers that are constant reminders of England,—the common buttercup, just as with us, and a purple violet, but without scent. There is a flower like a larkspur, standing about the same height, and having many flowers on a stem,—purple, with a rich, heliotrope odour,—which they call everywhere cherry-brandy (*Thysanotus tuberosus*). There are lovely orchises and lobelias, some of which have the same scent as the lime-tree. In the grassy places, the Murnong of the natives, like a yellow hawkweed, and a yellow bachelor's button (*Craspedia Ridua*), are very gay. There is everywhere, at this time of the year, a very pretty flower, which, before it opens, looks very like the *Hypericum pulchrum*, but when the flowers expand, more resembles a Star of Bethlehem. It is of a fine gold colour (*Bulbine semibarbatum*). But the hot weather soon sends away most of these vernal flowers. The native flax, just like our flax, grows all over the country, showing its azure blossoms with another, but shorter, azure flower, very like a nemophile. Amongst the flowering shrubs, I observe various Daviesias and Grevilleas, with their pink and orange blossoms looking very lovely, but not magnificent. There is, too, the native hop, as much unlike a hop as the native cherry is unlike a cherry. This so-called hop—only so called because it is intensely bitter—is a shrub with oval leaves, growing in the bush, from two to six feet high, and with various shoots springing from one root, very much resembling tufts of plum-suckers, or suckers of the poplar, and having orange-coloured flowers. Instead of a humulus, it is a Daviesia, the latifolia.

But, perhaps, the birds are the most striking feature of

Australia, next to the hills and forests themselves. They are numerous, varied, often splendid, and are around you everywhere. Foremost amongst them are the magpie, the leatherhead, and the laughing-jackass. The voice of the laughing-jackass was familiar to us, from having heard it so frequently in the Zoological Gardens as we crossed the Regent's Park. But the leatherhead and piping magpie are constant companions, and they are the more amusing the more you see and hear them. They begin with the first peep of dawn, and there is then a perfect jargon of their and other birds' voices. There is a species of gray thrush, which has a splendid, but unvaried note. It is constantly singing "Otock-tock-o-tué," laying a fine stress on the last vowel. Some of them seem to say rather, "O! O! ochio-chee." The richness and music of the tone is unrivalled. A score of others have each their own note, and take part in the great concert; but they are the leatherheads and piping-magpie that are the chief and constant performers, and it would be difficult to do justice to their varied powers. There is a droll jollity, a spirit of the grotesque, mingled with the merry and the musical, in these birds, which I have never perceived in any others. I do not believe they could do anything like it in confinement. Their mirth, oddity, and music seem to be a fountain bubbling up from the soul of liberty and enjoyment of their native woods.

The piping magpies, or crows, whichever we are to call them, have the richest voices, and sometimes pipe most melodiously; but are sure ere long to break out into wild fantasias of those ringing, Punch-like tones, mingled with croakings which remind you of their crow affinity. Now, they are piping in a deep musical key, as boys in rich tones whistle some air that they have learned. Then again you have a lot of them chanting, as it were, together in a low key, and with such extraordinary variety of modulations as astonishes you. They seem to be hold-

ing little singing meetings,—family concerts,—in which the subject of their songs must be something very comic. In their louder warblings you have continually recurring the sound of “Ochio-faliera-po.” You see these magpies, with their clean black and white plumage and plump comfortable-looking bodies, in numbers all over the forest.

The leatherheads, again, with a very different voice, are just as various in their performances. At one time they seem to bark like little dogs, at another they shout “Off we go!” Then they are crying for an hour together, “Nylgau,” or some such note. About Kilmore, they have a cry most distinct of “Kilmore,” and must, to a certain degree, be mocking-birds; and their chatterings amongst themselves are inimitably ludicrous.

There is a sort of large, dark-coloured thrush called the wattle-bird, not because it haunts the wattle-trees, but because it has wattles like a domestic fowl. This bird frequents the Banksias, sucking the honey from their flowers, and has a crow and voice very like a pheasant. But it has many other notes. One common cry is “Yock! yock!” At other time it sits singing for hours in a clear, soft voice, “tacamahac.” If you startle it, it cries “Karackarock,” the name of the native goddess; and at other times, in a harsh voice near you, it seems to say, “Where’s your bacca-box, your box, your box?” And then this cry as rapidly changes into a jovial, rollicking note of “Gyroc-de-doc, roc-de-doc; cheboc! cheboc!”

It is false to say that no Australian birds have a complete song; there are warblers that sing pretty much as those that visit England. The piping magpie has a complete collection of songs; and the leatherhead, besides what I have mentioned, has a regular song, which it is impossible to describe, but is like a merry tune played on a fiddle, and is constantly heard at this season, when they have nests. Their voice has something metallic in it; and their notes seem often worked off by some odd kind of machinery.

Of course Charlton sees and hears all this as he leads the fore horse along the forest track; and often, when he should be paying the closest attention to avoid stumps and trees, or when we are near some difficult gully, he will shout out, "See, see! what a beautiful parrot hangs, head downwards, on that tree!" or, "See, see! what a beautiful nest!" or, "See, see! what a flock of green paroquets!" or, "What a splendid red parrot!" or "bright blue parrot!" Of course, if a young piping magpie has fallen out of a nest, it is carried along with us. All bandicoots, kangaroo rats, and opossums catch his eye immediately. To-day he has seen a crane in the creek below, and that amphibious creature, the platypus, and has found a number of lovely nests in the hanging branches of the trees. One is a perfect globe, suspended by cords; one very small, like a willow-wren's nest, and the eggs of precisely the same colour. He enjoys the life amazingly; and when we come to a sheep or cattle station in the woods, and I remark what a solitary life it must be, he always adds "But I think it must be very pleasant."

He and Alfred also fish a good deal, and have caught black-fish, perch, trout, and mullets, besides those bright blue crawfish. They are now fishing at the creek with some of our travelling neighbours, while I have sat writing under a tree through one of the most serene and heavenly evenings that I ever saw, amid the scent of the gum-trees, like the incense of a Catholic church, diffused through the forest. And I have been so absorbed by the voices and proceedings of the birds that I have mentioned, that till this moment I have been insensible to the attacks of mosquitoes, which I now find have left their bloody marks in some scores of places upon me.

But I must take another sheet to relate to you our last evening's adventure.

LETTER VII.

Scene on passing Sandy Creek. — Wonderful Scene at the Goulburn Ferry. — Gross Neglect of Government. — Township of Seymour. — Burnt Ground and barren Woods. — Iguanas.—Snakes.—Pest of Flies.— Overtaken by a Party of Friends. — Huge Trains of Bullock-drays and Diggers' Carts. — Aspect of the Diggings. — Women.— Strange Costumes.— Free and easy Address. — Van Diemonians. —Thorough Break-down again.— Scenes around us.— More-Pork.— Razor-grinder's Nest. — Mode of Life on Travel. — A View of Interior of our Tent. — Scotch Publicans and greedy Highlanders. — Passing the Time till Wheels are repaired. — Sketching and exploring. — Fresh Birds and Flowers. — A Friend returning from the Diggings dilapidated.

Euroa, on the Severn Creeks, Dec. 1. 1852.

THE day before I closed my last communication, we had travelled over good road, and with splendid weather, through a pleasant country. All at once we came to a most formidable gully called Sandy Creek. It was in fact a river lying deep amid a scene of chaos which the wintry torrents had produced. First there was a precipitate descent down to the bed of the river, steep as the roof of a house. Then there was a quagmire of adhesive clay, deep enough to take the horses up to their bellies, and the cart to the axles. Then, if you got through that, you would be obliged to make a sudden turn upon a heap of solid earth thrown up in the middle of the river, and then make another steep descent to the water, and, finally, to pass through the bed of the river, of some twenty yards wide at least. The water was up to your waist; and some huge trunks of trees lay sunk in the stream, ready to stop or to overturn your vehicle.

The party that was passing this hideous place imme-

diately before us, had their cart at once turned topsy-turvy, and their horse thrown upon its back in the water, with his heels in the air. Luckily the water was not deep just at the spot; or the horse must have inevitably been drowned. The poor people's luggage — their beds, clothes, provisions, everything, were soaking in the stream.

Warned by their fate, we set to, and with our shovels levelled down some of the ridges of the middle heap; and Alfred wading through the river, leading the fore horse, and I on the shafts driving, we passed successfully through with half our load; for we did not venture with the whole, lest we should capsize too, or be scotched against some of the sunken timber, especially as we had to ascend a very steep hill as soon as we had crossed. In taking the second half over, the horses played me and Charlton a trick; for, accustomed to make a rush at such places, before we could mount, away they dashed through the river, spite of all Alfred's exertions, and left us to wade through after them. But this was no hardship: the day had been very hot; and we found it cool and refreshing. Our clothes were quickly dry again; and we encamped on a rising ground above the stream, near the station of Captain Adams, where we procured milk and mutton. The latter article rises as we approach the diggings. At first we purchased a sheep for 10s.; here half a sheep cost that.

We rested the Sunday; and Alfred and I took a walk to the ferry over the Goulburn, near Seymour, about three miles from our camp. We found the stream about the width of the Thames at Henley, but of a very different character. It has none of the clearness and brightness of an English river, but, like all Australian ones that I have yet seen, has a somewhat sullen and moody look. It lies deep between its banks, and abounds with fallen trees and snags; and, appearing deep itself, these circumstances tend to give it its sombre look.

We were here struck with two extraordinary things. One was the enormous traffic on the road to the diggings; and the other the amazing neglect of the Government of the natural resources of the colony, and consequently of the interests of the public.

When we came down to the ferry on the Sunday afternoon, we found a train of loaded drays, of about a mile long, all waiting to go over. When we went, early on the Monday morning, there was still a train of equal or greater length. "What!" we asked, "have these drays been waiting here all night to go over?" "Oh, no!" said the drivers; "we are all come up this morning. "Then why don't they let you cross?"

"You may ask that," said the men; "but they have got us on this side, and they do as they like with us: they know we can't ford it."

"But why does not the Government see to this obstruction?"

"Government! Government ha'n't got nothing to do wi't. They only should; and then, I reckon, it wouldn't be no better."

"Who, then, has to do with it?"

"Why, the publican here, to be sure. He put the ferry over; Government never troubles its head about sich things; and a pretty penny the man is making of it. Why, he sacks 100*l.* a day, if he sacks a penny. Look, here's more nor fifty drays here now; not one on 'em will get over under a pound a-piece; and there's plenty more on the road."

Our astonishment may be imagined. Here was a Government doing nothing in the world to the roads to enable the diggers—the very life-blood of the colony, and the source of its unrivalled prosperity—to get their provisions up, and their gold down; and here had nature put into their hands, by this unfordable river, a means of raising funds to any extent for the making and maintenance of them;

but so far from laying hold on this grand advantage, they suffer the first man that pleases, not only to monopolise it, but to make it an engine of unexampled extortion to the public! Well, we thought, may colonial government be proverbial, if it be like this:—a toll which in England would not exceed a halfpenny for a man, threepence for a horse, and sixpence or a shilling for a dray, at 6*d.* each foot passenger, 1*s.* 6*d.* each horse, and 1*l.* or more for a dray and bullocks!

But worse still, the government neither protected the pockets nor the time of the public. We watched the proceedings at this ferry (or punt, as they call it) with increasing astonishment. The lucky publican, who levied a good round tax for his liquors and entertainment at his house besides, not only laid on such incredible tolls here, but treated the people that he fleeced with the utmost contempt. Notwithstanding the pressure for transit, and the value of the passers' time, he could only employ two men to work the ferry-boat, who seemed quite resolved not to hurt themselves. They turned their winch very leisurely, stopping every now and then to gossip with bystanders; and if people called out in impatience to be over, they moved all the slower, besides giving some insulting answer. At breakfast time and at noon they disappeared, each time for an hour; and though their master was netting such a splendid sum every day, he could not afford to keep a relay of two men to work during the two hours they were away. It was eleven o'clock before our turn came to pass; and we thought ourselves very lucky that it was not twelve, or we should have had to wait till one.

We crossed the Goulburn Nov. 9th—Lord Mayor's day!—at Seymour, which cuts a considerable figure on the map, consisting of two inns, one shop, and a few cottages. At the shop we found the very coarsest sugar 1*s.* per lb., and flour 150*l.* per ton!

From Seymour we proceeded twenty-five miles over a flat country, sterile and burnt up. It appears some time to have been bodily on fire. The small stones scattered everywhere over the surface, which is of a reddish colour, grind up on the roads exactly like brick-dust. The ground is as hard as stone, the grass scanty, and the trees comparatively small. It was, as you may suppose, pretty warm walking through this almost desert country with the sun at 100° and more. There were few birds to be seen or heard; they prefer the more fertile regions; but every now and then we came to a great iguana or tree-lizard, lying dead on the road; for the diggers shoot all they see, probably imagining them venomous, though they are not so, but are eaten by the natives as a great delicacy; and travellers have eaten them too, and pronounced the same verdict. At the same time their appearance is by no means prepossessing. Some of them measure five feet in length, and resemble small crocodiles. They are of a dingy grey or lead-colour, with a dry, leathery look. They brandish a long steel-blue tongue, as they creep rapidly up the boles of the trees; and their tails are long, and taper away to the smallness of a piece of whipcord, and are frequently divided into alternating lengths of three or four inches each of grey and white. They, as well as most of the lizard tribe, like hot places. There are also, every now and then, huge serpents thrown out on the road, which travellers have killed. Some of these were, at least, five or six feet long, and as thick as your wrist; but we see few alive, and they are all anxious to get out of your way. Near our tent we found a piece of the skin of a carpet-snake, which was ten inches in circumference.

But these creatures never trouble us. They are the flies which are the torment and nuisance of this country. They exist in millions, and cover you and your horses all over as you go. There is a small fly just like our common house-fly, which is a perfect fiend. It is legion; and

every day, the whole day long, during six months of the year, they are darting in a cloud at your eyes, nose, and mouth, with an incessant and determined audacity. We are obliged on their account to wear veils on our hats, which go all round and draw close to your neck; but these veils are very close and smothering in this hot climate. I therefore prefer to whisk a small branch about before my face, and I have it in my hand from morning till night. As soon as these flies leave you in the evening, the mosquitoes take you up, and are at you all night. I have often wondered why Beelzebub was called the god of flies; but I know now. He must have been the very chief of tormentors.

The other morning, about eleven o'clock, as we were quietly proceeding through the torrid woods, we saw a large party, with two bullock-drays, who had stopped to rest and refresh, and were seated on the ground very jovially. Alfred and Charlton were going on before with the team, and I observed to Edward, who was walking with me, that these were none of your rude diggers, but English gentlemen. They had most of them blue blouses, with belts round them, and veils on their straw hats. Scarcely had I spoken, when we saw two gentlemen start up and rush forth out of the party after Alfred and Charlton, and call after them. They stopped, and then commenced a hearty shaking of hands. I imagined that it must be Mr. Hankin and his party; but, on coming up, found that they were Mr. Bateman and Mr. Burnhard Smith, and their friends. They had not at first recognised the two boys in their Australian disguises,—Alfred in scarlet blouse, with revolver and bowie-knife in his belt, and Charlton in his grey blouse and white wide-awake.

Mr. Bateman had brought us a whole heap of letters and newspapers up from Melbourne; and we sat down on a log alternately to talk and peruse them. You may

imagine that it was a joyful moment to us. Just before us was a spectacle that would have astonished a cockney. It was a tree on fire. A party over night had made their camp-fire at its foot. The tree was a large red-gum, but hollow, as they often are. The fire had gone up it, as up a chimney, to its very branches. At its foot the ashes poured out of its glowing interior as from a furnace, and, as we sat, the huge trunk of the tree came down with a tremendous crash. The fire had consumed all its interior support, and the whole tree-top, covered with its green leaves, lay on the ground smoking from the thick ends of the branches, and leaving the tall stem standing as a fire-chimney. Well for the campers that it did not fall before they went—that it had not indeed fallen on them while asleep!

Mr. Bateman at once joined our party, and we travelled on with this accession of company to near this spot, where we camped, our new neighbours making themselves very merry round their fire just by us—one playing on the flute, and others singing. All were gay, because the news from the new gold-field of the Ovens is good. Alfred and Charlton are as blithe as any of them. They are always full of spirit and resources, never discouraged by untoward events, and like the life amazingly. Edward, whose great taste is chemistry, and who really has a surprising knowledge of it, is carrying a bottle of strong nitric acid all the way in his hand, to use as a test, and dare not put it into the cart, lest it should break and destroy things.

You would be amused to see the almost endless trains of bullock-drays and diggers' carts on the road. The drays are covered with canvass awnings, and drawn by eight or ten bullocks each, amongst which there is almost sure to be a Cockey, a Tiger, a Brindle, a Strawberry, a Lion, a Mulberry, and a Dandy. The diggers' carts are piled with all sorts of diggers' apparatus—shovels,

sieves, cradles, iron buckets, picks, axes, and the like. Behind hang whole heaps of pans, panikins, kettles, and iron pots, with a sprinkling of frying-pans. Upon the rest of the cargo lie beds and bedding, and often two or three women and some children. Under or beside the cart go a couple or more of huge dogs. Around the cart march on eight or ten fellows, many of them with guns on their shoulders; and others with their swags, as they call them, that is, bundles rolled up in various fashions, according to fancy; often containing a rug or blanket for a temporary bed at night, or to roll themselves up in under a tree.

I saw the other day four or five of these fellows strolling on behind their cart. Amongst them was a young woman very well dressed, wearing a sun-bonnet, that is, not a bonnet with "an ugly," but a full flap behind, at least a foot long, to screen the neck. On one shoulder she had a gun, and in the other hand a basket, while one of the men carried a baby, and another a swag. Many are travelling up without cart or horse, bearing all they take on their backs; others with a packhorse. You see a good many women going up on the whole, and some of them right handsome young girls. They all seem very cheerful and even merry; and the women seem to make themselves very much at home in this wild, nomadic life.

As for the generality of the men, they are, to look at, as rude fellows as you ever saw. They beat your navvies at home all to nothing. They are generally rigged out in strong fustian trowsers, and stout shoes or boots; a blouse or cloth shirt, which they call a "jumper," tucked into their trowsers,—sometimes blue, often scarlet, and as often of great tawdry stripes of red and white, and blue and white, and, in fact, of all sorts of strange and flaming colours. They almost all wear the dirty battered cabbage-tree hat, and have grim beards, and look as if they never

washed. You may know the old diggers by the worn and dashed state of their appurtenances. Many of these fellows are escaped convicts from Sydney or Van Diemen's Land, and are as rude and lawless as they look. They are very cavalier and independent in their speech and behaviour. Here they throw off all restraint of law or custom; that of good manners some of them never knew.

They hail you as they pass with, "Well, my lads, are you for the Ovens?" They come up and examine very freely everything you have about, and make the freest possible remarks on them. "Well, old man," is a common salutation from one to another. Their extreme freedom of address is quite amusing to me. But rude and lawless as the bulk of these men are, they seem generally content to live on the gold they get. At least, so far, that is three weeks on the way, we have encountered them in all sorts of places, but have never suffered the slightest molestation from them. But all go so well armed, that that may be one reason why the peace is pretty well kept; for, spite of the apparent security, nothing is more certain than that a great number of these fellows are of the vilest scum of creation. They are, however, mixed up with a large amount of respectable men; though I do not see anything like that proportion of gentlemen that we were led to expect.

Friday, Nov. 12.—Here we are in a fix that would make you despair of our extrication. Our cart has broken down in the midst of this wilderness, and we are ten miles from the nearest wheelwright, and not certain that there is one at present even there! We were passing over a deep creek, when our cart got such a shock, that one of the wheels gave way, and down came the whole affair. You may be sure this struck us with consternation; for we had no idea whether it were possible to get the wheel repaired within any reasonable distance, or whether there

were any station near. There was nothing for it but to set up our tent by the stream and get our property under cover, till we could see what was to be done. Meantime the party that we had so lately joined were obliged to go on and leave us all alone. But our fate is not at all singular. All the way up the road is scattered with dead bullocks and horses, broken axles, dislocated wheels, drays smashed bodily, or fixed deep in bogs. People without end have lost their horses or cattle. One party supplied their loss of a horse with two bullocks, which they harnessed in front of their shaft horse; another gentleman the other day had a horse which cost him 100*l.*, drowned in the Goulburn, and had to buy another at that price. We are not so badly off. We have already heard of a station near where we can get meat, and Alfred has ridden off to inquire about the wheelwright.

While I am writing Alfred has returned successful. He has found the wheelwright, who engages to repair the wheel for 8*l.*; quite a trifle for such a job here, though in England you can get one of Ransom's best patent carts altogether for 12*l.* Well, there is, at all events, a prospect of getting all right again sometime.

And as we have just now nothing to do, I will tell you how we contrive to pass our time here, and what is our daily routine on the road. All night we hear the opossums and flying squirrels round us. The sounds at night are as peculiar as those in the day. For the greater part of it the frogs keep up their chorus. Some seem to play on castanets, others to spin wheels round, others to whirl rattles, and others to bark like dogs. One day we really thought we had heard a pack of hounds, but it was a set of very deep-mouthed bull-frogs. Then again the curlews cry from the distant swamps, and the quails; and the morepork, a species of caprimulgus, or goatsucker, keeps up all night the exact repetition of its own name, "Morepork! morepork!" It is a sound to me the most expressive

of a dreary loneliness and twilight distance that I ever heard. At first we fancied that it was a nocturnal cuckoo, the cry of which its note resembles, and many new comers actually think it is one. Last night an opossum came close to the door of our tent, rearing up like a hare, and looking in. It makes an odd snoring noise, and the flying squirrel a terrific screech. As soon as there is a moon we mean to shoot some of them.

The other day Charlton found the nest of a razor-grinder. "What!" you will say, "do razor-grinders make nests in Australia?" Certainly. The razor-grinder is a bird which very much resembles a swallow, but is larger, and swings its long tail about just like a magpie. It is a very bold bird, and makes a noise precisely like a knife passed over a grindstone. You see it continually about your horses, and always about their noses as they graze: I suppose, to catch the flies that annoy the poor creatures; and they seem to be quite aware that the razor-grinders are doing them a service. This pair had built their nest over a brook on the bough of a mimosa-tree, so that snakes or wild cats could not easily get at it. There were three young ones quite ready to fly, and it was laughable to see them; for the nest was very small, and any one of the young birds was enough to fill it. So there they all sat like outside passengers of a coach, while the old birds flew at us in a very bold manner, not caring for us. Sometimes they were hovering in the air just before our noses, and then perching on a branch close to us, and chattering and waving their tails about in great agitation. When we retired, they were not contented, but followed us a good way, as if to insult us, flirting up against us, and keeping up an incessant chatter, as if saying, "What business have you coming about our premises? Impertinent intruders! you ought to know better. So, you are going, at length, are you? But we will see you safely off the ground, for we have the worst possible opinion of you."

When we are travelling we have little leisure. We encamp, if we can, not later than four o'clock. We look out for a good supply of water, running water if possible. Near water we must be, both for ourselves and horses. The next requisite is wood to cook with, and though the Australian forests abound with dead wood, yet sometimes near a great road and favourite camping spots, it is cleared away to a good distance round, and requires some labour to collect. The third requisite is always, in fact, the first with us — plenty of grass for the horses, and yet ground dry enough for safe lodging upon it. We always look out, too, for a fallen tree to make the fire against, or a tree sufficiently slanting, so that if it burn through it may tumble away from us. These desiderata being found, we draw off to some distance from the highway—a welcome sign of stopping to the horses, and which they instantly understand. We place the cart so as to be convenient to get what we want out of it; then pitch our tent opposite to the fire, but so that the smoke shall blow from us. Charlton takes the horses, gives them water, and tethers them out where there is the best grass. Meantime Alfred and I make the beds up in the tent, and the two Edwards make a fire, get out flour, and prepare a damper or a leather-jacket for tea. The damper, the universal bread of the bush, is a mere unleavened cake of a foot diameter, and from an inch to an inch and a half thick, baked in the ashes. The leather-jacket is a cake of mere flour and water, raised with tartaric acid and carbonate of soda instead of yeast, and baked in the frying-pan; and is equal to any muffin you can buy in the London shops. A fat-cake is the same thing as a leather-jacket, only fried in fat, and is not only much sooner done, but is really excellent. After tea they bake in the camp-oven, in the embers of the fire, a loaf, raised also with acid and soda, and which is equal to any home-baked bread in England. A suet pudding, called a dough-

boy, or a dish of rice or potatoes, if we have them, are put into the fat, and when ready, beef steaks or mutton chops are fried; and our tea-dinner, you will admit, is not to be sneezed at, especially with the Spartan sauce of a day's travel. It is amazing what a quantity of tea is drunk in the bush. It comes upon the table everywhere in the bush or on the road. Two or three panikins, that is, from a quart to three pints, are thought no extraordinary quantity for one person, after the copious perspiration of a day's travel in this warm, dry country.

After tea Alfred gets his cigar; we talk over our affairs, and retire early to bed. We are up at peep of day, that is, from four to five o'clock, breakfast again on tea, damper, and a fry; pack, and move on till noon, when we stop near some stream, get a luncheon pretty much like a dinner, lie down for a couple of hours, and then on again till four o'clock. That is our routine, except getting a bathe, or good cool wash from head to foot, where bathing is impracticable, after we have camped.

If you could see us, however, now we are stationary,—if you could see all our pots, pans, panikins, our buckets and tin dishes, for making loaves or puddings in, and our larger ones for washing in; our knives, forks, and spoons lying about; our little sacks—pillow-cases, in fact—of sugar, rice, salt, flour, &c., standing here and there; our tea-chest, our tin tea-pot, of capacious dimensions; our tea-kettle, in constant requisition; our American axes, for chopping firewood into suitable lengths; our lantern, at night suspended by a cord from the centre of the tent, or more commonly a crowbar stuck into the ground with a candle between its fork,—a famous candelabrum;—if you could see the whole interior of our tent, with its tarpaulin spread for a carpet, and the beds spread out over part of the floor, covered with their grey rugs, that is at night, but in the day rolled up into a divan; the tent hung round with straw hats with veils on them, caps, &c., re-

volvers, daggers, travelling pouches; our guns standing in a corner, with books and portfolios lying about, you would say that it was a scene at once curious, yet comfortable-looking. It is amazing, however, since Bateman arrived, what an unvaried air of neatness the place has assumed. Things have fallen into order, and have been grouped so as to produce artistic effect. We have had four posts set down in front, and a roof made of boughs, so that we can sit out there in the air and the shade; and the ground under it is scattered with rushes, or the twigs of the shiock, so that we are thus carpeted like the barons in their halls of old.

Monday, Sept. 15th.—Yesterday Alfred and I rode over to the Salutation Inn, a good twelve miles, in my opinion, to see the wheelwright again about our cart-wheel. We had constructed a kind of sledge of boughs to draw it on: but, considering the distance, the heat, and the dust, we determined to send it by some empty cart. The first people that we saw proved to be Highlanders; and of all the men that I have encountered here, Highlanders are the most unfeeling and rapacious. Before the gold discovery, this colony was almost entirely Scotch; and all the world gives the palm to the Scotch for ability in turning a penny. When buying some meat at a public-house the other day, another purchaser said, in my presence, “Now, I must have a nobbler out of this,” that is, in colonial phrase, a glass of grog,—for scarcely anything but rum and brandy are drunk here, beer being 6s. a bottle. “I wish you may get it,” said the servant who was selling it; “but my master is—Scotch!”

Ten times Scotch, however, are all the Highlanders that we have hitherto come across. Poor as rats at home, they are as rapacious as rats abroad. There is scarcely a year at home that there is not a piteous outcry about the poor, famishing Highlanders; but catch a Highlander out here that has any feeling for an Englishman except that

of—fleecing him. There may be some of a different stamp, but I have not yet met them. Now these men, who were not asked to go a yard out of their way, who *must* go to this very place with their empty carts, *only* asked 2*l.* to take the cart wheel these ten reputed miles!—and they would not abate a penny. They thought we were in distress, and in haste, and *must* give it them.

But we waited, and the next who came up was an Englishman, who reasoned thus:—“Well, I know what I was charged for having one of my wheels carried twenty miles; that was a pound, and half that way should be half the sum;” and he at once took it for that.

Alfred and I mounted our horses, in bush style, and rode after him. Not supposing that we should much require saddles, we brought none; but I see that we must get some. We threw rugs over the horses, folded so as to make a pad; put on our rope stirrups, in which Alfred made a great improvement by fixing a flat piece of wood in the bottom, instead of a stirrup-iron—no doubt the original predecessor of a stirrup-iron. Away we rode; Alfred upon the grey, looking, in his scarlet jumper, his huge jackboots, his broad straw hat with a brown veil on it, his revolver glittering in his belt on one side, and his bowie-knife on the other, for all the world like a figure out of one of Wouverman’s pictures. As we approached Middlemiss’s Inn, the Salutation, we met two men, who called out, “If you are going to Middlemiss’s, that man is dead.”

“Dead!” we exclaimed, in consternation; “what, the poor fellow who took our wheel?”

“Oh, no,” said they; “the blacksmith. We thought you (that is, *we two!*) were the doctor.”

The smith! That was bad news, too, for he was required to take off the tire from the wheel, and put it on again. The man had died in the night; and we found the wheelwright working away at such speed at his coffin, that he

could hardly give us a word: "For," said he, "the man is flyblown already, and we must have him in the ground this evening."

Oh, these flies! these troops of Beelzebub! They are an intolerable pestilence, an incessant torment. And these yellow-bottles,—for blue-bottles they are not,—deposit live maggots on meat immediately it is killed, and on game the moment it is hung up; and in a few hours these maggots are more than half an inch long.

But the black flies are the most persecuting vermin. As I sit writing this in my tent I have a branch of eucalyptus in my left hand, which I incessantly whirl round my head, or I could not proceed for a moment. You cannot sit one instant, even in your tent, without hat or cap, for them. How people continue to spend whole lives in such an Egypt, we have yet to learn. But this is a parenthesis.

A party coming over the creek here soon after us, snapped their bullock-dray pole, just where we smashed our wheel; but they had a carpenter with them, and they have felled a tree, and made another. They say that they saw three bullock-drays lying with broken axles, a little way behind; and you should hear the account of a man who has come over this road all the way from Sydney, 500 miles, crossing rivers and creeks, and having the whole of his horses drowned in one. Another man has stuck fast in the creek here, and has been flogging at his bullocks, and swearing, from nine o'clock this morning till three in the afternoon, before he could get out. Hosts of croakers are now coming down with empty drays, saying, "Ah! you don't know what you have before you." And numbers of coward-hearted diggers are turning back. It will be time enough for us to do so when we find that we must.

While we are waiting here, Alfred and Charlton are generally out shooting and fishing; and Mr. Bateman and Edward are sketching a huge fallen tree, in a pleasant valley, on the banks of a fine stream. This tree may give

you some idea of the timber here. It is a red-gum, which trees are fond of growing near the water, and often in it, though they are found, too, on the very driest ground. They have no tap-roots, but their roots run along the surface, like those of our ash, and the trees are therefore easily blown down. I measured a root of this tree as far as it was visible; and that part of it was 21 yards, or 63 feet. This tree has been blown over by the roots, which stand up loaded with earth 16 yards high and as many wide. It measures upwards of 150 feet to the branches, and must have stood, complete, more than 200 feet high. It is of proportionate thickness; and about half-way up divides into three stems, each of which would make a colossal tree.

The valley where this tree lies, and where, too, the boys are fishing, is very pleasant. The water widens ever and anon, into great pools, with huge trees tumbled into and across them; and along the grassy valley grow the most magnificent wattles (*Acacia molissima*): they are large as tolerable oaks, and covered with one mass of golden blossom, which scents the whole air around with the odour of meadow-sweet. On the highest branches of the tallest gum-trees near, we observed a kind of nest made of mud. It was of the shape of a hat crown, or of a Stilton cheese, set upright on the branch in a way that puzzles us to imagine how it can be kept perpendicular. It is said to be the nest of the black magpie; but we saw no birds about it. This charming valley was bounded by a fine range of hills, which, on Saturday, Alfred and I ascended. The hills must be 2000 feet high, very steep, and rudely scattered with granite crags. Up to the very tops they were covered with grass and scattered trees; and in the ravines the grass was up to the knees. The shiock-trees, moaning in the breeze, reminded me of the sound of the pine-trees in the Black Forest of Germany. The barer crags were covered with everlastings, some golden,

some white, but all as crisp as if they had grown in a furnace. There were also some fine hawkweeds and vetches, abundance of campanulas, as light as our harebell, and large tufts of a pale blue flower, with a strong poppy smell, probably a calendenia. There is also a white speedwell, just like the blue one of our gardens, but three feet high; and the *Dianella cerulea*, a plant with blue flowers, like that of our bitter-sweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), but springing from grassy leaves. We observed in the hollow trees several nests of the little green paroquet,—here, from its colour, called the leek.

As I close my writing to-day, the road is crowded with heavily-laden bullock-drays, on the way to the Ovens. There are swarms of people going up, and whole trains of empty drays coming down; all signs of the great attraction of these new diggings. Amongst the people coming down, I met poor old Mr. R. He would insist on going up, though totally unfit for such laborious work, under an almost tropical sun, or for anything but acting as tent-keeper and cook for some party. The person he went up with proved a Jew-pedlar, and never dug at all, but sold his goods at two or three hundred per cent., and hurried off down again for more. Poor R. had no friends, and no tools, nor much strength to use them if he had; especially as he had little to eat, and had to lie out in the open air. He was going down with a party that only gave him the protection of their company, but found him neither board nor lodging; so you may imagine what a figure he cut. He lay under the trees at night, and ate what he could get. He realised my idea of a wayworn pilgrim returning from some distant shrine; and, indeed, in this case, it was the shrine of mammon. With a tall, rugged stick in his hand, a beard white and untrimmed, a belt round his waist with a panikin hung to it, footsore and travel-worn, and dusty; and with a slow, tottering gait, showing that his constitution had suffered a shock, I thought, what does

that man deserve who inveigled him out? His right hand, with the burning sun and the flies, was one great wound; he had it wrapped up in a rag; and he was nearly blind with the fly-blight. Who could imagine this poor old man a gentleman, who had been bred in the lap of affluence? We led him into our tent, gave him refreshment, and filled his pockets for his journey. He was most thankful, and said it was a real godsend. But a far greater consolation to him was, that we could give him a good account of his family; that they were doing extremely well; and that a comfortable home awaited him at Melbourne. I also gave him a note to my brother, begging him to assist him in procuring some post suitable for him; so that he went forward in great animation of spirits, and like a new man.

LETTER VIII.

Author attacked by Dysentery. — Intolerable Heat. — Melancholy Situation. — Visit from mounted Bushrangers. — Their Cowardice and Cruelty. — Discover Mr. Forlonge's Station. — Remove to his Sheep Station. — Extreme Kindness. — Life at the Station. — Intelligent Overseers. — Sheep Washing and Shearing. — Doings of Shearers. — Wonderful Wages. — Cavalier Conduct of Workmen. — Shepherds insane from Solitude. — Miserable Public-houses. — Bush Life as regards Shepherds, Overseers, and Squatters. — Adventures of Cattle-drivers. — Squatting System the great Obstacle to Colonisation. — About 650 Individuals hold all Victoria. — Instances of Colonial Mismanagement. — The Gold Discovery the making of the Squatters. — Visits of Shepherds to the Author. — Daily Scenes at the Crossing of the Creek. — The Government and the Bridge. — Set forward on our Journey.

Euroa, on the Severn Creeks, Dec. 8. 1852.

MY writing to you was suddenly cut off by illness; and to this day—seventeen days—I have not been able to hold a pen. As I always mean to tell you the worst, as well as the best, which befalls us, I shall now tell you exactly what has happened. We had not been many days waiting for our cart-wheel, when I was seized with a violent attack of dysentery. I believe the place was an unhealthy one. Though perfectly dry at this time of the year, during the winter it is almost entirely under water; and therefore, no doubt, an unwholesome miasma arises from it. The creek, too, was sluggish, and had vast quantities of fallen trees rotting in it. However, we all more or less felt the effect of it, but I far more than any of the rest. In fact, the complaints which prevail in this country, as in all warm ones, don't trifle with you. They are rapid and resolute, and make short work with you;

and this seemed as if it would make very short work with me. We were thirty miles from any medical man. Edward's pills, which he had brought with him as a perfect nostrum in this disease, so fatal here, produced not the slightest effect. We did not know who, or if anybody, lived anywhere near us in the woods. The weather suddenly set in tropically hot; the thermometer stood at 120° of Fahrenheit in the shade of the tent. For three days I lay prostrate with the disease, and broiling with the heat, the whole day persecuted by the incessant attacks of the Australian devils—the little black flies, the most intolerable, unabashed, and shameless vermin that ever were created. My young people did all they possibly could to defend me from their attacks, though almost driven mad by them themselves. They threw a piece of net-lace over my head, securing all the sides under the bedclothes, but in vain. When they could not find a way in above,—and they would find the very smallest, if it existed,—they dived under the bedclothes, and travelled along till they reached my face.

I shall never forget those three days. What long, weary days they were. Alfred and Mr. Bateman made a canopy outside the tent, where I could catch what little breeze there was; and there I lay, watching the sun pass slowly—oh, how slowly!—through the blazing sky. When, at length, it descended, the black tormentors took their leave; and legions of mosquitoes came piping, in their thin notes, from the creek. But these we could keep out. The black fly seems all fire, and all devil; but the mosquito is but like the ghost of a fly. Lanky and feeble, he is easily killed if you watch him; but he has an awful power of *punctuation*, if he be allowed time.

While I was at the worst, there rode up, one day at noon, towards the tent, seven horsemen, one of them having a led-horse by the bridle. As they approached, I was quite satisfied by their appearance of what they were.

They drew up in rank, at about a hundred yards from the tent, and one of them rode forward. Only a portion of our party were at home; but to them I gave warning that seven well-mounted bushrangers were at hand, and they got their firearms ready. For my part, ill as I was, I determined, if they demanded money, to go into the tent, on pretence of fetching it, and giving them the contents of a revolver in rotation. Our tent was extremely convenient for that, as we could fire from under the valance round the eaves, without those without seeing precisely where we were, and we made up our minds from the first to treat such fellows as we would so many wolves.

The one who had advanced, rode round the front of the tent, as if to see how many people were there; and then gazed at me, without saying a word. I asked him very sternly, what he wanted; and he asked, in reply, if we sold lemonade. I said, no; we sold nothing, except what we should sell pretty dear; and desired him to take himself off. The man seemed quailed by my manner, wheeled his horse round, rode to his fellows, said something, and away they trotted.

Soon after, a young man of the name of Morgan, whom these seven dastardly fellows had surrounded, knocked off his horse, beaten till he said he was sure that two of his ribs were broken, came up and inquired if we had seen them. It was his horse that they were leading away with them. He said that they had taken all his money except 5*l.*, which he had in a match-box, and which they took out of his pocket and flung away.

Since then these cowardly villains have haunted this road, but only attacking solitary individuals. This young man, watching for them, at length has seen two of them at Middlemiss's here, and got them captured, and condemned to eight years in the road-gang.

Scarcely were they gone, when a *reiver* of a different

kind came. My illness continuing as violent as ever, Alfred was about to mount and ride to the Broken river, thirty miles, for a physician, when up came a party, and camped near us. They came to borrow a frying-pan and a camp-kettle, which we lent them; and one of them professing to be a doctor, Edward thought he might tell him what they had given me. The man recommended him to give me some aromatic powder; and had the impudence to charge 1*l.* for his advice. My proposal was to charge him 1*l.* for the loan of the camp-kettle and frying-pan, and so be quits; but as, of course, this did not satisfy this *soi-disant* doctor, we paid him his demand to be rid of him. We hear that there are plenty of such sharks on the diggings, who have no more real title to the name of doctor than I have.

Meantime, we had written to Dr. Howitt, who sent medicines and directions for my treatment; but for a week, there we lay in a most wretched condition. The intolerable heat had run into thunder, deluges of rain, and cool weather; but still the frightful complaint continued unabated, and my strength every day was sinking. When some of our party went for the wheel, it still was not done; and there we were, pinned to the ground in this dismal wilderness, without resource. The grating and dissonant croakings of the bullfrogs in the creek, the loud screaming of the curlews, and the uncouth sounds of opossums and flying-squirrels, made the nights dolorous.

At this moment we discovered that we were on the station of Mr. Forlonge, a wealthy squatter; and Alfred immediately rode off to his house, about seven miles distant amongst the hills, to endeavour to get some articles suitable for an invalid. Mr. Forlonge instantly supplied him with as much good bread, butter, eggs, milk, and vegetables as he could bring; and the next day sent one of his overseers from the hut near us, and took us — tent, baggage, and crippled cart — all away together.

They soon had our tent pitched near the hut, where our party could sleep, while Alfred and myself were located in the hut. To this generous and hospitable treatment there is no doubt that I owe my life. A few days more on the banks of the old creek would have seen the last of me.

Here we have been since then, and here we are ; and I must now give you some notion of the place, and the life here. We are lodged in a slab hut, roofed with broad sheets of the stringy bark, which are tied to the rafters by thongs of bullock hide, and still more secured from the force of the winds by poles, which are fastened along the outside of the roof. Remember, that in such huts the greater number of the squatters of Australia live ; people, many of them of old English and Scotch families, retired officers, medical men, and clergymen—wealthy, and even elegant people. Here lived the squatter of whom Mr. Forlonge bought the run, or station ; and here Mr. Forlonge and his family lived some time, till he built his present handsome house in a much finer situation.

Well, there is a broad verandah on the sunny, that is the north, side of the house, and the whole has a rough and picturesque aspect. At each end there is a chimney, built externally of wood, and lined some four or five feet high in the inside with slabs of granite to prevent the wood catching fire. These fire-places are very capacious — I suppose nearly six feet square, and the fire is laid on the hearth. In the room where we were first located, the bare wood of the walls had no lining ; and the chinks between the slabs were often wide enough to put your hand through. There was no ceiling, but all open to the roof. We soon removed to the room at the opposite end of the building, which was lined and ceiled with canvass, but where the floor was still mud, and an old table or two, and a few broken-backed chairs, the only furniture, except an old-fashioned sofa. Yet here lived for some time the wealthy

holder of various squatting stations, some hundreds of square miles in extent, and possessing 30,000 sheep, and many thousand cattle.

Mr. Forlonge is a gentleman, and a man of education. He was educated in Germany. Mrs. Forlonge is a lady, who, for person and manners, would grace a ducal coronet; and they have a very fine family of children growing up. They have a very amiable and accomplished governess, Miss Maclean. Mrs. Forlonge, senior, Mr. Forlonge's mother, is one of the pleasantest and most energetic ladies I have ever met with. So there you have a picture of an Australian squatter's family; and a real providence it has been that we fell in with these amiable and hospitable people.

Here in the hut we have experienced the utmost hospitality. We found here three of Mr. Forlonge's overseers; the principal one, Mr. Rutherford, a most worthy, excellent man. He is evidently one of the most experienced men in sheep-farming in the colony; and Mr. Forlonge has the greatest respect for him, and with good reason. The second is Mr. Cameron, a young man commencing bush life, and therefore styled the New Chum. The third is Mr. Haliburton. You will observe all these are, as well as Mr. Forlonge himself, kindred in nation—Scotch. Haliburton has read a great deal, and has a decided literary turn, and a still more decided turn for smoking. With the usual fate of men who have a stratum of business, with a substratum of literary taste in their composition, he professes not have been eminently successful; but he appears to be very clever in all that relates to cattle, and has passed years on the wildest stations in Sydney and on the Murray. You may suppose that we hear a deal of the adventures of such life—of cattle-driving amongst the hills, swimming rivers, sleeping out in tempests, and so on. They are all gentlemen,

and looking forward to become future holders of sheep or cattle stations.

Sheep washing and shearing are going on here. Spite of all the outcries of ruin of the flocks, and of the impossibility of securing the wool, the flocks are all tended, and the wool is steadily shearing, and going down every day on bullock-drays to Melbourne. True, they do not get so many men as they used to do, but they get sufficient to do the necessary work in a little more time. True, they are obliged to give higher wages, and find these washers and shearers very lordly and independent. They pay 10s. per day for sheep-washing, and board and lodging; and 30s. per hundred for shearing sheep, also with rations. A man can do about seventy per day on an average, so that these labourers get about 6l. per week with their living. Jolly times for them! They get a great deal more than the overseers themselves, many of whom have not above 70l. a year salary, with maintenance. These workmen will have the best of everything. They keep a sharp look-out on what is cooked in the kitchen for us, and if we have anything that they have not, they just make free to take it. Yesterday the cook brought us in a beefsteak pudding, and he said they had so abused him for not having made them one too, that he had had a scuffle for it, and gave notice to quit. To-day they sent me some vegetables from the head station, and these good fellows at once appropriated them!

A little time will set this right. There is such a tide of population pouring in, that there will be plenty of labour, and these gentlemen will alter their note. At present the position of the squatters, especially near the roads to the diggings, has its annoyances. They dare not speak to any of their men, for they immediately march off, saying, "Do your work yourself." They shear the sheep very badly, they are in such a hurry to do a large num-

ber, and are by no means particular as to clipping large pieces out of them. I have seen sheep snipped occasionally in shearing in England, but never saw any such wholesale mangling as these fellows make. The other day, one of the overseers had to stitch up the skin of two sheep's stomachs that they had actually cut right across.

The diggers going up the country also plunder their gardens, sweeping off all the vegetables, and all the fruit, ripe or unripe. Some of them last autumn carried off a sack-bag full of peaches, and could be traced for ten miles by the unripe ones they threw away. They have a fine garden opposite to the house here, which on this account lies wholly uncultivated. The diggers put their horses at night into their paddocks, and even into their corn; and when Mr. Forlonge remonstrated with them, they threatened to stick his head into a water-hole. Amiable state of things!

But don't imagine that the squatters have not their consolation for these temporary annoyances. They have it, and amply too, in the enormously increased value of all their property, as I shall show you by and by. Meantime it is the golden age of labour.

We had an amusing instance of the independent notions of labourers at present in this colony, this morning. A labouring man employed on the station, has a cottage about two hundreds yards off. His wife does the washing for Mr. Forlonge's family, for which she receives 60*l.* a year and her rations, that is, the usual allowance of meat, sugar, flour, tea, &c. The man himself is now getting his 6*l.* per week at sheep-shearing, and has regular employment the year round at 10*s.* per day and rations. He is allowed to keep a cow on the station; and as there does not happen to be another milch cow here just now, the overseer has ordered a quart of milk per day, at 1*s.* per quart. The man has hitherto brought it; but this morning he announced that henceforward they must send for it, as he finds the walk too long for him!

There is a great strong shoemaker on the other side of the creek, who is just as amusing. He can make a pair of boots per day, for which the leather costs him 5s., and he charges 35s. for them; so that he can get 9*l.* per week, if he pleases. Yet, though the Forlonges, with their shepherds and stockmen, are his main customers, one of the overseers here has, ever since we came, wanted a boot mending, and has not been able to get it done. He says what the fellow wants is, that he will offer him a bottle of grog, value 6s., when it would be done at once; and he supposes that he shall at last have to comply. Delightful state of things! and a little contrast to that of the poor peasants of Dorsetshire and Wiltshire, with their 6s. per week, and no rations at all. This certainly is the Paradise of Labour.

A class who have benefited as much as any by the change, are shepherds and hutkeepers, that is, men who keep the hut where two or more shepherds sleep, and cook for them. These men, before the gold discovery, had, the hutkeepers 18*l.* a year, the shepherds about 25*l.* and rations. For this miserable sum, they vegetated rather than lived in these monotonous woods, generally without wives or children, and with no idea but the eternal one of sheep, sheep, sheep. Thus their minds gradually became a vacuum, and gradually contracted to the dreary routine of their lives. Thus they grew old without any connections, and without a single object of interest to soften life's decline. A more wretched or desolate existence for a more wretched pittance it is impossible to conceive.

So far as wages are concerned, they are now better off. They get, I am told, from 70*l.* to 80*l.* a year. For the rest, their lives are the same; and it is scarcely a question whether this advance does them any good. For these walking automata are still not so thoroughly automatic as to be destitute of all desire for excitement or recreation;

and what recreation is there for them? None but the bush public-houses. These are scattered at intervals along the roads, wherever there is a chance of custom enough to pay. And a little will do this; for a more wretched set of houses of public entertainment cannot be imagined. Even those along the side of this great Sydney road would astonish Englishmen. Instead of the neat, clean rooms, and the luxurious fare of English country inns, you find dirt, discomfort, and most extortionate prices. Beds, if you get them, infested with vermin; tough mutton or beef, with bread and bad tea, for your fare. For such entertainment it will cost you about 1*l.* per night, and another 1*l.* for your horse! Instead of the splendid home-brewed beer of England, there is rarely anything to be got but what they call grog — generally a vile species of rum or arrack, vilely adulterated with oil of vitriol, and therefore the finest specific in the world for the production of dysentery. If they have English ale or porter, it is 6*s.* a bottle; and their vile spirits are 7*s.* and 8*s.* a bottle, and 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.* a glass, denominated a nobbler — if half a glass, a nip or a ball.

The people in the bush seem, in fact, to have depraved their taste altogether by the use of this abominable trash; for they drink it, and praise it, and really often do not know rum from brandy. To such wretched, unwholesome public-houses, the wretched shepherds generally post off when they get their wages, and seldom come away again till they have spent the whole; when they return to follow their thousands of sheep-shanks through the wilderness.

I am told that the poor, simple fellows often go into these houses, and say to the landlord, — “Here, mate, is so much money; keep it, and when it is all spent, let me know.” How these conscientious publicans execute their trust may be supposed; for, so far as I have seen, a more sordid, grasping, extortionate, and churlish set of men followed a base calling more basely. They have

but one object—to make fortunes; and they will accumulate their 10,000*l.* a year in spots where you would say there was hardly a living creature to drink their poison. Of course, there are exceptions; but, as a class, they are few.

As for the poor shepherds, I have talked with a good many who are getting old, and a more simple, dreamy, half-alive sort of men I never saw. Many of them have a great passion for wandering, and seldom stay long with one employer. The weight of the woods seems to lie on their souls; they are not attached to any particular spot—how should they?—and feel a want which they do not know how to fill. As they get old, many go deranged, and become wandering vagabonds. Some are taken care of by Benevolent Societies; but it is said that, as soon as they cease their nomadic life, they stagnate and die off rapidly.

When I look over this bush life, it presents to me few but melancholy features. The numbers of men who lead happy and aspiring lives are very few indeed. The squatters of the whole of Victoria only amount to about 650. These monopolise, with the exception of the very small portion of land which has been sold near the towns, the whole surface of the colony. To these may be added their overseers, who are men of some education—sometimes of a superior one. They have an object and an ambition; they trust some day to become masters of squatting stations themselves, and so, eventually, rich. But in the career to reach this position, they occasionally suffer much hardship and privation. They are exposed to much wet weather, and occasionally considerable cold, too, during the winter season. Even in summer they will have the thermometer at noon at 140°, and in the following night down at 40°; and they have to follow their cattle, when mustering them or conveying them across the country, through mountains and rivers, sometimes swim-

ming, sometimes wading, and lying in their wet clothes at night. By day they will be galloping through mountain ranges, collecting wild cattle, or horses as wild; and by night will have to camp out with them, wrapping themselves in a single rug, and sitting or lying at the foot of a tree, often amid deluging rains.

I have heard one of them describe his passing a whole night sitting on a saddle to keep him off the flooded ground, and holding another saddle over his head to keep off the heaviest of the rain. In the morning, it is probably too wet to raise a fire, and to comfort themselves with their favourite panikin of tea; and they get a piece of heavy damper and some cold meat; mount and go on. Perhaps, if they are bringing cattle from the distant Murray, or from the far-off Darling Downs, Liverpool Plains, or other pastoral districts of Sydney, to Melbourne, they will find that the whole herd has gone off in Indian file, silently as the night itself, and they have to gallop back for miles and for days, perhaps, to re-collect them. They say that sheep, when camped near you, will generally lie till you go to move them; but that when you have cattle in charge, if you are awake at one or two o'clock in the morning, you will probably hear a soft, quiet lowing from a bullock. That is the signal from the leader of the herd for it to move off; and if they are not at once on the alert, the whole will have disappeared before morning as silently as a cleverly retreating army.

I mention these as the life occurrences of overseers, because, though overseers on settled stations have more settled life, most of them have, occasionally, to collect herds, or mobs, as they call them, of horses and cattle, and drive them across the country, often to great distances. At their settled huts their lives are monotonous, and their fare the same. Beef and mutton, damper and tea, that is their perpetual food, with the addition of a few dough-boys or hard dumplings.

I never saw a country where the cultivation of vegetables for the shepherds and overseers was so utterly neglected. There is rarely a potato, onion, or cabbage to be seen in the bush, except at the head stations of the squatters; and yet the least trouble would procure all these things at the huts of the shepherds, and fruits, too, in any quantity. Apples, pears, peaches, peas, beans — every fruit and vegetable, might be had in the fullest abundance; but only the chief settlers have these luxuries about them.

And how many of this class are there in the whole colony? It is divided into 1000 stations, and two or three are often held by one individual, so that the number of squatters in Victoria is, as I have said just now, but about 650. In fact, it is a colony rather inhabited by sheep, cattle, and horses, than men.

The fatal Wakefieldian system of only selling colonial lands at a high price, and only where Government pleases, has totally quashed that intermixture of tillage, that diffusion of cheerful villages up the country, which would have converted it from a desert to a place of happy and civilised life. The theory of preventing the too rapid spread of population in new lands, has here prevented it spreading altogether. The regulation of not selling less than 100 acres at once, except for town allotments, and at not less than 1*l.* per acre upset price, to be carried as much higher as possible by auction, has produced the squatting system; for men refused to buy on such terms, and the only alternative was to allow them to graze upon it on a temporary tenure. This has led to large growth of wool, but to nothing more. In all the hundreds of miles up this road you scarcely see a village; and where there is one, it is a wretched one; for it has none of the elements of prosperity; no good farms around it, supplying all the articles of life, and no little tradesmen to supply, in return, clothes, shoes, and stores, on those reasonable terms

which a certain degree of competition ensures. The attempt to direct forcibly the sale and purchase of land into an artificial channel, has signally failed, as everything that is opposed to nature must; and the example of the prosperity of the United States of America, on the exactly opposite system, has hitherto been lost on the British Government.

And while the mother-country cannot be roused to a perception of its gross and fatal fundamental blunder in the philosophy of colonisation, what is the Government of Victoria itself but a series of blunders equally amazing?

I have heard a great deal of Colonial Government; but seeing it for oneself can only make us credit what it really is. It seems to consist in either leaving nature to do everything, or in thwarting her efforts where she would do right. It seems only to have one eye, and that fixed only on the money of the subject. No sooner does the Home Government give up liberally all the proceeds of the gold-fields, to enable the Colonial Government to make those improvements that are necessary to an active and extended traffic, then these profound legislators immediately attempt to burn their candle at both ends. Not content with levying a monthly license of 30s. on every individual who digs or traffics on the gold-fields, a large proportion of whom never dig up anything, they are also eager to lay on an export duty of 2s. 6d. per ounce. A former attempt to double the license fee, making it 3l. per month, had failed, showing them the folly of striving to do more than they had strength to carry out. The natural consequences of so absurd a measure as the export duty began to show themselves the moment that the question was mooted in the Legislative Council. Gold began to fly over the frontiers in all directions; and Melbourne would soon have seen its gold trade dried up, like one of its creeks. What forces had Government, to maintain a cordon all along its fron-

tiers, to prevent this transit? None. It had not force enough on the fields to compel the diggers to pay the license-fee, which they declared that they would refuse, if the duty was imposed.

The most glaring sign of the fatuity of a Government, is its unconsciousness of its own weakness, or of the power of those whom it seeks to control. When the bull-frog attempts to swell himself into the bull, Æsop tells us the inevitable result. But the most fatal error which a Government can commit, is to teach its subjects its utter inability to compel them, if they choose to resist; except it be that of setting them an example of injustice and rapacity,—a lesson only too readily learned by those on whom they seek to practise it.

The next astonishing feature of Colonial Government which has forced itself on my notice in coming up the country, is the total absence of all attempt to introduce those improvements for which the Home Government gave up so splendid an income. Nature has done much up this Sydney road in spreading an immense level, but Government has done nothing. This same Government, so eager to impose taxes on the diggers at both ends, has not done a single thing to make the road to the diggings passable. There is scarcely a wooden bridge over a gully; and there is not a dangerous piece of hill-side or precipice where the Government spade or pick has left its trace. The diggers, and the carriers of the supplies of their necessaries of life, whom the Government were in such haste to tax, are left to make their way up the most terrible roads conceivable, as they can. Their carts and drays are dashed to pieces; their goods are shattered and damaged; their horses and bullocks are injured, and even killed, by scores, on roads, so called, for the making of which so splendid a revenue is resigned by mother England. Yet this Government, which does absolutely nothing *on* the roads, takes care to sit at the end of them,

like a dragon, to swallow up the wreck which remains to these suffering men.

But even more surprising, with this lust of income, is that stupidity to which I have already drawn attention, of neglecting the toll which might be secured, on a fair scale, at rivers like the Goulburn, and allowing publicans to fleece the public at those places by the most monstrous impositions. It is impossible to conceive stolidity beyond this, — particularly existing not on an entirely new road, but on this, the *great mail road to Sydney!* — while the condition of the mail, carried in an ordinary spring-cart, is universally complained of, as most wretched, unsafe, and inefficient.

I have just been to look at the sheep-washing here. It is a very odd scene to a man who has witnessed the process in England. Accustomed to see our valuable sheep at home dropped by ones or twos into a stream where men stood to catch them, to wave them to and fro in the fresh water, and then squeeze every individual handful of wool till the whole fleece was clean, I was amazed to see a number of men forcing the sheep and lambs, by a dozen or two at a time, into the brook, and other men with long forked poles poking them under water. The poor wretches seemed to have to wash themselves by their struggling and swimming. After a good scuffle, the men poked their heads down under a beam fastened across the surface of the water, and, as they came up, another man, standing in the stream, poked them down under a second beam, whence, on rising to the top, they swam to shore as well as they could. Some, indeed, were too exhausted to gain the land; and I saw no less than three drowned. But time is much more valuable than sheep here, and, as there are 20,000 on this run, they cannot stay to be very particular.

How diametrically different has been the effect of the dis-

covery of gold in Australia on the wool-growers to what was predicted. All the flocks were to run wild for want of shepherds, a prey to the wild dogs. Of course they could not be shorn, for there would be no shearers; and there was nothing for it but the total destruction of our great wool growth here. The squatters backed this cry lustily, and it has answered well. The flocks are better shepherded than ever; for when there were plenty of shepherds, they used to pen their flocks regularly: now, as they have but one shepherd to one flock, he camps his flock, that is, he assembles it near his hut at night, and there it lies quietly till morning. It is found that this suits the flocks amazingly. They are not crowded together as in a fold of hurdles. They get some food often in the night, and they are stronger and better. The cry has raised the wool-market at home, and the squatters have kept it up as long as they could, by pretending that the flocks are diminished by want of proper shepherding, and that the amount of wool will be naturally diminished. It is all fudge. The flocks are just as numerous, as healthy, and as productive of wool as ever, as the exports of the wool will prove. Sheep have risen, in consequence of the demand at the diggings, from 7*s.* to 15*s.* and 1*l.* per head. Cattle have risen in like proportion; and horses, which used to be worth some 30*s.* a head in the bush, are now driven down to Melbourne, and sold for from 40*l.* to 100*l.* each. In fact, the squatting stations are now, on an average, quadrupled in value. It is true that most of the squatters were alarmed at first by the gold discovery; and some actually in their panic sold their stations at any price they could procure. But a very little time sufficed to show that this idea was erroneous. This very station on which we now are was offered, with all its sheep, for 20,000*l.* to a neighbour. He took a week to consider of it, and not closing, the holder of it demanded 30,000*l.*,

and, directly after, 40,000*l.* That is the effect of the gold on the squatters.

I must now tell you something that will amuse you. The sheep-shearers, the other day, asked one of the overseers whether I was the real William and Mary Howitt. He gravely said, "Yes;" on which one as gravely replied that he never expected to see "an able man" come out of England to see the diggings. But I have had sundry visits from the shearers and shepherds round, making a similar inquiry, and, on being answered in the affirmative, wanting me to "take a nobbler with them."

Wednesday, Dec. 8th.—To-day I have been sitting on the banks of the creek, contemplating the beauties of Colonial Government. Cart after cart, and bullock-dray after bullock-dray came up, and the drivers stood aghast at the horrid descent they had to make into the stream — sheer down a steep bank into a deep slough of muddy clay. One after another made the desperate descent, and one after another stuck fast.

There was a two-horse cart, laden with flour. It stuck fast at once, and had to be thoroughly unloaded, and the bags carried over. Meantime a host of bullock-drays were waiting behind: the first plunged in, drawn by sixteen bullocks, but it stuck fast too. One wheel nearly disappeared in the mud, and down fell two of the oxen in the water, and were with difficulty saved from drowning. Then they tried once more. Down went the bullocks again; the leaders, feeling the check, turned round, and the whole sixteen were soon in a jumbled heap in the middle of the water. Then there was a good half-hour's shouting, swearing, and cutting at the bullocks with their heavy whips, the drivers being all this time in the water; and when they had disentangled their bovine chaos, they had again to flog, shout, whip, and swear for another hour. In vain; they, too, were obliged to unload, and take the cargo over at several times; and so they lost the

whole day, and had to encamp on the other bank, opposite to all the unfortunates that had to follow them.

One more of these determined to cross this evening, if possible. It was a man from a station somewhere farther up, who had stores, flour, sugar, salt, tea, and the like, in a two-horse cart. No sooner had he made the plunge than his cart was capsized in the flood, and all his articles were spoiled or dissolved by the stream! If he had not been energetically aided by those about, who rushed into the water to his rescue, both his horses would inevitably have been drowned.

Such are the scenes daily and hourly exhibiting at this creek, and this but one of scores like it on the road. And yet, about a furlong higher up the stream, there are the remains of a very substantial bridge. Four years ago the gentlemen here gave notice to Government that some of the minor timbers had given way. No notice whatever was taken of it. From year to year the dilapidations increased; and fresh notices were forwarded to Melbourne, receiving the same neglect. Last winter a flood carried half of the bridge away, and deposited it in the pool below. Fresh notice of this was sent to Government, and, *six weeks ago*, a Government official came galloping up, gave a glance at the ruined bridge, said something must be done, and galloped back again. The people here, like the Babes in the Wood, have anxiously looked for the promised help:—

“ But never more they saw the man,
Returning from the town.”

What would be thought of such government at home? Roads, the first consideration in the internal traffic of a country,—and the *whole* traffic of this colony lies on these roads to the diggings,—never seem to occur to the executive here as matters of any consequence whatever. Meantime the people go on cursing the authorities, and

beholding their cattle and their property destroyed by wholesale, and themselves worn out by the most frightful wear and tear.

And now we are about once more to set forward. For a whole month I have lain here, persecuted by this awful complaint, but amidst the kindest friends. The neighbouring squatters have been extremely courteous; and the ladies have manifested that generous sympathy, which is the noble attribute of woman in every quarter of the world. They have sent all sorts of good things, which they thought would contribute to my comfort or convalescence; and we shall always have occasion to remember the kindness of the interesting family under whose roof we have been entertained, and of the neighbouring inhabitants of the bush. Without the benefits of that kindness, I should scarcely be now writing this.

Long shall I remember the rustic home at Euroa; the wide forest plains around; the full stream in front, for ever gliding past, beneath the immensely tall red-gum trees; the black and white dovelike birds, called magpie larks, so pure in colour, and tame in manner, crying, "Chain! chain!" on the banks of the river; and the little birds, in those lofty, giant trees, which shaded the hut, that all day long, in the bright sunshine, seemed to sing exultingly, "Away, away, we go! Away, away, we go!"

LETTER IX.

Rise of Charges as we proceed.—Petty Thefts.—Strange Scene at the Broken River.—A party of Shipmates returning from the Diggings, in Disgust.—Fine View of the Australian Alps.—The Pest of Flies increases.—Dampier's Account of them.—Grass-Seed Nuisance.—Prevalence of Cramp.—Mischiefs of one-sided Accounts of Australia.—Monopoly of Ferry at Ovens River.—Dialogue between Ferryman and Author.—Meet another disappointed Party.—Cattle-branding.—Reid's Station.—Odd Reception at Mackay's Station.—Ovens Ranges.—New Class of Shrubs and Flowers.—Groups on the Road.

Spring Creek, Ovens Diggings, Dec. 18. 1852.

HERE we are at The Broken River, thirty miles farther on our way. We left Euroa on Thursday, and we are now resting on the Sunday. We felt that so long as we continued in inaction, notwithstanding the kindness of our hosts, we should never get entirely rid of our indisposition. Alfred and Edward, as well as myself, were affected by it. We therefore resolved to set out and try what change of place would do; and on Thursday afternoon, we made a short stage. The moment that we moved on, we left our tiresome enemy behind. Every symptom disappeared, and I was as well as ever, except for debility. But I can already comfortably walk about five miles a day, and the rest I ride in a snug corner of the load, which these good boys have made for me. We have camped for the day on the banks of The Broken River, so called because it is broken into many channels. There is a village here and two inns. We had a letter to Mr. Smythe, the Commissioner of Crown Lands here; but he is at the Ovens Diggings. His overseer, however, offered us anything that he had in the garden; so that we

have a good supply of vegetables; and he would have baked us some loaves, had it not been Sunday.

Everything is monstrously dear on the roads, the nearer you get to the diggings. My youngsters the other day, at an inn called The Honeysuckle, would insist on my having a pint of beer. It was 3*s.*, and most disgustingly vapid. We got some milk, however, at 1*s.* a quart, butter at 4*s.* a pound, and cabbages at 6*d.* a piece, which are reckoned very low prices here. We got a horse's shoe put on for 7*s.* 6*d.*, and the man only wanted 15*s.* for merely shifting three others. We declined the favour, and he said that it suited him quite as well, for that he was *particularly* busy. He had literally nothing to do!

But the worst is, that we run the gauntlet of petty thefts whenever we come near any people on the road. Luckily, so far as we are concerned, they yet are *very* petty ones. At every place where we camp near any one, we miss something,—some panikins, an umbrella, or an axe. At The Honeysuckle—which you are not to suppose some English-looking country inn with a honeysuckle porch, but a wooden house, so called from some wretched scrubby and half-dead *Banksias* near it—we set a tin kettle down on the ground to get some milk in; but while getting something else out of the cart, it was cleverly whipped from our very heels. But a much cleverer dodge in a *very* small way was played off on Charlton. He was fishing, and a big boy came and looked on. Anon, Charlton's hook came off, and he was about to fasten it on again. This boy, who had been lamenting that he could catch *huge* fish in this river, but had no hooks, nor had we any to give him, as soon as he saw the loose hook, remarked, that it wanted a notch or two filing in the upper end, or that it would soon come off again, and proposed to take it to the village and get it filed. But Charlton not attending to the suggestion, this clever lad immediately saw some wild ducks under the bushes near,

and eagerly affected to point them out to Alfred and Charlton. Instantly down went the line and hook, the guns were snatched up, and Alfred and Charlton were earnestly hunting after the ducks, which, of course, were not found, nor, on their return, was the boy or the fish-hook either.

Last night we heard a number of people quarrelling and making a great clamour at the inn across the river; and this morning it was rumoured that they had managed to kill one of their party; but it turns out that he jumped out of the chamber window in *delirium tremens*. About noon to-day, the whole set were seen by Mr. Bateman on the bridge, with the dead body in a cart, quarrelling about how they should dispose of it.

Behold! Mr. L., his son, and his two nephews, our old shipmates, returning from the Ovens! As I expected, very soon after they left us with Captain Nolusbolus, they found it impossible to associate with their rude and reckless comrades. There was a speedy dissolution of partnership; and Mr. L., his son, and nephews went on by themselves. Mr. L. declared on shipboard, that he would not come down from the diggings in less than two years, — but the very sight of them was enough for him. He denounces the whole affair as a most unmitigated hoax; that the Victorians, with their well-known powers of puff, have propagated the most outrageous falsehoods regarding the gold-fields; that it is true there is gold to be got, but not in the easy manner described by the Governor and Mr. Town Councillor Guthrie, pretty much like digging potatoes; that the aggregate of 100,000 oz. a week at all the diggings, divided amongst 100,000 diggers leaves on an average one oz. per week per man, or about 3*l.* per week, which, even if easily got, he contends, will never make a fortune. But then the actual getting! Pits full of water black as ink, and with a stench like a tanyard, in which men are working under a broiling sun, up to

the waist, the upper part of their bodies in profuse perspiration, the lower part chilled with the water which is very cold. Sam Slick's Kentucky men, half horse, half alligator, he thinks, could not stand it. And then the people who swarm there! Thieves and murderers from every quarter of the globe; Norfolk Island devils, Sidney and Van Diemen's Land convicts, and the *élite* of St. Giles's and Ratcliffe Highway! Certainly, the prospect, as thus drawn, is by no means tempting, but we mean to see and judge for ourselves.

Yesterday, we reached at length an eminence, our way, ever since we left the Goulburn, being over one immense plain. From this eminence, a part of Futter's Ranges, we had a view such as we have not yet had in Australia. Below us stretched an immense ocean of dense wood, and beyond, to the right, at some twenty miles' distance, extended ranges of mountains, with higher ranges behind them. They were the great chain of the Australian Alps, looking wild and dim in their hazy dignity. Edward exclaimed, "This is the finest scene in the world!" But as he has neither seen the European Alps, much less the Andes, or the Himalayas, you will not, perhaps, consider him a very safe judge. In fact, this view is not to be named with a distant view of the Alps, yet it is fine, and was very cheering to us after our long travel across this dreary and parched-up plain. We are come again upon the same sort of burnt brickdust country that commenced at the Goulburn, and again we are amongst golden everlastings and iguanas crawling up the trees.

There are here many shrubs and flowers quite new to us. There are some beautiful geraniums, dwarf grass-trees, and the forest is of the iron bark-tree, a species of eucalyptus, which affects only the most arid and hilly regions, and gives a peculiar character to them by its great stems standing black as if burnt, and its bark

ploughed out into longitudinal grooves and ridges, which stand up six inches, this bark being full of gum resin, and where wounded, exuding the bright red gum kino of the shops. But all our pleasure in observing what is new in nature, is destroyed by those old and universal abominations, the flies. They are in millions on millions all over the country. As I have told you, every hour of the day, from sunrise to sunset they assail you with incessant and unconquerable avidity. You carry them along with you, for they cover your horses, your load, and yourselves; your veils smother you, and there is no defence but eternally whirling your bough about your head. I expect to be whirling my bough every day for the next three months; a charming prospect! At your meals, in a moment myriads come swooping down, cover the dish and the meat on your plates till they are one black moving mass; dash headlong into your tea, or whatever you are drinking, and fight you to the last moment for the last morsel. Every meal is a pitched and a hard-fought battle too. It is impossible that it could have been worse in Egypt in the time of the seven plagues; and I suspect that when the wind blew the flies away from Egypt, it blew them hither, for they must certainly be of the same species, or worse.

But go into a butcher's shop! The air is black with all sorts of flies, and the sound is like thunder,—you cannot hear yourselves speak! Yesterday, when, on the hills I was wishing to take a closer view of the plants and stones, I put on my spectacles. Instantly, dozens of the black flies ensconced themselves behind the glasses, as many, in fact, as could crowd in, and they defied me to dislodge them. I was obliged to take off my glasses, and go on with my doom of bough twirling.

It is curious that Dampier, in his *Voyage round the World in 1688*, never mentions the annoyance of flies anywhere but in Australia, though he had been in the

hottest regions of the West Indies, South America, and the Indian Ocean; which shows that here they are an unexampled plague. Speaking of the natives, he says:—“ Their eyelids are always half-closed, to keep the flies out of their eyes; they being so troublesome here that no fanning will keep them from coming to one’s face; and without the assistance of both hands they will creep into one’s nostrils and mouth if the lips are not shut very close. So that from their infancy, being thus annoyed with these insects, they do never open their eyes as other people, and therefore they cannot see far, unless they hold up their heads as if they were looking at somewhat over them.”

On Futter’s Ranges we encountered too, for the first time, the Australian nuisance of grass-seeds. When these become ripe, they are like so many needles; and it is a point to get the sheep washed and clipped before these seeds are ripe, or they fill the wool and ruin the fingers of all who attempt to clean, spin, or weave it. They seem furnished with little barbs or scales, which continually push them forwards on the least motion, so that they are forced through the sheep’s skins by thousands, and even penetrate to the lungs; for so long as there is any motion where they are, they keep travelling forward till they meet with something too hard to penetrate. I have had skins shown to me after the sheep were killed, regularly bristled inside with the points of those vegetable needles. There are cranesbill geraniums also, the seeds of which penetrate the bodies of the sheep, only working forward in corkscrew fashion.

The grass on these hills was up to the waist, and the seeds penetrated our light trousers in all directions, like so many pins. It was intolerable. You could not walk without agony, and we hastened back to the road as fast as possible. Boots, they say, are the only defence against this nuisance, and the ladies in the bush wear tall laced

ones. But to be secure from them men must wear boots to the hips.

The hot weather has spoiled all the water. It is tepid, and rapid, and bitter. There are no rocks up this road, whence cool water gushes, no deep shaded springs; the only places to get water from are the creeks, and in them the powerful sun drives off all the carbonic acid gas, which should give sharpness and freshness to it; and the thousands of tons of gum-trees lying and rotting in these creeks, make it bitter and unwholesome. We hear that there is fine cool water at the Ovens.

A considerable nuisance remains to be mentioned. From what cause it arises I do not know; nor have I yet met with any one, medical or not, who could tell me; but such is the fact, that people are very subject to cramp in this country. Cramp and paralysis are very prevalent; the dogs especially are extraordinarily affected with paralysis. You cannot be a day in Melbourne, without noticing the enormous quantity of dogs lying about in the streets, and a great number of these are so paralytic that they can scarcely move, particularly in their hinder parts.

But it is the cramp which has been my enemy ever since I landed. Why it should be so in this dry and otherwise fine climate puzzles me. As soon as I arrived, I was extremely pestered with it; a thing quite new to me. The Doctor said, "Oh! this is a terrible crampy country." And so it proves to be. It is very annoying to me, because it is sure to attack me in the right hand when ever I want to write. The moment I take the pen up, the fingers cramp together; and it is only by a constant and determined struggle, sometimes for hours, that I can conquer it. But I never cease till I make it yield.

Now, since I came hither, I have seen so much of the miserable consequences of the outrageous system of puffing regarding this colony, that I shall candidly and honestly

set down things as I find them. The seventh heaven *is* the seventh heaven, and no country I am persuaded, on earth is that place. All countries, be they where they will, and as charming as they will, I am persuaded, have their drawbacks; and if they are not fairly laid before people at the same time with the *deliciæ*, the portrait is one-sided and false; and when the *truth* is discovered, there is a feeling of indignation excited, which does more real injury to a country than any truthful statement possibly could. Almost every portrait of this colony which I have seen, is false and deceptive, because one-sided; and yet the colony is undoubtedly a good colony, and the climate a fine climate. But how many hundreds, nay thousands, of people have I already seen almost foaming with indignation at what they consider the deception practised upon them! When the dustwinds blow, when the sun burns three times hotter than the statement of "the climate of Devonshire" led them to expect, when the cramp or the dysentery seizes them with diabolical pangs, when the mosquitos puncture them, and the flies drive them almost mad, "Is this," they exclaim in fury, "your heaven upon earth? is this your delicious climate? this your Australian paradise?" And hundreds upon hundreds rush back again, cursing the false, flattering, and interested statements which lured them out. It is, in truth, a serious thing for people to go all the way to the antipodes, on the faith of a trader's or speculator's puff. Yet is it not a fact, that if both sides of the picture had been truthfully sketched at first, as many people would have come out? Perhaps not the same people, but people who looking out for a new home, or for a road to fortune that they do not see at home, would come prepared to face the really existing evils; and when they met them, would have thought all the less of them because they expected them, and must have enjoyed the fine genial weather, and the pleasant, if not *romantic* country all the

more. A distorted picture will always produce distorted impressions; and they who have hitherto painted this colony in entire *colour de rose*, have grossly mistaken its real interests. I shall endeavour myself, as much as if upon oath, to state "The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Dec. 15. The Ovens River.—Here we are at length across The River Ovens, and only about twenty miles from the diggings. I trust we may be rewarded for our determined prosecution of our journey under all difficulties, for as we approach we hear no more croaking. The river here, though yet in the plain, is by far the clearest that we have seen. It has not the sullen look of the others, but has a clear azure-green colour, and when you take it up into your vessels, is bright and transparent as any English water. Cool, as yet, it is not; for we have had three or four broiling days, which, as usual, last night terminated in a magnificent thunderstorm; and now the sky is cloudy and cool, but this will not last long enough to cool down the water.

The thunder here is frequent and intense, in proportion to the quantity of electrical fluid carried up in the copious evaporation under so much more powerful a sun. The other day, we saw the fragments of a huge tree in the forest, that had recently been shattered by the lightning. The remains of the trunk stood aloft, all shattered and splintered, and the boughs and bark, and fragments of wood, lay far around in four directions, as if scattered to the four quarters of heaven. The electric bolt must have been terrific.

After passing the gap out of Futter's Ranges, our course lay for miles along the side of a vast marsh, abounding with wild ducks and geese; but the most extraordinary thing there was the booming of the bitterns. I never heard anything like it, and could not have supposed any bird capable of producing such a sound. It

was like the low bellowing of bulls, or like the blowing of a bullock's horn, in short hollow puffs; but perhaps still more like some one blowing into the spout of a watering-pot. The force and compass of it, and the distance to which the sound could be heard, were amazing.

Last evening, we crossed in the punt, over the river here. The river is about twenty yards wide, and the punt is precisely like that of the Goulburn. Exactly as in that case, the Government has not taken a single thought for the passage of the public; but has left it to be accommodated and fleeced, according to the conscience of any man who chose to make the speculation. The man who did undertake it, was on the punt himself, and charged us 12s. for the passage of our cart and ourselves. The descent to the ferry, and the ascent from it, are so steep that it is highly dangerous to heavily laden drays. The following dialogue took place between us:—

PASSENGER. I suppose you pay a large rent to Government for this ferry?

FERRYMAN. The Government! the Government has nothing to do with it: it is my own, I put it up myself.

PASSENGER. Then I think you might afford, on your large profits, to make the approaches to the punt easier. Surely five minutes spent in taking us across cannot honestly earn 12s., unless you have done something else for the public. You should lower the brows of the hills on each side; and having done that, put up a board of fares; and if you were wise, you would let them be moderate fares, or you will some day find Government stepping in and taking the concern into their own hands.

FERRYMAN. Ha! ha! ha! The Government indeed! If you wait till Government does anything, you may wait till doomsday.

PASSENGER. Don't be too sure of that. Government may be still, if the public will let it; but will the public submit much longer? I think not.

FERRYMAN. But what has the Government to do with my ferry? I tell you it is my own property. I put it up, and it cost me 1500*l.* Government never did anything; and if I had not put down this punt, you might have *poddled* through the water: and then you gentlemen come and complain of the charge.

PASSENGER. Excuse me; we do not complain of a moderate and *fair* charge, but of an exorbitant one; and this is exorbitant and monstrous. Now, confident as you seem of your security; I will venture to say, that when we return this way in the course of a few months, all this will be changed. The public wont bear it; and I for one promise you a good lift. I know both the Governor and most of the members of the Government, and you may take my word that I will do all I can to effect a change here.

The man gave a queer sort of twist with his mouth, as though he had tasted something bitter, and so we left him. But only imagine what a Government is that which permits such things! Why Sancho Panza, the proverb-loving governor of Baratania, would have sent word to these punt-keepers, who levy from 50*l.* to 100*l.* a day each on the public, saying, "Here is a tariff of charges for you. Put that up and abide by it, or we will throw over a bridge and annihilate your ferry." The rogues must submit; they would have no alternative.

While encamping by the Ovens, Burnhard Smith, Woolner, and their party came up to us. They were on their way back from the Oven's Diggings, and to the Delatite, or, as the diggers prefer calling it, The Devil's River. They had in a month dug up 120*l.* worth of gold, five of party; but that of course did not satisfy them, and there had come a great fame of The Devil's River. This is always the case. In gold digging, as in life, "Man never is, but always *to be* blessed;" and people are always posting with bag and baggage from one digging to another.

I may say that the fame of The Devil's River at this time proved groundless, and this party disgusted with their short experience of the diggings, marched down again to Melbourne, after losing one of their party who was drowned in The Broken River.

They informed us that the Commissioners had letters awaiting us, and that a party had been and taken out licences in our names. The Commissioners had asked this party of impostors whether they belonged to the party of Mr. William Howitt, the author, and they said,—"Yes." They were unquestionably the same Nolusbolus set who had assumed our names all the way up the country. The Commissioners, however, were suspicious of them, and therefore did not hand over our letters to them.

Our next encampment after leaving The Ovens River, was at the station of the Messrs. Reid. I had a letter to Mr. David Reid, addressed, Ovens River, and therefore supposed that this was his house. As we drew near the place we saw a number of men busy in a stock-yard branding cattle. These stock-yards are large square enclosures, fenced in with posts and rails. They are divided into two or more compartments, so that the squatters can drive their cattle or sheep into them, and then drive them by portions into the smaller divisions to catch them, or single them out for any purpose. They were branding the yearling calves; an operation which, if we are to believe the inflictors, is by no means cruel; but which the evidence of the sufferers, given in bellowings and kickings, shows to be far from agreeable. It is not particularly attractive as a spectacle; but appears to be absolutely necessary in an open wild country, quite unfenced, and where there is, of course, no means of identifying cattle or horses, except by a brand of the owner's initials. No one can assert his property in cattle or horse more than a year old, that is without a brand. So long as foals or calves follow the dam, they are recognisable by that fact, but not after-

wards; and there are not wanting plenty of sharp fellows in the Bush, who are ready to put a brand on where an animal is without one, belong to whom it may. But from this branding system you are at first surprised to see magnificent horses disfigured by an indelible scar; yet this, which in England would be considered an intolerable eyesore, you here soon almost cease to notice.

As we drew near the stock-yard, we heard desperate bellowings, and saw cattle running and plunging about madly, and a group of men all struggling with some one of the unfortunate beasts. There was smoke ascending, and a strong smell of singed hide and hair. Coming nearer, we saw what was going on. The cattle and great calves were crowding into one corner of a small compartment, and one of the men was dexterously throwing a lasso over the heads of the calves in succession. One of them was noosed, he began to plunge, and run, and bellow furiously, as if conscious that no very agreeable treatment awaited him. But, spite of his struggles, and plunges, and bellowings, he was rapidly dragged along to one side of the yard, where he was thrown down and the hot branding-iron clapped on his hip. It was no touch-and-go application, but a regular pressure on the poor wretch's hide for some half minute or so, till it burnt through hair and hide, during which the unlucky beast roared lustily. At the same time his eyes seemed starting out of his head with the throttling of the rope, which from the furious resistance of some of them actually cut through the skin of the neck. Once liberated, however, up they jumped without any bidding, and dashed back to the herd. They are said not to evince any great suffering from the operation, except at the moment, but the mark remains for life.

Of course, we did not stay to witness these scenes longer than was necessary; but being told that Mr. Reid was superintending his business, I went to deliver my letter. I found, however, that Mr. David Reid did not reside here,

but at the Ovens Diggings, Reid's Creek there being on his station. There resided Mrs. Reid, his mother, and three of his brothers. Nothing could be kinder than our reception by the whole of this hospitable and very intelligent family.

Mrs. Reid is very fond of her garden, and has a very excellent one, full of the most splendid flowers and fruit, but not yet ripe. It is amazing how flowers and all kinds of fruit flourish when they are cultivated here. My old favourites, the sweet scabiouzes, were nearly as tall as myself, and with many other flowers, are spreading out into the open country, and likely to become regular denizens of the forest. The vines were covered with clusters of young grapes as thick as they could hang, none of which they thin out, because the stocks are so full of life that they feed them all to a fine size.

There were very good crops of wheat in their paddocks, rather thin but healthy looking, and much finer in the head than any I ever saw on the Rhine plains; but they were horribly infested by huge flocks of white cockatoos, that devour a hundred times more than our sparrows. The harsh cries of these birds, as they rose from the corn at our approach, were horrible.

On the open plain not far from their house there was a palisado inclosure of a grave. One often sees these enclosures in the Bush. There was no stone or inscription to this, as there scarcely ever is; but they told us that it was the grave of an old merchant from Rio de Janeiro, whom they had known in that city, and who, on some account, had come out hither when upwards of seventy. They heard of his lying ill somewhere in the Bush, and went and brought him here, where they nursed him till he died: and there he lies.

Some of the Messrs. Reid had been at the Ovens Diggings buying gold, and the accounts they gave us of individual success were wonderful. One of Mr. David

Reid's shepherds, it seems, first discovered it at Reid's Creek, and had made about 1400*l.* in a few weeks. They had themselves purchased of one party there 61 lb. weight of gold in a week, and they had got as much more by the week following. These are wonderful accounts, but we expect to hear of these things rather than see them ourselves.

On leaving this hospitable house we were literally loaded with presents of beef, bread, butter, and milk. The beef by far the best that we had yet tasted in the colony.

At noon we arrived at a very different place. In Melbourne Dr. Black had given me a letter to Dr. Mackay, and particularly begged me to deliver it in person. As it was sealed, and, therefore, I inferred might contain matters of his own beyond a mere introduction, we drove about a mile out of our way down to the neighbourhood of his station, where we proposed to rest and cook our dinner. The place, however, was so dry and parched up, and seemed so fenced off as to shun approach, that we went on about another mile in quest of water; and finding a pool of very yellow-looking water, we there, in lack of better, watered our horses, and filled our kettle, and while dinner was cooking, I turned back to Dr. Mackay's station to deliver the letter, and to make some inquiry as to the road that we should take from this point. It was a broiling noon, and the whole place looked scorched and baking. I perceived that the Dr. had arrived at the dignity of a small one-storied brick-house, the earlier stages of these stations being of wood; and there were the usual number of wooden huts or outbuildings, scattered about at considerable distances. The kitchen is always separate from the house. There was also the usual quantity of sheepskins hanging to dry on the garden fences, that is, the skins of the sheep they kill for their consumption and that of their shepherds and stock-keepers, so that they are often in hundreds, and extend a long way round. This

is the usual appearance of a squatter's station,—a slab hut, with a great number of lesser huts about it, sheep-skin-adorned wooden fences, and a garden looking very vividly verdant in comparison with the dusky hue of the open forest around.

As I went towards the house, I saw a boy of apparently twelve or fourteen, come out of the kitchen, look at me some time, and disappear again. Then out came two women, took a good look, and again disappeared. The boy, apparently a son of the house, and the two young women were in the kitchen when I reached it, the latter busy washing. I asked if Dr. Mackay was at home. The boy said, "Oh yes!" and I requested him to give him Dr. Black's letter and my card. He vanished, and I was left standing in the heat of the sun for about ten minutes, the only alternative being to step into the kitchen, reeking with steam and the odour of soap-suds.

At length the boy returned, and said in a curious sort of way, "My father is very unwell, but he says you can go in and get some dinner." I said, "I am sorry to hear that, and I do not want any dinner, thank you, my boy, as my party are waiting of me to dine; but I should be glad to ask some one about our route from here. Is your mamma at home?"

"Yes," said the boy; "but she's ill too."

On this I paused a moment to consider what the message meant. The boy had said nothing in the first place of any illness, which it occurred to me must be a very sudden attack indeed; but supposing I should see somebody who could give us reliable information of our way, as the Reids had enjoined us particularly to ask it here, I concluded to go in. The boy did not lead me directly into the house by the door opposite, but took his way leisurely to a gate at some distance into the garden, and went by circuitous walks to what I suppose claimed the dignity of being the front door. Here I was intro-

duced into a room where evidently a considerable family had been dining at the moment of my arrival, and, as it was evident, had made a precipitate flight on the announcement of a stranger. The table was covered with dishes, the contents of which had been pretty well exhausted by vigorous appetites, and plates and tea-cups (for tea appears at every meal in the bush) only partly emptied. The chairs stood in confusion, as if the whole party had started up in alarm; and there was one dish of meat covered with a wire cover,—constantly used here to clap on as soon as the carver ceases cutting, to keep out the host of flies, which in a single second would cover it entirely with one black mass. The room roared again with the myriads of angry and disappointed vermin.

The boy giving a push to the back of the chair which stood by this dish, said, "There is dinner!" Still more astonished, I again informed him that I would not take any dinner, but would thank him if he would send some one to me who could give us some information regarding our route. He disappeared by an opposite door, and I was left to my meditations. Seeing a chair at a distance from the table, I sat down, and sat, and sat. No one appeared except two little pale-looking girls, of seven or eight years of age, with a great deal of hair falling on their shoulders, and most vigorously twisting the corners of their pinafores into their mouths, and seeming resolved on eating them up altogether. Anon they withdrew from the door, and anon they stole back to gaze at the stranger, and make a fresh onslaught on the corners of their pinafores.

This continued for nearly half an hour, when a bell from a distant room rang, and presently a little servant-girl, with a dreadful squint, brought out of a cupboard a decanter of sherry, fetched a jug of water, a tumbler and wine-glass, and setting them on the side of the table

nearest to me, said "There's wine," and marched off in a queer nonchalant way.

Is this, thought I, bush hospitality? Certainly it was something that I had not seen in the colony so far; and I was curious to see how it would end. As to eating or drinking under such circumstances, I believe any Englishman would perish of hunger or thirst first. So I sat on, expecting that, perhaps, this was the prelude to the appearance of some one of this invalid and now invisible family; who, as it was evident that they had not lost their appetites, might not possibly have lost the use of their legs. But I sat in vain: the house continued as still as a tomb; so, after another quarter of an hour, I sallied forth to see if I could find somebody. Nobody was discoverable till I again crossed the yard, and found again the two girls progressing with their work.

"Are Dr. Mackay, and Mrs. Mackay, and every one else," I asked, "too ill to see any one?"

"I don't know," said the little maid with the unfortunate obliquity of vision.

"Can you tell me?" I said to the other, a clever-looking Irish girl.

"Oh," said she, with a very significant expression, "I have nothing to do with it. I am only here by the day!"

At this *naïve* declaration, I had much ado to avoid laughing outright. "Pray," said I, "go in and beg Dr. Mackay not to disturb himself, as I can remain no longer." And with that, instead of making the same formal circuit by which I had entered, I bolted out of the yard through a gap in the pales, and made my way to my party as fast as I could. We had a hearty laugh at the scene over our dinners, and many jokes were circulated on the occasion. One thought that Dr. Black must have been asking the squatter for the payment of a debt in the letter; and another thought that the alarm was occasioned by the first irruption of an author into the bush; and

that the whole family were afraid of being put into a book. If that was the case, they have had the same fortune as the poor lady who pretended to be dumb in the presence of Holberg, the great comic author of Denmark.

Paying a morning visit to some ladies, Holberg addressed some words to a strange lady seated near him. She only replied by a profound bow. Soon after he put to her a question: she replied only by the same profound inclination of her head. On a visit some time after to the same family, Holberg inquired of the lady of the house after her friend the dumb lady.

“Dumb lady!” she exclaimed, “I have no lady friend who is dumb.”

“Yes,” said Holberg, “certainly you have;” and he described what has now been stated.

“Good gracious!” said the lady, “she is no more dumb than you are; but when she heard that it was you who had called, she said, ‘O! I won’t say a word, or he will put me in a play.’”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Holberg, “why I have done it. I have put her in as the Dumb Lady; if she had only spoken, I should never have thought of her at all.”

As I had not learned what we wanted to know,—our route through the hills,—Mr. Bateman went off to the hut of a stock-keeper within sight to ask this. As he approached he picked up a large stick, to defend himself from any outrush of large dogs, which is very common. A child, playing before the hut, on seeing this, rushed away into the house; and, on Mr. Bateman’s arrival, he found two women standing in attitudes of alarm and of defence, no doubt expecting that the tall man with a big stick was nothing less than a bushranger. To all Mr. Bateman’s inquiries he could only procure answers that told nothing; they seemed to have lost their wits. “Can you tell us

anything of the direction of the road leading to the Ovens Diggings?" "No; only you are wrong." "How shall we get right again?" "O!" said the women, "you might as well ask a gum-tree as us." And so we left this odd, impracticable place, and blundered out our way as well as we could.

We have now got amongst the Ovens ranges, and are approaching the diggings. Hill after hill we have to pass with our load, now rushing down again through deep gullies, and now again bouncing over rocky roads. The bare granite begins to show itself. Broad bare spaces of it burn in the sun; and around us we see chains of mountains stretching in different directions. The trees on these hills look battered and weather-beaten, and half their limbs dead. The foliage gets bluer and bluer; it might be some azure forest in a fairy tale; and the leaves perpetrate the strangest vagaries. There are two or three different kinds of leaves on the same trees. Many of them have on their lower branches round leaves embracing the stem very much like the trumpet honeysuckle; while those above are long, willow-shaped ones. There are, again, acacias with long, narrow, simple leaves, and bipinnate leaves alternating. And now at length, in the granite ridges, and fast rooted in their crannies, where there appears not a particle of earth, we see a new tree, a species of pine, with foliage like a Scotch fir, but the tree tapering up like a larch or silver fir. Its cones, or rather seed-vessels,—for they are round, and resembling those of the cypress,—are about the size of marbles. It is evidently not a *pinus*, but a *callitris*, and is, no doubt, akin to the Murray pine.

Besides this, the flowers and shrubs of these bare, but granite hills, are to us new and curious. The everlastings abound; and there is a shrub which is very like an everlasting too, the *Cassinia aculeata*. It grows five feet and often more in height; has broad, white, umbelliferous

flowers; is light and elegant; and accords well with the other shrubs, which are curious, but difficult to describe. There is a shrub growing out of the chinks of the hottest and barest stone, which has small pinnate leaves, something like a chrysanthemum; but is covered with masses of hop-like seed-cases, like those of the rattle-grass (*Rhinanthus crista-galli*). It is the *Dodonæa hirtella*. There are various dianellas, the flowers resembling those of the solanums, some delicately white, others blue.

Singular groups pass us continually on the road. Here are five or six diggers on splendid horses, their rugs rolled up before them. Then, again, another group cantering along on lanky horses with switch tails, and having themselves a more work-a-day and weather-beaten look. After them comes a train of bullock-teams. They are all the property of one man, who travels from digging to digging with stores—flour, tea, sugar, cheese, bacon, &c. See! they arrive at a creek. All halt, take out their bullocks, and let them graze. Out of one covered waggon descends a stream of children from two to seven or eight years old, followed by their mother, with her sun-bonnet shading her neck with a broad flap. A fire is made, and the kettle is set on, and the frying-pan brought out. The youngest child seats itself in the very middle of the road, and begins to play with the dust. The rest get down to the stream, and paddle in it, and wash their faces. The eldest girl pulls out a comb, and combs and arranges the hair of the younger ones. Then she pulls out a small looking-glass, attaches it to the bark of the tree by a hook, and arranges her own. The boy is busy helping to drive the bullocks to the best grass. The mother calls, and they all run off to dinner.

But there, again; see what a train! It is like that of the retainers of some old feudal baron. First rides a man in a cloth cap with a gold tassel, and in a scarlet mantle,

which flies behind him. He has a led horse, carrying luggage in a leathern valise. Next rides another man in ordinary dress leading two horses; and, finally, one in the bee-hive white pith helmet of the mounted police, leading another horse. I suppose it is some gold commissioner and his attendants.

LETTER X.

Ovens Diggings. — Extraordinary Scene. — Increasing Gold Fever in England. — Reality here. — Sickness, Death, Disappointment. — Dangerous Experiment of Women coming out. — A great Rush, which proves a Hoax. — Murders. — Christmas Day.

Ovens Diggings, Spring Creek, Dec. 25. 1852.

HURRAH! there are the diggings at last! After the arduous and eventful journey of nearly two months, over only about 250 miles of ground, but such ground! there are really the diggings. On reaching the brow of a hill, we see a broad valley lying below us, and white tents scattered along it for a mile or more. The tents, right and left, glance out of the woods on all sides. In the open valley they stand thick, and there is a long stretch up the centre of the valley, where all the ground has been turned up, and looks like a desert of pale clay.

After our long pilgrimage, it seems as if we ought never to come to diggings at all, but that our business were to go on and on. But here are the diggings, spite of fate. We descend the hill. There stands a great wide-open tent, with a pole and a handkerchief hoisted upon it, in sign that it is a store or shop. We go on, — huts, dusty ground, all trodden, trees felled and withering up in the sun, with all their foliage; here and there a round hole like a well, a few feet deep, where they have been trying for gold, and have not found it. Down we go, — more tents, more dust, more stores, heaps of trees felled and lying about; lean horses grazing about on a sward that a goose could not lay hold of; hole after hole where gold has been dug for, and now abandoned; washes

hanging out; horrid stench from butchers' shops, and holes into which they have flung their garbage: along the valley to the right, green, smooth sward, and nothing to indicate that there is gold here more than in a thousand other places that we passed over with unconscious feet.

But to the left, up the valley, hundreds on hundreds of tents are clapped down in the most dusty and miserable places; and all the ground is perforated with holes, round or square, some deeper, some shallower, some dry, some full of water, but in few of which work now seems going on. The diggers have flitted to other holes. All between the holes, the hard clay-coloured sand lies in ridges; and you must thread your way carefully amongst them, if you don't mean to fall in. Still horrid stench from butchers' shops and garbage pits; the scene thickens, and tents after tents, stores, and bark-huts crowd upon you like a great fair. There is the creek or little stream, — Spring Creek, — no longer translucent as it comes from the hills, but a thick clay puddle, with rows of puddling-tubs standing by it, and men busy working their earth in tins and cradles.

Such is the first view of a digging. But we turn up to the right into a green quiet glade of the forest, and there pitch our tent, at a distance from the throng, and where there is food for our horses. After a hasty tea, we set off to the Commissioners' Camp for our letters. The tents of the Commissioners stand in a row, on a rising ground on the other side of the creek, with a number of other tents for servants and officials behind them. The whole is enclosed with posts and rails, and sentinels are on duty as in a military camp. The Commissioners' tents, lined with blue cloth, and of a capacious size, look comfortable and, to a degree, imposing. Mr. Smythe, Commissioner of Crown Lands for this district, as well as a gold commissioner, and Mr. Lieutenant Templeton of

the mounted police received us most cordially, and promised us every information in their power. They had a good packet of letters for us, which we soon returned to our tent to read.

You represent the gold fever as still growing more intense at home. Well, those who come out will find enough to cool them down. We have seen sufficient already to show the falsity of the Arabian Nights' fables, which the Melbournians have circulated all over the world. The idea of walking up to Mount Alexander in a couple of days, and shovelling up a few sack-bags full of gold, and going home again, is very charming, and quite as true as the romance of Aladdin's Lamp. The history of this, our memorable journey to the gold-fields, will show what a gigantic undertaking going to the diggings really is. And our history is but that of thousands. We are not the only ones who have had hardship, accidents, and sickness to encounter. Hundreds have already gone back again, cursing those who sent such one-sided statements of the gold-fields and of the climate. Thousands have been struck down, and many of them are still lying on their backs, from the effects of change of climate, but still more from those of the change of living, and exposure to heat and cold, wet and night air, to which they had never been accustomed. Numbers have made a much more rapid progress up the country than we have, because they have endeavoured to dispense with a tent and with a tarpaulin under them. They have rolled themselves in a rug at night, often soaked with rain, or chilled with the cold of the night, which is often very penetrating, especially after a day's march under a hot sun; and, lying on damp ground, have been seized, very naturally, with dysenteries, fevers, and rheumatism, which will cripple many for life, and have already carried many out of it. New as are these diggings, there is a tolerably populous cemetery on a hill here; and some who crossed the sea with us are already

sleeping there, as I shall tell you anon. Thus, according to the old adage, the most haste has not been the best speed, and perhaps those whom all along the road we have seen with broken axles, carts broken down, or sticking fast in the bogs, have not been the most unfortunate parties. In short, to get up to the diggings is a gigantic labour. But for ourselves, we are no whit daunted. We shall dig, and we shall buy gold; and whether we shall get more or less, we shall still be picking up information for an ultimate object.

As to the two maid-servants who, you say, wish to come out, I am not the person to advise them to it. They have lived in comfortable places at home; and after the comforts of a good English home, and the pleasant and vigorous climate of England, the change to a colony would strike them dumb. At all events, let them reflect well on the unpaved streets, and the dust blowing every few days in Melbourne till you cannot see your own hand; on the heat, the flies, the mud, and slush, the moment there is rain, before they quit the smooth pavements and the comforts that abound in England. Let them reflect well, too, on the rude, chaotic, and blackguard state of the lower society in this suddenly-thrown-together colony. It would strike them with astonishment.

As to girls marrying here—the great temptation—that is soon accomplished; for I hear that lots of diggers get married almost every time they go down to Melbourne to spend their gold. A lot of the vilest scoundrels are assembled here from all the four winds of heaven. Nobody knows them; much less whether they have left wives behind them in their own countries; and they marry, and go off, and are never heard of again. Of the demoralised condition of a large proportion of the working population,—escaped felons,—no one in England can form any adequate conception, nor of the low, obscene, brutal language which you hear on all sides. As to wages for female

servants, they are high; and if they can come with introductions,—real, effective introductions, to good families, for introductions generally are waste paper,—they may do well. The experiment, however, is so awfully hazardous, that I shall carefully avoid in all cases promoting it.

Since writing the above, we have wandered about amongst the diggings. No language can describe the scene of chaos where they principally are. The creek, that is, a considerable brook, is diverted from its course; and all the bed of the old course is dug up. Then each side of the creek is dug up, and holes sunk as close to each other as they can possibly be, so as to leave room for the earth that is thrown out. These holes are some round, some square, and some no shape at all, the sides having fallen in as fast as they have been dug out. They are, in fact, pits and wells, and shapeless, yawning gulfs, not three or four feet, as in the tempting accounts from Mount Alexander, but from ten to thirty feet deep. Out of these the earth has to be drawn up in buckets; and some wind them up with windlasses, rudely constructed out of the wood that grows about; and others hawl it up with blocks and pulleys; others, and the greater number, merely with their hands. The diggers themselves generally ascend and descend by a rope fastened to a post above, and by holes for their feet in the side of the pit.

Many of these holes are filled, or nearly so, with water, filtering from the creek. It is black as ink, and has a stench as of a tan-yard, partly from the bark with which they line the sides of their holes. In the midst of all these holes, these heaps of clay and gravel, and this stench, the diggers are working away, thick as ants in an ant-hill. You may imagine the labour of all this, and especially of keeping down these subterranean deluges of Stygian water.

The course of the creek is lined with other diggers washing out their gold. There are whole rows, almost

miles, of puddling-tubs and cradles at work. The earth containing the gold is thrown into the puddling-tubs—half-hogsheads—and stirred about with water, to dissolve the hard lumps, when it is put through the cradle, and the gold deposited in the slide of the cradle, then washed out in tin dishes. It is a scene of great bustle and animation. We saw some parties who had washed out in the course of the day 1 lb. weight of gold, others 5 or 6 oz.; and so most of them had some golden result.

As we were watching this process, we observed that the attention of a great number of the diggers was directed to a little green rocker, as they called it, that is, little green-painted cradle. They said that they had seen the people belonging to that green rocker wash out 7 lbs. of gold from nine tin dishes of stuff. All eyes, therefore, were on the watch to trace the party to the hole they brought it from; and that being done, there was a desperate rush to that spot. In a very few hours hundreds of claims were marked out, as near as possible to the golden hole. It was curious to see swarms of men suddenly appear upon the place, all engaged with their picks and spades in marking out the turf into squares of eight feet, or, if for more than one person, of twelve or sixteen feet. The mode of making a claim is simply this: each man traces out one or more of these squares, and sticks a stick down at each corner, and turns up a sod in the middle of it. That is taking possession; and work more or less must be done in it every day, or it is forfeited. It is a common practice for them to mark out one or more claims in each new rush, so as to make sure if it turn out well. But only one claim at a time is legal and tenable. This practice is called *shepherding*; but if any one discovers that a party is holding more than one claim, he can seize any of the supernumerary ones. In case of any dispute about a claim, the Commissioner is called to decide it.

Well, in a few hours, a great space of many acres was marked out, and more people were flocking on, so that they bade fair speedily to come upon our quiet glade, to our very tent; and, in fact, there are several sinking holes very near us. Before the day was over it was amazing what a quantity of holes were dug four and five feet deep, and how the whole scene, which a few hours before was a green sward, looked like a tumbled stone-quarry, with all its heaps of rubbish. Had there been much gold found, the whole of this glade would, ere now, be turned upside down; but very little has been found, and the knowing ones say "it is no go." We marked out two claims, and sunk them nearly six feet each, with no result; and about noon we had a specimen of the way in which mares' nests have been got up to humbug successfully England, Europe, America, and all the world.

There was a great hurraing at one hole, and a man who knew me came running to desire me to go and see a nugget nearly as big as his finger. As no nuggets had yet been found here, but only small gold, it appeared the more surprising. I hastened on; but before I could reach the spot, I heard a man say, "Well, I have sold the nugget and my hole for 5*l.* 15*s.* 0*d.*" "Where is the nugget?" I asked. "Oh!" said he, "the man who bought it has gone off with it."

Now there was a nugget, but it had been first put in by this fellow, an old Bendigo digger, in order to sell his hole. The nugget was probably worth half the money. The diggers dug on with renewed ardour, but soon came down to the rock, and scarcely a particle of gold was found. I have no doubt that many of the Münchhausen holes out of which the 5000*l.* and 7000*l.* were so readily shovelled up at Mount Alexander in a few days, were got up the same way, and for the same purposes. The people everywhere do not hesitate to assert that the wonderful finds that the Governor reported to the Home Govern-

ment were prepared by interested parties. Their expression is, "The holes were peppered for him." I believe very little, if any, gold will be got out of the whole of this rush; and most of these holes are already deserted. Indeed, it seems to be a general opinion that the rush was planned by the people of the "Little Green Rocker," who saw that they were watched, and resolved to mislead their watchers.

Mr. Smythe, the Commissioner, asked me to go to the camp yesterday, to look at seven men whom they have in charge for the perpetration of two murders. He thought they might probably be the seven who visited us on the road. But they were very different fellows; as rascally and murderous-looking a set as I ever saw. The two murders were committed on two individuals whom they found at a distance from their camp. One was a German Jew, Marcus Just, or some such name. He was on his way to these diggings, and had camped somewhere not far off. He had gone to a horse that he had tethered in the wood, when the fellows seized and murdered him. Four bullock-drivers who were camped near, saw them murder the man, but were too cowardly to interfere. It is on the evidence of these bullock-drivers that they are detaining these ruffians. But the bullock-drivers have disappeared, and the man's wife has gone away, some say down to Melbourne. At all events she has not yet arrived, and I much fear the villains may escape from want of evidence. The diggers would have lynched them upon the spot, but the Commissioners very properly prevented it, as it is by no means certain that these are the murderers.

You are not to alarm yourselves about these murders and rumours of murders. They are only committed on solitary individuals; and we make it a practice never to go far into the bush alone, nor unarmed. As for these diggings, they appear quiet and orderly; and people leave their tents all day, and seldom have them "shook," as the

phrase is, or robbed in plain English. But the diggers have a notion that we have some official business up here. They see us with the Commissioners a great deal, and that may be one reason; but all the way up the road they persisted in calling ours "the Government team," for what reason we could never discover; and I having on one day a Bernous, bordered with scarlet, some diggers going up inquired of Alfred if I were not Judge A'Beckett going to judge the prisoners at the Ovens. Though we disclaimed the judgeship, we are at no pains to do away with their notion that we are some way official, as it is evidently a protection. In fact, nobody interferes with us.

Dec. 25. Christmas-day! which we are going to celebrate with the good old orthodox roast-beef and plum-pudding. We have invited two young gentlemen diggers, Messrs. Cooke and Palmer, the latter a nephew of the Speaker of the Legislative Council, to dine with us; and shall drink a Merry Christmas to all our friends in Old England, in a tumbler of brandy and water. We shall *try* to believe it Christmas, spite of the thermometer at 120°, of diggers' tents in the distance, and the bush around us.

LETTER XI.

Diggers' Propensities; firing Guns and felling Trees.—Spring Creek and Reid's Creek. —Wet Diggings.—Ants, Centipedes, Scorpions, and Flies.—Reid's Creek, its repulsive Aspect.—Attempt to assassinate Mr. Reid.—Sells his Station.—An official Snob.—Civility of Spring Creek Diggers.—Death of Dr. Godwin, a Shipmate, from Disappointment.—His Grave.—Fresh Rushes.—Perpetual empty Rumours.—The Mysterious Germans.—Heat 139°.—Our Digging Experience.—Intense Competition.—Determine to go ahead.—Explorers dodging in the Bush.—Churl the Miller.—Result of the Dodging Manœuvres.—We discover a Gold-field.

Spring Creek, Ovens Diggings, Jan. 15. 1853.

WE have now passed more than six months since leaving home, and have bade adieu to the year 1852. The close of the year was celebrated here by the diggers, in firing off guns and making bonfires, with the usual additions of drinking, fiddling, and the like. There was no such thing as any body sleeping till near morning. It is the custom of the diggers to keep up a temporary firing every night. It is the custom at all the diggings, and probably originated in the idea of letting the evil-disposed know that they were well armed. The diggers think, too, that it is necessary to discharge a gun or pistol at night, and charge it afresh; but, except in rainy weather, the powder in this climate is not likely to become damp. However, all are armed, and all fire off their guns at night in rapid succession, so that you may imagine the abominable noise. But the diggers seem like children, who are immensely delighted with the noise of gunpowder.

The diggers seem to have two especial propensities, those of firing guns and felling trees. It is amazing what a

number of trees they fell. No sooner have they done their day's work, than they commence felling trees, which you hear falling continually with a crash, on one side of you or the other. In fact, the stringy-bark is the most useful tree conceivable, for the diggers as well as for squatters. Its bark easily peels off, and forms large sheets, which become hard as boards, from half an inch to an inch thick. These make sides and roofs of huts. They make also floors for them, and for tents. They make seats and tables, one of which we have laid on two trestles in our tent. It forms boats, and spouts and shoots for water. You see large shoots of it to convey the water from the diggers' holes, or to their washing places. A few sheets of canvass, or a few blankets, eked out by sheets of stringy-bark, form numbers of temporary abodes at the diggings. You see numbers of stringy-bark trees standing with the bark stripped off for six or eight feet high, and others felled, and completely stripped. The wood is not less useful. It has the property of easily cleaving, and splits up readily into posts and rails, into slabs for the walls of huts, or into anything that you want. Therefore, there is a great destruction of this tree, and fortunately there is no lack of it. It burns very well quite green, so that it supplies fuel at hand.

Before telling you our individual experience in digging, I will give you a more extended idea of the gold-field here. It consists, in fact, of two fields, Spring Creek and Reid's Creek. Spring Creek runs into Reid's Creek some three or four miles below here. Altogether there are calculated to be nearly 20,000 people on these diggings already, and 13,000 oz. of gold were sent down to Melbourne by last escort. The greater part of this gold is got out of the wet diggings; that is, out of the bed of the Creek. No one, except he sees it, can possibly form any idea of what these wet diggings are. It requires from ten to fourteen men to work a claim, for the

water pours in so fast as to require a good number of them constantly bailing it out; this is done both by buckets and pumps. You see long poles fixed on posts, like those at old wells in Germany, the outer end of the pole being weighted so as to balance the bucket when full; this machine they call a wee-gee. Others use a Chinese pump, called a belt-pump, which the Chinese took to California, and which Californian diggers are using here. The belt-pump consists simply of a long wooden pipe or tunnel, about six inches square, at the upper end of which is a wheel turning a long band of canvass, the two ends of which are sewed together so that it forms a circle. On this band are fixed upright square pieces of board at regular distances; and as the wheel is turned, these pieces of board move onward with the band, enter the lower end of the tunnel, and carrying the water with them, discharge it at the mouth. You have probably seen drawings of it.

Many of these wet diggings are from ten to twenty feet deep; and not only are they thus flooded with fetid water, but the sides continually tumble in, and require to be cased with slabs or sheets of stringy-bark. If this be neglected, most likely, at the moment that the diggers reach the gold, an enormous mass of earth falls in and buries it and them too, if they are not very lucky, many feet deep. Imagine, therefore, the Herculean and incessant labour of these wet diggings; for they must be worked day and night, or they become filled with water to the brim.

In these dismal and troublesome holes you see groups of men working under the broiling sun, streaming with perspiration, and yet up to the middle in water. You may well imagine that nothing can be more destructive to the constitution, yet the quantity of gold found in these wet holes being much larger than what is found in the dry ground, there is always a rush there. Yet what a scene it is! amazing to a stranger. These deep and unshapely abysses, are black with mud, in which lie beams and poles,

and masses of stringy-bark; other holes worked out, or whence the people have been driven out by the overpowering force of water; and amidst all this sludge and filth and confusion, swarms of people, many of them gentlemen of birth and education, all labouring as for life! When you have seen this, you begin to have a truer notion of what gold-digging is, than from the rose-water romancing of the Australian papers.

Next come the dry diggings: these are far enough from the stream to be free from its drainage. Every yard of ground is there dug up; the whole surface is honey-combed with holes, from ten to forty feet and more deep. These are far more tolerable than the wet holes; but working, even there, is no play. The strata through which they are cut, are often as hard as flint; and a noon sun darting perpendicularly into them, and not a breath of air being able to reach the worker, you may imagine something of the severity of this labour.

In some places large square masses have been dug out solidly; and the excavations resemble the foundations of some ancient city, like Nineveh, laid open to the day. The amount of labour has been already enormous, and gives you a very different idea of gold-digging to anything that you see described in England. Indeed, if any one at home asks you whether he shall go to the Australian diggings, advise him first to go and dig a coal-pit; then work a month at a stone-quarry; next sink a well in the wettest place he can find, of at least fifty feet deep; and finally, clear out a space of sixteen feet square of a bog twenty feet deep; and if, after that, he still has a fancy for the gold-fields, let him come; understanding, however, that all the time he lives on heavy unleavened bread, on tea without milk, and on mutton or beef without vegetables, and as tough as India-rubber.

All the meat that we get at the diggings is intolerably

tough, partly because, the diggers say, the squatters are killing off first what they call their hospital flocks—the scabbiest sheep, and those worn to skeletons with foot-rot; and partly because it is obliged to be eaten immediately on account of the heat and the flies, which are truly described by a Melbourne advertiser of wire-gauze dish-covers, as “the insect pests of Australia.” As for the little black devil fly, I give up all attempts to convey any idea of it as a perpetual torment; and the blow-flies we are quite contented with if they don’t fly-blow ourselves. They blow your blankets or anything that has a particle of woollen in it. The other day Charlton was skinning a flying squirrel just shot, and it was crawling with live maggots before he had finished. The other day we saw an ox in a dray, which had its eye burst, and there were actually dozens of maggots in it, eating it out. But stranger still, a gentleman in a party working near us, hurt *his* eye with the handle of a windlass; and the next morning feeling a strange creeping sensation in it, he got up and to his horror actually saw it alive with maggots.

In truth, this country seems the favourite home of insect life; insects here are endless in numbers and form. Many are most singular and curious; but the ants, the flies, the centipedes, and the scorpions are a terrific nuisance. The bite of all these is severe and venomous. There is a red spider too, whose bite is said to be deadly; but the ants are the most numerous, next to the flies. They cover the whole surface of the ground, I might almost say of the whole colony, of all colours and sizes, and almost every variety of them stings keenly. Nor is it the ground only on which they swarm; there is not a log lying on the ground, nor a tree standing in the forest, up and down which they are not creeping in myriads. Trains of them are constantly ascending to the topmost twigs of the loftiest gum-trees, 250 feet high, and other trains descending.

They appear to be a main cause of the prevalent hollowness of the trees, as they pierce to the centre of the youngest ones, and eat out and make their nests in their hearts. They eat the wood of the boughs, so that immense arms often fall off, with a sudden snap, just as if they had been cut asunder by an axe. The other day we cut down a young stringy-bark tree, and split it to make some trestles and the heart of it was all eaten out and occupied by ants. These insects, many of them an inch long, fiercely contest the ground with us, when we are pitching our tent in any fresh place, and their sting is as severe as that of a wasp.

But to return to the diggings: We went the other day to Reid's Creek, and found it much more populous than Spring Creek. For nearly two miles, a wide valley is completely covered by tents, and the soil turned upside down by the diggers. A more rowdy and uninviting scene I never saw. There was an indescribable air of blackguardism about it. All the trees were cut down; the ground, where it was not actually dug up, was eaten perfectly bare by lean horses; and the tents and booths and nondescript erections had anything but a look of prosperity about them. More shabbiness and apparent wretchedness, it would be difficult to conceive, and yet heavy quantities of gold have been undoubtedly taken from the Creek here.

Alfred and I had no little difficulty in making our way into it and through it; for the diggers had evidently taken an especial pleasure in felling trees across the roads, where they were made. When the carts and drays were thus compelled to make circuits, they had felled other trees across their new tracks, till there actually was no road to be found through this delectable digging of gold. You could well perceive what delight these fellows had had in witnessing the difficulty of the draymen in threading their way amid the rude chaos of felled trees; and that

these trees were really felled for this purpose was evident from the fact, that there they lay, tops and all, and, therefore, had not been cut down for fuel or other uses.

Reid's Creek has the character of being a disorderly and dangerous place. There have been no less than fifteen murders committed at it; and we were warned, if we went there, to look well after our horses, as horse-stealing is very rife there. One of the murders was that of a man by his mates. He was known to have got a large quantity of gold, and it was observed that his tent was closed for several days. This attracted attention, but his mates said he was gone away on business. After this had continued for about ten days, the neighbours strongly expressed their suspicions to the Commissioner, and recommended the tent to be searched. But as he declined this, the diggers entered it themselves, and found the body buried under the floor, and in a state of putrefaction. Meantime, the assassins had disappeared.

Mr. David Reid, on whose station this digging was, and who lived about two miles and a half off, has been several times waylaid, in order to rob him. As he was in the habit of buying large quantities of gold, the villains imagined that he carried it home with him in the evening, which, however, he was too prudent to do. As he did not expect to escape assassination eventually, he has sold his station and gone away.

We had a letter to Mr. Reid; and inquiring where we should find him, we were directed to the Assistant Commissioner's tent, as the best place to learn. We rode there, and saw an official personage standing in front of the tent, having very much the look of a clerk of a coal wharf. This, we afterwards learned, was a Mr. Mackaye, the inspector of police. He pretended not to know Mr. Reid, appeared offended that we should presume to speak to so great a personage, and in the most snobbish manner turned into the tent, refusing to give us any in-

formation. A more civil man pointed out Mr. Reid's hut, which was about fifty yards in front of this silly jack-in-office as he stood. The man, I found from Mr. Smythe the next day, was a low drunken sot, and was within a few days dismissed, for commanding his men to charge a respectable store with fixed bayonets, in a drunken fit, when his own men knocked his hat over his eyes and marched him away to the Commissioner.

Mr. La Trobe told us that some of the most desperate characters in the colony had come up to the Ovens Diggings. They seem instinctively to have congregated at Reid's Creek; for I must say, that a more quiet and orderly population I have rarely seen, than at Spring Creek. We go about amongst them, and watch them at their work, asking all sorts of questions, and in every instance we have met with the utmost civility and good nature. People leave their tools and cooking apparatus about outside their tents, while they are perhaps a mile away at work; and it is very rare that anything is touched. Nay, the other day a digger found a valuable tether-rope of one of our horses, in the woods, and came and asked if it were not ours; a great contrast to our experience on the road.

I only wish that gold were more plentiful for the sake of these good-hearted fellows, as well as of ourselves. But except in the wet diggings, which they are fast exhausting, there is a great dearth of profitable labour. The majority of the diggers are dissatisfied, and not earning more than their expenses, many not that. There seems a general feeling of disappointment; and there is as general an expression of indignation at the inflated accounts which have drawn such numbers to this colony. They declare that the only object has been to cause a large immigration, at any expense of truth; and that where the accounts were true in some respects, they were not *the whole truth*; the drawbacks and difficulties being carefully kept out of

sight, which make all the difference. Numbers of those who came out in the same ship with us, have abandoned the quest of gold, and a considerable number made their way back; but the most melancholy fate has been that of Dr. Godwin. He was one of the most intelligent and best-informed men in the ship. One of the first persons whom I met on my arrival here, was a Mr. Pettifor, who had been the partner of his enterprise. He had occasionally given the passengers lectures on biology. He now presented himself to me in an old slouched white wide-awake, and the rest of his dress in correspondent dilapidation. He was nearly blind from the attacks of the flies, had an ulcer on his nose, and was altogether so metamorphosed that I did not in the slightest degree recognise him.

After saying who he really was, he added, "I suppose you have heard the news?" "What news?" "The Doctor is dead!" "What! Dr. Godwin?" "Yes; did you not hear of the coroner's inquest?"

"I heard of a coroner's inquest over a person who was supposed to have cut his throat, or to have poisoned himself. Surely the Doctor did neither of these acts?"

"Oh! no; nothing of the sort. These are false rumours, owing to the suddenness of his death. But the truth is, he died of sheer disappointment,—of nothing more nor less than a broken heart. The depression of his spirits, on perceiving how cruelly he had been drawn from one end of the world to the other by enormously exaggerated statements, completely overpowered him. He was very ill, and at length died of utter collapse, in a few hours."

This statement was fully confirmed to me by Dr. Green, the coroner. Poor Godwin! I was really shocked at the news. The many long conversations I had had with him on the poop of the Kent, on moonlight evenings in the tropics, came back upon me strangely. Then he was full of his plans for the diggings, of the gold that had been re-

presented so plentiful and so easy to procure; and now, already, he was sleeping on a hill near in the Bush, one of a considerable company who had thus early broken this virgin soil of the wilderness, not with their gold-spades, but with their mortal remains. I have been up the hill, and contemplated his grave with strange and melancholy feelings. Like those of his fellow-slumberers, his grave was surrounded by a rude paling, but without any inscription. What golden hopes and visions, I thought, lie quenched in this recordless spot!

The uneasy state of the digging population here is evidenced by their being so generally on the *qui vive* for a rush. Wonderful rumours are afloat on all sides, and everywhere the diggers are ready to run after them. Scarcely was that over which I described to you, on what is now called Pennyweight Flat, as indicative of the amount dug up there, than there came other stories of wonders in the woods between us and the Buffalo ranges. For days bands of diggers, with their picks and spades, their washing-dishes and provisions, were going up. Drays and carts, with all their loads of tools and instruments, soon followed. Alfred and I went too, and saw some small creeks at three and five miles distance, and tents pitched and people working, but with so little result, that some of them were already on their way back. And what a road they had had to make and travel up! All the way up steep stony hills without a track, through the woods, and amid huge stones and fallen trees.

Then there was much talk again of famous diggings at The Buffalo ranges and at The Devil's River; but the Commissioners assure me that really nothing is doing there. Then there have been wonderful tales of certain mysterious Germans, who bring in large quantities of gold from nobody knows where, and whither nobody can track them. There was the same story at Melbourne before we left. The scene of those mysterious Germans was in the

Dandenong hills, where, when followed, they always disappeared as by magic at a certain spot. The same story had circulated at Bendigo; and there the mysterious Germans, equally untraceable, said they brought their loads of gold from Whipstick Gully. Here, when asked by the Commissioners, they were said to reply, that they brought it from Wattle Gully; which means anywhere, for wattles grow in all gullies. It was confidently stated that they had brought into the gold office 100 lb. weight in one day; and this soon grew to 150 lb. weight. It was evidently one of those myths in which people delight; and as it was all over the diggings, and produced universal excitement, I went purposely to the camp, and there it turned out to be 100 oz. ! The Commissioner declared that to be the very largest amount that had ever been brought in there by any one party at one time. If the golden stories that reach home, could have thus been put to the test, how many thousands might have spared themselves the circumnavigation of the globe !

And now for our own experience. Our holes at Pennyweight Flat yielded nothing. We then sunk a hole eighteen feet deep, near our tent. It was through gravel set as hard as adamant, and appeared as if it would go down to the centre of the earth. We, therefore, concluded to leave it for an easier trial, especially as the sun stood, on the last day that we worked it, at 139° of Fahrenheit, at noon ! We were the more resigned to abandon it, because some of our neighbours had gone twice the depth with the like result. Yet I have heard since that one party went 130 ft. deep near there, and got a tolerable quantity of gold !

Observing, however, that the gold was most abundant in the stream, or near it, and must, therefore, have come down the stream, we set off, and prospected, as they call it, that is, reconnoitred, upwards. With the exception of about half a mile at the head of the present diggings,

which for some cause remained untried, we found parties on the Creek and in the gullies bordering on it, for two miles upwards. In one gully going off to the right, called Blind Gully, there were great numbers at work; and they had been tolerably successful, but had now nearly worked it out.

We returned to the unoccupied part nearest the diggings, and prospecting, soon found gold. Thither, therefore, we removed our tent, and set to work. Two men, following our example, one of them a negro, immediately sunk a hole near the creek. Gold was speedily found there, but the water was too powerful and drove them out. To avoid this evil we set in at some forty yards from the creek, but with the same fortune. The water at about four feet deep ran through a gravelly silt, like a millstream; and after throwing out, with all the vigour of our whole five persons, 7000 buckets of it, we perceived that it was hopeless to endeavour to keep it down. Yet we could see the gold in rich quantities on our shovels, but which was immediately washed off by the water. It was clear that the gold here, plentiful as it was, could only be got by a great number of parties working it at the same time. We did our best to attract people there; but the water deterred them, and the charms of a dry gully just behind our tent, with the alluring name of Madman's Gully, turned all that way. We were on the point of opening a claim there ourselves, and intending to return to the creek side as soon as a sufficient rush could be drawn there. But we were destined to follow another direction. Seeing the thousands that now came pouring into Madman's Gully, and the yet very irregular results, we perceived that there would not be any chance of securing more than one claim before the whole gully would be occupied.

This fierce competition, owing to the amazing numbers thrown upon the diggings all at once by the marvellous re-

ports sent through the whole world, we now saw would defeat every chance of large individual accumulations, except in some incidental cases. Europe has nothing to compare, for a desperate struggle of competition, with that which the diggings of Victoria present. It struck us, therefore, that the best chance was for those who went boldly a-head into new scenes, and that the only period of profitable harvesting would, even then, be that which elapsed before the eager tide had overtaken you. The gold clearly came down the stream from the hills, and we resolved quietly to steal away and explore them.

But our scouts had not penetrated far into the Bush before they encountered another emissary on the same errand. This was a person belonging to the party of Mutch, a substantial miller who had abandoned his grist and his toll in quest of the native gold. Having seen this party on the road hither, our pioneers now learnt that they were watching a certain dray, which, well loaded with tools and provisions, was as quietly as possible stealing across the Bush. The man said that they knew the head of this party well,—Braidy of Albury—and that it was one of great experience, and would not move across the trackless Bush without being in possession of some rich and real object. They had been off prospecting, and were now, doubtless, on the way to some newly discovered digging-ground.

Our scouts joined this man, and they together pursued this interesting dray. They went on till they reached the heads of Spring Creek, in fact, till it was lost in bogs, instead of descending from the mountains as was supposed. They followed on till the land dipped down the other way into a great valley filled with scrub and rank grass up to their horse's necks, and they saw ranges of hills before them.

At length they came up with a loaded cart, also on the track of the bullock-dray. Very soon after they overtook

two Yankees on foot with their swags on their backs, and also on the same chase. Two bearded fellows they were, who had more the look of Poles or Hungarians, but whose intonation left no doubt of their nationality. They declared that they would dog the dray to the world's end if necessary, saying that they had heard that the proprietors of this party had brought twenty pounds weight of gold with them. The country was covered with hop-scrub up to their very heads, so that these Yankees could follow very near to the pioneer dray, unseen.

As there appeared no likelihood of the dray moving on with those spies after it, our scouts rode on to some distance to explore the country, and on returning found the original dray, the cart, another bullock-dray which had come up also, and the two Yankees, all camping for the night near each other. The original dray people declared that they had provisions for three months, and would not move a step further while the others remained. There they lay watching each other, and endeavouring to tire each other out; the followers declaring their determination to follow, and the leading party protesting that it would not lead, and that even were it to go on, the rest would find the road over rocks, precipices, and streams, such as they had little idea of. The others responded that, where they could live, they could too, where they could pass, they could. Thus our party left them, like chess-players watching for the next move, and returned home.

Friday, Jan. 7th.—Yesterday we went to the tent of Mutch the miller, and learnt that the parties we have described had continued to lie in the Bush for two days, obstinately watching each other. On the third morning before daylight, the original bullock-dray party had put in practice a clever dodge. While it was dark they had sent off two pack-horses, and the most able of their party towards their destination. They knew that the ground

being dry and hard, it would be more difficult to track the horses than the loaded dray. The dray remaining just where it was, and all having been conducted with wonderful quietness, the departure of a portion of the party was not discovered for some hours; and then, indeed, there was a running, and a hunting, and an excitement!

The remainder of the other party had secretly sent in the night to the diggings for other horses, which they had ridden to and fro in the scrub, so as to confound the traces of those which had gone forward. And now, as the other parties eagerly began to pore over the ground on all sides, to make out the foot-prints of the pack-horses, it was found that they had set off in quite a different direction to that which the dray had been pursuing, and had made such a zig-zag route till they got upon the hard stony ranges, that all were thrown out by it. Meantime, the people of the dray themselves, quietly collected their bullocks and drove back to the diggings, followed by all their pursuers, except the two Yankees. They coolly declared that they would never quit the search after the pack-horses till they found them; and like two Indians of their own forests, they continued to pore after their traces, sometimes on their hands and knees; sometimes, making long cross tracks through the bush, eyeing the grass and the shrubs to discover where they had been broken by any passing animal, and thus they disappeared at length in the woods, and they succeeded! After numerous hardships they came upon the original dray party on the lower Yackandanda, and on the spot which on this discovery speedily grew into the present Yackandanda Diggings.

Our party, once more resuming their exploratory expedition, took a direction to the right of that where these rivals had lain, they camped during the nights under a temporary blanket-tent with a fire at their feet. The country which they traversed was more wild and hilly

than any that they had seen. The grass, the hop-scub, a white speedwell, and other shrubs and plants which Alfred, who was our representative, did not know, reached to the horses' necks. They saw kangaroos hurrying out of their track in their deep woods, and the ground was full of dens of the wombat (*Phascolomys ursinus*) and, therefore, most dangerous for their horses. They passed through glens where the tree-ferns were so tall and thickly grown as to close over their heads, and made it nearly dark. But the most important thing was that at some twelve or fourteen miles distance amongst the hills, they prospected a considerable stream, and found abundant signs of gold. Hither, therefore, we mean to steal away as secretly as we can.

LETTER XII.

Stealing away.—The Miller's Camp.—Miller's Boy lost in the Woods.—Steer our Way through the Forest.—Arduous Journey.—Profound Solitudes.—Obstructions from Jungle and dead Timber.—Dragging on through the Rains.—The Yackandanda.—Two Diggers there!—Our Encampment.—Opossums and Flying Squirrels.—Dog bitten by a Snake.—Extraordinary Hawk Family.—Black Cockatoos.—Hot Wind.—Colony destitute of wild Fruits.

Upper Yackandanda, Jan. 21st. 1853.

AFTER what we had witnessed of the dogging of Braidy's party, it was clear that a vigilant look-out was kept for any sign of successful prospectors on the move to get to their newly discovered grounds. We saw that it would require the greatest caution to get away without being watched and followed. As we must take our carts with us, it would be impossible to prevent leaving traces of our wheels. Our best chance, we thought, lay in drawing first to an outside, and then to busy ourselves in apparent prospecting up the creek, as if we knew of nothing better farther off. We commenced at first by removing and encamping near the miller, as he had a short time before withdrawn himself to an isolated and retired spot on the higher part of Spring Creek, and was digging there for a blind. His tent was pitched in a solitary bend of the creek with high wooded hills on each side, and he and his men were digging in the banks of the creek, with all apparent zeal. It was a picturesque spot. High banks overhung the stream on the near side; and on the other, you looked up steeps thickly covered with shrubs, and solemn with giant growth of trees. The stream ran clear

as crystal; and close to the tent lay a stupendous blue-gum tree, blown down, with its mass of roots and earth reared like a wall close upon the stream; and on these sat a tame gray magpie, and a green paroquet called a leek.

We pitched our tent close by, proposing to make another move the next day, as if bent still on trying this stream higher up. The night was intensely cold, though now the hottest season of the year; and we were delayed in the morning by a circumstance which may show you the ease with which cattle, both horses and bullocks, may be lost in the bush. A few evenings before, in approaching the miller's tent, and not a quarter of a mile above it, in coming down the banks of the creek, we met the miller's boy with a dog, going up to bring in the bullocks, eight in number. These bullocks we had passed in the gully not ten minutes before. We were astonished, therefore, on arriving at the miller's tent to pitch our own, to learn that neither boy nor bullocks had been seen till the day but one after. He had never caught sight of the bullocks at all; and for two nights, and nearly for two days, he had been wandering through the woods in quest of them. He had lived by casually coming upon some stockmen collecting cattle, who had given him some provisions; but how he had borne the bitter cold of those nights is to me a mystery. It was such that it had nearly killed a horse that yesterday we found fallen into a hole made by an uprified tree. We got some men, and pulled it out by main force, but it was so cold and cramped that it could not rise for nearly the whole day.

However, though the miller's boy was returned, the bullocks were not; and a day was again spent in seeking them, but in vain. The next morning, therefore, leaving the further search of these for the present, we moved on, taking the track which had been followed by Braidy and his pursuers for some distance. If any one was aware of

our departure, and on the watch, our keeping this track might seem to impress them with an idea that we were only endeavouring to follow the course of that party.

But when we had advanced a few miles, perceiving no one in any direction during this whole time, we took the opportunity at a hard, dry, stony place, suddenly to cut away from that track, and to point our course in the direction of our new goal. After proceeding for several miles, we flattered ourselves that we had perfectly succeeded in giving the slip to every one, and that our track would not be likely to be noticed, as, from the hardness of the ground where we left the other, it ceased there to be at all visible.

At noon we reached a creek in a secluded valley, and paused to dine. We had now to direct our course through the perfectly trackless forest by the compass. Our progress was slow enough, for the whole wilderness was overgrown with the hop-scrub and long grass, up to our middles; this hop-scrub, as I believe I have said, resembling bushes of plum-suckers, or perhaps more like bushes of poplar-suckers, of a light green, both stem and leaf. These, in the smoothest parts, made it very heavy drawing for the horses; it was, in fact, a regular forcing and ploughing our way through it. But the greater part of our way lay over high hills, all rough with rocky stones, and embarrassed by fallen trees. Immense trees they were, of a former generation; of a vastly greater bulk than any now standing, most of them from 150 to 200 feet long, and many of them six and seven yards in girth; and these lay continually across our path. All were charred and black,—both these and the lesser trees and branches, which were concealed by the grass and scrub. Some terrible bush-fire—years, many years ago—must have done this; for the trees now standing have a youthful look, though many are quite as tall, though none so bulky.

Onward we went, up hills and down valleys, and over creeks, wade, wade, wade, through the deep scrub. The country appeared as if no mortal had ever yet traversed it. The solemn stillness of the boundless woods; the wild growth of shrubbery and grass; the tangled thickets; the lofty trees; the immense masses of fallen timber lying on all sides, and often completely cutting off our way and shutting us in; the thick, dense masses of wattles and tea-trees in the valleys, which, with swamps and jungle, hid the streams,—all bore evidence that here we were truly in the haunts of primeval nature; and that, in the language of Childe Harold, it was ours—

“To slowly trace the solitary scene
Where things that own not man's dominion dwell,
And mortal steps had ne'er or rarely been.”

Mr. Bateman and I went on in advance, to pioneer; and we were really pioneers, according to the witty definition — “the men what *axe* the way;” for we had continually to clear away fallen trunks and huge branches for the passage of the carts; to drag others aside, when we could, and, when we could not, to cry halt, and call up the assistance of the whole troop. Every few yards we were met by these obstructions, and the labour was immense, and the progress slow. Alfred and Charton led the horses, and had continually to bounce the cart over timber that we could neither cut, drag, nor go round. Edward came behind, to see that nothing was jumped out of the cart in this rough progress,—carrying in one hand a gun, in the other a tin kettle or billy, as the diggers call it, of yeast for baking; and on his shoulder perched the miller's green paroquet. The gray magpie, which had ridden on the miller's load, had its leg broken by the blow of a bough, and was obliged to be killed.

The way through the woods became more and more difficult, and, to add to our troubles, rain came on. All the afternoon it continued to rain heavier and heavier; but we

were unwilling to stop till we reached the banks of the Yackandanda. We therefore pursued doggedly our way, thoroughly soaked, both by the falling rain, and the dripping scrub through which we waded. At length, as evening drew on, we descried the object of our search.

The Yackandanda runs many miles from this part of the country, and falls into the Murray near Albury. Some twenty miles lower down are those Yackandanda Diggings which sprung out of the pursuit of Braidy. We are here, we imagine, not many miles from its source; but though we are yet buried in seemingly unfrequented woods, it is not to be hoped that we shall be left long to the sole enjoyment of them. The diggers are sure to trace up the stream if they find gold in it, as there must be, since it is found both below, and now, by us, above. Parties or individuals are scattered for scores of miles in various directions from the Ovens Diggings, exploring, tracing up every little stream, and certainly will not stop till they reach the Snowy Mountains. We must take time by the "top-knot," and make all speed we can with our digging, before we have company. In the most solitary and remote woods, where scarcely, if ever, a white man has yet set his foot, the adventurous gold-digger is now daily wandering, his rug, his tea and damper, his sole resources.

As we gazed on this valley, it looked wild and lonely enough. The stream was hidden in the bottom of a considerable valley, amid a dense green shroud of wattle and tea-tree, and bordered outside these with great swamps and jungles. We looked up and down, it was all the same, profoundly still and sombrely gloomy. We had not seen hitherto a single hut, nor a single head of sheep or cattle. The natives had abandoned these parts; and the white man has scarcely, even in the shape of a solitary squatter, taken possession of them; but there is gold here, and the rushing tide of men, in pursuit of it, is not far behind.

Here we pitched for the night, and were glad to creep

into our blankets, without attempting to make a fire and enjoy tea. The rain fell so furiously that it was hopeless to do more than clap down the large top of our tent on the ground, and throw hastily in our bedding, with the tarpaulin under it on the wet ground. We were all wet to the skin, and our boots soaked through and through; but we had dry things in our bags, and so managed to lie down in dry night-clothes. But the rain continued to fall in such deluges, that our tent top, not being well stretched, the water ran through as through a sieve, and other streams came running in under us. But there was no help for it; so we made the best of it, poor supperless creatures as we were, and found something to be merry over in the fresh outcries of one or another. "Oh! I am drowned! The water is pouring on me as out of a spout!" "Ah! ah! ah! there is a regular river running into my bed!" "Ugh! there comes Prin (the dog), all wet as a mop, and has dived, shivering, right down into bed beside me!" Amid these outcries, attended with fresh laughter, tired as we were, we at length dropped asleep; and yet a more miserable situation you cannot well conceive, in those, to us, unknown woods, with darkness, and the winds howling around us, and the stream moaning along its swampy bed below us.

But morning came and cured all our ills. It was fine, and we were soon up, not a whit the worse for our previous day's drenching. We were camped on a pleasant knoll above the valley, under some huge trees. We had soon a roaring fire kindled at the foot of one of them; the kettle boiling, and steaks frying. We spread out our wet clothes in the sun to dry; and so warm was it now, that, by the time we had breakfasted, they were ready to pack.

Again we proceeded on our way, the journey being only a repetition of yesterday, labouring on amid scrub and fallen timber, sometimes involved in such labyrinths

of it as brought us to our wits' end. We followed the course of the stream upwards, and as near to it as we could for the swamps. We had no doubt that there was gold in the creek here; but the swamps and the volume of water presented difficulties which would be lessened higher up. We crossed a brook coming from the right hand, and falling into this, since well known as the Nine-mile Creek, and abounding in gold, but at this moment all intact in its native wildness, without a digger upon it. We were bound for a spot higher up, at the juncture of another small creek flowing from the left, where the ground was more elevated, and the creek less swampy and scrubby. About noon we reached it, and were no little surprised and chagrined to find two diggers already encamped upon it. They had traced our scouts, beheld the marks where they had dug in prospecting, made themselves certain of the presence of gold, and, having nothing to carry but their light tent-sheets and a few tools, were there before us!

No time, we saw, was to be lost. We crossed the creek with some difficulty, and selected a camping-place on a rising ground in the fork made by the two creeks. All around us we had the view of the woods behind us, and of those beyond the two creeks, in most places rising in a gradual slope, till lost in the thickness of the forest. The soil, a reddish gravel, in many places on the forest slopes showing itself through the thin grass, gave an appearance of dryness to our location; while the greenness of the grass in other quarters promised food for our horses. The green hop-scrub, however, spread more or less everywhere, and the trees were the loftiest we had yet any where seen. They are of the white-gum on the slopes, with huge red-gums and blue-gums by the water.

Thus we had quietness and greenness, and the most deliciously cool water, sweet and clear. But this quietness and greenness cannot last. Prospectors will

speedily follow us. We foresee that all these bushy banks of the creek will be rapidly and violently invaded. The hop-scrub will be burnt, the bushes in and on the creek cleared away, the trees on the slope felled, and the very ground torn up for miles around. The crystalline water will be made thick and foul with gold-washing; and the whole will be converted into a scene of desolation and discomfort.

Such were our thoughts as we pitched our tent, cut a little trench round it to carry away any wet from rain, cleared away the scrub from the front, and gave it, what even you would say was an air of neatness and comfort. This done, we laid down our tarpaulin carpet, arranged our beds, rolling them up in divans; and then, with a couple of rude tressels made of forked branches, and a large sheet of stringy-bark, some two yards long by one wide, furnished ourselves with a table.

We now began in earnest to dig; but before I relate our proceedings and our fortune in that operation, I shall treat you to a few miscellaneous observations, which will give you a more lively idea of the natural objects that we live amongst.

One thing which has struck us in this country is the extreme tenacity of life in many of its animals. The opossums will often take two or three discharges of shot, as if it were only so much dust or dough. Even when forced to quit their hold of a bough with their feet, they will cling to it by their tail, and hang for hours. They will fall from a bough, perhaps 150 feet from the ground, with a bump and a bounce, which of itself, you would say, would knock the life out of anything not already perforated with some dozens of shot-corns. You may hear the thump of their fall some hundreds of yards off, yet even this only seems to revive them. Up they will spring, and, if not instantly seized by the dogs, will be up the nearest tree as quick as a squirrel, and disappear in a

hole. Here, though both they and the larger flying squirrels, or perhaps more properly flying opossums, called Tuons, which are as large as opossums abound, we have ceased to attempt to shoot them; the trees are so wonderfully tall—from 200 to 250 feet—that they may be said to laugh at our shot. It is only when the dogs surprise them on the ground, and they run up into young, low trees, that we get them. They are the favourite and principal food of our dogs, as they have been, next to kangaroos, of the natives.

Dogs, immediately on coming into the Australian forest, become perfectly frantic in the pursuit of opossums. The moment the night falls they are off, if they are loose, into the woods, and, chasing the animals up the trees, stand at the foot and bark vehemently for you to go and shoot them. They would hunt all night, and every night, if you would let them; and when you are in the habit of chaining them up to prevent this, they steal away, if possible, most cunningly at the approach of dusk, and you may call them in vain till they betray themselves by their barking.

The miller's tent and ours count no less than ten dogs. Two only, however, are ours. Prince, Prin, Perkin, or Prim, as he is often called, from his reddish drab colour, that we brought out with us, is a famous opossum hunter, following them often, where a tree slants, right up it. As a retriever, he is unrivalled, and fetches us any wild-fowl that we shoot, out of any water. Our other dog is a large and very handsome black one, with long silky hair, a fine brush tail, and is supposed to have a strain of the wild-dog in him. He came up to our tent one evening, worn down with travel, lame, and exhausted. We fed and caressed him, but it was several days before he recovered from his fatigue; and we find that he has had one of his fore-legs broken sometime, as if by a wheel having gone over it. Possibly this was the cause of his being

left behind. We named him Buff,—not certainly from his colour, but from his coming to us from the direction of the Buffalo Mountain. You may imagine that, with two dogs for guards, no one can approach our tents without very vociferous notice of it.

Buff was bitten the other day in the ear by a black snake, which species abounds on the banks of these creeks, and he was very nearly killed by it. He still droops that ear; and before we left Spring Creek, a very fine dog, belonging to an Irish gentleman, was bitten by one of those black snakes, and died on the spot.

In a very lofty tree near our tent there was a hawk's nest. The old ones offended Charlton's feelings very much, by continually bringing small birds in their claws, and rending them up for their young. We therefore consented to destroy the predatory family. But here, again, we were met by the wonderful tenacity of life. Alfred shot at the young ones as they sat on the side of the nest. One of them fell, and hung by a leg, but in a few minutes, to our surprise, recovered itself, regained the nest, and sat upon its edge, as blithe as ever. Alfred fired at them repeatedly, but, so far as we could see, they only retreated into the nest. He sent two rifle bullets through the nest, with as little effect. In a little while they were all sitting again in a row on the side of the nest, awaiting the arrival of their parents with fresh prey. We, therefore, felled the tree. When the tree fell, which was 150 feet long, we went to the nest, expecting to see the young ones all killed; but, with the exception of one, which had its leg broken, and which we destroyed, all the rest—although flung far out of the nest by the shock of the fall—were as lively as possible, and are now sitting all-*arow* on a pole before the tent of the miller, who begged them.

Numbers of the birds here appear quite insensible to shot. I have seen a parrot fired at half a dozen times,

and evidently hit each time, go off at last as if there was nothing in the world amiss with it. But the life-tenacity of these birds is nothing to that of the insects. To the accounts I have given you of them, I may add that we have watched the actions of the large inch and inch-and-half long ants, called bull-dogs, and are satisfied that they sting exactly as wasps or bees do. We laid a quantity of rice, which had got wet, to dry in the sun. A cloud of the little black flies settled on it; but very soon advanced a host of bull-dog ants. They pounced on the flies, as tigers would on their prey, seized the flies with their mandibles, and then stung them with their tails. Their death was instant; and the ants then marched off with them. If the bull-dogs only killed the black fly, we should regard them as no trifling benefactors; but they are so vicious, and sting us so abominably on all occasions, that we wage ruthless war on them, if they enter our tent; but as to killing them by cutting them to pieces, that is hopeless: cut them in two, and the head will immediately seize the body, and gripe it fiercely with its nippers, and the tail will sting away at the head. They never trouble themselves to die; and the only way to destroy them is to crush them to powder.

The nests of ants are everywhere; and many of them are enormous. As I have said, they make the trees hollow, and fill the interior with earth, in which they live. If a tree is broken off, they fill the stump with earth, and convert it into a nest. Others collect whole cart-loads of quartz and other stones, about the size of peas, and live in them. These nests are often six or eight feet across each way, and as hard as rock itself. When trees are blown over — and that is by hundreds and thousands — you see the nests of a species of ants under them, or within the hollow bole, as large as globes of two feet diameter. These are globular, and formed of leaf-like layers, or imbrications, of what seems a mixture of earth

and the gum kino of the tree. They are like huge, globular wasps' nests, but hard like gutta-percha, and about as tough.

The white ants form conical nests of clay, of three or four feet high, and three or four feet in diameter at the base. These are baked by the sun to the hardness of brick; and the entrances to them are so carefully concealed, that they seem only one solid pile of clay. A troop of these white ants we were by no means pleased to find the other day had made their way into a clothes trunk, and had laid a great number of eggs in our coat pockets, sleeves, &c. We speedily routed them.

A curious natural fact which has been pointed out to us, we find, from repeated notice, to be quite correct. It is that the black cockatoo, a much larger and more splendid bird than the white, is a certain prognosticator of rain. These birds are rarely seen in flocks; seldom more than two together; but whenever you hear their loud clear cry of "clayo! clayo!" you may rely on speedy rain. These birds have a rich gold colour about their heads. We have also flocks of gray cockatoos, with scarlet heads, which have a strange creakling note. They are said seldom to rear more than one young one at once; and that half-a-dozen birds will assist at this difficult achievement. When they have young ones about in the trees, they make a strange croaking cry, like a barn-door fowl when some one has caught it.

The other day we had one of the hot winds that blow from the interior. It is the north wind, and is the most singular wind I ever felt. This wind blew for a few minutes hot as out of a furnace, and yet mixed, as it were, with lines of cold wind. In a few minutes it ceased; there was a lull; and then it blew back again from the south, but now all cold. Then, again, there was a lull for a few minutes; then back again hot; and so it seesawed from south to north, and north to south, in the

most odd and unaccountable manner, till it ceased altogether.

Another natural fact regarding this colony is its almost total absence of wild fruits. There is scarcely a nut, a berry, or a wild fruit of any kind. Many people who have been in America express their surprise at the difference in this respect between the two countries. There you find many rich berries, and abundance of nuts (hickory-nuts and others), in the woods, as well as wild grapes. Here you literally find nothing from one end of the colony to the other, except a red-fruited bramble, very inferior to our good old blackberry. No apples, no plums, even poor as crabs or sloes. There is a species of cranberry, the fruit of which grows *under* the plant; but this is extremely rare; and there is a fruit called the quandong, which grows on the Murray, which has a large stone, and would seem to resemble a plum. Edible roots are as few. In fact, except a very rare sort of fungus, growing in the ground, called native bread, which the natives roast and eat, and the small root called the murnong, the natives had no vegetable food, but were thrown entirely on animal food. But this is a country which takes kindly to almost any fruit, root, or vegetable that civilised man brings into it; and will, doubtless, one day, be as affluent in all these riches of nature as any land on the globe. We have said how prodigally the peach flourishes; the same is the case with the vine and the fig; and hereafter every man may and will "sit under his own vine and his own fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid." I see no reason why vineyards should not be cultivated to any extent, and wine produced without stint in quantity or superior in quality. To-day, however, these lie in the background of gold.

LETTER XIII.

Digging up the Creek. — Plenty of Gold. — Prospectors find us out. — A Veteran of the Class. — A great Rumour of our Discovery, and a Rush. — Crowds arriving, Trees felling, Bullock-drivers swearing. — Tents and Stores pitching. — Nature returned to Chaos. — Prospecting ahead again. — Scenes among the Hills. — Routine of our daily Life. — The Miller and his Men excited by our Success. — Our Claim robbed. — Frantic Conduct of the Men. — Menace Assassination. — The Men punished. — Mutch and an old Man. — Predominance of Scotch in the Colony. — A Scotch Spendthrift.

“Upper Yackandanda, Feb. 28th, 1853.

WE have begun to destroy the beauty of this creek. It will no longer run clear between its banks, covered with wattles and tea-trees, and amongst its shallow parts overgrown with foreign-looking shrubs, flags, and cypress-grass. A little while, and its whole course will exhibit nothing but nakedness, and heaps of gravel and mud. We diggers are horribly destructive of the picturesque.

The creek runs about fifty yards to the left of our tent, and is, perhaps, some ten or a dozen feet across; but the stream only occupies part of this space, running amongst thickets of the afore-mentioned shrubs. Well, we set to work in earnest as soon as our tent was complete. This is what may be called surface-digging, for the gold lies near the surface of the bottom of the creek; and, indeed, we find it hanging in the roots of the shrubs that we pull up from the spaces that stand above the water. But the main quantity of gold in this stream is found to lie on a layer of clay about two feet below the surface. On this lies mud; and in this mud there is more or less gold. We have no need, therefore, to dig holes of from ten to eighty feet here.

Our first business was to select a portion of the creek

where, from its slope, from natural obstructions in it or otherwise, it appeared likely that the gold would lodge. Along the bank of such a portion we then cut a race, some twenty or thirty yards in length, through which we diverted the stream, leaving the channel dry by throwing a dam across. Immediately below us the miller and his men threw another dam across, and raced off another portion. We then placed our cradle by the side of the race, and began digging up the bed of the creek, and both its banks, as far as we could find any gold. We found all the mud and gravel to contain more or less gold; and therefore we put all through the cradle, one bailing on water as another rocked; the rest digging and carrying the precious sludge. After putting a certain number of buckets-full of the washing-stuff through the cradle, we take the fine gravel out of the slide of the cradle, where it lodges with the gold, and wash the gold from it in a tin dish.

Imagine us setting to work on any brook that you know; cutting down the bushes and sedge, and paring off the grass; damming the water off into a channel cut for the purpose; and then digging up the bed and the banks of the old channel, and washing the whole of the mud, gravel, and earth through a cradle. It would seem absurd to expect gold in it. But there is nothing in these brooks that looks different: the mud is just as black and muddy, and the wet and dirt are just as wet and dirty. Yet out of the very roots of the grass we shake gold. We can see the particles shining as we open pieces of the grass-roots. But the chief part of the gold lies on the clay at the bottom, and that seems studded with it just like a pudding with plums. The gold here is small, much finer than that of any other Australian diggings, and purer too. Only very small nuggets, and very few of them, are found up here; seldom larger than one we found to-day, which was about the size of a horse-bean.

We propose to work the washing earth in this creek

with a Long Tom,—that is, a trough some ten or twelve feet long, and about six inches deep, with a grating at the end, where the gold drops through into a box placed under it, and the stones are shovelled away. As the stream turned into the Tom washes the earth when shovelled to and fro, the work is much more rapid.

We find gold beyond our expectation, and if we could have a few months to ourselves, we should come home laden like bees. In this creek, within the next mile, there lies undoubtedly a splendid fortune, if we had it to ourselves. But that is not to be hoped for. We have been only a few days, and we already see symptoms of an accession of company. Smokes have been perceived by us, rising over the woods down the valley. The man working below has disappeared, it is expected to fetch others to help him; and, with the numbers constantly on the watch, others will quickly be on their heels.

The wonderful accounts sent from Melbourne have brought hither throngs, not only of English, but Germans, French, Italians, people from the Cape, Californians, Americans, and even New Zealanders. You meet them on every hand. At the Ovens there are thousands, doing no good, who are on the *qui vive* for a new rush; and no sooner does a man pitch his tent in the most secluded spot, than he sees others coming after him. His smoke betrays him, or the discoloration of the stream where he works his gold. Numbers range about merely to examine the streams; who the moment they see any discoloration, they follow it up till they find the cause. Cautious diggers, therefore, never wash at a stream, if they are not actually working in it; but resort to some pool, or take water from the stream, and run it off another way.

The number of men *prospecting*, that is seeking out gold in new situations, is very great; and, therefore, let you penetrate into the most obscure places, they eventually come upon you. The first-rate prospector is a

peculiar character, worth noticing. He is a cautious mortal. He steals quietly away through the woods—generally, at first, taking a direction opposite to that which he means to follow. He is sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, carrying, besides his swag, a spade, a pick, and a tin-dish, to examine the soil of the creeks, or their banks. If he find gold, his phrase is that he has got a *prospect*, good, or pretty good, or excellent, as it may be. The prospector generally belongs to a party, who continue working at their old location, till he comes back with good tidings. Then they go away, generally pretending that they are doing nothing, and are off to some well-known diggings. They steal away as quietly as they can; interest makes them the most modest and retiring of men. The prospector hates popularity, as much as some other people like it. He desires no flourish of trumpets or beating of kettle-drums before him.

An old fellow of this description was one of those who had got up hither. When *our* prospectors were out, they found him digging beside a lonely creek amongst the hills; and he did not seem very well pleased to be found. He declared that he never followed anybody, and wished that nobody would follow him. He was an old man, stoutly built, sported a grizzly beard, and, like old Johnny Wolgar, rode an old white horse. But the old fellow, no doubt, carefully traced *them* to this stream. He did not, however, seem to be satisfied with it; for he was always going to and fro through the woods on his horse, on pretence of going to some mysterious station, where meat and potatoes might be procured. Alfred and a son of the miller's proposed to accompany him; but he led them *seven hours* through the woods, and they found no station. The next day he went away and never reappeared; but a man who had been his mate here, staid a day or two behind, and then followed, leaving us a blessing by setting the scrub on fire before he went. Luckily for us the wind was

not strong, as it would soon have destroyed our tents. As it was, we succeeded in beating it out with branches. This old prospector declared that on one occasion he was lost in the bush for nine days, and subsisted on lizards, the heads of which he chopped off, and then boiled the bodies in his quart-pot; and that they tasted like fish.

Jan. 27th.—Our fears are realised. Prospectors have come wandering up the creek. They had succeeded in following our tracks, and they declare that there is a great rumour at Spring Creek of *splendid surface diggings* somewhere in this direction. Of course, we professed only to be prospecting; but, as we had dug out a considerable space of the creek, confessed to finding a little, adding, however, that if there were really splendid diggings, we imagined they must lie on some other stream. But you cannot delude these fellows. Yesterday a man made his appearance, and, spying our tin-dish, in which we had washed out a few ounces of gold, and placed it in a hollow tree, he very unceremoniously marched up to it, took it up, and began to examine it. I called out to him that that was making rather too familiar. "All right!" said he; set down the dish, and disappeared; and this morning he reappeared at the head of some scores of others, marching in Indian file through the wood, shouldering their picks and spades

So farewell to the quiet of these woods, and to the gold of this creek. This formidable invading army, looking gay enough in their red jumpers, and blue jumpers, and wide-awakes, but by no means attractive to us, at once marched straight up to our claim; sprang down into it, examined the clay at the bottom, nodded to each other their approbation, and hastened to appropriate sections of the creek both above and below. We had cast our eyes on several spots which appeared particularly promising; they have pounced upon them all; and already we behold their carts arriving with their tools and tents. They must

have been somewhere not far off when their scout discovered us.

Feb. 10th.— We have lost no time in working out our first portion of the creek here, and securing another while one was left; for it is amazing what a host of people have flocked up hither after us. Our coming here was like cutting the dam of a reservoir, and letting all the flood in upon us. Spring Creek and Reid's Creek were crowded with diggers, who were doing no good, and were ready to run at the first news of something better; and already there are many thousands settled down for three miles along this creek, and for about the same distance along the branch which we crossed on the right hand, which they call the Nine-mile Creek, and which is said to be still richer than this. Below that distance, the water is too strong to cope with.

But what a change in so short a time! These valleys which, when we came up them, were so solitary, and so dense with tea-trees and wattles shrouding the courses of the streams, are now all studded with tents. The trees are felled by thousands; the creeks are laid open in long stretches to the day, by the tea-trees and scrub being cut down. There are carts and bullock-drays going to and fro with stores; there is a beaten road where we dragged away the fallen trees out of our path; the forest echoes to the blasphemy of the bullock-drivers; there are stores and a butcher's shop at Nine-mile Creek; there is a doctor's shop; and there is to be directly a Government Camp there. These revolutions here are about as rapid as the shifting of scenes in a theatre.

Our first claim in this creek turned out wonderfully; and we are working another, which bids fair to equal it. But by the time that we shall have finished this, which will be in the course of a few weeks, we must be prepared with a fresh one, and that must be on another creek, for this is every day getting fuller and fuller. Fellows come

every day and attempt to dispute possession with you. They declare that you have too much; and in one instance a large party actually commence in the very middle of our claim. Hitherto we have always got rid of them by telling them, when they did not heed our remonstrance quietly, to do as they pleased, and we would send for the Commissioner to settle it. We were pretty certain that none of them had licenses; and so it proved, for none of them staid to risk the arrival of a Commissioner.

But, to be prepared, we have set at liberty two of our party to prospect some of the creeks still farther ahead. In the pursuit after Braidy's party, Alfred had seen a mountainous country, which he imagined to be a gold country; we, therefore, proceeded to the spot where he obtained this view, directing our course by a pocket compass. The whole way lay through woods, which, from their look, you would imagine had never been tracked. The scrub, the ubiquitous native hop-scrub, was up to our chests, and sometimes even over our heads. We waded through it with no little labour; but wherever we went we could see neither man nor beast, except a few kangaroos. We were obliged to be very careful lest we should plunge down the perpendicular holes which the natives have dug in pursuit of the wombats, which abound in these forests.

The wombat resembles a large badger in the shortness of its legs, but has a little of the pig and the bear in its shape, hair, and movements. It is so large that it is said frequently to weigh a hundred-weight. It digs a circular hole, large enough for a good big boy to creep into, and entering the earth in a slanting direction, to the distance of thirty or forty feet. There are frequently three or four entrances in different places to these burrows; and the natives have generally struck down in the centre position between these holes. The holes the natives have dug are circular and perpendicular, like chimneys, and from ten to

fifteen feet deep; so that they are very dangerous to ride or walk over, for the tall grass often hides them, and your horse might break his legs in them, or you might disappear down them in a moment. But of the wombat holes themselves, you are warned by the heaps of earth and stones that the animals have thrown out of them, amounting to whole waggon loads.

We came upon a creek, which we tried for gold, and found some, but not in quite so rich a quantity as in this creek where we are. This creek was bordered, by places, with fern-trees, but not more than four or five feet high. The stems of the fern-trees consist of a spongy elastic substance; except a small portion in the centre, which is more solid, and striped with alternate black and white. As for the timber-trees, there are more noble stems of many yards in girth, and from 100 feet to 200 feet long, than would supply all England from these neighbouring woods. It would be worth something to have 100,000 tons of them lying in some timber-yard in London.

We pursued one creek till it fell into another, and that into a third, the Barwidgee, which went bounding on its way over granite rock deep amidst dense woods. Before descending to this last, we crossed the one we were upon, and ascended the woods, to obtain, if possible, a view; and soon found ourselves on a precipitous steep, overlooking a sea of hills, the prospect being bounded by the huge bulk of the Buffalo, at, I suppose, some 20 miles distance. It was one of the finest views that we had yet seen; for we rarely get any view at all in this country; the whole, as far as we have seen it, being one unbroken forest. Their sheep and cattle stations are all uninterrupted woods, which are, of course, extremely monotonous.

Here, however, we had an ample prospect of hills beyond hills, a whole region of them; and, far below us, the valley of the Barwidgee winding through them, to-

wards the Buffalo Mountain, whose bare ridges stood clear in the azure atmosphere. I do not know the height of the Buffalo, but should suppose it about 3000 feet. The nearer and lower hills were dotted all over with what appeared short, stumpy trees, but which, I dare say, were tall enough in reality. They looked, many of them, very much like hills covered with vineyards. The higher and more distant ranges, had a wild, forest, and solitary look; and solitary was the whole scene. There was no smoke, except a great one near the Buffalo, which we supposed to proceed from a bush-fire; no sign of man, or animals, except that we could occasionally perceive the lairs and drinking spots of wild cattle, but could get no single glimpse of them.

After making tea in a quart-pot, as the diggers do,—that is, putting the tea and sugar into the tin, and boiling them for a while on the fire,—we descended the steep to the Barwidgee. It was very precipitous, and nearly half a mile before we reached the bottom. Huge masses of granite, imbedded in drift-sand, formed the channel of the creek, and all around was deep jungle and wooded hills. Mountain trees had fallen across the bottom of the valley; and we had to clamber over them, and again jump down into the thick grass and jungle up to our heads. But even here the prospector had been before us. There were holes dug at intervals along the creek, which only very strong parties could have made. One was twelve feet square, and as deep; and out of it they had raised blocks of granite of at least a ton each. But it was evident that the labour had been fruitless; the valley had been abandoned. We tried the creek, but could get no single trace of gold. It was clear that we must still penetrate deeper into the mountains to find it; and, as our present claim demanded our speediest operations, we returned to work it out.

Before proceeding, I will give you an idea of our daily

life at this spot. It is monotonous enough—that of active, daily, but profitable labour. We see only a newspaper by accident; and as we are twelve miles from the Ovens Diggings, we know little of what is going on there. We rise with the sun, about half-past four o'clock, and leave off work when he sets, about six. On rising, we perform our ablutions at the great log near the tent,—a fallen tree of some 200 feet long, which we have burnt through in the middle with our daily fire. We then go to work for about an hour before breakfast; and so through the day, only allowing ourselves a good hour at dinner time. After tea, we generally congregate round the fire, where I have manufactured and placed a long bench; and some of our neighbours often come and hold a chat. We go early to bed; and that is the course of the whole week. Sundays are, of course, our days of rest and reading. On these pleasant days, too, we write our letters, and occasionally take long rambles through the woods, noticing all that they have to show to us of vegetable and animal life.

Feb. 27th.—The harmony of our immediate neighbourhood has been lately sadly broken up by the demon of gold; and I must give you a short history of it, for it is one of a kind that is continually occurring, and finds the Commissioners enough to do in settling disputes and restraining offences. It must be so where Mammon is Lord Paramount, and will illustrate curiously one feature of digger life.

Mutch, the miller, and his men, had been very peaceable and useful neighbours up to a certain point. The man had an honest, bluff look, and seemed disposed to be very civil, especially as he had flour, sugar, &c., to sell, which we were willing to buy. He would occasionally borrow a horse from us, when his own had strayed, or had sore backs—a very common case in this warm climate, where horses are not groomed at all in the bush, and where the

saddles are generally very flat. Of all book-knowledge he was as innocent as any miller need be; but as that was an accomplishment that we did not look for in him, we had no cause to complain on that account. It was something to have a party near you that you seemed to know *something* of,—for of the majority of diggers, of course, you know nothing,—and with whom you could establish a sort of neighbourly standing, and mutual-obligation-and-protection society.

All, therefore, went well till our claim began to assume a very golden aspect, far surpassing that of the miller. Then was it wonderful to see the excitement, the agitation, and the restlessness that seized on him and his company. This consisted of two men, whom he said he had taken into his employ for charity, having found them reduced to a state of utter destitution. The looks of these men certainly did not recommend them. They were both red-haired, and one was destitute of an eye. Amongst ourselves, they accordingly went by the names of Polypheme and Caliban. The one was a stupid sailor; the other, Polypheme, a more acute and knowing fellow; but both, up to this point, were well-behaved and civil. Besides these, there were two boys, Bob and Bill.

As I have said, the moment they began to witness our success, their whole nature seemed changed. They were working the portion of the creek next below us, and there is every reason to believe that it was equally as good; but instead of digging it all out clear before them, they dug here and there, turning the whole up pretty much as so many pigs would. No part could be said to be cleanly and thoroughly washed; and their refuse was actually thrown in their own way.

When, therefore, they witnessed the gold that we obtained,—and they kept a sharp look-out,—they became more like the wild beasts in the Zoological Gardens at the approach

of feeding time, than anything else that I can think of. They were all in agitation. Every nerve seemed to quiver with irritability. They were in constant action; running to us, to look at our proceeds every time we worked a fresh dish or emptied a cradle; then running back again, jumping into their holes, and digging away like maniacs for a few minutes; then jumping out again; then holding a hurried council, and setting in in some fresh part of their claim, as soon to abandon it.

Before they had manifested any symptoms of this violent gold-fever, I had confidentially said that, if no one took up the portion of the creek immediately above us, before we had done this, we would take that. They now, therefore, rushed away from their own claim, before it was half finished, and yet leaving a quantity of tools in it, by way of retaining it; though quite unavailing, if any one chose to slip into it while they were at work on another.

Here they delved and plunged about in the same extraordinary way; and, as if they thought that all the gold, by some magic process, was conjured into our claim, they came and pared down our dam as close as they could, so as not actually to let the water in upon us; for which, however, we were chiefly indebted to the logs we had laid across it, and which they could not cut through. After working two or three days with little success on this new claim, and seeing that we were approaching the lower end of ours, they as suddenly abandoned the one above us, and returned to their old one. There they set in as close to ours as possible, and cut away their dam, so that if we had turned the water into our claim, when finished, it would entirely drown them out. But having cut away their dam, they pared away the earth close to our claim, the boundary of which was marked by a tree on each side of the creek, as if they were anxious to have the smallest possible grain of gold that their terminus would admit.

But unfortunately they did not stop here; for, on going

to our claim the next morning, to my astonishment, I saw that the thirst for some of our gold had been too strong for them; they had actually been at work in the night, and had cut away four feet of our claim quite across! Surprised as I was, I proposed in my own mind that no notice should be taken of it, but that we would quietly draw away, when we had finished this claim, now nearly done, from these so clearly dangerous neighbours. But some others of my party were not so forbearing. Their youthful blood boiled with indignation the moment they saw the encroachment; and they told Polypheme and Caliban, who were the spadesmen of the party, that there must be no more of that.

This was the signal for what these fellows call "a flare up." They were on fire with cupidity and jealousy at our success, and there only wanted a spark to cause their gunpowder spirits to explode. They did explode, in such a volley of oaths and abuse as only the most accomplished blackguards could let loose. But that was not the surprising part of the affair. It was no novelty to see and hear the most unsurpassable specimens of blackguardism on the diggings. The extraordinary person in the party turned out to be the miller himself.

The moment that Polypheme and Caliban began to wield those weapons of Billingsgate with which no decent person can cope, I appealed to the miller to put a stopper on their tongues. I told him that there could be no question about their robbery of our claim — the trees were the undeniable evidences in the case; but that our desire was peace. For my own part, though I could not avoid seeing the encroachment, I should have made no remark upon it; and that, now it had been remarked by my party, though in the most simple and unexact terms, I had no wish to claim restitution, though several ounces of gold were clearly taken, and though the Commissioners would, on appeal, compel its immediate pay-

ment. What I asked, was merely that he should order the men to be silent, and I would engage that no remark whatever should be made by our party.

The miller was rocking the cradle at a little distance, but it became at once manifest that he was pleased that the fellows should abuse us. He sat, coolly rocking the cradle, and all that I could extract from him was, "I am a member of the Peace Society, and won't interfere." I told him that that was the very reason why he should interfere, and order peace and decency; but he only rocked his cradle quietly on, with a quiet smile on his full-moon, placid face.

It was clear that these men were no other than the bullies of this man of peace, and that the object of the whole party was to drive us away from the remainder of our claim, that we might leave its plentiful gold to them. Seeing, therefore, that this was the object, and any further appeal was useless, I requested that my party would not return a single word, whatever might be their abuse, and that, if they proceeded to any acts of interruption, we would seek the protection of the Commissioners. I said this before the miller's party; and on that system we steadfastly acted. We went on calmly with our work, paying no attention to the incessant vile language of these two low fellows, and the mild approving smiles of the miller. We had to bear this disgusting outpouring of rage and vulgarity for two or three days, hoping that the fury of these men would of itself die out. But no such thing. Our patience and forbearance only seemed to add fire to their malice.

The one-eyed Polypheme seemed actually on flame with malignity; and he became a perfect devil in spite, audacity, and mischief. His one eye glared with a furious light; his features were inflamed with a fiendish fury; his abuse never ceased; and often he seemed on the point of rushing at us, and attempting some desperate act.

The perfect indifference and forbearance of every member of our party commanded my admiration.

At length to such a pitch did the ferocious rage of Polypheme advance, that, seizing an axe, he began to chop down one of the boundary trees, which I perceived so leaned that it would fall directly across one of our cradles, and smash it, if not instantly removed. The rascal exclaimed aloud, that if he could smash us altogether with it, he should be content. And truly, as I gazed on him, chopping furiously away at the tree, I thought I never had seen so perfect an image of a devil.

As the cautious miller, however, saw that we made no attempt to remove the cradle, and foresaw that, if destroyed, the Commissioners would be called in, and that his party would not only have to pay the damages, but also probably to be fined four or five ounces of gold; and moreover, as he would probably get his trusty and well-beloved workmen committed to custody for a few weeks, and thus lose their services, he now, though a member of the Peace Society, interfered, and ordered Polypheme to desist. But, to use an expressive phrase, the devil was too strong in him to pay any attention; he chopped away with only more demoniac energy. The miller, therefore, ordered the rest of his party to fix a rope to a branch of the tree, and, as it fell, to drag it away from us.

It was now a desperate strife between Polypheme and his own party. He put to all his force, and struck fast and furiously, to get the tree down before they could secure the rope to it. It was a doubtful chance which would prevail. The tree already tottered. The men had some difficulty in reaching a bough that had strength enough to bear the pull. They were all bustle; the miller stopped his phlegmatic working of the cradle, and stood rivetted in attention. Polypheme, red with heat, and dropping with perspiration, chopped with all his excited strength, and made his chips fly, and his axe swing so

that no one dare go near him. At length the tree gave a crack—a swing. Polypheme stood like all the rest of us, watching intently which way it inclined. For a moment, it seemed that nothing could prevent it falling directly on our cradle; but the force of the men pulling prevailed; the tree gradually turned aside, and fell clear of us and our apparatus.

There was one peril escaped; but having now seen the desperate and diabolical nature of Polypheme, and how little was to be hoped from the better nature of the miller, we began to have serious fears that his malignity would urge him to other attempts; and our first thought was of our horses, which grazed in the bush near, and were, therefore, exposed to any mischief that he might desire to practise upon them. To prevent this, we could only trust to our constant watchfulness, and to that of our dogs, who gave instant notice if any one stirred amongst the tents near us.

No such mischief happened; which perhaps was again caused by the Scotch caution of the miller, who, though enjoying, and no doubt, abetting the insolence of his men, was careful not directly to commit himself. The rage and insults of Polypheme, and the stupid Caliban, who was his ready tool, continued unabated. After we had finished that claim, and commenced one down the creek, at some distance from them, we trusted that the infernal fire would die out gradually. But by no means. We had still to pass near the miller's tent to our own; and on all possible occasions, Polypheme assailed us with the vilest language. No one ever returned a syllable; and this seemed to exasperate him more and more.

This had gone on for about a fortnight; there was no abatement whatever of the nuisance. The very boy Bill, an Irish lad, was set to insult us whenever we passed; and nothing availing to rouse us to any notice of their conduct, Polypheme began to utter the most deadly threats

against us. He took his gun, and pretending to shoot at birds in the bushes near us, sent his shot right amongst us while at our work. Luckily we had been watching his motions, and took care to interpose the trunks of some good large trees betwixt ourselves and him. But it now appeared time that we should seek some protection from him. We were here in the bush with no police; the Government Camp was not yet established here; and we were entirely exposed to the brutal wickedness of this fellow at any moment; while his malicious fury only seemed to grow by time. An opportunity was very soon presented for seeking redress.

As we returned from our claim to breakfast, near the miller's tent, Polypheme crossed our path, carrying on his shoulder a huge branch of a tree, the thicker end of which he held near the ground. As Alfred passed, he dexterously pushed the bough betwixt his legs, evidently with the intent to throw him down; but Alfred got away, and, without even turning his head or uttering a remark, walked on towards our tent. I was standing near Polypheme, who now occupied the path with his person and his huge bough. Defeated in his object, he now burst forth with a torrent of the most horrible language, and menaces of murder, which I did not wait long to listen to; but no sooner had Alfred and myself reached the large tree by our fire, where we washed our hands for breakfast, than Polypheme and Caliban came out to the corner of their tent, about twenty yards from us, and recommenced the most violent threats of murder. Polypheme vowed particular destruction against Alfred; and his faithful shadow, Caliban, exclaimed,—“Why not do it now? Why not do it at once? I would.”

The miller had now for days heard the murderous threats of his men, and never interposed a word of rebuke. He now sat in front of his tent, a most placid image of a member of the Peace Society, and heard all these vows

of violence and bloodshed, and uttered no word whatever. It appeared, therefore, high time that an end should be put to this state of things; that all prudent forbearance had reached its limits. I therefore said to Polypheme,—“There has been quite enough of this; you shall now hear what the magistrates have to say to your conduct.”

The miller, now addressing Polypheme, opened his mouth with these oracular words,—“There! you have put your leg in it, and they’ll take advantage of you.”

As we sat at breakfast we could hear great altercation in the miller’s tent, and his voice loudly raised, denouncing their folly, for, as he phrased it, “getting their leg into it.” But he had enjoyed their malicious insolence too long; his caution and condemnation came too late. After breakfast Alfred, well armed, rode off to Spring Creek; and in about three hours came cantering back again with three troopers, and a warrant for the apprehension of the offenders. The magistrates made short work of it with them; they condemned them to pay a fine of 5*l.* for Polypheme, as principal actor, and both he and Caliban to be bound to keep the peace for six months in penalties of 80*l.*, which the miller had to guarantee. The magistrates also assured them that the slightest attempt to renew their insolence or annoyance, independent of any higher breach of the peace, should be most severely punished by imprisonment, and the penalties most rigorously exacted. Never were men more completely muzzled. We had calculated that it would not be safe to remain near them; but there was no fear: they were thoroughly quailed; and within a week afterwards the miller dismissed them, and they went at large, he being for six months responsible for their conduct,—I have no doubt, a severe punishment to his sordid and cautious nature.

So far as we were concerned, we suffered no further molestation from them; but we were witnesses of further

development of the miller's character, which, though it did not surprise, extremely disgusted us.

Amongst the arrivals who had now thronged to this creek, was an old man who had pitched his tent near to the miller's. He had been seized with a severe illness, and lay long confined by it. His vigour was greatly impaired; but he had a good tent and tools; and his mates having left him in his illness, he had given to a strong young fellow the use of his tent and tools, to help him, and go shares in the proceeds. No sooner had the miller lost his own two men, than he cast his eyes on the stout mate of the old man, and offered him inducements sufficient to lure him away from his partner. The old man came to me, and said,—"What, in God's name, am I to do? The miller has wheedled away my mate, and I am set fast. We have a hole within a few feet of the bottom, which I am confident will turn out well; but I cannot work it alone; I cannot both dig and wind up the dirt." I advised him to go through the diggings and see if he could not find some other able young fellow, who, for the comfort of a good tent, and the use of tools, would join him.

"I must try," said the old man, despondingly; "but here is a claim in the creek which seems abandoned; that I could work alone, as it is surface work, and it is very near my tent."

"That," said I, "is quite at liberty. It is a good claim; I saw much gold taken out of it by the last party; but they were from Bendigo, and said it was better there, and are gone back. It has been untouched for a fortnight; and is yours if you like it."

He old man fetched his cradle, set it down by the race, and began to work. Suddenly the old miller looked out of his tent, lifted up his head like a startled hare, on seeing the old man at work, rushed into his tent where the old man's former mate was, brought him out, pointed to the old man; and both he and the young man seizing

spades, immediately hastened to the old man, to let him know that they meant to have that, and began to shoulder him off. The poor old man came again in his trouble to me, and said,—“What in the world shall I do! The miller has taken my mate, and now he is taking the very ground from beneath my feet.”

I told the old man not to distress himself; to go and assure them that I would prove his right to the claim, and would stand by him in an appeal to the Commissioners. This had the effect of bringing them to some reason. They agreed to divide the claim; and the old man, to avoid loss of time and the trouble of an appeal, consented. A tree, which lay across the claim, was to be the dividing boundary; but it was soon seen, that when the old man was absent, the miller and his party rolled the tree with levers forward, thus continually encroaching on him. I therefore advised him to begin and dig at the tree, so as effectually to stop them. This has served for a time; but we are going soon away; and then poor indeed will be the old man's chance against them. They will be sure to drive him out of his claim.

That is certainly a strange history of an honest miller, who boasted that his mill was making him 3000*l.* a year. Abounding as the diggings do with singular demonstrations of character, they can, I think, furnish few more remarkable than that.

And yet, perhaps, that of a Scotch prodigal is not much less so. We give the Scotch such unbounded credit for enterprise and the quality which their own word “canny” so well expresses, that we are not surprised to find a host of Scotchmen on whatever shore we may step, where money is to be made. Neither the snows of Canada nor the heats of India present any obstacles to them. This colony, before the gold discovery, was almost entirely Scotch. An immense majority of the squatters were Scotch, and remain so still. The principal mer-

chants are Scotch: there is the same preponderance of the North Briton amongst the medical men and officers of the colony; and the publicans are almost entirely Scotch and Irish. On the diggings Scotland has no lack of representatives; and they are everywhere, in all professions, careful, grasping, and thriving men, with a few exceptions. Take one:—

An old man came the other day, and throwing off his wallet, sat down on a log by us, wiped his brow,—for it was tropically hot,—and began what he called “a crack,” and in which he gave us this sketch of himself. He was from Glasgow. He came out before the gold discovery, having a brother at Hobart Town, in Van Diemen’s Land. He did not say that either he or his brother had been *sent* thither. On the breaking out of the gold-fever, he went over to the diggings, and arrived at Bendigo in the first abundance of its yield. He soon cleared 1300*l.* With this, like numbers of others, he went down to Melbourne; and, as there was no land to buy and settle on, he spent in drunkenness and riot 800*l.* One of his countrymen, belonging to his party, robbed him of 300*l.* more. He went over to Hobart Town, and arrived with 170*l.*, which his brother prevailed on him to place in a bank. Of this he soon drew out 70*l.*, and started once more for the diggings. But the days of wonder were over; his luck had deserted him, as it had done thousands of others. From one place to another he had wandered on—through Ballarat, Bendigo, the Ovens—and here he was, with nothing but his pick and spade on his shoulder, and his blanket and provisions on his back. His 70*l.*, he said, were nearly gone; but then, he had still 100*l.* in the bank at Hobart Town; and there he would go and winter, if no better fortune detained him. “Ah! those grand days,” he said, “when the stuff he dug out was so rich, and glittered so that he was obliged to throw his blanket over it to prevent people seeing it!” He was now bound for

some one of those wonderful diggings which are always floating in the imaginations of the digger, and, aided by interested storekeepers, drive him on, and on. The one he had now heard of was somewhere up this creek, and amongst the hills. It was useless to tell him that we knew of no such place, but only of one boundless waste of forest and mountain in that direction, where gold had been, to our own knowledge, sought in vain. He "humped his swag," in diggers' phrase, that is, shouldered his pack, and disappeared in the woods.

LETTER XIV.

Fresh Throng on the Diggings. — Estimate of Climate. — Fresh Accounts. — Statements of various Authors. — All understate the Heat. — Heat shown by our Thermometer. — Changes of Temperature. — Causes of Illness. — Effectual Precautions. — Evils inevitable in a new Colony. — Exposures of Digger Life. — Fly-blight. — Diggers' real Grievances. — Nothing done for them. — Rigorous Exaction of License Money. — Russian Treatment. — Why no Roads? — What the Mormons did. — Dr. Lang on the Land System. — An American's View of our Policy. — Colony opened to Plunderers, but not to Settlers.

Upper Yackandanda Creek, March 1st, 1853.

THE crowds which every day oppress, as I may truly say, the diggings, grow constantly and rapidly. They are discontented crowds, and far from healthy ones; and I should not give a true picture of the real condition of the gold-fields, and of the colony generally, if I did not at some length here endeavour fairly to state the causes of these facts. We will despatch the question of the salubrity of the colony and the diggings first, as the soonest dealt with.

If we were to judge of the healthiness or unhealthiness of the colony of Victoria by the amount of sickness in the population, we must pronounce it to be very far from a healthy country. But this would be by no means a fair judgment. There are many circumstances to be considered before drawing a conclusion on so very important a point, as it regards emigration. In the first place, this is a new country, and a country yet uncultivated to any considerable extent. It is to Englishmen a new climate; and, however mild and delightful a climate for six months in the year, for the other six months it is a far hotter

climate than England ; and it is not to be supposed that, were there no other causes to affect the health of immigrants, this change of climate could be made by adults with impunity.

The heat of the summer is much greater than any accounts of the colony lead you to expect. Dr. Lang says the climate in summer is like "the climate of Devonshire;" but the sun would much astonish the Devonians if it treated them to such summers as they have here. In fact, this colony lies under the same degree of south latitude as the south of Spain and Portugal do in north latitude, including two degrees of Africa. Count Strzelecki was more correct when he compared it to the climate of Naples.

All the statements that I have yet seen profess to be based on the Government observations taken regularly at Melbourne and Geelong : and here the mystery is solved ; for Archer's *Register of Victoria* informs us that the three daily observations are made at the following hours :— 8h. 30m. A.M., 2h. 30m. P.M., and 9h. P.M. ; and all from a *thermometer in shade*. From these observations the published *mean temperature* is drawn. Now, let it be understood, that immediately after sunset in this climate the air cools down with an almost miraculous rapidity. Sunset at the very latest takes place at twenty-seven minutes past seven o'clock, that is, in January. So that more than an hour and half of this cooling process has been going on after sunset. This gives a stranger a most delusive idea of the temperature here, and elicits hearty curses when he feels the heat in which he has to work.

Mr. Westgarth, one of the best statisticians of the colony, following such guides, says, "The hot winds last commonly for one or two days at a time, with a temperature of from 80° to 90° in the shade, ascending *sometimes, though rarely*, as high as 100°."*

* Page 27.

Now, without any hot winds at all, we very frequently have the temperature within our tent from 100° to 120° ; and the other day we had the temperature in the sun at 139° at noon, the thermometer sinking in the following night to 40° ; so that within twelve hours there was a variation of 100° within one! But I mean to keep a careful register of the thermometer for twelve months, from which I shall give extracts in this work.

People coming out here under the impression that they are to experience a Devonshire climate, are confounded when they find themselves labouring under an almost Indian sun at the severe labour of the diggings; and when, after a profuse perspiration during the day, they lie down, and the thermometer falls rapidly, as it always does in the night, they are again confounded at the extraordinary cold which they experience. To these rapid and wide variations within each four-and-twenty hours, to the want of that preparation for them which a truer exposition of the climate would have induced, and to the neglect of the all-important precaution of having a perfectly waterproof oilcloth or tarpaulin to sleep upon, are owing three-fourths of the severe complaints which attack those who go to the diggings.

We spent *one pound* in an ordinary railway tarpaulin, such as is thrown over the carriages of the goods trains, which we obtained from Mr. Richardson, tentmaker, of the New Road; and, from what we have observed at present, we shall probably escape a hundred pounds' worth of doctors' bills by it, as well as the utter destruction of our constitutions. We invariably, whether travelling or stationary, lay that down on the ground, to place our beds upon; and we sleep as dry as in the best chamber in England. We often come to ground swimming with water at the close of a day's journey, and we have no alternative but to camp upon it. Yet what matters it? We lay down our tarpaulin, and have a floor as dry as that

which the Queen of England has under her ; and whatever be our days, whether hot or cold, our nights are nights of comfort ; and our health is far better than that of most of our neighbours.

We see the most frightful effects of cramps and rheumatism, of fever and dysentery. With the cramp and the dysentery we have had our struggle ; but our constitutions are intact, and our health good ; whilst around us we see the strongest men racked and crippled, and others cut off by fevers with fatal rapidity. But what have been the habits of these men ? They have been taught to believe that they might abandon all the habits of their English life in this *fine climate*. They have gone up the country thinly clad, and thinly provided. They have toiled and broiled through intensely hot days. They have drunk large quantities of water impregnated with decaying trees and gum leaves ; they have drunk, too, often, no trivial quantities of brandy or rum ; and at night they have thrown themselves down on the ground, wrapped in a single rug, and have awoke in the morning nearly frozen, and their whole frames chilled with the moisture of the ground under them. Is there any wonder that such men become the victims of excruciating rheumatism, of cramps, and dysenteries. And, *therefore*, you hear almost every one denouncing the climate as most insidious, most variable, and, in a word, “the most execrable on the face of the earth.”

As to the *variableness* of the climate, that does not apply to the state of the weather from day to day. Nothing can be more steady, nothing more uniform. For days, weeks, months, you have the same fine stretch of weather, whether the season of the year be hot or temperate. The trying variations are within the four-and-twenty hours — variations of temperature. When the sun rises it becomes in summer almost instantly hot ; the moment it sets it becomes as rapidly cool, and in the night

cold. But once aware of this, and there is neither danger nor discomfort. Get into plenty of blankets, and have a tarpaulin under you, and you know nothing of the cold of the night, and risk nothing from it.

I have said, too, that this is a new country, as well as climate. It is yet, with very trivial exception, one huge, unreclaimed forest. Now, I do not believe that any country, under any climate in the world, can be pronounced a thoroughly healthy country, while it is in this state. The immense quantity of vegetable matter rotting on the surface of the earth, and still more of that rotting in the waters, which the new visitants must drink, cannot be very healthy. The choked-up valleys, dense with scrub and rank grass and weeds, and the equally rank vegetation of swamps, cannot tend to health. All these evils, the axe and the plough, and the fire of settlers, will gradually and eventually remove; and when that is done here, I do not believe that there will be a more healthy country on the globe. But at present, many things are attributed to the climate, which arise from other causes,—from the new habits, the exposures, the excesses, and the neglects of the new population: the digging population, especially, owes the effects on its health, in a great measure, to the violent change of diet. People who have come from the regular tables of England—its well-fed and well-cooked meats, its puddings, its milk, and other domestic luxuries—and find their food to consist of mutton and beef tough as leather, damper as heavy as a stone, and this unvariedly, morning, noon, and night, from day to day, week to week, and month to month, with an almost total exclusion of vegetables,—depending on the frying-pan for the eternal sameness of their cookery,—ought not to be surprised that their stomachs are *astonished* at the change, and that they are extremely liable to dysenteries, diarrhœas, and indigestions; nor that, working up to the waist in water under a tropical sun, and sleeping exposed to

cold and damp, they should be visited by cramps and rheumatism.

But the flies and the fly-blight! Yes, truly, they are a curse, and no mistake. Almost every third man that you meet up the country in summer is half blind through them; and some people altogether lose their sight. Numbers of people have their faces muffled up in veils—a smothering alternative. Some of our party have had their eyes much inflamed for a week or more, when they have swelled up like two great eggs, just as if their owners had been fighting; and then they turn black. In a morning the sufferers cannot open them till they have been washed with warm water. Our dogs have suffered too; and we fear that Prin has lost the sight of one eye.

They tell us that a little green fly generally causes the blight; but we have seen no green fly, and want to see none; it is the little black devil which causes it here. And now we have another fly come out, which they call the March fly. It is a great grey-black blundering fly, very like an aged beef-fly. It is, in habit, however, a real gad-fly, and persecutes our horses infamously. Charlton kills scores of them upon the poor animals. They settle on us unceremoniously, and bite abominably; but fortunately they are very easily killed. What creature will come out next, we know not; but no doubt each summer month has its full and proper share. In the advance of cultivation and population the diminution of this insect nuisance must be looked for.

But, say the complainants here, Melbourne is equally unhealthy with the country. That is not quite true, for, in my opinion, it is far more so; for we find the *settled* population of the country, the squatters, enjoy good health enough. They have good comfortable houses or huts, and enjoy the necessary supply of fruits and vegetables, as well as meat, eggs, and good varied cookery.

But in Melbourne we are told that there are no less than about 150 doctors, to about 80,000 people. There are certainly very great numbers, and, what is more, they flourish. But wherever was there a healthy, populous town, in a hot country, which was totally undrained, and which drank the water of a small river, into which all its filth ran? That is precisely the status of Melbourne; and when it is well drained, and is supplied with a pure water, it will be a much less flourishing town — for the Doctors.

We come now to the causes of a very prevalent discontent amongst the diggers—the largest class, be it remembered, of the present population. Besides their complaints of the climate, and its diseases and nuisances, as just enumerated, they almost to a man consider themselves grossly imposed on by the accounts of the richness of the diggings, the depth at which the gold is found, and the ease with which it is procured.

There is undoubtedly great justice in this complaint. The stories of the gold being generally found at some four or six feet below the surface, and of its being shovelled out by single diggers, to the amount of 5000*l.* and 7000*l.*, in a week or ten days, may possibly have been true in a few isolated cases. Nay, in the acknowledged superiority of richness in the early fields of Forest Creek and Bendigo, there must have been much truth. But, as a general fact, we have not yet been able to witness anything of the kind, nor to meet with any person coming to any of the diggings lately, who have witnessed it. The gold is far less in quantity generally, is far more frequently obtained at much greater depths, even to that of a 100 ft.; and the numbers which the marvellous accounts have brought out have converted the whole scene of gold-digging into a scramble and competition unexampled even in the sharpest competition of England. The weekly quantity of gold sent down to Melbourne and Geelong, which was repre-

sented to be 150,000 ounces, now rarely amounts to half that amount, though the number of diggers is enormously increased. Wherever you go, the tone of discontent is the same: the diggers generally declare that they are scarcely paying their expenses. Yet, at the very time, crowds are still pouring into the field, lured by the most wonderful stories propagated notoriously by the publicans on the roads, and the store-keepers on the diggings. These stories can only be tested on the spot; and then it is too late for those who have been enticed by them. And no sooner does the digger arrive at one field, and find his mistake, than he is attracted by the same stories of wonderful discoveries, and wonderful finds of gold, in some equally distant scene. There they are digging up nuggets like potatoes, within a foot of the surface: and again the people post away; and thus there are perpetual rushes, and perpetual disappointments, except to the publicans on those roads, and the store-keepers on those fabulous fields. I have already told you how we have tested these grand rumours, and always with one result — their falsity.

The second cause of complaint with the diggers is the enormous price of every article of life, which they charge to the gross inattention of Government to everything that affects their interest. They were prepared to expect a great advance on the usual prices of such things,—yes, a very great advance, in a new colony, and with a sudden influx of population,—but they contend that the total neglect by Government of the facilities for furnishing ground for cultivation of vegetables, and of the roads, has at least quadrupled the price of everything that they wear or consume at the diggings. No land is to be procured in the neighbourhood of Melbourne for gardens, under some thousands of pounds per acre, owing to the refusal of Government to sell any but the most restricted quantities, and that for building land. And up at the diggings, none is to be got at any price, because the

squatters hold it all; and they in their turn, are strictly forbidden to cultivate more than is absolutely necessary for their own establishments.

Hence no vegetables are procurable at the diggings under 1s. per pound for potatoes and onions, often 1s. 6d.; cabbages 3s. 6d. each. Milk is charged 3s. per quart, and that skimmed. Fresh butter 5s. per pound, and rarely purchaseable at all. Sheep, which used, before the diggings, to be 4s. or 5s. each, are now 16s., and those picked ones—not picked for their fatness, but to get rid of them as scabbed or worn down with foot-rot. Wretches they are—much worse than India rubber or gutta percha. Oxen, which, before the diggings, cost 30s., are now charged 15*l.* and 20*l.* each.

Well, with the exception of the sheep and cattle,—the squatters being prohibited the cultivation of the other articles, to wit, corn, hay, or vegetables,—the diggers look with the more anxiety to the rate at which they can procure groceries and other stores from Melbourne and Geelong. But here the utter want of roads interposes; and besides the astounding prices which the merchants charge for all goods in those ports, the carriage which has to be laid on the prime cost of all that they consume ranges from 40*l.* per ton, in summer, to 150*l.* in winter!

Government, in fact, has done nothing whatever for the diggers but tax them! The whole amount of taxation which the squatters, who hold the whole country in possession, and charge their produce at the rates mentioned, pay to Government, is 20,000*l.* a-year. The diggers, on the contrary, pay in licenses more than half a million a-year; namely, this year, 542,420*l.* in license fees, and 50,184*l.* in escort fees, &c. And yet Government has actually done nothing whatever towards making roads, and thus reducing the ruinous price of all things that they need. There are no bridges, no roads, no anything. The Colonial Government of Victoria appears to have no

idea but the single one of—Taxation, and no feeling but of grasping—all they can get.

Nothing can exceed the avidity, the rigidity, and arbitrary spirit with which the license fees are enforced on the diggings, and the eagerness with which Government sends off a batch of Commissioners and police to collect tax on every newly-discovered digging,—invariably never spending a thought on roads or facilities of any kind by which the onerous life-cost of the digging population may be lightened. These things naturally grate dreadfully on the spirits of the digging population,—a large amount of which are gentlemen,—especially when they see the arbitrary, Russian sort of way in which they are visited by the authorities. Any one found without a license *in his pocket*—though he have it in his tent—is, without excuse or explanation allowed, marched off to camp, and there summarily fined from 3*l.* to 5*l.*; and if he show any reluctance or indignation at this treatment, he is, without ceremony, handcuffed and dragged off. These things are not only true, but too true, and too common, and are creating a spirit that will break out one of these days energetically.

Many an indignant digger, when he has his license in his pocket, and can afford to speak, says to the police, when they ask him to show it, “Go and look after the roads, and then come and demand our licenses.”

And why does not the Government make passable roads? Nothing is easier, and, therefore, nothing is more culpable than the not doing it. I do not mean that, at the present price of labour, they should set about and make regular macadamised roads to the diggings. That is the very error they are committing. They are making macadamised roads at Melbourne, at some 6000*l.* a mile, which, if continued, would reach the diggings some twenty years after they are all over. What is wanted is a simple and expeditious mode of making them passable; and nothing is more practicable. A band of some twenty active

labourers, under the inspection of a good practical engineer, for each line of road, and with a good spring-waggon to carry up their bedding, tools, and provisions, would, in a month or two, make a very passable road to each digging. The materials are there on the whole way. Let them glut the bogs with faggots till they will take no more, as the heavy bullock-drays pass over them. That would conquer them as Chat Moss was conquered. There would remain only to level the approach to the occasional gullies, lower the brows of abrupt hills, and throw rude, strong bridges of trees, growing at hand, over the deeper ones.

All that, say you, sounds very well on paper. Yes, and would sound much better in reality in the ears of the diggers, and is but a mere fraction of what a single detachment of the Mormons have done on their way from Nauvoo to the Great Salt Lake. They have made a road for those who have to follow them, over a country at any rate as bad, and through swamps far more extensive for 1200 miles, with all the necessary bridges, filling up bogs, and levelling of gullies. Surely the Government of Victoria—a country which boasts itself the richest of any country on the globe of equal population, which exports gold to the amount of 7,000,000*l.* a-year, and taxes the diggers more than half a million a-year—*should* be able to do as much as a single band of emigrants. But little more than one-third of this extent of road-making is demanded of Victoria; for say, at the fullest measurement—

From Geelong	to Ballarat is	50 miles.
„ Melbourne	to ditto	75 „
„ ditto	to Forest Creek	80 „
„ ditto	to Bendigo	100 „
„ ditto	to Ovens	180 „
	The total is	485 „

To say that the Government of Victoria had made that extent of road passable, — for great portions of it are naturally so, — would not be to recount any giant exploit ; but to say that it has rigidly, and even oppressively, exacted the diggers' money to the amount of upwards of 600,000*l.* a year, and given them no single *quid pro quo*, is to describe a Government which — requires no describing.

Lastly, in the list of the diggers' grievances, and indeed of the whole body of immigrants, is that sore question, the Land Question.

If we had been told of a nation of lunatics, who had a splendid extent of rich and pleasant country, which they were anxious to populate as speedily as possible, and who, while they sent over the whole world the most bewitching descriptions of its charms and its fertility, steadily refused, on the arrival of the people they wanted, to sell them a yard of it, to settle and farm on, we should say it was very lunatically correct, and should enjoy our laugh at their insanity. But to admit that this nation is a nation of Englishmen, and that such a government is the Government of our colony of Victoria, is naturally a concession which makes us look very foolish, and dreadfully ashamed of our countrymen in office ; especially when we cast our eyes across the Atlantic, and see how wide awake our relatives there are to this folly, and how immensely they are profiting by it. They are drawing daily from us the sinews of a gigantic empire, which, in Australia, we are repelling by all the force of idiotic folly.

Whilst writing this, a letter of Dr. Lang's, in the *Daily News*, has been handed to me. The main object of that letter is to advocate the growth of cotton, sugar, coffee, &c. at Moreton Bay, and in the warmer latitudes of Australia ; as well as of New Zealand flax and common flax all over these colonies.

Whatever be the immediate success of these recom-

mentations, they are all founded on the soundest basis, are most important, and will certainly succeed when labour is more plentiful and cheap, and the public mind has become disenchanted of the predominating fascination of gold-digging. There are numberless other sources of wealth and comfort in other metals, gums, barks, and drugs, which will in time assert their own importance. But the portion of Dr. Lang's letter to which I now draw attention, is that which so fully confirms what I have already written here. He says:—

“People will tell those going to Port Phillip, that, if they do not succeed at the diggings, they can procure situations as clerks, shopmen, storekeepers, &c., but there is not one situation of these kinds, for twenty who may wish to take them.”

That is only too true, as thousands have found to their cost. When I have applied to merchants, at the request of persons wanting situations, they have produced lists of applicants a yard long.

He says, next, that they will be told that they may take to pastoral pursuits, keeping sheep and cattle, like other people. But he justly observes:—

“They must do so, however, either as masters or as men. In the one case they will find that every acre of land in Port Phillip is part of somebody's sheep station or cattle run; and that in order to get into that sort of occupation at all, they must purchase the entire stock and station of some actual squatter (as such people are called in the colony), who may be willing to sell out; and this may not be done for less than thousands of pounds, which will probably be altogether beyond the means of the great majority of immigrants.”

Very true. There are few stations now to be obtained under from 10,000*l.* to 40,000*l.* and 60,000*l.* These, a few years ago, were to be had for as many hundreds; but the gold-digging has altered all that. I knew a gentleman who sold one the other day for 17,000*l.*, which, in the bad times following the crash of 1843, he purchased for a

mere trifle. These are no longer boiling-down times, as when there were no diggers to eat mutton, and the sheep were sold at from 9*d.* to 1*s.* 6*d.* each, to boil down for their fat. The poor squatters, as they call themselves, now can sell their worst of mutton at good prices to the diggers, and get from 2*s.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* per lb. for their wool.

Dr. Lang proceeds to the chance of employment by these lords of the wild:—

“In the other case, it is very heartless to think of a young man of respectable standing and education hiring himself as a shepherd at 25*l.*, or even 30*l.* a-year, with ten pounds of beef, ten pounds of flour, a pound of sugar, and a quarter of a pound of tea every week; to live in a bark hut, far from the society of mortals; to go out every morning in the year with the same flock of sheep, to follow them through the woods, or over hill and dale all day, and to bring them back to the fold at night. This is shepherding as it is called, in the Australian colonies; and although it may be a very Arcadian sort of life, to be praised by poets who know no better, it is anything but inviting for the great majority of those who will prove unsuccessful and disappointed miners.”

I have drawn you a picture of the wretched lives of these shepherds; and the Doctor might have added, when speaking of these rations, that too frequently the beef, tea, flour, sugar, and tobacco, are of the coarsest and cheapest possible description. In fact, till I saw them and tasted them, I had no idea that commodities so vile could be procured in any part of the world. Post-and-rail tea, that is, a collection of sticks, rather than of tea-leaves; and Jack-the-painter tea, that is, a green preparation of leaves of some kind, which taste like a mixture of copperas and verdigris, and leave a green scum on the infusion,—are ingredients which shepherds are familiar with, though their stomachs protest stoutly against the acquaintance. But, continues the Doctor, it will be said—

“They will purchase a tract of waste land, and begin farm-

ing. But before they can do this, they must notify their selection to the Government, and have the land put up to auction, and they will probably discover in the process that the spot they fixed on is part of the squatting station or cattle run of Mr. John Smith or Mr. William Brown, who has not only got a lease of it from the crown, but a right of pre-emption over it at the minimum price, under which he can effectually prevent the *bonâ fide* immigrant from obtaining it at any price. This monstrous injustice, the immigrant will find, is perpetrated under an Act of the Imperial Parliament passed in the year 1846, at the instance of Earl Grey, before he was three months in office, and when he knew just as little of the real circumstances and wants of the Colonies as the merchant's clerk in Mincing-lane who has thrown up his situation a few days ago and paid his passage to be off for the diggings."

Again, perfectly true. The squatters are allowed to purchase a square mile, 640 acres, at the upset price, one pound per acre, and to select it in the very centre of their stations, or in any part of them, so as to render it as undesirable as possible for any one to buy the rest, especially as such purchaser, if Government were disposed to sell, as it is not, must purchase at auction price. Some gentlemen that I know, have selected and purchased, under this Act, those very portions which Government will one day have to obtain for townships; and in one instance, the only possible place for a seaport, so that Government will have to purchase these lands of them at their own terms. Again, the Orders in Council allow only a certain extent of river frontage to be sold to a certain amount of acres, but such is the negligence of the Government surveyors, that many squatters have chosen their square mile along the very banks of a river; thus not only taking the best meadow land, but cutting off a vast tract of country from any water at all, so that no one would purchase that on any terms, and it must, therefore, of course fall into the squatter's hands for an old song. Dr. Lang finally adds:—

"At all events, the immigrant will then discover to his cost

what is implied in that withering and blasting curse of the British Empire—Government of the Colonies by Downing-street. It might perhaps be considered unmannerly to say of any Act of the Imperial Parliament—the emanation of the collective wisdom of this great nation—that it is worthy of Bedlam, and therefore I shall say nothing of the kind of the Act of 1846, commonly called the Squatters' Act. But I confess it would be difficult to imagine a more appropriate origin for that notorious instance of ignorant and presumptuous legislation—legislation in the dark, and in entire ignorance of the circumstances and interests for which it was provided, or which it was calculated to affect—which inflicts on the one hand monstrous injustice on myriads of her Majesty's unoffending subjects, while it authorises on the other a virtual confiscation of the valuable property of the State to an enormous amount. The evils of that Act have as yet been but little felt in New South Wales, from the earlier settlement of the country, and the much greater distance of the squatting stations; and they have hitherto been but little felt in Port Phillip, from the comparatively small number of persons proposing to purchase and settle upon land. But now that the rights of pre-emption which it has created in favour of a mere handful of squatters, who were entitled to no extra privilege or indulgence whatever at the hands of the public, over millions of acres of the finest land for agricultural purposes in the British Empire—now that these rights will be exercised against the myriads of immigrants who are now flocking to the mines, and who, whether successful or not, will almost all eventually desire to settle down on such lands—the heartless injustice, as well as the suicidal policy of that Act, will now be seen and felt in Port Phillip to an incalculable extent.”

This land question is a great question; and will have yet to be stoutly fought out in the colony. We shall find another opportunity to state fully its history and general bearings; here we now only notice it as it presents itself to the mind of the digger; and we cannot do that more clearly than by simply repeating the remarks which we have heard made by American diggers. They, of course familiar with the liberal and sagacious system of their own country, are proportionately astonished at the features of ours here. I have heard numbers of them say, who had

made money at the Victoria Diggings, "We like this country, and we would not be at the trouble of going all the way back to the States, if we could settle here on anything like equal terms; or if, indeed, we could settle at all. But see how they treat us.

"No sooner do we land than we find ourselves almost pulled limb from limb in Melbourne to make all they can of us. They seem as if they would chop us up and make money of us. California was nothing to it. We have to pass through the purgatory of Hobson's Bay, through boatmen, lightermen, wharfingers — all clutching at our very life with their unheard-of demands; and escaping them, we fell into the hands of the Melbourne tradesmen. And surely, never in the history of the world did such a system of ruthless rapacity show itself as in Melbourne. We assure you that it struck dismay to our hearts; and never will they cease to remember the harpies of the capital of Victoria. Whether we wanted to lodge, to refresh at an inn, to purchase anything at the shops, it was all alike; and Government had not done a single thing to facilitate our escape from the place. There was no quay for landing our effects; and we had to wait a month to get them out of the ship. Once clear of the town, the same utter neglect of Government met us on the roads. Roads! there was not a yard of road — but a frightful bog, a mile wide, and seventy miles long. The carriage of our effects up to Bendigo was at the rate of 150*l.* per ton.

"Once there, with weary limbs, and empty pockets, before we could dig up a grain of gold the police were down upon us for 1*l.* 10*s.* each for licences. We did not object to the licence, that was quite just and fair; but we thought it hard to be dragged off to the camp at a moment's notice, and expected to pay before we had had a single day allowed to get the means. Here, however, we found a true gentleman, Mr. Commissioner Gilbert, who, seeing that we were honest, paid the money for us out of his

own pocket, and gave us ten days to refund it. God bless him! That was the only drop in our bitter cup on landing in Victoria. It nerved our hearts again, and we got gold and repaid him in less than a week.

“ Well, we have done pretty well, and would stay here ; but, strange, to say, the people who allured us hither by their praises of the colony, won't allow us to settle here — they won't sell us land. If we land in America with 100*l.* in our pockets we can have 400 acres of land from the Government for that money, and we can select it where we will, and the Government will make a road to it. But here we cannot get it at all. We have been to the Commissioners of Crown Lands, and they say there is none to be sold. So we must go home again.”

Is this not a beautiful system? Is it any wonder that Americans are astonished when they come into a fine country, all lying open and waste, and find nearly its whole extent of 93,000 square miles, or 60,000,000 acres, handed over to 1000 squatters for a mere 20*l.* a-year each? — That, with a vast population pouring into the country, and who want to settle, there should be more than 60,000,000 of acres still unsold, and yet not an acre to be had? — That 1000 men, for the small aggregate sum of 20,000*l.*, should hold the whole from the public, who would pay millions of money for it, and establish a population upon it, trading to the amount of millions every year with England? — That each single man, for 20*l.* a-year, shall enjoy on an average nearly 93 square miles, or 60,000 acres?

What, it may be asked, have these men done to merit this wonderful favour? How have they become the particular darlings of the British Government, that they should be thus actually overwhelmed with good fortune? The only answer is that their merit, and what they have done, is, that they managed to get on the blind side of the English Government, and persuaded it that Australia

was such a poor, barren country, and so utterly unfit for agriculture, or for any thing but grazing a few sheep and cattle upon, that the Government, with the same sagacity which lost America, was actually glad to make it over bodily to these obliging squatters who were willing to take it off their hands.

But, say the diggers, they have actually mended their bargain for them, and have remitted the head-money which they originally paid for their cattle and sheep, one $\frac{1}{2}d.$ for each sheep, $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ for each head of cattle, and $3d.$ for each horse, and having done that, why press so stringently on the digger who happens to be unfortunate? That sum would probably not amount to more than another 20,000*l.*, yet they levy upwards of 600,000*l.* on the digger, and allow him neither land nor franchise.

And we may finally ask, on what principle the British Government has thrown open the gold-fields to the people of all nations, if it were not as an inducement to settle there? The gold is the property of the British people, and should have been carefully preserved to them, unless it were made an equivalent for some other benefit, which settlement in the country would be. True, the Americans have set the example of giving free admission of all foreigners to their gold-mines, but then they set the example also of inducing these foreigners to invest the gold they got in the land, by its cheapness and facility of attainment. *This* example we have *not* followed, but having drawn a vast amount of foreigners into the colony, as soon as they have loaded themselves with our gold, we force them out of it to expend their gold elsewhere, as if our only object had been to rob ourselves and our fellow subjects as much as possible. We can only conclude this letter in admiration of the perfection of that suicidal policy which the government of Victoria has arrived at: for England has accorded full power to it to pursue a

directly opposite course if it pleased, or rather, had the sagacity to do so.

To-morrow we propose to take our departure from these diggings. We are now perfectly acquainted with their character and statistics, and must direct our steps towards the older ones, taking them in rotation, the nearest to us being Bendigo, whither we shall, according to our present intentions, proceed first.

LETTER XV.

Leave the Yackandanda.—Vast Changes.—An unlucky Digger.—Crowds coming up.—More wonderful Rumours.—Richard the Groom turns up.—His Wine-cellar.—Rides a Steeple-Chase over the Holes.—Features of a Digging as it is.—Ride to the Murray.—Granite Desert.—Pleasant Locality of Reid's Mill.—Sleep in the open Air.—Bewildered old Man.—Camp of Natives.—A Walk through Albury.—The Evils of the Squatting System stamped on the whole Colony.—Why England produces more Wool.—A Gang of Horse-stealers.—Second Night in the open Air.—Visits at Reid's, Turnbull's and Forlonge's Stations.—A Specimen of an Australian Gardener.—A Squatter's Progress.—The Forlonge Family.—Mrs. Forlonge's Wanderings in Saxony.—Introduce Saxony Merinos.

Melbourne, March 29. 1853.

HERE we are again, safe and sound. We have come down the country with as much ease as we had difficulty in getting up it. The fact is, that the roads are now dry, and beaten smooth by the traffic of the whole summer; and, therefore, as we broke no wheel, we had no delay except what was voluntary, and, consequently, no ill-health. Exclusive of the time that we staid at friends' houses, we were only about ten days in getting down. We called on our way to see our friends, eat peaches, grapes, and water-melons, and in these agreeable relaxations spent nearly a week.

We quitted our pleasant abode in the woods at the Upper Yackandanda on the 2nd of March, and took our course back again to Spring Creek. But now, we had no longer, as in coming up, to make our way through the untracked bush. It was tracked to some purpose. The diggers who had followed on our course were thousands.

They had settled along these creeks for miles; and the extent of ground that they had turned up was surprising. We were astonished at the population that we found where, at our coming up, it was an untracked desert. On the Nine-mile Creek the throng was great, and some of the diggers had done well. One party of our acquaintance had obtained 16 lbs. weight of gold per man. But, of course, there were complainers here as everywhere.

We stopped to talk to one young man who was rocking his cradle by himself at the creek. He seemed to me to have been a clerk in some bank or merchant's office. Evidently he had not been brought up to hand-labour; and you might take him as a type of hundreds, and even thousands, who have come out to this land of gold, with glowing expectations, but with no conception whatever of what they were really undertaking.

He was a slender young man, of fair complexion and pale, yellow hair, with that faintly florid colour which often accompanies that colour of hair, and thin, short whiskers of a similar hue. The upper part of his face was closely muffled in a reddish-brown veil, and the lower part in a pale, ruddy beard. He replied to our greeting in a feeble voice, that seemed to betray a feeble chest. In fact, he appeared on the very verge of consumption, and said that he had been a year and a half in the colony; that he had been to all the diggings, both in Sydney and Victoria, but everywhere with the same absolute want of luck; that everywhere he had been pursued by dysentery, or some other exhausting complaint; that he had come up here into the bush, and that how he was to get down again was a problem far more difficult than any in Euclid, for his party was broken up, and he had no means of carrying his tent and tools away.

When we talked of England, he shook his head, and said, "Ah! it is a very long time since I have heard any thing from England:" and with that, he began rock-

ing his cradle in silence, and we went on. The sight of that young man, I thought, might have acted as a considerable sedative to numbers who, over desks and counters, never having handled pick or spade in their lives, are yet dreaming of the wondrous treasures of the Eldorado of the south.

But strange and very pathetic cases are occurring at the diggings every day. Mr. Gilbert, now the Commissioner of Forest Creek, was relating numbers the other day which have come under his notice. Numbers of cases of men who came there, fell ill, died, and were buried without any clue being obtained as to who they were. He spoke particularly of a German, who was evidently reduced to great distress. He had only a piece of canvass, which he threw over the trunk of a fallen tree, and lay under one side of it, while his cradle, spade, and pick lay under the other. He was found lying there extremely ill—indeed, in the last stage of exhaustion—and it was reported to Mr. Gilbert, who immediately went to him—but it was too late. He was too far gone to give any information regarding his friends, or the place whence he came. But it was clear that he had left a family somewhere, for he continually repeated to himself, “*Meine arme Frau! Meine arme Kinder!*” His name was found written in a small pocket-book, but no address, and there were no papers to disclose it.

No doubt his family, as that of thousands of other sanguine adventurers, still live in the hopes of golden tidings that will never reach them; still, sometimes, no doubt, think it unkind that they send no greetings. Those who should send them lie in the wilderness, enclosed with one of those square pallisade fences which mark the diggers' graves.

As we returned to Spring Creek, we met numbers still streaming up to the creeks we had left. One woman sat on the road side on a pile of boxes and bedding, while the

rest of her party were gone back for the remainder of a load too heavy for their horses to bring at once up the hill. She said the accounts of the surface-diggings at these creeks were wonderful. It was said everywhere that they were *fust-rate*. It was in vain for us to tell her that we knew of no real surface-diggings there, but wet diggings in the creek, and dry sinkings. She still maintained, with a knowing shake of the head, "Oh, yes! surface-diggings—*fust-rate*!"

No sooner had we encamped near Spring Creek, than a man, who had come overland with his family all the way from Sydney, 400 miles, came rushing up to us, and exclaimed, "You are just in time. The real gold-fields are found! Five miles from the Buffalo Mountains, a stockman has come upon four men digging without licences. They were shovelling out gold by basketfuls. He came and informed the Commissioners, who sent troopers, and fetched the four men in, and fined them for digging without licences; but they said they did not mind that, for they had got as much gold as they wanted."

He added, that in consequence, 100 drays had gone off to the place in the night, and that hundreds of others were on the point of starting. We thanked him for his information, and told him we would ascertain how far the tale were true from the Commissioners themselves. Accordingly I went up to the camp: finding on the way the whole of the diggings in a state of excitement.

But, alas for this new golden vision! Mr. Clow, the Chief Commissioner, assured me that the whole of it was a fable; no such digging was discovered; no such stockman had been there; and no such lucky mortals had been brought in. So our poor informant, considerably chop-fallen, resolved on making an immediate progress in the direction of Bendigo.

At Spring Creek we were astonished at the changes which had taken place in less than two months. The old

location of the diggings was already worked out and deserted, and the stream of research and labour had ascended the creek two miles or more. All this space, during the short time that we had been away, had ceased to be unbroken forest; the trees were felled, the ground was turned up or perforated with holes, and the creek diverted from its course; where our tent had stood alone, there was now a whole town of tents, and where we had in vain endeavoured to keep down the water, hundreds of wet holes had been sunk, and, being worked at once, had been drained, and a rich harvest of gold obtained.

Alfred and I, walking through the diggings, were accosted by a gentleman, mentioned in the earlier part of this volume, who had been Dr. Howitt's groom, under the name of Richard. He had got, since he came up, 200*l.*, and was very jolly; he had challenged the diggers to ride a steeple-chase amongst the holes, for a large bet, and had won it; for when it came to the point, no body dared to follow him in his mad-cap dash right over a region of pits, enough to have broken the necks, and destroyed the riders, of any number of horses; but by the luck of such neck-or-nothing men, he escaped, to the wonder of a gaping crowd of some thousands, and pocketed his cash. He now insisted that we must go and take a glass of wine with him at his tent, but as we were late for dinner at our own, we excused ourselves till another day. On hearing this, Richard suddenly disappeared down a hole some twenty or thirty feet deep, and again speedily emerged with a bottle in one pocket and a tumbler in another. It was a bottle of superb port; he knocked off the neck with a stone, poured out a tumbler for each of us, and threw the empty bottle down another hole near. I observed that such wine must have cost a good price: "Oh!" said he, "only 16*s.* per bottle."

Going on, we were more than ever impressed with the strange, and by no means attractive aspect of the diggings;

in truth, no scene can be more revolting to an eye that is accustomed to the beautiful. No scene would be pronounced more horrible by English ladies, if they could see it; no scene is less characterised by an air of wealth than a gold-digging. The tents have a wretched, rag-fair appearance, and they stand on a field composed of holes, and clay, and gravel heaps. Every tree is felled; every feature of Nature is annihilated. The tents are rarely handsome or clean; many are eked out with old sheets and blankets, and others with pieces of bark, and boughs, with all their withering leaves upon them, crisp with the sun; some are made entirely of poles covered with boughs with their dry evergreen leaves; then, at intervals, appear the butchers' shops, which are merely sheds or shades, consisting of a flat roof of leafy boughs raised on four posts; meat, often not very attractive, hanging in quantities under it.

There are also tents covered with boughs with their dry leaves, to deaden the force of the sun on the canvass; and other masses of boughs enclosing carts to prevent the sun shrinking their boards, and, still more, their wheels, which would otherwise soon fall to pieces. Then there are huts of mingled boughs and sheets of bark; and here and there simple mimies, in imitation of the mimi of the natives, that is, just a few boughs leaned against a pole, supported on a couple of forked sticks, and a quantity of gum-tree leaves for a bed.

The stench of butchers' shops, or putrid meat, and skins frying on palings, or lying festering on the ground, was awful here. Blankets, clothes washed and unwashed, hung over tent-lines; beds were laid out to air; old tubs and boxes and tools were standing about; old rags, and bottles, and old sheeps' heads, and bullocks' heads and feet, lay about everywhere; and with a host of huge, savage, and barking dogs, a sprinkling of goats and hens, a swarm of great, rough, hairy men, and, finally, a number

of women and children completed this strange scene. 'Twas a little different to a walk through a spring meadow in England, strewn with violets; to a wood with banks of primroses; to an autumn stroll through apple-orchards, nut-copses, or corn-fields, and quite as much to a promenade through Hyde Park, when the ring is crowded with "beauty and fashion."

On reaching the Government camp we found typhus (no extraordinary guest amid such scenes as have just been described, in a warm climate) had carried off one or two of our friends there—amongst them Dr. Green, the coroner.

Having pitched temporarily in a quiet outskirts of the digging, Alfred and I trotted off for a ride to the Sydney border. The distance to Albury on the Murray was forty miles, and took us till quite evening before we arrived at our camping place. That was on a high ground two miles short of Albury, overlooking the swampy Murray flats which extended from the foot of this hill to the river.

Our ride was, for the most part, through a country of granite rocks and desolation. This scenery commences immediately at Spring Creek. On one side, that of the diggings, you have the gravel and slate, with a fine rich green sward where the diggers have not destroyed it. Step across, and you are at once on the barren granite, with its grey masses of stone projecting everywhere from the earth, covered with a thin heath-like vegetation. There is a fine wild glen running down from Spring Creek to Reid's Creek, commencing with a bold waterfall close to the diggings, and having another near Reid's Creek.

We rode on over hill after hill covered with these projecting masses of granite, many of them as large as a house, and all scattered with scorched trunks of trees, the remains of incessant bush-fires. It was such a country as you see in the older editions of Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, stern, wild, and desolate. The soil, for the greater part

of the way, consisted merely of decayed and disintegrated granite, and the very stringy bark-trees which covered the hills were short, crooked, and in austere keeping with the scene. We obtained, ever and anon, some splendid views from eminences in the woods, one especially, giving a distant view of Reid's Creek Diggings, the white tents of which ranged on the plain, and backed with vast masses of forest, in whose skirts we could also see tents gleaming out, looked like the camp of an army.

About half way, for a distance of fifteen or twenty miles, all around Reid's Mill, lay a much pleasanter country; the ranges of granite mountains showing themselves at a distance, and fine land, in swells and slopes, descending from them to the banks of the Yackandanda Creek.

The mill here is so called after Mr. David Reid, who, I believe, built it, as well as the house, a good brick-house, lying on a pleasant mount beyond the creek, surrounded by a famous garden, abounding in the season with grapes, melons, water-melons, and fruits of most kinds. The Yackandanda here spreads itself out in broad sheets of water abounding with flags and reeds, water-fowls, and large fish. But the creek comes down yellow and muddy from the diggings above. Still, the place is a pleasant place, situated in a pleasant though solitary country. The house used to be a hospitable place of call for travellers between the Ovens and Albury; but Mr. Reid, disgusted with the neighbourhood of the diggings, having, as earlier stated, had his life threatened, had sold this spot with the station for a mere trifle. It had fallen into the hands of the hospitable Dr. Mackay, at whose house on the Ovens I encountered so droll a reception: and the people at the mill told us, that the doctor had been there, and left orders that no one was to be entertained there under any circumstances. We endeavoured to procure some melons

or other fruit, but were told that all fruit was cleared off and sent to the diggings. So we jogged on.

As we approached Albury, the country again grew barren and flat, and from our encampment we saw the Murray flats lying apparently rich and grassy at this time of the year, but in winter they are all under water.

At night we made a fire at the foot of a tree on an elevated camping place, turned out our tired horses, boiled our tea, and made our supper of provisions brought with us. We then lay down in our rugs before the fire, and slept soundly under the grand, starry expanse of heaven. We never slept more sweetly, except that we were exposed to various disturbances. First came an old man, inquiring if we had seen anything of a boy on the road to Melbourne. We informed him that we had not been on that road. Had we seen him on the road to the Ovens Diggings? We had not. Then he stood over the fire, and gave us a long history of this boy's going away with some bullock drivers, and why he was gone, and how he had tried to dissuade him, and that he was his grandson. Next, he solicited much advice how he should go about to recover him, which we gave him to the best of our sleepy ability, and hoped, at length, we were well rid of him. But at midnight our dogs barked again and roused us, and there stood the old man warming his hands, and giving us a long history of his having endeavoured to find out the Ovens road, and wandering in the bush till then. We advised him to lie down and sleep till it was daylight; but no, he thought he would try the Melbourne road. He went: we dropped asleep, only to be awoke again about three o'clock, and hear the old man's voice maundering away as he stood over the fire, about having been lost again. As we could not prevail on him to lie down, we advised him to try the Melbourne road again, which was close by, and luckily saw him no more.

But once or twice we were again awoke by a loud

rushing sound, as of a vast meteor sweeping through the air. We soon found that this proceeded from huge flocks of wild ducks and pelicans, on a lagoon at the foot of the hill, which occasionally took flight, and made this rushing sound with their wings. Lastly, a drunken party issued from a public house, which turned out to be below the hill, and were quarrelling in a style so sonorous that it effectually roused us.

We jumped up, got breakfast, and rode over the flats to Albury. On our way, we passed an encampment of natives, the first that we had seen. It was a wretched exhibition! There they sate, different families of them, on the ground, under a few gum-tree boughs, pricked into the ground, not even calculated to keep off the sun, much less a shower of rain, or the cold of the frequently very cold nights here.

They were surrounded, as they always are, by a great swarm of dogs, for they are said to be fonder of their dogs than of their children, and it is asserted that when provisions are short, they make the children go without, rather than the dogs. Nay, a native woman has been seen on a journey carrying a great dog on her back, while her children trotted wearily along behind. They are said to smother their children in the smoke over the fire, and there is abundant evidence of their being cannibals.

This Murray tribe used to be a very fierce one, and often killed the settlers as well as their cattle, but they are now too well aware of the power and vengeance of the white man, to meddle much with them. Yet I hear that of late, finding that the stockmen were few, owing to the diggings, they have been troublesome. Within a very few years, the Ovens, or the Goulburn blacks, used to attack the shepherds on the stations of Dr. Mackay, Mr. Faithfull, and others, and killed some of them, but were soon chased away by the squatters, and are now tame enough. Mr. Byerley, a friend of ours, was engaged in a

sharp encounter with them. They had murdered a young man of the name of Beveridge, on the Murray; and Mr. Byerley, who was residing near, became aware of the three natives who had perpetrated the deed. He managed, with the aid of some others, to inveigle the blacks into a hut on the station, where they were secured. But numbers came up to rescue them, made a desperate attack upon the house, climbed upon the roof to set fire to it, and were only repulsed by a careful and well-directed discharge of fire-arms, by which one or more of them were killed.

They are more properly copper-coloured than black, particularly the women and children; the men, and some of the women being much darker. They have, many of them, very flat noses, large white teeth, intensely black, but not woolly hair; but otherwise, have a very negro look.

With all my feeling for justice towards the aboriginal tribes, and all that I have written, in "Colonisation and Christianity," of their treatment by the whites, I really could not help asking myself, on seeing this miserable spectacle of humanity, in the midst of a race full of activity and progress, whether such a race could be intended by Providence to ramble over, without possessing, much less improving, large regions of the earth? and I could not avoid admitting to myself that that which will not go onward in the world's progress, must go down.

There is no reason why we should act unkindly or unjustly towards them, but it seems to point to a great fact, that the hunter races are but the precursors of the sons of Japhet, who till the soil, and build cities; and that the sons of Nimrod will only remain till the Japhetians come and take possession with spade and plough, instead of bow and spear. The mammoths and the saurian tribes are gone, and the hunter tribes of mankind appear, as certain to go after them; for, with no lack of native acuteness and ingenuity, within a certain circumscribed circle, they appear to possess no organ of imitation, no emulative prin-

ciple, or faculty of constructiveness and progression. Amid the wonders which are introduced around them, they remain just where they were. They see fields tilled and yielding abundance of food, yet they do not cultivate; they see houses rise full of comfort and plenty, yet they raise none, but still crouch under the miserable gunyah, or mimi of withered boughs; they see the white man ride on horses, but they still wander on foot. The white man carries fire-arms; they, for the most part, still carry the spear and tomahawk. The white man has his flocks and herds; they still lie in wait for the kangaroo, and climb the notched tree in pursuit of the opossum. The white man grows his fields of potatoes: they still grub up the wretched root of the hawkweed, called by them the mur-nong; still eat the roots of fern, and pick the grub from the wattle. The white men live in harmony, and overrun the earth with their numbers; they kill one another whenever two different tribes meet, and thus carry, in their most rooted customs, the means of their own extinction.

But the vices and diseases of the white men, the only things which they acquire from them, or imitate in them, kill them off faster than they kill one another. Wherever you see them, they are crowding about the public-houses for spirits. They fish and hunt, make baskets and opossum-rugs, and sell their produce to the white men, and drink it. There is a heavy penalty on selling spirits to them; but though there are nominal Protectors of the Aborigines, they do not seem to enforce the law on their behalf; and it remains a dead letter. The fire-water is killing them off, as it has killed such numbers of the American Indians, and every primitive race where the white man has come. These poor creatures adhere chiefly to the banks of rivers, which yield fish and wild-fowl; for the kangaroo is now scarce wherever the white man is numerous. A gipsy camp is a princely scene compared with a camp of Australian natives. The gipsies have good

tents, often good covered carts, have horses and asses; the native has none of these. A stake, on which is suspended a bag, containing the spoils of the chase—a few opossums, kangaroo rats, or perhaps a portion of a kangaroo: that is their larder. The men are rarely in more than a jumper or shirt, often vilely dirty, or an old smoky blanket, fastened over the chest with a wooden peg. The women wear the blanket, or often, in very hot weather, a heavy opossum-skin rug; but, when no whites are near, they freely dispense with both. The children run about naked as they were born, and are remarkably pot-bellied. We saw young women seated on the ground naked to the hips, their lower extremities covered with their blankets thrown round them. Others sat squatting like frogs. There were old hags of women limping about, supported by long sticks, and a swarm of mongrel dogs about them. One young man sat by his pot, stewing on the fire, under the boughs of his mimi as we went; and he was sitting in precisely the same posture and place when we returned, hours afterwards.

Another man and his wife were just setting out towards Albury. He had on only a red shirt, or jumper; she an opossum-rug, her arms and legs being left bare. She was a tall woman, of a very good figure, but ugly face; and she walked, as many of them do, with the air and gait of a queen. Many of the women have a firm, free step, and really graceful walk; and they throw on their blankets with a certain elegance, leaving the arms bare to the shoulders, and the legs to the knees. I observed that most of the women had their arms, between the shoulder and elbow, marked, as if done by a succession of slanting gashes, which had left scars. These cuts are said to be made with pieces of broken glass, and to be very painful, the women crying out lustily under the operation. But their faces were free from any such disfigurements. One young woman, who was of a light copper-colour, appeared

to me a half-caste. She was the only good-looking woman in the party : her features were quite European, and she had a quiet, sensible, and even aristocratic look ; but she had dreadfully disfigured herself by painting the whole of her forehead with red ochre, which at a distance looked like a scarlet cloth.

I spoke to the man and his wife who were going to Albury, at which the man seemed especially delighted ; and, with a strange kind of chuckling laughter, he replied, " Yes ! yes ! we go to Albury — Albury." They were followed by eight dogs. They did not trouble themselves about the ferry, but, putting their garments on their heads, swam across the river. I asked the ferryman if they ever paid to come over ? He said, " No, no, not they ; they are just like fish." Numbers of natives, men, and women, and boys, were fishing along the banks of the Murray, or crossing the stream to and fro.

We crossed the ferry, and found ourselves in Albury, in the Sydney or New South Wales Colony. Albury, like almost every township that I have seen laid out by the Colonial Governments, is built on the actual level of the river ; so that some day, when it overflows its banks pretty rapidly, the whole place will probably be swept away, like Gundagai, of colonial notoriety. Gundagai is situated on this high-road from Melbourne to Sydney, on the Murrumbidgee, equi-distant from those capitals. It was, I think, last year suddenly swept away, by the rise of the river, with circumstances of great terror and loss of life ; and the inhabitants complained to Government that the cause was so low a spot being assigned for the township. Government thought the complaint reasonable, and gave them land on a hill, which they sold, and returned and rebuilt their houses on the very spots from which they had just before been swept away. A second rising has threatened them with a similar fate ; and, when it really

occurs, as is pretty certain, they will have no very profound claims on the public commiseration.

Albury is like most of the towns up in the bush of this country. It is a village of one-storied houses, scattered about on a wretchedly flat sheet of baked clay, which at this time of the year grows only goose-grass, chenopodium, and the Bathurst bur (*Xanthium spinosum*), a plant with long triple spines like the barberry, and burs which are ruinous to the wool of the sheep—otherwise, itself very like a chenopodium, or good-fat-hen.

The town consists of a number of inns, a shop or two, a bakehouse, and a quantity of wooden huts. As usual, there is scarcely a single garden, and what garden there is only growing weeds and cabbages in amicable disorder; but there is a large exhibition of back-yards full of carts, heaps of wood, and the like lumber. Everywhere there is a slovenly colonial air. The only attempt at cultivation which we observed was at the far end of the village—a large stubble field, with a crazy barn in it. The stubble was standing up about a yard high, as if the reapers had been too lazy to stoop, and had only cut off the heads of the corn; while in some places it was pulled up by bullocks that were in the field. A portion of it, ploughed up again, lay in huge lumps, which farmers in England call “horses’ heads.” A couple of settler-looking men, in white linen coats and huge straw hats, were on horseback, with dogs, driving out the bullocks. Altogether, it was one of the most wretched attempts at tillage that I ever saw.

But the truth is, that all the way across this colony, the “unrivalled fertility” of which is now boasted all over the world to draw emigrants, I have not seen a single farm, or a single agricultural attempt, except in one or two squatters’ paddocks, after leaving Melbourne twenty miles behind, up to this splendid example. The squatting system is a perfect prohibition and incubus of agriculture,

and, therefore, of the settlement of the country. How long is this to last? If squatting was a mere temporary expedient, to occupy the waste lands till population poured in, it is time that it should at last retire before population, so far as is requisite. But if it is to remain as a whole for ever, and the perpetual destiny of the colony is to be one great and intact sheep-walk, it should be fairly stated, and the tide of emigration be allowed to diverge into some more auspicious quarter. To invite population on the ground that this is a region of "unrivalled fertility," is, in Lord Denman's phrase, "a delusion, a mockery, and a snare." And it should be remembered that, in demanding land for the advancing population, it is one thing to demand a sudden annihilation of squatting, and another, such a modification of it as shall cede to the agricultural emigrant as much as he needs. Long must be the term of years before the squatter will be called upon fully to relinquish his wide unfenced wastes; nay, when all shall be eventually enclosed, a judicious allocation of a tract of alluvial ground for tillage, with a large back-ground of ranges and lighter soils, for flocks and herds, will unquestionably, as in England, leave the product of wool as large as ever, with a product of tillage not yet existing, immense in its amount. In fact, England, with all its enclosures and its large proportion of corn-land, produces six times the sheep and the wool that Victoria does.

We were very soon satisfied with Albury; and, not perceiving that the political division of the two colonies made any difference whatever in the aspect of nature, but that burnt-up ground and dusky gum-trees still abounded, we trotted back again.

In going out we had met a number of fellows mounted on good horses, and leading others, who looked to us very like bushrangers. We kept our pistols and revolvers in readiness as they approached. They were, indeed, a villainous-looking set of scamps, but they were very civil

in passing, in their rough way. In the course of the day we met two young men hurrying on foot along the road, who asked us if we had met any party with horses, which they described. Sure enough their horses were in the possession of these fellows. They had stolen them at day-break out of the flats near the Murray, with five others belonging to parties camped there for the night. The young men ran on, in the vain hope of overtaking them at the Ovens Diggings. As we drew near Albury we were surrounded by numbers of the other people and their families, who had been thus left stationary on the spot. They said that fourteen felons, condemned to labour in Cockatoo Island, had broken out of the prison at Liverpool, near Sydney; that they had been traced this way; and that, no doubt, these were a part of this gang.

It was amazing what swarms of people were now on the road from Sydney, attracted by the exaggerated fame of the Ovens. While those who had been lured by the usual hoaxes up from the earlier Victoria Diggings, were pouring out of the Ovens at one end back again, these fresh dupes were pouring in at the other. It was a melancholy sight. Four hundred miles they had dragged along their carts, over gully, swamp, and mountain, leaving the richer diggings of the Turon and of Bathurst behind them, to gather at the Ovens, as they had been assured, hundred-weights of gold! Surely this is a system of monstrous and of unabashable humbug! One young man, who had been down for a long time at Bendigo, and had done pretty well, but not better, he said, than he had done at the Turon, sat on the bank of the river the picture of melancholy. "My poor mare," said he; "she brought me up from Sydney, and she has been with me through bad and good; and now these villains have taken her, and how she'll get used I don't know. If I don't get her again, I must sell this," said he, taking out a nugget of seven or eight ounces; "and I meant to have kept it while

I lived, as a remembrance of old times. But I must have another horse to drag my cart home, and I've sent my other gold by escort." We would have bought his nugget, but he would not sell it till he gave up all hope of recovering his mare.

As we set off late in the day from Albury, we were compelled to pass another night *al fresco*. As we staid a little time to see the Yackandanda Diggings, which are but of moderate extent and yield, a rough-looking fellow came up and asked if we would sell our gray horse. We told him, no; but he was very intrusive in his importunity, and seemed to think we ought to let him have it, merely because he wanted it. I said, "My friend, we cannot spare it." "Can't you?" said he; "perhaps you'll be obliged to spare it sooner than you think." With that he gave a significant nod, and went away. It was then getting nearly dark; and as we rode on we thought it very likely that this fellow and some of his chums might belong to the escaped Liverpool Gaol convicts who were on this road, and might watch us and make an attempt on our horses in the night. Therefore, when we had ridden a few miles, we suddenly turned from the road, where they could not readily track our horses' feet, and seeing a deep valley at some distance below us, we made for it.

We rode up it till we found a situation where our fire could not possibly be noticed from the road. It was in a deep hollow, well-wooded, and with plenty of grass, and a small stream of water. We turned our horses loose, determining to see that they did not stray far from us; made a good fire at the foot of a large tree, cooked our suppers, rolled ourselves in our rugs, and were soon asleep. We were neither disturbed by horse-stealers, old men, nor pelicans; but our awakeners to-night were a number of small rats, which they call the marmot rat, which came out of the long grass, and, no doubt taking us for logs of wood, ran over our faces without ceremony. Once, on awaking,

one was sitting on my shoulder ; but the moment I turned my head to look at him, he took an immense spring into the scrub. There was a young opossum, too, in the giant tree above us, and which, finding a strange phenomenon, a fire, burning at the foot of its tree, could not come down to feed. It appeared occasionally angry at the interruption, making the most chattering noises, and scampering about the tree, cracking and sending down rotten branches, which fell upon us, and woke us up ; which was all very well, as it enabled us to keep watch on our horses.

Leaving Spring Creek, the great difficulty on our road down was to get water and feed for our horses. When going up we found rivulets and lakes : the water was now all dried up for scores of miles ; and had we not taken the precaution to carry a keg with us, and fill it wherever we found any, we should often have had to go without, and travel immense days' journeys into the bargain. The poor frogs, which were so jovial when we went up, were, what few remained alive, faintly quagling in the dry rushes. The grass, all burnt up to hay, was everywhere eaten near the road by the hosts of horses and bullocks, that, during the summer, had travelled the road, and camped near water-holes and swamps at night.

We called at our old and kind friends, the Reids, and made havoc amongst their magnificent peaches. We also spent a day at Mr. Turnbull's station, at Faithfull's Creek. It stands on a hill, with a fine range of granite hills surrounding it at some distance. The hut is a slab hut. I imagine American houses in the back settlements very much like it. A piece of India matting hung in front of a verandah ; behind that we dined, and a pleasant dining room it made. In the sitting-room the green, trailing branches of creeping plant shung down the chimney, and occupied the place of the winter fire. It had a very agreeable effect. In spring the place must be charming with greenness and flowers, but now all was burnt up.

But in the garden near the creek below, there was abundance of fruit, melons, peaches, and the like, and a single vine, a sweetwater, which showed what vines will do in this climate. It must have had some hundred-weights of the finest imaginable grapes upon it.

We next went on to Mr. Forlonge's station, at Seven Creeks, or, as called by the natives, Gurra-gurra-gong. It is a fine squatting station, about eight miles from Mr. Turnbull's, extending thirty-five miles long and ten broad. It lies on a good stream, and is finely bounded on either hand by hills, approaching in altitude to mountains. Here we spent a couple of days, and supplied ourselves plentifully with fruit and vegetables for the road.

We had a very amusing contest with the gardener; and he may serve as a very good specimen of the consequence which such characters assume here, because they fancy they cannot be done without. This old fellow is the actual dragon of the garden; the whole family, except Mrs. Forlonge, senior, seem almost afraid of him. He has a hut in the garden, and will hardly let them have anything out of it. As to carrying vegetables up to the house, he would not do it. He says if they want things they must fetch them; and yet, such is the want of men, they go on tolerating him. The garden lies on the other side of the creek, in the flat, a quarter of a mile from the house. It is, I suppose, five or six acres in extent, and is full of splendid fruits in the season,—loads of grapes and melons of all kinds, especially. They desire him to let the shepherds and hut-keepers have the surplus vegetables; but he won't do it, he had much rather sell them; and, no doubt, he finds good customers of his own; for potatoes at the diggings are 1s. 6d. per lb.; grapes 5s.; water and other melons from 5s. to 10s. each.

When we told him that we must have different kinds of vegetables and fruit, he scowled at us as if he thought we were mad. "Who are *you*?" said he. "Ourselves,"

said I. "No doubt; and who is that young fellow in the rough coat?" "My son." "Ah!" said he, "I remember *him*; he was here when cherries were ripe: and who told you to come here for things?" "Mrs. Forlonge." The old fellow vowed, with a sort of grunt, that we should have nothing.

"Very well," I added, "then we will just help ourselves; we can handle a spade." "Can you? by dad, and I can handle an axe; and by dad, if you touch anything I'll cleave you down."

"Well, we must send to your mistress for an order, I suppose; perhaps you'll obey a written order?"

"By dad, and I don't know that; I think the old woman (his polite and respectful phrase for his mistress) is cranky; one day she tells me to let nobody have anything without an order, and then she goes and sends down a whole clanjamfrey of people to carry everything off."

My nephew was meantime gone for a written order, which now arrived in these words,— "Mrs. Forlonge desires Joe to give Mr. Howitt everything in the garden." The sight of this actually seemed to take away the cankered old Polypheme's breath; but, on recovering it, he said,— "Do you know Dr. Godfrey Howitt of Melbourne?" "Yes, I think I ought, he is my brother." "Well," said he, "I worked for him five years ago;" and thereupon he began to abate his ire, and to cut away at melons and grapes in good earnest; but, lifting his head, and seeing Mrs. Forlonge, who, to make all sure, was coming there herself, he exclaimed,— "Well, there's the old woman herself,— by dad, and she *is* cranky, and no mistake." Wherefore, having tolerably well supplied us, he made off to his hut, and left us to add anything that we pleased, at our own discretion. Certainly, that is a fine specimen of a colonial servant.

Mr. and Mrs. Forlonge, as you know, are now gone to England for the education of their children, and Mr.

Forlonge's mother only is remaining here in this large house, which Mr. Forlonge has recently built. She is one of the most energetic and meritorious women of the colony, and is a fine example of what ladies often are in the history and advancement of their families. Many an educated woman, who has been brought up in delicate care and refinement at home, goes out into our distant colonies, Canada, Australia, the Cape, and elsewhere, and is a far truer heroine in the unnoticed obscurity of the unreclaimed forest, than numbers who have figured in chronicle and song.

Mr. John Forlonge was living on a small patrimonial property in Scotland, near Glasgow. He had two sons, William and Andrew. When William, Mr. Forlonge of this place, was about fourteen, he betrayed, during his rapid growth, symptoms of consumption. A warmer climate was recommended for him; and Mrs. Forlonge formed the plan of his coming out to New South Wales, a colony then beginning to attract the attention of adventurous graziers and wool-growers, especially in Scotland. Stimulated by her arguments, Mr. Forlonge procured an introduction through Sir Thomas Brisbane, a friend of the family, to Mr. Huskisson, then Colonial Secretary. He proposed that his sons should be educated in Germany, in all that related to the management of sheep and of fine wool, and then to send them, each with a select flock of Saxony merinos, to New South Wales, where Sir Thomas Brisbane was Governor.

Mr. Huskisson warmly seconded the proposal, and the Forlonge family proceeded forthwith to Leipsic. Mr. Forlonge soon returned home, to attend to his own affairs; but Mrs. Forlonge staid four years in Germany with the boys. She had introductions from high official persons to Professor Brandis and other gentlemen in Leipsic, and to all the great wool-houses and wool-growers in Saxony. When her sons had learnt the language familiarly, she

had them placed in the most eminent wool-sorting warehouses, till they were well acquainted with all that related to the quality and management of wool. She then set out on foot with them throughout Saxony, to select and purchase sheep to take over to Australia.

They went on, this noble mother and her two sons, from village to village, and from farm to farm, through the length and breadth of Saxony. It was not then as now, when railroads traverse the country, and the English abound in every street and on every highway. Germany was then a rarely visited country; its roads were villainous, and the accommodations at country inns none of the best. But they went steadily forward, selecting the finest specimens of sheep,—testing the fineness of the wool by probes,—instruments for the purpose,—and, when they had purchased any, putting each a collar round its neck, secured and sealed with their own seal, so that they should not by any possibility be changed.

These sheep were then of great value, 30*l.* each. When they had purchased all that they wanted, they went once more over the whole ground, collecting the sheep, and driving them onwards towards Hamburg. There was Mrs. Forlonge, like a shepherdess of old, with a long staff in her hand, wandering on after their ever augmenting flock, and their money sewed into her stays. Every night when they halted, they had the sheep locked up in a stable, and fed with hay or corn, so that they might be able to warrant them as the very sheep they had selected. It was not always easy to procure such accommodation, and such lock-ups; and they were obliged to incur much trouble and expense for that object, or to undergo heavy watching after a hard day's travel. Then, they were obliged to have their passports, and all their receipts, in order to produce to the authorities on every occasion, as, with so valuable a flock wandering on from place to place, they might be suspected as not having come rightfully by

them. Any one who knows the slow and cautious punctilio of Germany in all such particulars, even now, after the rapid and daily intercourse with the French and English, may form some idea of what this ordeal was then, when a German landlord would let you have no dinner if you were not in at the precise hour of his *table d'hôte*; and when Wordsworth and Coleridge were driven with cudgels out of a village inn, as suspicious foreigners, and compelled to sleep under a hedge. "My heart," said Mrs. Forlonge, relating this to me, "used to sink, as I heard the chains of the drawbridge rattle on coming to a fortified town, lest our passport and all our papers should not be at hand, or should by any chance be lost." On one occasion their passport could not be found, and their flock was taken possession of, and they were carried before a magistrate. But they soon discovered the missing document, and were discharged with an apology.

So they went on, till they reached Hamburg; whence they sailed to Hull, and then crossed England till they reached Liverpool, in the same manner. Thence, if I recollect right, they sailed to Greenock. This flock the Australian Agricultural Company, I believe, bought; and it obtained the chief medal of the Scotch Agricultural Society. Once more they selected, in the same manner, a flock of a hundred first-rate specimens of Saxony sheep; and William Forlonge, then only eighteen years of age, embarked with them for New South Wales. But the ship being obliged to put into Van Diemen's Land, Col. Arthur, then Governor, prevailed on the young emigrant to settle there, with his splendid little flock, by a grant of land. Mr. Forlonge was considerably chagrined by his son stopping thus short of Sydney, where he hoped for the zealous patronage of Sir Thomas Brisbane. However, the advantages offered in Van Diemen's Land soon induced Mr. and Mrs. Forlonge, with their younger son, to follow with another flock. Mr. Forlonge soon returned, I believe,

to prosecute the claims of his son Andrew, who was refused a grant on his arrival with seventy-six sheep, on the plea that he was a minor. But, at that juncture, Government was ceasing its grants, in consequence of immigration no longer needing that stimulus. Mr. Forlonge died at home; and Mrs. Forlonge continued with her sons, still intrepidly prosecuting the claims of her son Andrew, but without effect. The following passages from a printed memorial, addressed by her to Lord John Russell, in 1840, will give the main facts of the introduction of Saxony sheep by the Forlonges into Tasmania:—

“In 1826, my late husband, Mr. John Forlonge, of Glasgow, after several communications with Mr. Huskisson, then Secretary for the Colonies, was induced to send our sons William and Andrew to Saxony, for the purpose of acquiring a competent knowledge of the sheep economy of that country. This was done with a view of their afterwards importing into New South Wales a flock of fine-woolled Saxon sheep. My husband went twice to Saxony to assist them in their inquiries; and I remained with them for nearly four years, stimulating and directing their energies, and qualifying them to fulfil their father's promise and engagement to Mr. Huskisson.

“In 1829, my eldest son, William, then *eighteen* years of age, returned to England, and immediately thereafter sailed for Sydney, recommended in the strongest manner by Mr. Huskisson, as Colonial Secretary, to the Governor of New South Wales. He carried with him one hundred fine Saxon Merino sheep (worth about 3000*l.*), and he received from the Colonial Office, Downing Street, the necessary copy of the regulations respecting emigration of 1827. Having touched at Hobart Town on his way to Sydney, Sir George Arthur, the Governor of Van Diemen's Land, impressed with the value of the undertaking, and its importance to the colony, prevailed upon him to remain there; and *upon evidence of his possessing the requisite amount of capital*, ORDERED HIM A MAXIMUM GRANT OF LAND.

“In 1830, my husband and the remaining members of our family emigrated to Van Diemen's Land. On our arrival, my husband, on exhibiting his capital, easily procured a maximum grant of land.

“My youngest son, Andrew, who accompanied us in 1830, took with him one hundred and thirty fine Saxon Merino sheep and lambs, which he had *personally* selected and purchased,—of which, however, he was only successful in landing ninety-one, the remainder having perished in a storm at sea.

“On his arrival, Andrew applied to the Land Board to have his stock valued, with the view of procuring a grant of land to depasture his sheep. The Board accordingly *made the valuation*, and estimated the sheep exhibited (seventy-six in number) at thirty pounds sterling per head, or 2280*l.* in all. He then made application, under the 13th Article of the Regulations of 1827 (a copy of which he had also received in Downing Street), for a maximum grant of land, to which parties possessing such an amount of capital were entitled; but was met with the statement that, being a minor, he had no title to such grant. On this resolution being communicated to him, Andrew requested that a maximum grant should be reserved for him, in terms of the, almost, unvarying usage, till he attained majority; but this also was refused, and, in short, to this hour he has received neither equivalent nor compensation for the capital embarked from this country, or for that expended on his scientific education in Saxony, or indeed for any part of an undertaking, the importance of which to the colony can neither be gainsayed nor denied.”

Mr. Macarthur, I believe, was the first to introduce fine Saxony sheep into New South Wales; and for the introduction of only four of these, he received a grant of 10,000 acres of land. Mrs. Forlonge had, therefore, great right to insist upon the claim of her son Andrew; but this was resisted, under the shield of new regulations made in 1831, a year after his arrival with his flock. But though Mrs. Forlonge did not succeed in wresting this justice from the Government, she had the satisfaction to witness the success of her sons. From Van Diemen's Land they passed over to Sydney, and thence to Port Phillip. Andrew afterwards married, and, making a tour in America, settled there. William, from his business habits, and the thorough knowledge of all which relates to the growth of fine wool, with which his mother had

taken care to imbue him, has gone on prospering till he has reached his present fortunate position.

Mrs. Forlonge, senior, is still full of the vigour and enjoyment of life, is very fond of the country, and manages all, with the utmost ease, in the absence of her son and his family. You may add her, as another instance, to the list of mothers who have laid the foundations of their families.

After leaving Gurra-gurra-gong, nothing of interest occurred on our journey, which was easy and rapid, from the state of the roads.

LETTER XVI.

Immense Growth of Melbourne. — Government still busy with Town Allotments, but without small Farms. — Consequences of this Policy. — A Specimen of Rents and Bargains. — A drunken Man's Luck. — Rage of Speculation. — A supposed Error in a Title Deed. — Population of Melbourne. — Fortunes not made at the Gold Fields. — Erroneous Views of this at Home. — Gold-buying become Profitless. — The Land-shark, a Government Creation. — Speculators Birds of Passage. — Trade immense, but unsound. — Victoria the Paradise of Labour. — Influx of Chinese. — Wooden and Iron Houses. — Price of Building Materials. — Melbourne a Digger Babel. — Assumption of Servants. — Distress of Immigrants on Landing. — Houses for the Destitute. — Canvass Town. — Working on the Roads a genteel Profession. — Sketch of the Life of a Stone-breaker.

Melbourne, April 27. 1853.

I SEE immense changes here in the few months that we have been away. Canvass Town, as they call it, a large camp on the other side of the Yarra, where people who cannot get lodgings, or who cannot afford to pay exorbitant prices for them, pitch their tents, has sprung up while we have been up the country, and contains, I suppose, some thousands of people. There are also in the same locality whole rows of wooden houses, erected for the same purpose, the temporary shelter of the immigrants, who yet keep pouring in. On Emerald Hill, a slight elevation in the swampy flat between Melbourne and Liardets' Beach, where was a camp of emigrants, there is now a whole town of wooden houses sprung up like mushrooms: inns, shops, and cottages. On all other sides of the town there is the same amazing

increase of population. The Government, the most peddling Government in the world, totally inadequate to, or totally unmindful of, the unexampled crisis which has arisen, is still doling out one small scrap of land after another in the suburbs for building upon. They will not throw a good quantity into the market, so that people could get little farms and enclosures, for that would reduce the price; but they only sell little bits at such intervals of time as ensures a monstrous price for it; for people must have houses of some sort and somewhere. But where? It can be nowhere but in Melbourne or Geelong, for they will not sell land up the country: that would interfere with the squatter; and the squatter and the Government, however they may differ on other points, are perfectly agreed on this. The squatter insists that he ought to have all the land,—that there is nothing like wool; and the Government officers don't want to take any of the squatter's land, for it would reduce the pressure on Melbourne, and, of course, on the value of town allotments, in which, as they know beforehand where and what is to be offered for sale, they have great advantages for speculation. In their opinion there is nothing like town allotments. People, therefore, are all penned up in the one or two towns, chiefly in Melbourne, except those who go up to dig, like sheep in a fold, and are compelled to buy at any price. Thus the fiercest gambling in town allotments is created. Thus speculation in such lots is a trade,—one of the greatest in the colony; a trade pursued with a step as steady as Time, and a spirit as inexorable as Death.

By this system these lots are already forced up from 250*l.* to 2000*l.* per acre! And the Government has raised its income from 350,000*l.* a-year to 2,000,000*l.* a-year. It pockets the cash, and the wretched purchaser just gets enough to build a pigstye upon, without an inch of yard for a garden! The whole of the suburbs of Collingwood

and Richmond, for miles round, are covered with these miserable little wooden huts. The town, instead of a city of houses fit for the capital of a state, is thus converted into a town of dog-kennels or rabbit-cotes.

But the land question is every day acquiring life. There is a stern demand for the land to be thrown open; the *Argus*, a newspaper of uncommon ability, is the great organ of this incessant cry; and it will grow louder and warmer till it becomes irresistible. But what then will become of all the poor people who will have given such extravagant prices for their little modicums of land? These scraps will tumble down in price to next to nothing, and the houses upon them in the same ratio. Labour, by the vast influx of emigrants, will, as a matter of course, fall to the same extent, and nine tenths of the purchasers of these dear morsels, if they are not ruined, will find themselves, so far as they are concerned, not possessors of £ s. d. but of 0 0 0!

All property is here yet at the same insane price. The rage for speculation is terrible. Every one who bought land and built houses, when things were at a rational rate, is now selling little spots, worth in England, near London, perhaps, 1000*l.* or 2000*l.*, for their 20,000*l.* and 30,000*l.* Three houses were pointed out to me, which in London would let for 50*l.* a-year each. They were bought by a lady, just before the gold discovery, for 1500*l.*, and she now lets the three for 1200*l.* a year, or every fifteen months puts the whole purchase-money in her pocket again!

A drunken fellow the other day, while in his cups, stumbled into an auction room, and immediately began bidding for the thing which happened to be under the hammer. It was a lot of land for building, at Prähran, near the Botanic Garden. It was knocked down to him. The next day, waking with a confused feeling that he had bought something considerable at an auction, he went to the auctioneer, and inquired what it was. Being in-

formed, he went next and examined his bargain. It was a small square bit of ground, covered with a heap of stones. As he stood scratching his head at the sight, a person passing asked him what was amiss. "Why d— it," said the fellow, "see what drunkenness does now. Yesterday, when I had been lushing, I gave 100*l.* for this cursed stone-heap."

"You would sell it, perhaps?" asked the stranger. "Sell it? To be sure I would." "Well, what will you take for it?" "Oh, a trifle," said the man, in a random, jeering way; "1000*l.* or so."

"I'll have it," said the stranger, carried off the astonished Bacchanalian, at once to secure the bargain, and soon after turned it over to a third customer, who wanted to build, for twice the sum.

A lawyer's clerk engrossing a conveyance deed of some property, pointed out to his principal what he conceived to be an error. In the former conveyance to the present vendor, the price, a few months before, was set down at 7000*l.*, but in the draught of the conveyance to the present purchaser it stood 70,000*l.* "It is perfectly correct," said the principal: "that is now the price."

Such are no extraordinary facts here. The whole place abounds with them, and the whole property of it and its vicinity is tossed about in the same Dutch Tulip-mania style. There will come, of course, a day of reckoning for all this, as there did in 1842. Nobody believes it, any more than the people believed Noah, when he told them a flood was coming. But it will come all the same. All this is apart from the real prosperity of the place; it is the froth on the liquor, which, however good and genuine, is all in a ferment below. The liquor will in due time settle and clear itself; the froth and yeast will be blown away. But the Melbournians, from some cause or other, have shown themselves from the beginning of their brief history, a most mercurial race,—the maddest specu-

lators in the world. At the slightest touch of prosperity, up they go beyond the clouds, and if they met the man-in-the-moon in their flight, he would never convince them that they must descend again — till they actually fell. They disdain everything but the most lunatic prices and profits. To all warnings, "The gold! the gold!" is the answer, and the assurance that this outrageously unnatural rate of property will last for ever. They might as well expect pyramids to stand on their points. It is contrary to all the laws of specific gravity. The value is not in the things, and, therefore, it cannot remain.

Imagine houses not so good as let for 70*l.* a-year, in St. John's Wood, letting for 1200*l.*, or as much as one of the very finest houses in Belgrave Square. And imagine, too, a family living quietly on some 300*l.* a-year when the gold-fever came. This family, if it did not happen to possess the house it lived in, and had only a fixed income, which did not rise with this state of things, — this family, if renting a house of 30*l.* a-year, would find it rise in rental, at one jump, to 300*l.* a-year — the whole of its income, — and must inevitably flee the colony. Such a state of things is as sure to continue as the mellow pears of the last autumn.

The population of Melbourne, which a little while ago was calculated at 30,000, is now estimated at 80,000. Servants are still scarce, and are still, in most cases, the real masters and mistresses. A maid of a lady that we know very well, went the other day to the races. Her mistress told her that she herself had an engagement in the evening, and hoped she would be back in good time. The girl very condescendingly replied that she would see if she could not make it convenient to be back in time, and set Mrs. M. at liberty. It is altogether a very pretty, queer, topsy-turvy state of things.

With respect to the gold-fields, which are at the bottom of all the rush hither, it is very important that they should

be better understood at home ; that the *fictitious* should be brushed off from the *real* value ; and that it should be well understood who are the people to whom they are an object of genuine attraction. It is not to gentlemen, but to the working classes. Fortunes, as gentlemen estimate them, are not to be made there by digging. We have seen the Ovens, and know that it is not to be done there. What we hear of other diggings is similar. Fortunes are not made by any one. There are now so many people come out to the diggings, that, even were they as profitable as they were at first represented, there is such a rush to any one promising point that the whole thing is torn to pieces. What then will it be when all have arrived, whom we hear are leaving England ? The fever is running its course at home, as the railway fever did, and nothing will check it till it has run its course through. It is in vain to cry out that nobody, with very rare exceptions, is getting more than navvies' wages for real navvies' work at the diggings.

The people at home look at the great Ballarat nugget, and every man thinks he can just run over and pick up one like it. They look at the 10 tons of gold by the "Australian," and at the aggregate amount of gold shipped monthly to England, and are persuaded that coming hither and enormous riches are synonymous. Nothing will teach them the reality, but the stern reality itself.

They must come here and see what thousands are suffering in the tents of Canvass Town, and in the most miserable lodgings. They must go up to the diggings, and see what they are. The most fearful distress is looked for this winter, and still the cry is, "They come ! they come !" There are 2000 souls now waiting a change of wind at the mouth of the harbour, to come up the bay. When they arrive in Melbourne, they will find lodgings 3*l.* and 4*l.* a-week, for a single room, and everything in proportion. Well, the natural, the inevitable

consequence of this immense influx is, such crowding and elbowing at the diggings, that the majority gets a very meagre dividend.

Gold-buying is every day, too, becoming a leaner trade. Gold has gone up on the diggings to 3*l.* 17*s.* an ounce, and is only 3*l.* 18*s.* here, so that it leaves but a margin of 1*s.* per ounce to pay escort fees, and brokerage in Melbourne. It will most likely, through the competition of Sydney and Adelaide, get every day higher, till it will pay no one to meddle with it except for remittances. Trade is the thing at present: everybody is making, or said to be making, fortune in trade, and the lawyers are doing wonders. As mere conveyancers, the sale and transfer of town allotments is a splendid digging for them. The Government sells its little sections of an acre; the purchasers divide each such acre into a sort of chessboard of little squares, and resell them for building, any one of which homœopathic doses of land requires a legal conveyance! The diggings are nothing to that. A digger, with violent exertions, may clear his 100*l.* a-year; a lawyer will clear, in great bodily comfort, his 5000*l.* and 10,000*l.*

But Government now has begun to sell *eighths* of acres, as it says, for the *accommodation* of people of small means; but it is merely because it sees that the speculator does this, and while it desires to pocket the extra profit, it assumes a patriotic pretence of endeavouring to keep out the speculator. The real and only way to put down the speculator and the landshark, is to keep the supply of land always a-head of the demand. To glut the market with land is to make it cheap, as it is with any other commodity. To accommodate the poor man is to give him a hundred times as much for his money as he now gets. To sell land at 5*s.* an acre, as the Government of the United States does, is the way to swamp the speculator and accommodate the poor man, linking to the sale a strict condition of cultivation. Why is there none of this hotbed

speculation in America? For these very causes,—cheapness, and the obligation to cultivate.

Here the farther Government proceed in this career, the more mischief they will inflict on the community. When the day comes, as it will come, that they will be compelled to throw open the lands, by that very act they will demonstrate the dishonesty of their conduct; because it must necessarily depreciate the value of all the land which they have sold at such enormous prices under this forcing system. In exact proportion to the quantity they have sold, will be the amount of their robbery on the public. They are thus in a cleft stick, and the only alternative which they have is to rob the whole public by withholding land, and keeping it and everything at an insane value, or to rob all they have sold to by giving it.

But there is another evil that they are fostering with this speculative mania: it is that of fictitious purchases. I find that in many of these transfers, bills of from *two* to *five* years are given! This throws a rather startling light on the nature of the present rabies. Needy and unprincipled adventurers, on this system, can, by paying a deposit of ten per cent., purchase quantities of land, give these bills for five years, sell this land again for cash or for good bills, and, long ere their bills are due, they will have vanished. In all probability, a whole series of these fictitious sales will have taken place, on the same property, and when the day of reckoning comes, the nature of it may be well imagined.

The people here, however, contend that the quantity of gold which is constantly being dug up in the colony, will buoy up the public prosperity in spite of all these circumstances. But they forget that the gold goes, all or the greater part of it, out of the colony to purchase almost every article abroad which the population demands. Excepting beef and mutton, they have to send out of the country for all that they consume. They have not land in

cultivation, nor can have, under the present system, to supply the rapidly accumulating population with corn, nor even with fruit and vegetables. They must send their gold as fast as it is got to purchase flour, hay, oats, groceries, tea, coffee, tobacco, sugar, wine, beer, spirits, and every kind of manufactured article. We may safely say that nearly the whole of the real wealth which remains in the country is that brought in by the emigrants: and in nothing, is the present Government system of refusing land to the emigrant more obviously high treason against the colony than in this. If they sold land freely, they would fix a settled population in the country; a population which would take firm root there, and retain on the soil the produce of the soil and of their industry. By refusing to sell land, they actually cut off every fibre and root of the population which would lay hold on the soil; and extracting from the diggers, the great producers of wealth, all that wealth as fast as realised, by the enormous demands created by this system, and throwing it in masses into the hands of merchants, publicans, and squatters, they virtually create a class of mere birds of passage, who load themselves with the colony's affluence, merely to fly off with it to England. This is the grand and perpetual drain of this colony; it is the actual opening of its chief arteries, and they who defend and maintain this murderous practice should be regarded, not as the governors, but as the assassins of a nation.

Should the gold-fields become exhausted even for a time, that is, should there be a break between the using up of old fields and the discovery of new ones, or should there be a cessation of immigration from the impossibility of obtaining land, or the decreasing charm of gold-digging, how can the gold, which is got only to be carried out of the colony, stave off the evil day? There would be a panic, a depression, and a shock, such as would check the progress of the country for years. The stamina which

should bear it through such a crisis, would be already gone, and the cormorants of speculation would fly precipitately after it.

Meantime the increase of population, and the progress of building in and all round Melbourne, are marvellous. Imagine the place being only eighteen years old, and then just look at the statistical facts which have been published here by the Chamber of Commerce. From these it appears that, in 1851, the population of the colony was 95,000; in 1852, it amounted to 200,000, or, in other words, there had in one year been an increase of 105,000 people! They had more than doubled themselves. Melbourne itself, in 1851, contained 23,000 inhabitants — a great number for a place which was a wild wood eighteen years before. In 1852, it contained 80,000, or had increased in one year, 57,000! The neighbouring port of Geelong, in 1851, contained 8,000 people; in 1852, it contained 20,000! The amount of shipping, in 1851, inward vessels, were 669; in 1852, they were 1657. The tonnage of these vessels, in 1851, was 126,000 tons; in 1852, it was 408,000. The value of the imports, in 1851, were 1,056,000*l.*; and in 1852, they were 4,044,000*l.* The exports of 1851 were 1,424,000*l.*; in 1852, they were 7,452,000!

The quantity of gold produced up to the end of last year was 4,491,000 ounces. In addition, there has been brought down this year, by escort, in January, February, and March, 527,998 ounces.

The general revenue in 1851, for the quarter ending March, was 232,099*l.*; the same quarter in 1852, it was 524,394*l.*; or an increase of 126 per cent., namely, 292,294*l.* The revenue of Victoria is, therefore, now upwards of TWO MILLIONS A YEAR!

The duties on the sale of spirits have, during this period, risen — in round numbers — from 30,000*l.* to 80,000*l.*; on tobacco, from 18,000*l.* to nearly 20,000*l.*;

tea, coffee, and wine, from 15,500*l.* to 28,458*l.*; post office receipts, from 2,241*l.* to 4,358*l.* the quarter. The land sales in the same quarter of 1852 realised 95,248*l.*; in this quarter of 1853, 157,864*l.*

These are evidences of an amazing progress and prosperity, which must continue so long as gold flows in at both ends; that is, from the diggings and from England with emigrants. That gold will continue to be found, there is little doubt; and people will flock over from England, if they are offered inducements by liberal measures to settle here. But that the folly of the Colonial Government will create a revulsion ere long is certain; yet not less certain that the spirit of the people will push down that fool's barricade — the land restriction; and that Australia, as a whole, will progress into a great country. I may prefer the old country, and so may any one who looks for the picturesque and the beautiful in scenery, and for a high state of intellectual culture and taste, as the chief ingredients of the pleasure of existence; but what thousands and millions are there to whom the main consideration is to live! How many thousands to whom the great object is to get rich speedily! And for both these classes Australia offers ample inducements.

Victoria is the Paradise of Labour. The demand for labourers is almost boundless; and all species of labour are, therefore, paid at extraordinary rates. To every enterprising man of mercantile or mechanic genius, it is the arena of certain success. To these, tormenting flies, swingeing heat in summer, the abominable dust-winds, occurring about every week, and lasting half of it, mud to the knees when there is no dust, hosts of thieves at your elbow, demoralization and discourtesy in the mob going hand in hand, fevers, dysentery, and influenza holding carnival with drunkenness and want of drainage, will be a few reminders that they are not indeed in the Seventh Heaven, as speculators promise them. But En-

glishmen seek honour at the cannon's mouth, and wealth in every torrid desert, pestilent swamp, and frozen region on the face of the globe, and, compared with these Australia is an Eden; for the progress of cultivation and society will augment its *agrémens*, and diminish its nuisances.

Of the number of thieves in this colony, the united contributions of Sydney, Van Diemen's Land, and the *purlieus* of dear old London, the *Argus*, one day this month, gave a singular evidence. It contained twelve columns of advertisements of stolen horses!

The aspect of the streets is mottled with the people and costumes of nearly all nations, amongst them Americans, Persians, and Chinese. There are crowds of Chinese, men, almost all under the middle size, in uncommonly wide trowsers of a most rude cut and flimsy material, often the thinnest blue calico; and with the sallow, flat, faces which you see on their tea-pots. They are many of them brought over as coolies are carried to the Mauritius, into a sort of slavery. They are bound for four years, during which time they work for their masters, only receiving their maintenance. Others come on their own account; and a very worthless class of immigrants they appear to me. If they come to gather gold only to return with it, they to that extent rob the English subject; if they settle, they are not a race that are very likely to amalgamate well with the rest of the population; and as to their present labour, that cannot be very valuable, for they appear of a very inferior *physique*, and not inclined to hurt themselves with hard work. We saw a number of them putting up their tents in Canvass Town. There was a stump of a tree in their way, and each of them worked at it with a pick for about half a minute, the rest standing round to wait for their turns. A few feeble strokes made the man give up the pick to the next, and

so on. A couple of good English labourers would have rooted out the stump in a tenth of the time.

Three hundred of these poor creatures were shipped from Canton in the "Spartan," a vessel of only 300 tons. There was a mutiny on board, in which the Chinese killed one of the mates, and wounded the other and the captain. They were eventually, however, put down; and the vessel, under convoy of an American ship, put into a port in India. This same vessel has brought 180 of these poor people here. They, with Turks, Lascars, Negroes, and black natives, and many other strange races, in strange costumes, are all in quest of gold, along with Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans, Poles, Swedes, Danes, Spaniards, Californians, Yankees, and men of still other nations.

I mentioned the wonderful growth of building from Melbourne to Liardet's Beach, including Emerald Hill. I have been out on that side of Melbourne, and am still more surprised at the growth of buildings in other directions. Prahran, on the south of the town, has become a large village, at a distance of a mile and a half, and itself stretching as much further. St. Kilda, three or four miles off, has grown equally. It is true the greater proportion of these houses are of one story, and are built of wood, — erections evidently not intended for eternity, nor for the encounter of any tolerable hurricane. The timbers of which their skeletons are first formed are often only two inches by two and a half in thickness. I actually measured some in Collingwood, — the spars and joists about two inches by three. The floors are generally raised about a foot from the ground, and are principally supported by pegs driven into the ground, just as you see pegs driven to mark out the site of any intended building. The whole thing, before they cover it with boards, looks more like a spider's web, or a birds-cage, than anything else. You imagine you might just kick it over, as you would a basket.

But there are also a great number erected of an equally ponderous kind. They are of what they call corrugated iron — sheets of iron, fluted or channelled. These have been brought out from England, and look like huge caravans, the roofs being arched like them; or like great steam-engine boilers, or gasometers. These houses seem to have a vast demand, because they are rapidly put together; but they should send out iron constitutions with them, for the people who are doomed to inhabit them; for they will be very cold in winter, and in summer will just roast their tenants alive. They will prove admirable houses — for the doctors.

And now, too, they are beginning to build good houses of brick and stone, large, and of several stories high. You may imagine the cost of these, when bricks, which I suppose are not more than 10s. per thousand in England, are 2l. 10s. per thousand here; stone, wood, iron, everything of equal cost; and the labour which prepares and raises them, 1l. 5s. to 1l. 10s. per day. A shopkeeper's house and shop, now building, of moderate dimensions, will cost 20,000l., that is, 1000l. a year rental. But there are plenty of shops from 500l. to 1000l. and 5000l. a year rental. The public-houses let at enormous rents, and no wonder, for they are always full. It is amazing to look into the ordinary tap-rooms opening into the street. What a dense crowd! What a din of voices! What a scene of diggers, in jumpers of all colours, and wide-awakes; carters, whip in hand; fellows, of all sorts, in dirty cabbage-tree hats: and with wild hair, huge beards and whiskers, and an indescribable colonial look.

The unions of trades here often strike you as odd. You see ironmongers and stationers combined; and in one window is a paper announcing "*Heavy men's corduroy trowsers*;" just as "*The brown lady's parasol*" was advertised. Alfred, the other evening, went to the theatre, and he has attended a concert or two, and was much amused

to see diggers sitting at both places in their shirt sleeves ; and most of them their pipe or cigar in their mouths ; an actor being occasionally saluted with " Well done ! Go it, old fellow ! " or a singer with, " Bravo ! Bray away, old woman ! "

Certainly the bulk of the emigrants are a rough, rude, work-a-day set of fellows, very independent, and very unceremonious. They seem to think when they get out here that they may do just as they please, and in that they are not far wrong. The new *hairystocracy* seem to indemnify themselves here for the subjection in which they are kept in England. So do the servants, and here it is the masters and mistresses who are obliged to be on their good behaviour, if they mean to *keep their places*. If emigration should continue as extensive as it is at present for a few years, the aristocracy of England, too, will have their servants assuming a good deal, and omitting a good many " Yes, my Lord," and " Yes, my Ladys," and instead of touching their hats, they will take them up and go at the slightest touching of their dignity.

There never has been known in any one week more people enter port here than during this last week. Upwards of 1800 came in one day, and nearly 800 another, or upwards of 2500 in two days ; and in the whole week, as I see in the *Argus* this morning, May 2nd, the number was 3888. There left, however, 553 ; but most of these, probably, only for the neighbouring colonies, to come again ; the actual increase being, in any case, 3335 ! What these armies are to do for lodgings this cold and stormy weather is the mystery. What sort of comfort the gold-digger finds on first stepping upon this, to his imagination, enchanted land, the newspapers of Saturday, April 30th, would show. Crowds turned out on the quay in the dark, up to the knees in mud, and wandering about the wet, dark streets, seeking a shelter in vain.

The condition of the emigrants by the " Sacramento," one

of a number of large vessels which have been for many days tossing about outside the Heads in great danger, and which itself went upon the reef at Lonsdale Point, and had its 250 passengers only saved by great exertion, is awful, as described in the *Argus*, of this morning. They were Government emigrants, and they escaped in their night dresses; many even of the women had to come up to town without shoes and stockings, and dressed in sailors' jackets. There is a long letter in the same paper, calling loudly on the public and the Government to make more effectual arrangements for the immigrants on arriving. The writer says—and I wonder whether your English newspapers copy such statements, and put them fairly before the public—

“For some months past, numbers of respectable families, with limited means, have continued to arrive amongst us. The capital which they brought with them, although small, was deemed, prior to starting, sufficient to establish them in some business in this their adopted country.

“They left their native land under this impression, and were not aware of the very heavy expense to which families are subjected on their arrival here, the difficulty of obtaining a house, the almost utter impossibility of securing business premises, even at a rental which would soon swallow up the whole of their small capital. Such parties leave home, friends, and country, believing success certain; but upon arrival, are doomed in many instances to experience the utmost disappointment, and find that the sum which they had fondly hoped was sufficient to start them in some business, is hardly enough to provide the necessaries of life for a few short weeks. They soon learn that their funds were inadequate to meet their immediate wants, and whilst they pause to look around them and mature their plans, their little all is gone, and the tide of prosperity which is leading so many on to wealth and affluence, leaves them a wreck behind.

“In addition to this, there is the risk of becoming incapacitated for all labour by sickness. The man who sees all his hopes blasted, and his fondly cherished prospects dashed to the ground, claims our sympathy; but he who has not only to bear this, but is also prostrated on a bed of sickness, who is



suffering from want and affliction, demands something more — our liberal and immediate aid. That such is the position of many at the present moment is too evident, whilst many to whom providence has continued health and strength are with desperate, yet sinking energy, manfully struggling against the evils which threatened to overtake them. Other families, in a state of utter desperation, are hanging fondly around the sick couch of their head and protector, whose last hour is embittered by knowing that he is leaving all dear to him on earth in wretchedness, poverty, and want, without any sympathising friends to whisper the words of consolation, to minister to their necessities, or alleviate the sorrows of their bereavement and affliction.

“ Many most distressing cases have of late been brought under my notice, one of which I give as an illustration, and would observe that this is only one out of many; and unless energetic steps and comprehensive measures are speedily taken and adopted to administer to the wants and necessities of the destitute stranger, many, many such heartrending scenes must unavoidably occur.

“ About four months ago a gentleman arrived in this colony, who had been a merchant in England. He was attracted by the flattering accounts received some time prior to his departure, and the hope which was inspired that here he would be able to open out brighter prospects for his family. Chiefly owing to an event which happened a short period before the time fixed for his sailing, it was deemed advisable that he should precede his family, and have a home ready to receive them. Soon after his arrival he was taken unwell, and became the subject of a long and painful illness. When his wife and family landed, about two months after, they found him on a bed of sickness and almost destitute. The expenses attending his illness had very nearly swallowed up his small means. The situation of such a family under existing circumstances may be more easily conceived than described. The few things which they brought out with them and prized far beyond their intrinsic worth, were parted with one after another, in order to provide the necessaries of life, and pay an exorbitant rent. The husband's illness still continued, and the poor wife struggled in vain against her fate. The distressed husband's anguish of mind became intense, — his family wanted bread, they had sold every article of dress, and disposed of every piece of furniture they could possibly spare; he was unable to

work ; and under these circumstances what would an affectionate husband and a kind father not do, rather than see a fond wife and family lack the common necessities of life? I grieve to publish it. This gentleman, who but a few months before was moving in a highly respectable sphere, and in the receipt of a respectable competency in our Fatherland, might have been seen at the corner of a public street, pale, emaciated, and with breaking heart, offering for sale a few brushes and combs, bestowed by the cold hand of a withering charity. Follow his tottering step to a cheerless and destitute house, and see him stretched on a damp floor, almost without a covering to shelter him from the cold blast. They knew not to whom to apply for help ; and day after day he pined away, until at last he sunk under the combined evils of want and sickness, leaving a wife and family so destitute that they were compelled to appeal to the sympathy of a Christian public for a winding-sheet and a coffin.

“ It was the appeal that first brought this case under the notice of the Ladies’ Benevolent Society, who at once did all in their power to assist the widow and her family. Similar scenes of deep distress, of fearful destitution, of mental anguish, of mortal agony, are now passing around us ; and can nothing be done to meet the trying and peculiar circumstances of such, further than supplying the winding-sheet and coffin ?

“ Something must be done, and that immediately.”

The remedy which this writer proposes, consists of immediate aid from a fund organised for the purpose ; and small farms, of from 20 to 100 acres, being made accessible by purchase from Government of a block of land of 500,000 acres, at a reasonable price ; these farms to be let on easy terms.

The scheme is grand, much too grand to be carried out here, where Government, which sees all this misery, is only impressible with ideas of huckstering land at the highest possible price, and in the smallest possible quantities ; and where everybody else is too busy in scrambling together what the Americans call a good pile, and going off home with it. It will never be carried out. Carried out ? it will never be attempted. The only remedies are, first, the diffusion of true information at home regarding the

colony; and next, the unlimited sale of land here. People at home have heard such glowing accounts of this climate, that they think it has no cold, no rain, no inconvenience at any time; and they flock into it in the midst of winter, and wonder where the paradise is. Another paragraph describes what they actually encounter:—

“What is passing on our quays lifts the curtain from the scenes of intense misery and distress which are daily enacted amongst us, and shows how inadequate are the few occasional glimpses that we obtain, heart-rending as they are, to portray the stern lineaments of that gaunt wretchedness which stalks unchallenged through our streets. An uncommon state of things must be met by uncommon measures. While we deliberate, hundreds are sinking. The remedy, to avail, must be immediate and decisive.”

There will be no efficient remedy which at the same time is immediate. The Methodists have a house of refuge for distressed immigrants, but it is full, and, I think, only affords shelter for ten days. The Government has built a dozen or two of wooden huts, where it lets to each of these poor families a couple of empty rooms for 1*l.* 15*s.* a week, or at the rate of 9*l.* a year! Glorious benevolence! In Canvass Town, too, the Government charges the poor creatures 5*s.* a week for pitching their tents on the waste, or at the rate of a rent, for their own tent, of 12*l.* a year!

Again, I ask, are these things known at home? Do the correspondents of the newspapers make this state of things clear and prominent? Do they tell people that Government will not let them have any land to farm upon? and that there are already at least 80,000 diggers on the gold-fields, while the weekly amount of gold got averages about 40,000 ounces, or half an ounce per man, something less than 2*l.* a week, and that to purchase provisions at those digging prices which I have so often quoted?

Let truth be published and made familiar, and then

emigrants will only have to blame themselves if they disregard it. Let all avoid arrival in the winter months here—May, June, and July. Let all who come take care to have a tolerable reserve-fund in their pockets—not less than from 10*l.* to 30*l.*—to bear them through till they obtain work. Let carpenters, bricklayers, slaters, blacksmiths, wheelwrights, glaziers, gardeners, sawyers, stonemasons, and all able-bodied men who can handle a spade and pick, break stones, drive bullock-teams or carts, and the like, come freely and fearlessly. They are wanted, and will be well paid. Let all those who want to settle on small farms wait, and listen out for a wise and Christian Government in the colony, which will allow of their purchase; unless they can, as they ought to do, handle the labourer's tools, when they may come and wait here. But let clerks and shopmen, and all delicate and dainty people, remain where they are.

Yet, stay, there is one refuge for the destitute here, and that is working on the roads. Let no one start in alarm at this, for I assure them it is as easy a post as any one can desire, and quite lucrative. It is, moreover, a gentlemanly profession here, and rather the fashion with knowing gentility. I saw a young acquaintance of mine the other day perched on a stone-heap, on the high road that is to be. He is a smart fellow, of a very distinguished family, and first-rate education, and he gave me these tempting particulars of the practice in this his new profession:—The wages are 3*l.* per week; and the rule is to take it easy enough. Their motto is the old one—*Festine lente*. The rate of exertion is three strokes to a minute, and half a minute's pause. They work a little before eight o'clock for the sake of an appetite; and then breakfast till nine. They *reckon* to work till twelve; then dine till two, and *profess* to work till four. I say *profess*, because, if a cloud comes over the sky, and a drop or two fall, they go into the good tents which Government finds

them, and which are always pitched at hand, and amuse themselves with books or cards. If a real shower falls, that's a rainy day!—and they never even profess to work on *wet* days. In the evening they go out shooting opossums; and thus they earn their 10s. a day, or 3*l.* a week per man. That is the way all Government work is done; and I think if you were to ask one of those much-enduring men who ride stone-horses by your waysides, and break up small a few tons of stone for half-a-crown, he would say it is a very pretty profession.

LETTER XVII.

On the Road again. — Crowds still flocking to the Diggings. — Volcanic Plains. — Stuck in the Mud all Night. — Curious Incident at a Store. — A Lady Storekeeper. — Horrible Roads. — Dragged through by Macdonald and Macleod of the Isles. — Capsize of their Dray. — Break down again, and left behind. — The Forge in the Woods. — Diggers on small Farms. — Why not more of them? — Crab-holes and Dead Men's Graves. — Desperate Struggle through the Mud. — Ancient and extinct Volcanoes. — A solitary New Chum. — The Big Hill. — Wonderful Escape of a Wool-dray. — Heavy Snow-storm, and crashing Trees. — Man with a Break-down reading the Jest-book. — Our second Break-down. — A Colonial Smith and his Profits. — Frightful Road through Kilmore. — How to get at the Post Office? — Highlander in pursuit of a Thief. — A famous Idea of the Victorians. — Roadside Lodgers. — Return to Melbourne for more Stores. — Scenes on approaching it. — Heavily laden New Chum. — Cockatoo Settlers and Campers-out. — Hosts of Drunkards. — Strange Public-house Sign.

Mount Midway, near Kilmore, May 28th, 1853.

WE started once more up the country on May 6th, our first destination a new digging called M'Ivor, and thence to Bendigo. We dined with His Excellency the evening before our departure, and he very kindly wrote down in my memorandum-book the best route for us, having himself been up to the diggings recently. He also gave us a general letter of introduction to the Commissioners at all the diggings, requesting them to give us all the assistance they can in our inquiries.

The weather was very fine when we set off, but that very day it broke up; heavy rain came dashing down, and the roads, absorbing it rapidly, were immediately in a

most discouraging state. This is a grand fatality here, that the roads and everything in the colony have been so entirely neglected by the Government. The labour of getting up a country with no roads consumes all your time. As we meant to winter at the diggings, we determined to take up sufficient stores; but we had been calculating on sufficient fine weather, and being overtaken by the wet, we have been nearly a month on the way, and have only made forty miles out of the seventy-five to M'Ivor.

During this time we have broken our axletree *four* times, and have spent 13*l.* in repairs of it. But we are by no means singular; there are scores of carts and bullock-drays broken down upon the way, — some with their wheels, some with their axles, some with their poles shattered to pieces. Many a horse and bullock lies dead by the roadside, the victims of the stupendous efforts to get along what are called roads, but which are something that defy all language to describe. No one who has not been in a new country, and especially in a new country like this, where an enormous traffic has suddenly sprung up, can conceive the vast, the excessive labour, of getting up to the diggings. At least 80,000 people have gone up into the wilderness after the gold, and everything except meat which they want has to be carried to them. It requires a constant train of ponderous loads of goods to supply them. You see huge piles of goods on heavy drays, dragged by from ten to sixteen bullocks, labouring and ploughing their way along the deep mire and clay: now sticking fast in deep bogs, now striving in vain to surmount steep and rocky eminences. Yet on they go, by incredible exertions, and incredible exercise of patience, like the slow tortoise, by little and little, drawing towards the conclusion of their Herculean labours. The amount of swearing, shouting, thundering cracks of the heavy bullock-whips, and the persevering straining through diffi-

culties that to a new comer appear hopeless, are such scenes as have no parallel anywhere else.

Those who, like us, go up with horses and carts, carrying their stores with them, fare like us. They are continually breaking down, getting stuck fast in deep sloughs, and compelled to unload and reload continually. There have been instances of people being five months in getting up to the diggings with loads. We set out with only half our stores, intending to go down again for the rest; but being informed that the roads forward from this place are pretty good, we have been down and got the whole up so far. A German and his wife, who camped near us the other day, had been a fortnight in making this forty miles with half their load; and they calculate that it will take them two months to get the whole up.

On the other hand, those who go up only with their swags, containing their blankets, tea, and sugar, have to buy all their stores all winter at digging prices, as well as tent and tools, which, if they are not pretty lucky, takes the whole of their proceeds. So, going up to the diggings is, after all, no joke, especially when you add to the labour, what those who have not good tents and plenty of blankets suffer from exposure to heat, cold, and rain. Very often men who have had a comfortable home in England lie wrapped in a single rug all night in the rain under a tree, and have no means of making a fire in the morning, because everything is soaking wet. To the rain you may, at this time of the year, add sharp night-frosts, and winds that seem able to blow you away. Yet the numbers who are now going up the country under all these disadvantages, wading all day through the quagmires of the roads, and lying all night as I have said, is quite awful. If the diggings were a solid region of gold, it could hardly yield a remunerative portion to all that are going there. At this time of day it is clear that no immensity of distance, no amount of labour or of suffering,

can prevent a struggle and a conflict of competition where there appears anything to be got. Here, at the ends of the earth, the struggle is as fierce and discouraging as it is in London itself. But to my narrative.

We took the Mount Macedon road, — the blue ranges of that mountain showing themselves before us. The country was for some distance rich and flat, and enclosed in large fields of fifty or a hundred acres each. It was quite a different style of country to that up which we proceeded last year; splendid land for farming, clear of trees, partly from nature, and partly by cultivation. It was a cheering sight, that of open land down to the very bay near Melbourne. As we advanced, too, nearly all the trees were shiacks, — not the eternal gum-trees, — and these, interspersed with *Banksias*, now in fresh foliage, and new pale yellow cones, or rather bottle-brushes, with a sprinkling of gums and golden wattles, gave what you rarely see in this country, a variety of foliage and hue. The shiacks (*casuarinas*) were, too, in full flower — these flowers being long slender catkins, and the whole tree appearing beautifully bronzed. We thought how much one of these trees would be admired on an English lawn. The sound of the wind had the wild melodious tone of the pine-trees in the Black Forest of Germany.

The whole of the land here is volcanic. It is part of the huge plain or basin extending from the Plenty ranges to the sea, and from Melbourne to Geelong. Here and there, it is scattered with the great, burnt-looking whinstones; but everywhere very fertile, as the volcanic land is, consisting of a rich, deep, black earth, excellent for farming, but detestable to travel over in wet weather. If, as Mr. La Trobe said, when he gave us this route, this be the very best road in bad weather, what must the others be?

When only six miles from Melbourne, we came upon volcanic land, and the horses immediately stuck fast

with the cart. We were on the top of a bare hill; but, oddly enough, the tops of the hills are generally the most boggy. The mire was stiff and adhesive as glue, and though we dug it clear from the wheels, the horses would not attempt to move the cart. Night was coming on, for we had started only for a short stage in the afternoon; and with the night came still heavier rain. We endeavoured to persuade some of the drivers of empty bullock-drays passing to put to a couple of bullocks and drag us out. One minute would have done it. But nothing would tempt them on such a night to stop. One merely shook his head; another sneered at the very idea; all passed on. We saw we were fixed for the night, and therefore got our tent top down as fast as we could, set it up on the muddy plain, got our beds under it, and crept into them till morning; but such a night of wind and drenching rain we had seldom if ever passed as in that exposed place.

In the morning a good-natured digger put to his horse, and we were in a few seconds out on the firm land. There was no wood there, not a piece as big as one's finger, to make a fire; but we got a kettle boiled at a tent at some distance, and breakfasted. But in preparing for breakfast, we discovered that we had left our frying-pans behind, and I went back to a tent store near the Lincolnshire Arms, half-a-mile, to get one. And here was another instance of the odd things that happen here, and of people most oddly placed.

A young woman whose air and manner showed superior breeding was the only person in the store. She showed me a lot of frying-pans, and I selected one. While doing this we entered into conversation, and I was more and more sure that, though vending frying-pans, and bread, and groceries, this was a lady of education and intelligence. I asked her if she liked the colony, and she said no. Like thousands of others, her husband and herself had been brought out by one-sided representations; and

there was nothing in the world she wished so much as to get back again. We spoke of various people and things connected with emigration to the colony; and she took out a quantity of letters, and said — “Here are letters to a number of people, but the reception of those we have delivered does not make me inclined to deliver the rest; and, indeed, there are names here whose owners I should not know where to find.”

She laid the letters before me, and one of the first I noticed was addressed to me. On opening it I found that it was from a particular friend, introducing the lady and her husband, as two most amiable and accomplished people, who were gone out to push their fortunes. The gentleman had held an office of considerable responsibility in London; and I now learnt that he was gone to Melbourne for a load of stores, and that something must have happened, for he had been away all night. While we spoke he arrived with the dray, and the old story of having been bogged at the top of Elizabeth Street in Melbourne, — a noted place.

This was an odd encounter, and all owing to a frying-pan. Another letter which they had was to my brother, Dr. Howitt, which I strongly pressed them to deliver; and was obliged to hasten away to my party, wishing them success, which I dare say they would have, though under circumstances neither they nor their friends in England could ever have contemplated. But I see gentlemen both of family and education carting goods about Melbourne, and meet them often in the outskirts, lolling in their carts as they return empty, with their long whips over their shoulders, as much at home as if they had been regularly brought up to it. And their comfort is that they make about 4*l.* a day.

We had now six miles of the most villainous road that I ever saw, to pass. It lay between fences, so that there was no getting out of it; and, besides being regularly nearly a

foot deep of this stiff, adhesive mire, had holes in it a yard deep, that took a cart at once up to the axles — sudden, abrupt holes, perpendicular down into them, and perpendicular out again, and brimful of mud.

Here, again, you have a most unpardonable neglect of the Government. Whenever land is sold and the road fenced off, it is a bounden duty of Government to expend a portion of the proceeds of the land sale to make the road. I know that there are statesmen who contend that the proceeds of the sale of new lands in colonies ought not to make any part of income, but should constitute capital as a source of future revenue, and to supersede the necessity of taxation. But, till such fund is adequately established, nothing can be clearer than that so much of the proceeds of the sale of new lands as are necessary, should make the requisite roads through them. If that is not done, a nuisance and an obstruction to public traffic is created, instead of roads. But nothing of this kind has ever entered the heads of the legislators of Victoria. Not a farthing is expended on the roads when the land is sold; and in such places as this you have the horrible result in a frightful and all but impassable slough of six miles long. So long as these strange rulers leave the forest open, you can diverge into a new track; where they enclose it, you have nothing for it but plunging through the abyss — if you can.

Luckily for us, two bullock-drays were just coming along, attended by a party of gentlemen carrying stores to the diggings. Yes, gentlemen! and engaged in a very profitable business. Without knowing anything in the world of them, or they of us, a tall, stout young man, with black hair and whiskers, came up to me, and said, "You are sure to stick here; keep as close to us as you can, and we will pull you through."

This was a striking contrast to the bullock-drivers over night; but, of course, common bullock-drivers are common

bullock-drivers; often coarse, hard, unfeeling wretches, though often, too, very different. But gentlemen are gentlemen, all the world over. These bullock-drivers got, every now and then, rooted, as it were, deep and fast in the horrid slough, and had to put on all their sixteen bullocks—and then sometimes in vain, till we had all set in with spades and shovels, and dug the wheels clear—and then assisted the team with poles, used as levers behind the wheels. Yet, no sooner out themselves, than they came and dragged us out too. But oh! what a six miles of road was that! Such mud! such mud-holes! such rushing and struggling and sticking fast, time after time. Without our volunteer friends we never should have got through.

And who were the good fellows? They were Isle of Skye men, Macdonald and Macleod of the Isles! Mr. Macdonald was the tall, athletic, dark-haired man who had first accosted us, and another of the party was the son of Dr. Macleod, the principal clergyman of Skye, who had taken so prominent a part in the agitation and establishment of the Free Kirk.

By one hole, in which one of their drays was for a long time plunged, lay a dead horse; and a man rode up, looked earnestly at it for some time in silence, and then said, "Ha! this is as I expected. He is dead!" He then told us that his team had stuck fast in that hole the evening before, and had to be dragged out by bullocks; but this horse was so exhausted that they were obliged to leave him; and there he was.

We were now, however, over the worst of that day, and had only to bowl down a hill to a pleasant green valley, called Broad Meadows, with a new, though thinly scattered, village in it. The cottages stood here and there on verdant slopes,—a neat, new stone Episcopal chapel, with a steep roof, and, at a distance a Methodist chapel, conspicuous amongst them,—all backed by the high forest

ridge of Mount Gellibrand, so called after one of the first explorers of this part of Port Phillip. In this pleasant valley we encamped for the night, by a creek which turned out to be brackish; but we got pretty good water from another at a distance.

Our kind fellow-travellers, however, were not destined to get over the creek without trouble. There was a rude bridge of trees across it; but the descent to it was so steep and broken, that, in passing the bridge, one of the drays, with its load of a ton and a quarter, capsized, and all but went over the bridge into the creek. Luckily, it hung on the edge of the bridge, and the bullocks were extricated without injury, and the party succeeded in getting away the loading, and setting up the dray again, before they went to bed.

The next morning, these excellent fellows did us another service. The surveyor of roads—a Mr. Foote, I understood—being a man of very aspiring mind, had determined on carrying the road up the very steepest place that he could find, out of the valley. Common sense, in the shape of the carters, who had been accustomed to pass there before, had taken the most easy, and, as a man there called it, *slantingdicular* direction, and the old track is still visible. But as this Government will have nothing to do with common sense, this aspiring Mr. Foote (perhaps, if I did not cross my *t*, I should more correctly name him) determined to let every carter and bullock-driver with a heavy load know that there was a Hill of Difficulty in reality as well as in Bunyan's dream. Not all the persuasions of the inhabitants, nor the offers of the gentleman to whom the land belonged to give for the road the piece where the easy line lay, could make him abandon his absurd and mischievous resolve. So there runs up this abominable road still, a monument of engineering stupidity, disgraceful to the colony, and ascended every day by groaning bullocks, panting horses, and men who curse the

surveyor with their most savory curses. Heavily laden drays have been known, spite of all that eight or ten bullocks could do, to run backward down the hill, dragging the cattle after them, and not long before one had rushed clean away into the creek at its foot.

Up this hill our obliging Islesmen dragged us ; and they would have dragged us out of all such scrapes, and we should have seen M'Ivor long ago, but alas ! a few miles onward, crack went our axle, and there we were fixed. We took a reluctant leave of these gentlemen, and remained to consider what was to be done. We were still within the fences, and must, therefore, get our horses into a paddock till we could get our axle mended. Luckily we found a small farmer not far off, of the name of Laurence, who very hospitably begged us to camp upon his ground, near his cottage, and sent a horse and cart to fetch up our tent and property. His terms for our horses were very reasonable ; and here we were soon located.

The grand question was, where was a smith to be found.

Mr. Laurence thought that we must take the axle back to Flemington—*nine* miles, and over that horrible road. But another settler, who just came up, said there was a smith working at a granite quarry, not a mile off, back in the woods ; and he had no doubt that he would do it. Accordingly Alfred and I posted away, under the guidance of Mr. Somers, the son-in-law of Laurence, and soon found the smith.

It was like going to the forge of Mimer or Wayland Smith, as Siegfried went. The smith was a young man from Liverpool, and his wife said she was the niece of Mr. Bower who had built the New Docks at Liverpool, under the direction of Jesse Hartley. They had a hut made partly of wood and partly of canvass, with blocks of wood for seats ; a bed on one side, and the usual huge open fireplace at the far end. There was a bullock-driver, a young man, and a quarryman and his wife ; and

they had some other small tents or huts for sleeping. Near at hand was the granite quarry at which they worked, and between that and the hut was the forge. It was raised of blocks of granite under a gigantic gum-tree, and the woodwork of the bellows was fastened to its bole. A roof of boughs, with all their dried leaves, completed the smithy; and here this little colony lived in the midst of the untamed wilderness, and made it echo to their labours.

The young smith was an active fellow, who talked as fast as he worked, and said if a man did not get on in this country, it was his own fault, and ere long he meant to commence something for himself. He had the axle soon mended, the young bullock-driver blowing the bellows, and Alfred and I carried it back, and set up the cart again.

We had here a specimen of the admirable effects of gold-digging when followed by the power of procuring land. Here were several small farms of about 50 acres each, which had been purchased by labouring men, with the few hundred pounds made in the good times of the diggings. They had given 5*l.* per acre for this land to the person who had bought it at the upset price of 1*l.*, and they calculated that it was already worth 12*l.* per acre. I believe it had been part of a special survey, a system which at an earlier period of the colony had favoured the capitalist and land-jobber, at the expense of the poor man, but was abolished in 1844. Any man willing to take 5000 acres at the upset price of 1*l.*, could have 20,000 acres surveyed by the Government Surveyor, and then pick his 5000 where he pleased. This evil at least has been got rid of by the dislike to throw much land into the market. Yet even this partial system had its good side, for speculators bought their 5000 acres, divided it into sections, and re-sold it, so that small farms were thus obtained where they cannot now be got at all,

Mr. Lawrence, the farmer on whose land we camped, had all the appearance of an agricultural labourer: he and his son-in-law were clearing off the trees; fencing off fields with trunks and boughs, and preparing to plough up a field of twelve acres for oaten hay. Now if hay be on the edge of the next winter, 40*l.* a-ton again, as it probably will, there will be 480*l.* for them, at a-ton per acre. A pretty little sum, paying off at once the 250*l.* cost of the farm, and leaving 230*l.* in pocket for one year's profit, independent of what they will get from pasturing cattle on their wild land, and from carting up goods to the diggings during the time that their crop is growing.

It is cheering to see this class of men thus established by their own prudence and industry. In a few years they will be rich and independent, and they will deserve it in this instance, not only from their sobriety and industry, but from their real kindness and hospitality. They were ready to oblige us in any way that they could, and asked the most moderate remuneration for what they did, very unlike the generality of those that you are obliged to deal with here. A farmer a little beyond, Scotch or Irish, I forget which, asked us the most monstrous price for the same accommodation, simply because he saw our accident, and thought we could not help ourselves.

At present our worthy host only occupied a small wooden hut, but the pretty, neat, active wife of Mr. Somers made it the scene of comfort and plenty, and anon there will spring up, no doubt, a good house there. The purchaser of the next allotment had come so recently, that he had only a tent on his farm, but short as had been his possession he had already got his old father out, a man of seventy-six years of age, a regular simple looking old labourer, who said that he came out of *Huntindonshyre*, and was astonished at his son's prosperity, never expecting, he said, to find him a landed *propriator*. He himself had been working all his life for about 9*s.* a-week.

There are a good many of these small farms on this road, and the public must never cease demanding the emancipation of the land, that there may be plenty of them everywhere. The country between the hilly ranges and the sea from Gippsland to the Glenelg, on the borders of Adelaide, is one splendid stretch of magnificent land for farming, and settled by an honest, English, independent class of farmers on properties smaller or larger, will soon fill the country with that rural abundance of which it is now, by this suicidal, insane, starvation system of keeping the earth uncultivated, so dreadfully destitute. Corn, hay, well-fatted cattle, instead of the lean kine of the wild pastures, milk, eggs, poultry of all kinds, butter, cheese, bacon, fruits of almost every nameable variety, would, in a few years, exist in such prodigal abundance, that instead of this wretchedly misgoverned colony having to send out all its wealth to procure the greater part of these good things of life, it would not only possess them in such cheapness and profuseness that every family could luxuriate in them, but it might export immensely to less favoured regions.

And surely to any government of humane men — to any men possessing the power of such creation — the glorious privilege of being allowed to raise such a scene of prosperity — to plant such families — to originate such abundance — to diffuse such a wide happiness — would be far more delightful than any feelings of peddling pettifogging gain; to any frigid adherence to Wakefieldian theories, or the barren track of official routine. How is it that our friend La Trobe, benevolent and kindly as he is in private life, does not see this and feel this, and rise superior to the miserable trammels which surround him? Certainly the power is in his hands if he chooses to exert it. The orders in council, which are the law in the land question, do not refer him to any legislative council, or executive, or any other authority besides his own. "Th

Governor is empowered." Those are the omnipotent words which make the work and the responsibility his own; and what a difference to reflect upon, to have attached historically to your name, whether you leave a country tied up in a net of withering, cramping, life-destroying policy, or free and moving all its limbs — free and vital in all its energies — spreading daily its circle of life — daily building new homesteads — kindling the fire on new family hearths — pouring forth its fresh millions into the wilderness — and turning it, by the noble alchemy of hope and industry, into a region of cultivated domains, of gardens and homes, where the hum of human happiness supersedes the thankless silence of the desert. Could it be supposed that there could be a doubt in the mind of any enlightened man, or set of men, what course to pursue? That the honour and the gratification of producing such an amount of human good — a rare privilege conferred even on men of the most exalted talents, and in the most exalted spheres, would not themselves have been irresistible incentives?

From this place we went over a flat country with a rich soil, admirably calculated for agriculture, — a fat soil, and not the picturesque being what farmers look after. In a couple of miles, or so, we got out of the fences, but were immediately met by new difficulties in what are called Crab-holes and Dead-men's Graves. These are all connected with volcanic agency, and abound, as well as the basaltic masses of stone, in volcanic districts.

Crab-holes, or Frog-holes, as they are called in some districts, from land crabs and frogs frequenting them when they hold water, are small pools or quagmires some few yards across, more or less, but so scattered about over certain places, that it is next to impossible to pass between them, and as to going across them with your cart, that is out of the question. They are often of unascertainable depth of mud, and are supposed to be occasioned by fis-

tures in the volcanic rock beneath, through which the water has been originally sucked down, as it were, carrying the earth with it, and leaving these holes on the surface, which in time have become glutted with mud, probably, as it has been baked in the summer, and so made capable of holding water. This is the case even with large volcanic craters, which instead of fire now hold lakes.

Akin to these Crab-holes are the Dead-men's Graves. They are oblong heaps of earth distributed over certain extents of these low, volcanic plains, which for all the world present the appearance of a graveyard. The heaps or mounds are placed almost as regularly as the squares of a chess-board. Yet not exactly, for they are never in rows so as to allow you to pass between them. There is a heap and a hollow on every side of you, turn whichever way you will: and it is impossible to conceive the unpleasantness and difficulty of passing across them with a loaded cart. It is bounce, bang, bang, bounce all the way. Yet over them you must go, sometimes for a quarter or half a mile. I can only suppose that they are occasioned by the basaltic stones beneath having settled into that shape. Many people have been simple enough to believe them burying grounds of the natives. But the natives never did or do bury in any one particular place.

From these stony and yet earthy plains we advanced, rushing through mire and bogs, and banging against stumps and stones, to the foot of the hills which bound this great volcanic champaign. From the little eminence where we encamped for the night, we could see the plain extending for miles and scores of miles as level as a bowling-green, and seeming evidently made for a great corn country. Here and there arose in the level a conical hill, obviously volcanic, and to the nearest one, about three miles distant, I walked the next morning. His Excellency had strongly recommended us to visit it as containing a very clearly marked extinct crater.

So off I went, attended by Buff and Prin, over Deadmen's Graves for the greater part of the way, and through a wood of *Banksia* trees, which, as well as shiock, particularly affect volcanic soil; the dogs in continual excitement with the noises of vast numbers of parrots, paroquets, and wattle-birds, which were feasting on the honey of the *Banksia* flowers.

The hill was of a considerable elevation, and very curiously the ordinary forest trees, the eucalypti, grew only to a certain height on its sides. Thence, at a well-defined line, it rose up green and clear, except for a few shiock trees, encircled below, as it were, by a dark sea of forest. An opening on the side by which I ascended, admitted me to the bosom of the hill, and there lay the crater, several hundred yards in width, now filled with rich, damp earth, overgrown with grass, as level as a bowling-green, and as perfectly circular as if struck out with compasses. I had no spade or pick with me to dig in quest of lava, but there could be no mistake about it. The hills rose round it smooth and green, showing that it was now long since fires had raged there: and I gathered a large quantity of fine mushrooms from the turf. From the top of the hill was a magnificent view, including ranges of mountains at various distances on three sides, and of level country quite down to Melbourne, and the sea on the other. The great ocean of forest, and another of plain filling up the area. At foot of the hill lay Mr. Beveridge's Station amid the woods.

Cutting across the plain in a direction to meet my party, who were going forward, I saw a tent pitched by the road-side, having, "Edgington, tent-maker, London," upon it. I went up to it, and found it occupied by a solitary new-chum, evidently a gentleman. He was at breakfast; his plate rested on the end of a box; a good English stove burning in the tent, the pipes ascending outside; and a double-barrelled gun leaning against the

back of his chair. He said that their cart had broken down in coming over the horrible plain; and that his party were gone on to the M'Ivor with half their load, leaving him their guardian of the remainder. Wishing him secure enjoyment of his solitary post, I soon reached my party: and we now ascended the hills on good hard road of nature's making, for about six miles. Here we were encountered by what is called the Big Hill, or Pretty Sally's Hill, one of the most extraordinary hills for a road to pass over that can be conceived. Imagine a road for heavily laden drays passing over the Brocken, and this is not unlike it. Yet every day, the year round,—I don't except Sundays, because the bullock-drivers don't,—drays with vast loads are toiling, struggling, and slaving over this hill. For still more oddly, all the roads coming from Melbourne converge at the foot of this lofty and abrupt hill, as though it was the greatest pleasure in life to climb its very highest point. Government, too, as if sorry to deprive the public of this taste for a Hill of Difficulty, has never done anything to ascertain an easier ascent, or to make this more accessible, though a dozen men, in a few weeks, would throw out a terrace road round its summit, and remove the whole obstruction.

Arriving at this strange place we stood aghast; and after taking a long and discouraging view of it, concluded to encamp on this hill till morning, to consider the best way of getting over it, and with the horses fresh. Having fixed our tent, and made a blazing fire on a height which looked over a vast extent of country, and a wild solitude of woody glens and hills below us; certainly in a most airy situation, with the wind roaring round in the forests very grandly, Alfred and I went on to reconnoitre while supper was preparing. The more we saw of it, the more we were astounded. The road at the last pinch went up an ascent which seemed very like the ascent of a pyramid. How a loaded cart was to climb that was beyond our con-

ception; and, to make the matter worse, the top of the hill, as usual, instead of being dry, was one deep bog, covered on the sides with a rich, red loam, which the bullock-drays had ploughed into, yards deep. Once on the top, the scene was dreary enough. The clouds passing across the height, gave it a dismal, hazy aspect. The wind roared with a melancholy sound through the woods; and nothing ever more reminded me of the ascent of the Broken than this Big Hill.

Beyond, the descent appeared as bad as the ascent, for the roads were terrible, and it was difficult to discern where we were to get down. With this pleasing knowledge, we returned to our quarters; and the next morning advanced to the foot of this last steep ascent, intending to take off half our load before attempting it. At this moment, however, appeared two bullock-drays, loftily laden with wool, in the very act of descending. They were coming on, dragging huge trees behind them by their drag-chains, to prevent the ponderous loads rushing precipitously down the declivity, carrying bullocks and all before them. At the sight of the descent, they paused as if dismayed at it. I seized this moment to call out to them, that it would be better for them to put a few bullocks on, and drag us up out of their way, as their bullocks might shy, and carry the load over the hill side. The good-natured fellows did at once; and thus, to our astonishment, we found ourselves aloft on the summit of the hill! We had difficulty to persuade the drivers to accept half-a-crown for their important service, and we waited to witness their descent.

The first huge load moved on, preceded by its eight bullocks; but, midway, the dray ran to the lower side of the road, and struck on the stump of a tree, cut off about a yard high. Here was a case! The men stood as if stupified. How in the world was that huge load to be got off? I advised them to put all their sixteen bullocks on behind, and drag the dray, if possible, backwards,

were it only a couple of feet, so that they might turn it aside from the stump. They did so, but all their efforts were vain. The only thing now possible was to cut down the stump, so as to let the axle of the dray pass over it; and this they set themselves about in good earnest. It was a perilous work, for the slightest thing might twist the dray round, and let it go, carrying the man with it, who was chopping under it, and crush him. But the man chopped away stoutly,—at every crack of the stump starting out from beneath the dray. In the midst of the operation, the stump split with a loud crash; the dray, with its huge load, spun round as on a pivot, and hung suspended over the precipitous side of the hill!

There appeared now nothing for it but the destruction of the dray, and of the two bullocks still fast to the pole; for, without these bullocks to keep up the pole, the dray would topple over head foremost. If the dray shot down that steep declivity, as shoot down it must, nothing, it appeared to us, could save the bullocks. If they lost their legs, their necks would be instantly broken! But there was no alternative now but to cut away, and let the dray take its course. Chop, chop, therefore, went the man, while we stood in intense expectation of the result. At length, crack went the stump, and away down the steep rushed the huge vehicle and its load, like a railway carriage on its line. On, on, down, down, it sped! but, wonderful! the bullocks, gigantic beasts, managed to keep their legs, and the whole concern, gradually decreasing its velocity, reached the lower, level ground, and stopped in safety! It was like a miracle; and the more so as it had not come in contact with any of the trees, which would have shivered the dray to atoms.

The next dray descended the road with great regularity; and we proceeded to descend the other side of Pretty Sally's Hill, which we accomplished without accident, and found at its foot a man encamped by a broken

bullock-dray reading Robinson Crusoe, and having The Complete Jest Book lying on a fallen tree beside him. He said that he had been there ten days, waiting for a new wheel, which was making at Kilmore. I asked him if he found any good jest in his book about bullock-drays breaking down; at which he gave a melancholy smile, and said it was no joke at all.

That night we encamped in a fine park-like situation, about two miles to the left of Kilmore, and were scarcely settled when it set in heavy rain. All night it was a perfect tempest of violent wind roaring through the woods, and of drenching, driving rain. The next morning it rained till eight o'clock, when it began to snow; and it snowed hard the whole day till three o'clock. At the commencement the flakes of snow were the largest I ever saw in my life. They were as large as the palm of my hand; and one that I took up from the back of Buff would certainly have weighed half an ounce. As the storm proceeded, the flakes diminished to their ordinary size. By the time it cleared up the snow was three inches deep; and in the defiles of the hills near, the settlers say it was three feet deep in some places. The most remarkable circumstance was the way in which the loads of snow crashed down whole trees, and the huge heads and branches of others. These evergreens, catching and retaining the whole weight of it (and the weight of this heavy, moist snow being great), when well loaded, they began to break off with tremendous reports. All round us in the forests these crashes were heard like repeated vollies of artillery. Whole trees snapped off like carrots, and gigantic branches of others came off with a thunder to the ground. This continued till the snow began to melt, and decrease the load on the trees. We were in great anxiety lest any of the trees or boughs should fall on our horses; and still more, lest they should fall on the tent of the German and his wife lately mentioned, who had pitched under some

very large ones. At length, down came one almost close to them, startling them no little; and so near was it to their fire, that, as soon as their amazement was over, they used the trunk for a seat.

The cold during this time was intense; and our horses were so perished with it, though always accustomed to run out in the bush, and trembled so, that we were obliged to put rugs on them. As for ourselves, in procuring wood to make good fires, and making these arrangements for the horses, our hands were nearly deprived of feeling or motion, for everything we touched was cased with ice.

The next day, as it had somewhat cleared up, we set out again; but had not proceeded half a mile, when crack went our axle again, and there we were fixed. We now determined to pitch our tent on a picturesque mount near the road, with a pleasant view of these undulating lands, and of the hills in the distance, and there to leave Mr. Bateman and Charlton, while we went down to Melbourne again for the rest of our stores, as we were told that our road onward was tolerable, and we were anxious to have the worst over. But, first, we had to carry our axle on Ben's back to Kilmore to have it welded, which cost us 1*l.* 10*s.*, the whole job only occupying the smith one hour! He wanted 2*l.* Two pounds per hour per man, and he had six at work smithing and wheelwrighting. Thirty shillings an hour, that is, at ten hours per day, 15*l.* a day each man, and for six men 90*l.* a day. With his profit on his wood and iron, for he used none in this case, he does not take less than 100*l.* a day, or 600*l.* a week; out of which he pays his men 5*l.* a week each, or 30*l.* A very pretty trade! The man is always full of work, being on the great road to the diggings, and a road that is continually smashing drays and axles for him. They say he has been buying a great deal of property. No wonder.

But Kilmore is at once one of the most vilely dirty towns on the face of the earth, and the dearest. The

street, as I mentioned when we visited it last spring, is one deep quagmire, in which stand up huge volcanic stones. It is marvellous to see how the carts and bullock-drays wade, plunge, bang, and bounce through it, and still more, to see how the people go about from one year's end to another wading up to the knees in mud worked into the consistence of batter. But all the people there are making rapid fortunes, and so what signifies sludge. The inn-keeper, who came there but a little while ago, they tell me has offered 10,000*l.* down in cash for the premises he occupies as tenant.

Having to go across the road from the wheelwright's to the post-office, the man advised me to go on horseback, as there was a particularly deep hole in front of the post-office. I thought it prudent to adopt his advice, and did very right, for my horse himself seemed as if he would disappear in the abyss of thin mud. Well, we got our job done, and the next day Alfred and I drove away to Melbourne. As we had only an empty cart, we did the forty miles in two days and a half. Near Pretty Sally's Hill we passed a Highlander, going in hot haste with his gun cocked after a boy, whom he said he was taking up to the diggings with him, and who had picked his pocket of 30*l.* 11*s.*, and decamped. The man patted the lock of his gun as he hurried on, saying, "I have it all ready for him here. I shall not call twice to him to stop if I once catch sight of him."

We passed numbers of wayfarers in the mornings, rising from their beds of heaps of gum-leaves by the road-sides; rather different from chambers and feather-beds in England. We passed no less than six bullock-drays, sticking fast in one place, amongst the Crab-holes, where they had been for some days, and could not tell when they should get forward again. The sound of the bells of all their bullocks grazing round reminded us of the bells of a city. Here was a settler building himself a hut, and in reply

to my inquiry as to the price of land there, he said, "Oh! the other day it was 1*l.* an acre, but now they have the conscience to ask 12*l.* and 15*l.* an acre. The people of Victoria, when they find a thing moves, fly up at once, right above the gum-trees; and in awhile, if things change a little, they take fright, and come down again like a stone."

As we approached Melbourne on a fine afternoon we were struck with the bustle and peculiarity of the scene. Around us were neat enclosures, and the sun shining on green, fertile slopes, while the road was full of bullock-drays, on the way to the diggings, heavily laden with stores of all kinds. There were scores of such drays, and heavily laden carts, attended by troops of people setting out to the diggings. The drays were loaded with flour, corn, potatoes, sugar, tea, spirits, bottled beer, and the like, as well as with spades, buckets, &c. On the road-sides were stores displaying plentiful assortments of tin ware of all sizes, hanging in front—tea-kettles, bales of flannel, shoes, boots, ready-made clothes, &c.; in fact, all such things as diggers are in constant want of. Wherever there was a public-house, the whole road was choked with carts and bullock-drays, the drivers and attendants of which were taking their grog. About every third man outward bound was in a jovial state, and many of the men on horseback had enough to do to keep their equilibrium. Strange figures, too, were many of these, with huge beards, wild shocks of hair, and odd cut of garments.

There were hundreds and hundreds of new-chums making their first start for the diggings, and going on a few miles to make their first encampment in the bush. Some of these were laden like bees with bedding and provisions. One young man was actually moving along under the following items. He had on his back a huge swag, containing bedding and blankets. On his breast

hung suspended from his neck a large carpet-bag, stuffed, probably, with clothes. Beside this hung on one side of the carpet-bag an extra hat, a bundle tied up in a handkerchief; and on the other side of the carpet-bag — of all things in the world — a heavy stoneware filter! He was bound for Bendigo, one hundred miles! How far he would proceed before flinging away the filter, we felt curious to know.

Besides these, there were squatters, cockatoo settlers, and tradesmen, all hurrying out on horseback or in gigs, each class distinguishable by something in their dress or air, but all having a colonial look; while under the trees were families stretching cords from one tree to another, to throw a canvas over, and so make a tent for their first night in the bush. Fathers and mothers were busy doing this, with a miscellaneous collection of kettles, pots, bedding, and children around them. But one of the things which looked oddest of all to my eye, was a sign at Flemington, three miles from Melbourne. It was the Bull and Mouth: a formidable bull standing fiercely on a huge mouth, which looked like a great oyster, and over its head an eye enclosed in a glory, meant to represent the Deity! Around it were the words, "Fear God and honour the Queen!" What a sign for a pot-house!

In Melbourne we found all well, and amongst the arrivals of fresh adventurers who called on us, a grandson of Wordsworth's, and very like the old poet too, who is intending to become a squatter.

LETTER XVIII.

Struggling up the Road again.—Mischievous Cockatoo Settler.— Third Break-down in the Bush.— Drunken Smiths.— The Big Hill and the Brandy Bottle.— Fourth Break-down on the Sydney Road.— Boys sleep there.— Author, like an old Gibeonite, reaches our Camp.— Start afresh.— Roads full of broken Carriages and dead Cattle.— No Slavery like getting up to the Diggings.— The Squatter and his Troubles.— Man digging his Boot out of the Road.— Fortunes made by Small Farmers.— Severe Nights, and thick Ice, but warm Days.— Amusing Scenes on the Road.— Inquiry after the Man in Slippers.— A Cockney Shepherd, inquiring after himself.— Wonderful Rumours and Rushes.— Arrive at M'Ivor.— Pleasant Country.— Stripping Bark in the Woods for a Winter Hut.— Rumours of a Copper Mine.

M'Ivor Diggings, June 20th, 1853.

I MUST give you yet some further details of our journey hither, as it is only by a complete narrative of the journey that those who follow us can have any real idea of what it is: the whole distance, be it remembered, being only seventy-five miles.

The weather had been fine while we were down in Melbourne for a couple of days, and the north wind and sun had considerably dried the roads, so that we got through the abominable road between the fences better than before. Instead of finding a party of good-natured Skyemen this time, we overtook a party who had more the appearance of Cockneys. Their cattle did not appear very likely to drag them through that six mile quagmire, and we proposed, for mutual security, to lend each other an extra horse in any case of sticking fast. They declined, saying, somewhat haughtily, they were quite strong enough to take care of themselves. In less than half an hour they were stuck fast up to the axles, and then came to ask us

to lend them a horse. Though they did not deserve it, and though we believed they would not have lent us one, had the case been ours, after the manner in which they repulsed our offer, yet we stayed and helped them out, but we then went on and left them to their own sufficiency.

We were also very near being led into a dilemma by a mischievous cockatoo settler. Most agricultural settlers are thus styled by the squatters, because, I suppose, they look upon them, with their enclosures, as plunderers and encroachers on their wild woods, settling down upon them, as the cockatoos do on the ripening corn. Whence the name, however, they have it, and this man, evidently of that class, came galloping up, as we were crossing a plain, and said if we went in that direction, we should speedily be involved in crab-holes and sunk past recovery; and pointed out another course which he said was as sound as a pavement. As we had crossed there before, I told him that I knew the way; but he declared that he knew every inch of the ground about there as well as his own house floor, and that the adjoining paddock belonged to him. Alfred was impressed by the man's confident assertions, and was very urgent that we should follow his directions. Much against my own convictions, I at length consented, and within five minutes' time, we found ourselves in the midst of the most frightful crab-holes. The man only waited to see this, and then cantered away over the very ground that he had warned us from! I suppose he thought it an admirable practical joke. Luckily, by a daring and abrupt turn, we regained our former track, and advanced over it,—as fine a sound piece of land as any in the colony.

Before we reached Pretty Sally's Hill, we were again left in the middle of the bush, by once more breaking our axle over a stump. Alfred had to mount and gallop about till he discovered a station, where they told him that he would find a smith at the Rocky Water-holes, three miles off across the forest. Once more, with the pieces of

the unfortunate axle on Ben, Alfred set out; and on arriving found the smith and his men drunk. They would not undertake to do the job at all without a nobbler, and they would not finish it without another. They were both drunk to begin with, and while they hammered, Alfred blew the bellows for them. This consumed the whole day, and a tipsy welding did not promise much endurance. But there was no alternative, so we fared on to the Big Hill. Our load being this time but light, we thought our horses would take it up, but having got two thirds of the way, they refused to go any further. A bullock dray coming up, we offered the driver a bottle of splendid cognac, to put on a few bullocks and drag them to the summit. He sulkily replied, that he would not do it for a cellar of brandy, for he had killed one of his cattle in coming up the hill. But on hearing this, a whole troop of young men who were sitting under a tree, and were a party who had engaged the dray to carry their luggage down from the diggings, jumped up and said he *should* do it. The man with a very ill grace complied, and in five minutes we were on the summit. We offered the man the bottle of brandy, but he rudely poked it away with his elbow, saying, "give it to the other fellow,"—one of the young men who had accompanied him; and we did so. We could excuse the man's ill humour, when directly after we came upon his bullock lying dead in the middle of the road.

Amongst the flowers which Mr. Bateman has painted, you will see some Epacrises, Australian heaths, which are drawn from some splendid flowers that we gathered on this Pretty Sally's Hill. We came at once on a magnificent patch of them in the woods, both red and white ones: I never saw finer in any conservatory, and most beautiful they looked growing in the wild forest. We called the place Pretty Sally's Garden, and shall not soon forget it, for its bullock-dray adventures and broken axles.

That day we had reached within three miles of our camp, and were congratulating ourselves on our quick and successful journey, spite of breaking down, when our cart struck on a stump imbedded in the mud of the road, and crack went the axle, like a piece of glass! The drunkards' work did not last long. This was most provoking. The same axle which had carried us to the Ovens and Yackandanda and back, about four hundred miles, had now broken four times in as many weeks. It was evident that the smiths in welding it had destroyed its temper, or, as their phrase is, "burnt the iron."

Well, night was coming on: there was no time to lose. The cart lay prostrate in the middle of the great muddy Sydney road, and in danger of being run over, and smashed to pieces by some ponderous bullock-dray. We therefore took out the horses; Alfred mounted Ben, and leading the grey, cantered away to our tent, to inform them there of our fix. Meantime I made a fire by the road-side, and prepared to pass the night there; but Alfred returned with Charlton, and they insisted that they should stay there, and that I should go to the tent. So I set off, like some old Gibeonite reaching the end of his journey. In the excitement of passing the bad road near Melbourne, I had blistered my heel, and, as is the case too much in this bush life, the wound was more inclined to make a sore than to heal. I was therefore tolerably lame, and could only limp slowly through the three miles of now dark forest. In the haste of our journey I had never found time to shave since leaving Melbourne. My clothes were torn by the boughs and protruding dead sticks of the bush; my boots had rent their seams, from having to drag them through stiff mud to the knees, and then to clamber over rocky places; and my hands were torn miserably with the elastic wattle boughs which I had cut to make props for the cart, while we got the axle and wheels on again. I was right glad to get a

good night's rest, a good wash, and fresh clothes. But there was not much rest to be had.

That evening it set in to rain, and rained torrents all night. I could not sleep for thinking of those two poor lads lying, in such a night, in the broken-down cart, all on one side, in the middle of the great muddy Sydney thoroughfare. I expected that in that position they would be deluged with water. But at the same time I pondered on the quickest and most effectual remedy for our disaster. With the early morning, therefore, I rose and rode back with the horses, and found the boys quite jolly, with a good fire, and having made a good breakfast. We had sent them on a supply of bread by a poor fellow who had lain under his cart all night by our fire, and they gave him his breakfast with them. Alfred and I again, therefore, set out to Kilmore, each carrying on his horse a fragment of the broken axle, leaving Charlton guard over the cart. The smith soon gave it a temporary weld so as to make it able to take our cart to our tent, which was soon done, and so glad were we to see this effected that we gave three hearty hurrahs!

We found that all had gone right at our tent in our absence, except that we had lost a very fine dog, Bob, by distemper and influenza, which rages here occasionally. In Melbourne they were carting dead dogs out of the streets by loads, and the disease has affected them throughout the whole colony. Poor Bob! we were sorry to lose him; he was a fine shepherd dog, of the Scotch breed, black and tan, and a perfect monomaniac after opossums. He could find them any time, and such was his delight on the slightest appearance of setting out on a hunt, that he used to bark as if he were crazy, and jump round in the most odd way, not running round, but twirling round on the spot where he stood at one jump.

The smith has now made our axle four times the strength it was. He warrants it to carry a ton and a-half

over any roads in the colony, so I trust we have done with axle-breaking. We have got new bushes put into the wheels, and the whole thing made complete. The axle has cost us 13*l.* within the last month, and the cart has now cost us 60*l.* We have been delayed by the wheel-right's men having run off to the diggings. On Saturday he had six men, on Monday all but he and his foreman had vanished. We have also spent two days in exploring the roads. We found that we had, a-head, three miles of road again between fences, there having been another special survey near Kilmore inclosed, and with the same entire neglect of Government to expend a farthing of the proceeds in making the road thus fenced off. This was even more infamously abominable than the six miles near Melbourne. We therefore reconnoitred the open forest, and found a direction that would bring us out beyond the fences, and to where better road commenced. But oh the weather that we had! With the exception of the week in which we went down to Melbourne, we had nothing but rain, incessant rain, a month's rain! We had then been five weeks out, and were only forty miles off. True, we had made the journey twice. But day and night it was nothing but rain, rain, rain, *agreeably* varied by fierce winds tearing through the woods, by frost, snow, sleet, and fog. What an idea new arrivers in June must have of this superfine climate! The other morning there was ice half an inch thick on the water in the vessels outside the tent, and I never felt my hands so perished with cold as in handling the axe to get wood in the morning for the fire. How the natives live in this country in winter without any houses, is to me a puzzler.

But you are not to suppose that our difficulties in getting up the country are more than ordinary. No, every day and every hour you see similar disasters. Just as I write, a loaded cart has gone right over just below our tent, the shafter being flung on his back, and the

shafts broken. The cart now lies bottom upwards in the road, the load under it, in the mud a foot deep at least. A little farther on, a cart stands fast, up to the axles in the road, where the party has for the present abandoned it in despair. The whole road, all the way up, is full of such spectacles; and the bullock-teams go along with such a din of swearing, cracking of whips, and incessant bawling as gives you a feeling of the difficulty with which every yard is made through the deep mire and clay, such as nothing but the witnessing can realise. Freight to the M'Ivor is 80*l.* a ton, or more than 1*l.* a mile, and this month's rain will double it, by its effects on the roads.

On the 10th of June was the anniversary of our sailing from Plymouth, and on the 12th, which was Sunday, we commemorated it, being a rest day, with roast beef and plum-pudding. We had neither made our fortunes, nor seen others do it at the gold-fields of such marvellous fame, but we had dug up a good mass of gold, and here we were all well and jolly, having great cause for thankfulness, after what we had seen of the speedy ends of numbers who came out with us; those who had remained in Melbourne having, perhaps, suffered the most. Mrs. A., a comparatively young woman, with a son and two daughters, had lost them all there in the mean time.

Seeing the state of the roads, and that it was not safe to proceed till we had pioneered a-head, we concluded to go no further each day than was necessary to take half our load, and then fetch up the remainder. We calculated that we should not in this way make more, on an average, than five miles a day. That would be a week in reaching M'Ivor from Kilmore; but then, we should always be all of us at hand to assist in difficulties, or defend in case of attack, which we should not be if we divided our party, by going right up with half our stores at once. We could, on this plan, go pleasantly along, and be independent of the weather. If it rained deluges, we could remain quiet, and

our stores would be safe under our tent, on double tarpaulings on the earth, and every night we should all have the tent, and comfortable beds.

But, as you will have seen, there is no slavery to man or beast like that of getting up to the diggings. Sticking fast; loading and unloading in consequence; digging wheels out of the terrible quagmires; heaving at them with long poles for levers; shouting, flogging, swearing, straining,—that is the every day work on the roads, except on the hard hill roads. Before and behind, you hear nothing but one eternal clamour of bullock-drivers, always apparently in a fever of despair; and at every few hundred yards lie the carcasses of horses and bullocks, killed in the dreadful business.

Mr. Clarke, a hospitable settler, a few miles beyond Kilmore, said, that he had often been tempted to put Martin's Act against cruelty to animals in force, such are the scenes which he constantly witnesses, from the road passing in front of his house. But, then, he reflected that it would be an act of flagrant injustice to the bullock-drivers, unless he could put the Act in force against the Government too, who are the authors of it all. This Government derives now two millions a year from the gold fields and the sale of lands, and ought, at least, to spend one-half in making tolerable roads for those from whom they draw so princely a revenue. They just expend nothing at all, but live on comfortably in Melbourne, as though no such daily scenes of cruelty and destruction of life and property were passing along the whole line of every road thence to the diggings; and coolly expend the whole upon their own salaries, and on those of a crowd of young, useless, and arrogant commissioners on the gold fields. By this conduct, they are fast alienating the respect, and exhausting the patience, of all good and thinking men.

Facts, ludicrous as well as sad, are often occurring from

this state of the roads. While we were at Mr. Clarke's, there came a man to borrow a spade, to dig his boot out of the mud of the road. He was digging at it all forenoon, and had not got the boot out when we came away.

From a mount above Mr. Clarke's house there is a splendid view of the country, and of the mountains around, some of them very distant. On one hand, you see the hills on the Goulburn, the Tallarook Hills, and those beyond the Campaspe. Nearer, are the Plenty Ranges—Mount Disappointment being the most conspicuous; the Sugar-loaf Hill peeping over other Ranges; and on the other hand, Mount Macedon. In the foreground lies a piece of cultivated country, consisting of the farms on the Special Survey, sold to a Sydney Company, and lately mentioned; and which reaches from very near Mr. Clarke's to Kilmore, some four miles or so distant. The farmers of these small farms, of from fifty to one hundred acres, before the discovery of the gold, were very poor; could but just make a living, and had often to borrow money to get their harvest in. Now, they sell their produce at high rates, and employ themselves in carting up stores to the diggings, at from 50*l.* to 150*l.* a ton, according to the season, and are grown rich. One of them, the other day, sold a stack of hay for 1,000*l.*, and another 700*l.* They are now, many of them, already worth their 4,000*l.* each. Such is the effect of gold. In fact, farming is most profitable, from the price of all produce, and the restriction of the sale of land. But the farmers, as well as the squatters, must make hay while the sun shines; for the British Government has now granted to these colonies the right to make new constitutions for themselves, and as the unlimited sale of land will no doubt be the result, produce will fall with the greater means of its production; and the demand of the public for many of the stations to be thrown into the market, will throw a doubt on their permanent value. At present, however, such is the demand for

all farm produce, that land is the truest gold-mine, and such the demand for beef, mutton and wool, that the squatters are constantly taking new ground, and pushing their way further into the distant wilderness beyond the Murray, the Billibong, and the Edwards.

Of the little farmers just mentioned, there are 120 on the Special Survey; and before the discovery of gold, they carted the squatters' wool down to Melbourne, forty miles, for 50s. per ton: it is now 50l. a ton, or, as many pounds as it was before shillings. Gold has been discovered in the Ranges behind Mr. Clarke's, and no doubt, there will be diggings all round here some day.

Mr. Clarke showed us a way through the woods behind his house, by which we escaped a most horrid road in front of it, along the deep, black volcanic soil. He said that he had repeatedly pointed out this admirable bush road to the bullock-drivers, but in vain. They imagined, as was true, as far as himself was concerned, that he only wanted to prevent their passing in front of his house, and ploughing all the rich, green level up into one immense black limbo of mud, in which they set their drays fast, and broke their axles, while all the time they might have had a hard road, and a much nearer, through the forest. As for poor Mr. Clark, they kept him in a perpetual state of excitement, for as one track became impassable, they ploughed up a new one still nearer and nearer to his house. To prevent their knocking down his fences, he dug two deep ditches, but they bounced over these with their empty drays, and would soon level them enough for the loaded ones to follow. To prevent this, and the destruction of his garden, he put up a board, stating that this was private property, and warning them to keep further off; but the very first bullock-drivers who came by knocked down the board and kindled their fire with it. Poor man! he had to be continually on the watch; and as you were speaking with him, he would snatch up his telescope, and

look here and there, and would be almost sure to exclaim,—“Excuse me, I see a troop of fellows going across my paddock. They have knocked down the fence. I must go to them.” And thus he was constantly darting out of his house, as a spider out of its web, to stop the encroachments of the bullock-driving race. This, you may imagine, is no enviable position for a man of fortune, who has lived all alone in his lordly wilds till the demon of gold has destroyed his rest for ever.

During the week of our progress on this road, we had the most extraordinary weather,—heat, cold, wet, drought in rapid alternations. The frost for several successive nights was almost as severe as one has it in England. The ice on the pools was a quarter of an inch thick, and in our buckets we had solid masses of ice an inch thick in one night; but the days were as warm as our summer weather, and speedily melted the ice. Then again came heavy rain; after hoar frost, rain here is certain; yet after the rain we often sought water in vain. It is singular that the most rain falls by night, and yet the animals are mostly out by night, and there is sure to be a bog on the top of a hill!

The country we passed through was very fine, the hills showing themselves on all sides, though the land was much less rich as we advanced farther from Melbourne; but still it was splendid land for sheep and cattle grazing, and very picturesque to the eye, with its steep hills covered with forests and gray granite rocks, and with deep dells running up amongst them, where we occasionally encamped in most secluded places, by clear, rapid, brooks, overhung by the wild woodlands.

Not the least amusing things on our journey are the groups that pass us, and the applications they make. I go on in the morning as far as we intend to travel that day, with the first load. I then remain with the goods, set up the tent, and get dinner ready for the arrival of the second detachment. When I have all in readiness, I sit down and read in the open air under some tree by the tent, to

the great wonder of all passers by. One day the Government escort, with six troopers guarding the gold, rode by. The officer exclaimed,—“Look! there is a gentleman reading in an easy chair; why, it is quite luxurious!” Presently came rapidly past a party of mounted police guarding a lot of bushrangers in a spring-cart, who had been taken near M'Ivor. They were equally astonished at my sitting there by my fire in my easy chair. “My word though,” said one, “*he* does not seem to care anything about bushrangers.” Then came past four bullock teams, and the drivers, equally astonished, discussed what I could be doing there all alone, and one said,—“Why the man must think of living there, sure-ly.”

The next day was Sunday, and the road was crowded with drays, carts, and pedestrians, going up and down as if it were no Sunday at all; and an old Scotchman was not far wrong when he one day observed to me,—“It is a fearfu' country, sir, a fearfu' country, where they pay nae respect to the Sabbath at a'.” Yet what an idea it presents of the mighty impulse given to the colony, to sit and see the throngs upon throngs which are going eagerly to and fro in the wilderness, where, till the other day, the natives only wandered solitarily after the opossum and kangaroo. The number of people who that one day came up to us to ask questions was quite amusing. One man wanted us to sell him a little sugar, enough for a day or two; another a little salt, for he had none for his damper; a third wanted to know if ours was a coffee-shop. Another came to inquire whether we had seen a particular team of bullocks; another certain horses; another if we had observed a couple of empty carts anywhere standing by the road-side. Then a whole troop inquired how far to the Pick-and-Shovel Inn. Then two Americans asking if we had seen a young man walking in slippers, and carrying his boots, which we had not, but had seen one walking without any slippers or boots at all. “No, that was not their

chum ;” and soon they came back shouting, — “ All right, mates, we have found the prodigal son !” and after them shuffled a very foot-sore youth, while one of them carried his swag, and another his boots.

At last as it was growing dark, up came a man saying, in a sharp, quick voice, — “ Good evening.” “ Hillo !” said Alfred, “ here comes Keeley ;” and sure enough the voice was precisely Keeley’s, and the man was a short, broad-set, fat man, for all the world of Keeley’s stamp. You might have imagined it was Keeley acting some one of the strange characters which abound in these woods. He was dressed in a very shabby pair of what had once been very fine dark cloth trowsers, and a pair of light stuff boots, with patent leather toes, such as the French and Germans wear. He had on a black silk waistcoat, but no coat, and “ a shocking bad hat,” which had once been a good beaver, from beneath which streamed out the most rat-taily and disconsolate raven-jet hair ; he appeared to have never had his clothes off, or been washed for six months. And who do you suppose this man was ? A shepherd, of all things ! What a contrast to the classical shepherd, with his pipe and crook ; or to the homely but wholesome Scotch shepherd, with his good warm clothes, his stout staff, and his plaid over his shoulder. This man had probably been a barman, or a waiter at some common inn or eating house in London. He looked like it ; and here he was a shepherd ! He had lost his flock and himself, and came to inquire, not after others, but after himself ; literally, to learn where he was. He said that the other shepherd had gone to seek his dog when it was time to let the sheep out of the pen, and as he alone let them out, they made a bolt and ran off into the bush, and he after them till he lost all sight of them, and then could not find his way back. All that he could tell was, that his hut was a new slab hut on Mollison’s station up in the ranges, and three miles from the Pick and Shovel. We advised him to

take the road back to the station, whence, he said, he knew the way to his hut; but, I suppose, he was afraid of the loss of his flock becoming thus known at head-quarters; and as he was here one mile from the Pick and Shovel, and on the road, he thought he could hit his hut; and away he struck off in the supposed direction towards the ranges. I hope to heaven he found his way; but being a new chum, utterly strange to the country, it is a great hazard if he did. He is only one of hundreds who arrive without any means, and take to shepherding till they can raise the wind to get up to the diggings. That, he said, was what he was doing. He had better have entered the liberal profession of road-making at Melbourne at 3*l.* per week.

As we approached the diggings, the marvellous stories of the wonders doing there, as is always the case, decreased more and more. Campbell must excuse the paraphrase, but—

“’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view,
And robes the Diggings in their golden hue.”

Now we see great numbers returning who say a few are doing extremely well and thousands are doing nothing at all. This is always the case. There is a constant chase from one digging to another, and the most distant one is always the miraculous one. Innkeepers and storekeepers employ both their abilities and their money to circulate these stories; and the farther off, the less possibility there is of disproving them. This humbug is now playing off here about the Ovens. Wondrous stories are in circulation as to what is doing there. This is preparatory to next summer, when these diggings will be deserted from want of water, and numbers are nibbling at the bait. “The Ovens,” they say, “will be certainly the richest after all.” But the true test, the amount of gold sent down by the escort, does not yet support these alluring

rumours. There is a report of new diggings not far from the Pick and Shovel; but no one that seeks them can find them. Hundreds, also, are rushing away to new diggings on the Goulburn, fifty miles off.

We arrived here a few days ago, and pitched our tents temporarily on an elevation just above M'Ivor Creek, a mile and half short of the diggings. The situation is very pleasant. A green slope, scattered with acacias and *Banksias*, descends to the creek, a good stream, and beyond it ascend other green slopes into the stringy-bark ranges. We have here quiet and food for our horses. At this time of the year all the country is as green as the fields of England, and the trees wear their brightest verdure. The stringy-bark woods look at a distance like oak woods, and the very *Banksias* are now handsome; for their foliage is fresh, and they are studded all over with thin, bright yellow bottle-brushes. We have decided that the *Banksia* is a Pre-Raphaelite tree, and would look formally beautiful in one of the pictures of that school. We have fine, warm days and frosty nights, and we like the winter season much better than the summer; for the country is verdant, the air is cool, and we are exempt from the intolerable plague of flies. All this part of the country, which is a hungry sand, would be a scorched-up desert in summer.

We have yet been only once through the diggings. They are like any other diggings, but much more scattered than the Ovens. The gold is here found on the left-hand side of the creek, and not, at all events yet, on its right bank. The gold field lies along the valley following the creek for about two miles, and extending up the slopes to the feet of granite ranges of no very great height, at about half a mile from the creek. They therefore, at present, cover a space of about two miles long, by half a mile. But they are rapidly extending in this direction, and no doubt we are encamped upon gold. Nay,

there is no reason why all the valley we have come along a dozen miles, and the gullies running up into the hills, especially about the Pick-and-Shovel inn, should not be auriferous. The gold in many places here is dug out of a soft sand, in some places not more than three or four feet deep; but there are other quarters where the holes are thirty feet deep and more. But more of these particulars anon.

We have seen the Commissioner, Mr. Brackenbury, who seems a very gentlemanly young man, and offers to forward our inquiries regarding the digging with great cordiality. He was in high spirits just then at the prospect of M'Ivor becoming a great copper-field as well as gold-field. A Cornish miner, whom I saw, announced the discovery of an abundant vein of copper ore, a beautiful malachite, containing 75 per cent. of metal. He offered to bring in three tons at once of this, provided he could have a lease of a considerable piece of ground, about which he had been down to the Governor.

Mr. Brackenbury says eight thousand ounces of gold were sent down last week by escort, besides what diggers and storekeepers have in hand. He tells us that the amount is increasing, and gives us every assurance of the opportunity to purchase gold to a large weekly amount. So far so good. We have, therefore, resolved to stay some weeks here, and make a fair trial of it. We have settled to pitch our tent near the Commissioners' camp, and to make a hut, both for greater warmth and security. In preparation, we have these three past days been peeling stringy-bark trees. The hut is to be the width of our tent, eleven feet, and nearly that length, with a good, large fireplace built of turf and lined with stones; so that we shall have two rooms: the inner one for cooking and our evening fireside; the outer one, that is, our tent, for our gold-buying bureau by day and our sleeping apartment by night. We have got all our bark and cut our timbers,

and are going to frame our hut here, and take it in complete for setting up.

It has been quite a Robinson-Crusoe work. The sheets of bark are six feet high, and run from four to six feet wide. When the outer fuzzy bark is cleaned off with the adze, they look like great sheets of ruddy copper, and are still nearly an inch thick. I assure you we shall be very snug in the winter; but I can tell you more about that in my next.

LETTER XIX.

Aspect of Diggings and Diggers. — Conspicuous Characters. — Mrs. Bunting. — American Auctioneer. — Scene between him and a Digger. — American Baker. — Grog-selling. — Ruins. — Savage Dogs. — Noise of Fire-arms. — Familiar rudeness of Diggers. — A Specimen. — Corruptions of Language. — What the Boys are growing into. — Account of one by Himself. — How they cheated the Commissioner. — Another Specimen and History. — Lesser Fry. — A Bush Comfort of Bullock-bells.

M'Ivor Diggings, June 30th, 1853.

IN perambulating these diggings, we find them very various in the depth of sinking and in yield. The central parts near and behind the Commissioners' camp are reported to have been the richest, and these parts are the deepest, from thirty to forty feet. The richest of all, Golden Gully, in that quarter, it is said, was discovered by a lad, the son of a blacksmith, as he was delving and making a sham, boy's digging—playing, in fact, at digging,—but carrying gold in considerable quantities to his father, the blacksmith set to work in good earnest, and there was very soon a rush there. Since then, the digging has extended in this direction, that is, towards the Melbourne side; and Californian Gully, German Gully, Caledonian Gully, mere hollows, scarcely below the ordinary level of the ground, are being dug up with very partial success. In and along the creek others are digging, but they are all complaining, and say, "Oh! these are only sham diggings." In the direction of the ranges, the granite rocks assume some of the oddest and most grotesque shapes that I have seen in this colony. They rise in some places abruptly out of the ground, and stand in

long ridges, some like sugar-loaves, others like pyramids, and others very much resemble the rocking-stones of Derbyshire and Cornwall. Farther up still, there are huge ridges of quartz, and the diggers are poring and delving all amongst them. High up amongst the woods they have sunk very deep, but apparently with very little result. The land all round in the woods, is most miserably barren. It consists of mere stone, covered with a thin coarse scrub, something like broom; and the diggers having felled every tree as far as they have gone, gives the whole a very wretched, desolate look. There is no feed whatever for horses on this side of the creek, till you get near our encampment; but there is very good feed on the other side, where are hills of a considerable height, and a perfectly solitary, unfrequented country. We have hunted and ridden a good way round in that direction, to see what game we could see; but we could find none except kangaroo rats. We can hear the wild dogs howling up in these hills; but we could not find any of them, though we came upon half a dozen sheep lying killed only the night before by them.

We have found several parties here that we knew, but they all complain of being greatly disappointed, and declare their intention of going away again. The wonders, they say, which were reported in Melbourne, all evaporated as they drew nearer; and their own luck has been but in conformity with this experience. The diggers who were lured from Bendigo have all hurried back again, declaring that that digging is worth ten of this. There all agree most is to be done, either in digging or in purchasing. We have concluded, therefore, not to winter here, but to go at once to Bendigo, and winter there, particularly as that field will require a good while for us to make ourselves well acquainted with its real character and value. A good many of our friends are there; and and here, I confess, the more I see of the population, the

less I like it. There appear to be no gentlemen, or very few, amongst the diggers here. They are the most common, coarse set of fellows I have seen anywhere. They appear all of the same navvie class, or made up of carters, labourers, ostlers, and low fellows, the scum of London, cab-drivers, and men about stables. They are a brutish, vulgar set, and monstrous thieves. The other day, a man walking across the diggings at noon, had a pistol put to his head, and his money demanded. He had 20*l.* in his pocket, which in his sudden terror he gave up; and the thief dodged round a tent, and, before the plundered man recovered his presence of mind, was quite lost sight of. Last Monday the Commissioners decided not less than fifty cases of offences of one kind or another. In one night ten horses were stolen from the flat below our tent. Luckily ours, being on the other side, escaped; but at noon-day some scoundrel stole a bell off the neck of one of them, worth a sovereign. We saw it there an hour before.

We shall give our bark-hut to some friends here, and hope to be in Bendigo in a week. It is thirty-five miles. But before quitting this place I must give you a few popular characteristics.

Mr. Bateman was sketching some scenes in the diggings, — a Sunday open-air preaching, a public auction, &c. The people soon got about him, and wanted him to sketch their tents, stores, and places of business, which I advised him to do, but not under 5*l.* per sketch, as this class of people have plenty of money, and are all amazingly proud of their establishments. He, therefore, stated his terms for a small pencil sketch, and had at once a host of orders. The butcher, the baker, the auctioneer, all wanted pictures of their places, to send home to their friends. The storekeepers followed with eager demands, and so I suppose Mr. Bateman will have to sketch all the diggings seriatim — a mile or two long. But now for a glimpse or two of scenes and characters of digger life.

First, there is Mrs. Bunting, an enormously fat woman.

Her husband is a storekeeper ; but Mrs. Bunting cuts the first figure in the establishment. She is well known as a sly grog-seller, and has been fined some dozen times or more, from 20*l.* to 50*l.* a time ; but she does not care for it, she still goes on, and sets the law at defiance. She rides on horseback about the diggings, and is especially ambitious to be sketched in the equestrian character. Nothing could exceed her dignity and bulk, except it were a Turkish dome or a steam-boiler on horseback. Awhile ago she drove down to Melbourne in their spring-cart, in company with the escort ; for she is a purchaser of gold ; and on Sundays, when other stores are closed, she has a large placard up in front of hers, with "GOLD BOUGHT THIS DAY." Well, she drove down with a pair of pistols in her belt at her capacious waist, and told the troopers of the escort that she would protect them in case of attack from bushrangers. All the way she kept ahead of them, and cracked her whip, and whistled to them, and called to them to come on. Everybody knows Mrs. Bunting, and has anecdotes to relate of her. There are some hugely fat women on the diggings ; the life seems to suit them. We saw one in a cart on the road, who set fast the cart and horse in a boggy place. She was the only load, and there they were sticking.

Next to Mrs. Bunting, I should say that a Mr. Langley, an American auctioneer, is the most distinguished character. He is every day mounted on a cart, or something equally elevated, selling all manner of things in the chief street before the auction-tent. He has an auction-tent, a store-tent, and a tent to live in, all in a row, which he calls the St. Louis Stores, St. Louis Mart, &c. He is a slight made man, with a rather effeminate style of features, and somewhat sandy whiskers, but especially American, and is a regular go-a-head one. He has always a crowd of diggers about him, and sells off their carts, horses, tents, tools, everything, when they are going away. When the

diggers' articles are exhausted, he sells his own. He has a never-failing stock of books, for instance. While Mr. Bateman was sketching here, he was selling "Uncle Tom's Cabin." You may hear him puffing off old dirty volumes, as, "these splendid volumes;" "these works that every one ought to know something of;" "this work which treats of a nation that we all ought to make ourselves acquainted with;" "this curious work, in which the author has said things of illustrious characters—by-the-by, how could this extraordinary volume get here? Why, it is not to be had in London. That is singular, how it escaped the book-hunters in Europe;—this most inquisitive, Paul Pry of a—" all this time turning over the leaves, breaking out in broader and broader smiles, as if quite forgetful of his audience in the piquant pleasantries and secrets of the book; but all the time listening to the five, ten, fifteen shillings of the eager and rapidly advancing biddings; when, knocking off for some nineteen shillings a greasy tome not worth sixpence on a London book-stall, he would say—"Ah! you've a prize there, my friend; that's the gem of the auction—nay, I should say of the colony; I should have liked to keep that myself." And then he immediately proceeds to sell some still greater wonder. The diggers fire off plenty of their rough wit at him, which he takes in good part, and chaffs them in return. One day we saw a drunken digger stop opposite, and put up his cradle, which he was carrying on his head, for sale, in opposition to Langley. There was a vast deal of laughter, roars of it ever and anon,—for the drunken fellow was very droll, and mimicked the auctioneer admirably, and often turned the laugh against him. At length Langley put up the digger and his cradle together, as one lot, to outjoke the fellow; but he instantly put up the boots which Langley had on, declaring that he would give the wearer in, and made so much merriment that Langley confessed himself beaten.

These scenes are all grist to the Yankee auctioneer's mill; and very probably he had planned the affair with the

digger. However, when he has done his ordinary day's sale, he mounts his horse, puts a fine brilliant-coloured cap on his head, and rides about the streets of the diggings to attract notice, and sell the horse he is upon. He is making several hundred pounds per week. The Commissioners won't license any auctioneer at M'Ivor as they do at the other diggings; but he goes on just the same. The other day, however, they had him up for galloping in the streets, and fined him. These auctions are very useful and convenient things, for you may buy or sell anything at them, which would occasion you much difficulty to find or dispose of without them.

The storekeepers are all making fortunes. Green, the baker, another American, is said to be worth his 20,000*l.*, and means, he says, next year to go home, and retire. He is an enormous man with great black mustachios and whiskers—a sort of baking Hercules, but a very good-natured fellow.

Another very money-getting trade is grog-selling. Government, as I am aware that I have already said, does not allow the sale of spirits on the diggings. They seize them where found, and fine the vender 50*l.*, besides burning down his tent; but spite of this it still goes on. In fact, it is well known that these people pay the police extravagantly not to see them, or meddle with them. Every body knows where these grog-shops are; and it is no uncommon thing for them to be kept by bushrangers, or by men in connection with them. They are well known; yet they are not taken, the police say, because it requires specific facts to arrest a man upon; but the diggers say, for the reason assigned, that the police are bribed.

There have been a vast number of robberies around here; and a good many bushrangers have been secured,—amongst them a desperate fellow called the Black Douglas, who managed to escape from the troopers, but is again taken. There is a man who keeps a grog-shop who seems

to be known to almost everybody as an old bushranger ; and yet nobody meddles with him ; and diggers are so foolish as to go and drink there. The bushrangers come in disguised as diggers, and hear all the news and talk of the diggers, who have been successful, and learn, therefore, where to make their attacks.

At the Pick-and-Shovel Inn, ten miles on the Melbourne side of M'Ivor, some young friends of ours stopped all night. There was a considerable number of men there, who were talking very freely, and leading others to talk of gold-digging ; saying what sums they had made, and then putting the like questions to the other guests. They pulled out lots of gold and nuggets, and challenged the diggers there to match the fineness of those specimens. When they went away, a person who was staying all night asked our young friends if they knew what sort of people they had been in company with ; and told them that they were a gang of notorious bushrangers.

Amongst the grog-sellers of M'Ivor, we discovered our old one-eyed enemy of the Yackandanda Creek, Polypheme. There, while with the miller, he was a professed teetotaller ; but here he was in his real character, and one of the most notorious scamps of the place.

One of the things which strikes you everywhere in this colony is the blunt, rude, independent manner of the common people. These men, in England, had a score of wealthier and more educated classes above them ; but here they are relieved from the high pressure of such a state of society. They find themselves the great majority of the country, and rarely see anybody, except on the diggings, who possesses any authority over them. There they come into rude collision with Commissioners and police, and, therefore, hate them, and some day will compare notes with them, and even now don't care for them. They get more money than at home, possess and ride on horses, carry guns, and keep dogs. On these diggings

there are the most huge, savage, furious dogs kept that I have seen anywhere. At every tent is chained one or more of these stupendous brutes; and you must be careful how you steer your way amongst the tents to keep out of the reach of their chains.

The diggers' guns, or rather firearms of all sorts, are an especial nuisance. They are continually discharging them on the diggings. There is a perpetual thunder of guns, pistols, and revolvers, night and morning—I verily believe for the sake of the noise; and I fancy an importation of little cannons, 6-pounders or so, would vastly delight them.

At home, few of these men ever handled a gun in their lives; here they all have them; and on Sundays are out, and firing at everything they see. They are dangerous sportsmen, these quondam labourers and cockneys, for they rarely think of anything but the bird they aim at. One young puppy, who had the look of a shop-lad, actually one day shot straight into our tent, at only eighty yards distance, meaning to have hit a wattle-bird in a bush below the tent. I went out and told him what he had done; on which, instead of expressing any regret, he assumed a very grand air, and informed me that if I presumed to say another word he would “double me up in a minute.” I invited him to try the experiment; but he only gave me a disdainful look, patted the barrel of his gun, saying, “Here’s my bottle-holder, and Snooks is my name, if you want me any time;” with which magniloquent delivery he stalked off.

In fact, it is impossible that such thousands of the coarsest, rudest, and most ignorant, of the English population, well sprinkled with felons from Sydney and Van Diemen’s Land, should thus meet together without becoming anything but agreeable or polite. There are, it is true, many exceptions, and much rough good-nature amongst them; but they are, as a whole, truly the *Hairi-stocracy*. Their most courteous terms for anybody, are,

"The man there;" "The old man there;" "The old woman there;" "I say, old fellow!" "Well, lad;" and so on. They enjoy, indeed, here a new liberty, of which they never dreamed before; how different to the state of the silk-stocking, crimson-plushed, livery-servants at home, who stand touching their hats at every word of their employers. Here, on the contrary, released from whatever species or degree of control they were accustomed to, these men run into the rudest and most impertinent license.

They make very free with you. They stop on the road at your tent, and make the most unceremonious remarks. They actually seem to take an inventory of your effects. Up they come, when they spy your fire; take up a firestick to light their pipes; seat themselves on the ground, or on a log, if they incline to rest, and accost you in terms of the most familiar equality. Then they go on talking to each other in this style:—"Look what a great, big tent these men have got. Why, it is as big as a Commissioner's! A good cart, and two prime horses."

"Ay," replies another, "and some capital dogs. I say, old fellow, what will you take for them two dogs; I mean th' big black un and th' little yolli un. I'll buy 'em."

"They are not to be sold."

"No! Why, you've Lord knows how many, and I want one or two. Well, I'll buy one of those there horses. I'll have the bay." "And I, the gray one," says his chum.

"They are not for sale."

"No? Have you got a drain, then?" (grog). "No."
"Any cigars?" "No."

"See here, Sam," cries another, "what jolly loaves. I'll have one of these loaves. What's the price?"

"Not to be sold: we don't keep a store."

"You don't, eh? D—n it, you might sell a fellow

something. Look! they've got iron bedsteads, axes, mallet and wedges, rugs, blankets, buckets, kettles, frying-pans, tins, easy chairs, boxes, spades, shovels, and everything necessary for anything. And what a heap of things under that tarpaulin there. What ever on earth do they want with all these things, if they don't want to keep a store?" And so on they talk, just as if you were not present.

Their attempts sometimes to use a better language than they know is very amusing. The Coliban Creek they always call the Columbine; the Campaspe river the Cumpasity; and the Tumut, the Tumult. One man, the other day, had a deal to say of people *monopolising* things. Another just now passed us with a couple of wood-ducks,—ducks that perch on trees,—the *Bernicla jubata*, a species of barnacle. I asked him if he had seen any turkeys out where he had been. He said, "No; and, in fact, the turkeys here are not real turkeys, they are turkey buzzard's,"—that is, vultures, the scavengers of Constantinople. The so-called turkeys here are bustards.

It will take a century to work this miscellaneous gathering of rude people out of the scum. As they get money, they will, however, as in America, in time give their children some education; but out of them will grow, as is plain to see, a go-a-head, self-confident, Yankee sort of people. It is really amusing and amazing to see what a knowing race of lads there is already amongst them: lads perfectly precocious in their experiences; lads who have been wandering ever since they first got on their legs—partly at home, and partly in different colonies of this continent. They set up for themselves before most lads at home go out apprentices, and are doing business on their own account before they have a trace of beard on their chins. Their spring, like that of the climate here, is an almost indefinable streak between winter and summer.

A boy of this class has often come up to our tent here.

One day he came to me, as I was sitting on the trunk of a tree near the tent; and, resting his back against it, began to talk. "A pretty flock of sheep, that," said he, nodding his head towards a flock that he was watching. "A pretty flock for a butcher at one time—about 200 of them."

"Yes," I observed, "a nice little flock. What does the butcher give you a day, now, for looking after them?"

"The butcher give me! Why he gives me nothing; they belong to me and my mate."

"What!" said I, "a boy like you in business already?"

"Why, as to that," said he, "I have been in business a good while now;" and so he went on to tell me his story. He was a slim, good-looking lad, of fourteen or fifteen. He was originally from London, but so long ago that he did not know from what part of it. His father, he said, was down in Melbourne, carting water, and, as he expressed it, was always putting his hand into his pocket, not to pull out money, but to put it in. He himself went to the diggings, and got enough to purchase a horse and cart. But he had scarcely got to work, carting washing-stuff for the diggers, when the horse was claimed as a stolen one. This, he said, sickened him of horseflesh; so he sold his cart, and joined the butcher, his present partner, in carrying stores to the diggings in a bullock-dray; and next, in fetching cattle out of New South Wales. The butcher, his mate, had a station at Yass, in New South Wales; it was there they went, about 300 miles; and when they had sold their stores, they were going there again.

It was pretty evident that, amongst their various business concerns, he and his mate kept a sly grog-shop; and it was very amusing to hear him tell how they contrived to trick, what he called "the fools of Commissioners."

"One day," said he, "my mate and I went to deposit some money at the Commissioners',"—who act as a sort of bankers to the diggers,— "but the Commissioner on duty

would not take it. 'I hear,' said he, 'that you sell grog.' Of course," said the boy, "we denied it; but, as we saw that the Commissioner meant to make a search, my mate held him in talk, while I got off as fast as I could, and sent the bullock-driver with the kegs into the bush. I gave the bullock-driver a bottle of rum, to amuse himself with while he lay there. Scarcely was he gone, when the Commissioner came with a policeman. 'Police,' said he, 'search this store; I hear they sell grog.' So the police began and turned everything over in the store; and, of course, found nothing. Because why? the bullock-driver was sitting crowner's 'quest on it in the bush. Then the Commissioner ordered him to search the tent. Now, we knew the policeman well enough, for many was the glass of grog that we had given him to keep all close. 'So,' says he, as he passes my mate, just in a low way like, 'mate,' says he, 'if you have any in the bed, don't pull the clothes off, but only touzle them about pretty well.' But my mate said out right loud, as the Commissioner might hear him,—'Off with the clothes, policeman! out with the bed! dig up the floor if you liken, and for every drop of grog that you find on my premises, I'll give you an ounce of gold for it.' So they pulley-hauled everything about, and found nothing;—'case why? The bullock-driver had it snug in the wattle-scrub."

This was the point that particularly tickled the boy's fancy. He seemed at one and the same moment to see the Commissioner watching intently for a keg of rum coming to light, and the bullock-driver, somewhere in a thick wattle-scrub, sitting, what he called, crowner's 'quest on the kegs, and amusing himself with a bottle to his own cheek. And the lad could not help laughing outright at the double scene.

"When the Commissioner saw that there was nothing, he looked as gruff as a bear at stake; and he said in a lofty, proud sort of way, 'Well, as you can find nothing

police, you can go.' And with that he began to walk off in a stately fashion.

"But now it was our turn to talk; and a pretty talk, I assure you, we made of it. 'Mr. Commissioner,' we said, 'it is all very well to charge us with sly grog-selling, and come and turn our store and tent topsy-turvy; but who is to set all these things right again, and who is to make us recompense for this scandal on respectable tradesmen?'

"At that he looked mighty astonished, and turned very red. 'Oh,' said he, 'you can soon put all to rights again.' But my mate said, 'Not so, Mr. Commissioner. If we had sold grog, and you had found it, you would have seized it, and fined us heavily into the bargain; but, as you have falsely accused us, we shall expect at least to be left as good as you found us. Pray where are we to sleep to-night, everything here being sixes and sevens, and our beds all pulled to pieces? Where are we to get our suppers cooked in this confusion? Where are we to breakfast, I ask?'

"'Well, my man,' said the Commissioner, 'what do you want to recompense you?'

"'Twenty pounds,' says my mate, boldly.

"'Twenty pounds! that is preposterous!' said the Commissioner.

"'Well, Mr. Commissioner,' said my mate, 'if you think that too much, then send your own men, and let them do it; it is all one to us, so that it is done. But mark me, sir, it must be to-night, and soon, as we shall be suffering from your unjust suspicion all the time.'

"'Very well,' said the Commissioner; 'I will send a couple of my men;' and he marched away, as proud as a peacock. But no men came; so at night we just put a few things in order a bit, got our suppers, and went to bed. In the morning we ups, gets our breakfasts, throws the beds and everything into *statico* again, and off we set to the Commissioner's. When we saw him we complained

heavily of nobody being sent, and of having to sit up all night, leastwise as long as we could keep awake, and then only resting our heads on the chopping-block.

“ ‘My good fellows,’ said the Commissioner, ‘you make much ado about nothing. You might have put all right yourselves before now.’

“ ‘About nothing? nothing?’ we broke out, both at once, ‘nothing? Is having our place turned topsy-turvy, nothing? our business stopped, nothing? for we can’t do a single thing. Is the slur cast on us, nothing? Nothing, sitting up supperless all night? Sir, we were all right before you came and ransacked us; and we expect to be set all right again, as you promised.’

“ ‘But I have got no men at liberty at present,’ said the Commissioner.

“ ‘And are we to wait till you have men?’ we asked.

“ ‘Well, what is the least that you’ll be satisfied with to put all right yourselves?’ now asked his worshipful Commissionership, looking a good deal posed. ‘If ten pounds will do, I will give you that, and I will give no more.’

“ ‘Well,’ said my mate, still pulling a long face, ‘that *must* do, if you won’t give us any more; but I must say it is a hard case.’

“The Commissioner handed us a ten-pound note, and we walked off, laughing consumedly in our sleeves. We had everything on its legs again in an hour, and ten pounds in pocket. They have never bothered us since about grog.”

“But you still sell it, I suppose?” said I.

“Oh! eye-water we sell; grog we don’t pretend to know nothing about. Eye-water! that’s the stuff, you know.—What a fool the Cooper is!” and, chuckling as he uttered this colonial phrase,—used when a man thinks he has done something very knowing,—our hopeful youngster went off to lead his sheep in another direction, profoundly happy

in dwelling on the way in which they had duped the Commissioner.

This is a pretty good specimen of the rising generation of this colony. You may judge of the heap by the sample. But I will give you a fellow to this, rather anticipating my narrative, to place it here. The other night we had encamped very near the road-side, about half way between M'Ivor and Bendigo. We were late, and could go no further, though the place had no water but a little puddle between the trees on the edge of the road. But the mischief of camping near a road is like that of stopping to look at something in a shop-window in a town. Though nobody is there when you stop, the moment you do that a crowd of other people stop, and you are soon glad to escape from the pressure of sweeps, bakers' boys, and others of garments too communicative. So, in the bush, the very next people that come past, imagine that you have some very good reasons for camping there. They assure themselves that you have found very good feed, and plenty of water and wood to burn.

So, scarcely had we settled down, when up came a cart-load of diggers, driving at full trot, till their horses were all in a foam. "Hillo!" shouted out a lad to his companions; "see, here are people camping with water and feed for the horses first rate." Without stopping a moment to ascertain that these good auguries were true, the men turned off their cart into the bush close to us. There was a famous gunyah of boughs just by, left by some party some days before. This was a discovery to them. "Look here!" again vociferated the lad,—a smooth-faced fellow, of apparently fourteen,—"why, here is a house ready for us. Many a fellow at the Bendigo has not one so good."

The party were soon settled in their mimi; their horses turned adrift in the woods, hot and covered with mud as they were, to take care of themselves. A fire was made, and the fellows were soon very jolly over their suppers.

These were speedily followed by others and others, who all turned into the bush and joined them, so that very soon there was a numerous and very noisy company. Their talk and laughter were incessant, and of the loudest; and we were unfortunately near enough to hear every word of their conversation, which, I need not say, was not the most refined, or altogether interesting. A vast deal of it was all about horses and bullocks, lost, found, stolen, and recovered. Now and then we were the subject of their conjectures. Our big tent, and plates, and silver spoons, and our tent set round with beautiful bedsteads, covered with blankets and handsome rugs, as the lad, who had taken a close survey of us, informed them, caused them not to know what to make of us.

The conversation of this lad, which never ceased till about midnight, was, however, the remarkable thing. He perfectly out-talked them all; and when they cut a joke at him, he repaid it with interest. He was, according to his account,—for he gave the new comers, as they sat round the fire, his history,—Irish. He talked of the time when he and Sammy, one of the party, were knocking about in Ireland. Since then he had been in Sydney, where he said his father was a blacksmith, making money as fast as he could hammer. Then the father had gone up to Bathurst and the Turon Diggings, and the whole family with him. “There,” said the lad, “he joined a doctor in digging, and lost all his money.”

“He had soon done with the doctor, then, I reckon,” said one of the party.

“No,” said the lad, “he is with him still; but what they are doing I don’t know, for I came away to do something for myself.”

And then, to hear the story of his doing something for himself! He had wandered all over the colony; been at all the diggings round, either helping to dig or to carry goods; and here he was, independent mate of a party,

which appeared to be picking up money, either by digging or carrying, as chance offered. He certainly was, if not actually director of the company, its chief speaker; and all the others appeared to listen to him like an oracle. He had learned very little that lads in England learn at his age, but a vast deal that no lad of his age ought to know. He came to our fire, to ask if we could sell him a pipe; and Alfred sold him one of his French pipes, with a wreath of red roses round it, and which cost in England $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, for 1s.—the digging price for the most ordinary dudeens. He was so delighted with it that he bought two, and soon came again with a large order for his comrades. Some days afterwards, as his party passed us again on the road, he spied out our tent, and came to get some more, and inquired if we could accommodate his companion, a boy of the like age, with a few excellent cigars?

This boy and his companions, however noisy, were that night serviceable to us, by preventing, by their presence, an attack of bushrangers, as we shall relate anon.

Besides this class of over-experienced lads, there is a lesser, more juvenile race, all about in the woods and at the diggings, looking after bullocks and horses. These lads, from eight to ten or twelve years old, look like little frogs moving about under extinguishers. They are all alike. They are dressed in a pair of moleskin or corduroy trousers, yellow with the gravel or clay of the diggings, and immensely wide,—being their fathers' cut shorter, and often worse for wear; a pair of strong shoes, and no stockings; a coloured shirt, that has perhaps been washed sometime; if the weather be cold or wet, a coarse, short, wide coat, much too big, and an old dingy wide-awake, which, having belonged to their fathers, is also much too big, and apt to blow off, and which, therefore, from constantly pulling down tight upon their heads, has got the brims stretched straight down all round: that is the regular invariable shape, and that is the regular picture of these boys. Besides these, there are

little girls running about, looking after horses, and seeming very much at home in the woods. I shall introduce a group of these anon.

I may close this chapter of Australian characteristics with one of the most annoying. Just as we are going to bed comes one of the comforts of the bush, in the shape of a whole *posse* of bullock-drays, and their drivers, with thirty bullocks. These fellows only, could blunder along these deep forest roads in the dark. They have been drinking at the Pick-and-Shovel, or M'Ivor Inn, and wasting their daylight, and now, valiant with brandy, think they will make up for it, and so drive on at the risk of both cattle and stores. To our misfortune, however, they have got thus far, and our fire is the signal for them to turn off the road, and give us their company, by camping close to us. And now they are all shouting and swearing in letting loose their bullocks. "Wo! Wellington! Wo! Nelson! Wo! wo! wo-ho-hoy! wo-ho-hoy! Yallar-man! Wo; Waterloo! Wo-ho-hoy, Lofty!"—and then clash go a heap of bullock-bells out of one of the drays to the ground. And then there is much noise in fixing them on the bullocks' necks, and the whole herd begin grazing all round our tent, with a peal of sonorous bells, like half a dozen belfries all in full swing. The other night, we had a crowd of these noisy fellows, hooting and running after their bullocks in the dark right up into the woods. "Halloo! halloo! halloo, lad! Halloo, Redman! Halloo, Tiger!" &c. You would have thought the bullocks and the men were all gone mad together. It was midnight before the din ceased, and we could sleep. Whether the fellows were driving their cattle away to better pasture, or whether they thought they were going off too far of themselves, we could not tell. But the bush is free, and you must take such neighbours as choose to come.

LETTER XX.

On the Way to Bendigo.—Cross the Campaspe.—Visit from a crazed Shepherd.—His strange Fancies and Conversation.—Midnight Visit from Bushrangers.—The Result.—Another Visit from one as Scout.—Rob two Ladies there next Morning.—Murderous Attack on the Gold Escort by same Party.—Jenny, Kitty, and Lizzy Ennis, a merry Group of Bush Children.—A Gentleman Shepherd.—The Story of the Frenchman and his Badger.

Bendigo Diggings, July 14th, 1853.

OUR road from the M'Ivor hither was alternately over plains and barren woodland ranges, scattered with white masses of quartz, and with the prickly acacia in flower. The roads, for the most part, were good, excepting a few miles on approaching the Campaspe. There we had several miles of the vilest crab-hole road, and a descent to the river horrid with masses of rock projecting from the hill-side. However, we bounced and tumbled over it as well as we could, and were rejoiced to find the river of the classical name so low that we could drive through without wetting the stores in the cart. This small river rises often twenty feet in a few hours, and in rainy seasons is utterly impassable. Just above our crossing-place lay a horse, drowned only a few days before, when the river was running furiously bank-full, and when the rider, endeavouring to swim him across, only escaped with great difficulty. The river runs from Mount Macedon, and is often fullest here when there has been no rain in this neighbourhood, the rain having been at the mount.

The greater part of the way from the M'Ivor to the Campaspe the country was very fine and pleasant to look

at, and the weather superb. We advanced over open plains, bounded on our right by downs, green, flowing in their outlines, and as free from trees as the downs in England. You would have said it was a cultivated sheep-farming country, like Wiltshire; but it was just as nature had left it. The clear, soft swells, rising and falling like the downs, or the green hills of Derbyshire, in many places perfectly clear of wood, in others only thinly sprinkled, and the edges of the forest showing themselves round at a distance, had a most civilised look. All was as emerald green as England itself; and the great, broad, level meadows over which we passed, were traversed with a wandering stream, just like an English trout stream. But all this consists of mere sand, and in the very first approach of summer will be burnt like a desert. Green as it now is from the winter rains, it is delusive, for the grass is so short that the horses are nearly starved upon it, and, had we no corn with us, would be so.

The trees are nearly all of the box eucalyptus, which makes no dead wood, so that we are at our wits' end for fuel. The day after we left M'Ivor, you might have seen me sitting on a hill, overlooking this open, verdant, beautiful scene for miles round, M'Ivor in the distance, at the boundary of the diggings, standing finely aloft, in his dark garniture of woods. Here I sat, as I have done every day on our journey, waiting for the second load coming up. Beside me, a pile of goods under a tarpaulin, my steak cooking in the frying-pan, or a slice of bacon frizzling on a pointed stick, and my tea boiling in a quart-pot, while I was busy setting up the tent, or, that done, preparing the dinner for the evening, when the party would arrive, or amusing my leisure, if I had any, with "Knickerbocker's New York;" always looking very formidable, in case of any visit from bushrangers, by a revolver lying on a camp-stool at hand, and a bowie knife in my belt.

Our party now consists only of myself and my two sons; Mr. Bateman having gone back to Melbourne.

The first evening we had a visit from a strange crazed shepherd; and I could not give a more lively idea of the intellectual condition of this class of unfortunate men, which I have often mentioned, than by simply stating what passed.

I had seen the man go by, while it was daylight in the afternoon. He was leaning forward on his stick, carrying a bundle on his shoulder, and talking aloud, as I supposed, to some one below the hill. But after it was dark, our dogs gave notice of the approach of some one, and a voice cried out from a distance, "Any danger?" We said "no;" and soon emerged from the darkness into the light of our fire, this strange, insane man. He was dressed in a pair of those riding-trousers, which are covered on the seat and down the inside of the legs with doe-skin, looking very odd and piebald, partly coffee-colour, partly nearly white, the gift, no doubt, of some hard-riding squatter. He had a short, shabby drab coat, and an old greenish-gray wide-awake. His shoes were slit open, as to give ease to gouty feet, and his swag consisted of an old, dirty linen coat, tied together by the arms, containing only a little tea in a paper, and some bread and cheese.

He said that he had been some distance onwards to reach the station of Mr. Patterson, a wealthy squatter, which, indeed, was conspicuous by day, on an opposite hill; but that it had grown so dark that he dared not proceed, lest he should be lost in the bush. He, therefore, begged leave to lie down by our fire for the night; and though, for obvious reasons, we rarely permit this to strange men, we permitted it to him, as he appeared perfectly harmless. We were just going to tea, and we made him sit down and partake of some capital beef-steak, fresh bread, and tea. The old man was delighted, and pronounced it beautiful!

As he had no rug to cover him, we made him a mimi of canvass in front of the fire, a bed of leaves, and lent him a horse-rug to protect him from the wind, which was intensely cold. The account that he gave of himself was, that he had been for years a shepherd, on the station of Messrs. Hamilton and Riddell, near Mount Macedon. That, through being frequently wet for days together while out with the sheep, he was so cramped and stiffened with rheumatism, or rheumatic gout, that he was incapable of following the flock. That, therefore, Mr. Maclelan, the overseer, had advised him to come up to Mr. Paterson, who, he told him, could, no doubt, get him into the Benevolent Society.

This was clearly a crazy man's story, for Messrs Hamilton and Riddell could have done for him all that Mr. Paterson could; and it would have been an absurd thing to send a poor, crippled, crazy man, nearly a hundred miles on any account, much less on one which was perfectly unnecessary, as it could have been done by letter. But this is a common phase of shepherd lunacy; the idea of something to be done a long way off, by which they are induced to wander from place to place till they frequently sink and perish in the bush. This, it appeared quite likely, would be the fate of this poor fellow. It was evident, from the state of his wardrobe, that he had been long wandering about. He had small features, dreamy eyes, such as I have often seen in old Australian shepherds; and his beard, though not his hair, was gray. He appeared sixty, but contended that he was only about forty. But his memory was obviously almost gone, probably from the effect of his ailment on his brain. He said that he came out from England so young that he did not remember what part he came from; yet he came to Melbourne direct; and yet Melbourne is only about eighteen years old, so that he ought not to be much more than twenty. Perhaps he did not wish it to be known where he came from; for his voice

was that of an educated person, and I had a strange feeling that I had seen him before, somewhere in England; a feeling much strengthened by his frequent use of *thee* and *thou* in his conversation. From this and other circumstances, I had a very strong impression that in early life he had been a member of the Society of Friends.

This poor fellow was as visionary as any man could be. He said, that when he got down to the creek that night, he could see a log lying in the water, and he stepped upon it to cross, when, he could not tell how it was, but the land seemed all at once to go away from him, and the water to go "tinkle! tinkle!" oh, so beautifully, that he really thought he could rush in, and take it all round him. Then he gave a leap to get over on the other side, and he was astonished to find himself again on this side. So he turned back, and seeing a fire near, he went towards it. The people were talking very loud all together, so he called out, "What are you people making all that noise for." And they said, "Go along, old fellow, and never do you mind." So he came along to us.

He described his being first taken with his illness (insanity) with feeling all at once as if the world had stopped; and "my feet," said he, "were set fast to the ground, and they seemed as if they had a couple of blacksmith's wedges in them."

I asked him if he had any wife or children. "Oh, no!" he said; "a shepherd never thinks of marrying." "But," I observed, "it must be a very dull, monotonous life in the woods, always following a flock of sheep." "Oh, no!" he said; "it is really very amusing. The nature of shepherding" — he was always talking of the nature of things, and involving himself frequently in strange, tangled attempts at explanation — "the nature of shepherding is to take out your sheep in a morning. You take them out, play on the fife, the flute, or the fiddle;" — I very much doubt whether such a thing was ever seen in Australia.

—“ I think sheep are very fond of the flute. Some like the fife, some the fiddle, but the flute is the instrument that seems to possess the highest charm for them;—take out a book or a newspaper; take back your sheep at night;—and really it is very amusing. I never could follow anything but sheep;—I don't fancy anything else. The nature of a man assimilates itself to a thing; and that thing works on the mind, and the mind works on it; and so nothing but that can please the man. It is the nature of things that it is so. There came a man to the station at the mount, and he said to me—‘Thee art a shepherd, and a shepherd thee must remain for ever.’ And I said, ‘What me?’ and he said, ‘Yes, thee; thee art a shepherd for ever.’ He said this in the presence of Mr. Maclelan,—and he was gone!—and I knew that it was true. I am a shepherd for ever.

“ And really it is a very amusing life. I learned a great thing from Long John, the other shepherd. ‘Long John,’ said Mr. Maclelan, ‘is a much older man than thee, Harry, that is, Henry; so mark and learn of him;’ and really I did learn a great deal in the nature of shepherding from him. Almost all shepherds follow after their sheep, but I observed that Long John did not follow his, but went away from them; and I saw immediately that it is the nature of sheep to go moving forwards if you follow them, and to stop if you go away from them; and I followed Long John's plan, and it really answered beautifully; for, instead of their rambling on and on, they staid and fed quietly in one place a long time together. I never could manage more than 3000 sheep; some shepherds may,—Long John could, I dare say,—but 3000 are my number. I could manage them, and no more. Once I came into a rough fuzzy scrub, and I really thought I should have gone mad, for here went leaping past 1500 sheep: and then another 1500; and sometimes I could see them going! going! going! and sometimes I could

not see them at all! No, 3000 are all that I can pretend to take care of."

I asked him what books he had read. He said he had read Burns's Poems and the Bible. And he had read some of Shakspeare. Two of Shakspeare's dramas that he had read were *Hamilton* and *Macbeth*. These were all he could remember. But he sometimes got a map to read, which was very amusing. To trace out the roads, and the places of market-towns, was very interesting. He complained much of the want of fruit in this country, and seemed to remember with a wonderful relish russet apples. "Oh! those russets! They are a beautiful fruit. I remember eating them somewhere in England; I don't remember where, but they were beautiful! A dumpling of them would fill you from morning to night. And do you know, I am very fond of currant cakes. As I came through M'Ivor Diggings I saw some, at a shilling a-piece. I ate two of them; two whole currant cakes!—I was astonished;—two shillings!"

Such is the childish condition to which these poor shepherds are frequently reduced by their life-long solitude. The merest trifles become wonders to them; the great events of their lives. Poor old fellow! he was singing and talking to himself most of the night; and in the morning he was very ill. He said he thought he should die, and we thought he would, too, upon the spot. I suppose the good supper, after much starvation, was too much for him. And he must have suffered immensely these cold nights from lying in the bush without fire or any rug or blanket to cover him. He had no doubt lost all these on the way; for his memory was gone, so that he could not remember Black Thursday, the 6th of February, 1851, though the great bush-fire of that day had burned all round Mount Macedon, and on Messrs. Hamilton and Riddell's Station. "I had a rug; I had a blanket; I had a quilt," he said; "but they are all gone, I don't know how."

But it was easy to see how,—for that morning he was actually going away without his swag. It really gives one a miserable idea of shepherding, and of the little care taken of old, or insane shepherds, to see them thus wandering about. I never saw a man more racked with pains than he was that morning; and I heard him moaning to himself,—“What pains! what pains! It seems as if the end were coming,—that is my belief, and what I say is, the sooner the better. O Lord, take us! take us to thy glory, we pray thee, and we are tired of praying. Take us! take us!” And then again I heard him saying,—“Oh! what a world this is! what a world of trouble! No father, no mother, no brother, no sister,—all alone! Oh, what a world!”

We gave him some warm brandy and water, and urged him to get to Mr. Paterson's as soon as possible, as we must move on; and we could not leave him to perish in the wilderness alone. But he sat to the latest moment with Charlton by the fire, and very much pitied me for thinking shepherding so dull a life. He said it was my misfortune. What a strange effect it is which this bush life has on these men: at once destroying their minds, and yet inspiring them with such a fascination for what is so dreary in itself, and which ends in such misery and desolation.

Our next encounter was with a very different class of men—bushrangers. There had been so many desperate fellows taken up about M'Ivor that we imagined the roads were now pretty clear. We, therefore, ventured to carry along with us nearly 500*l.*, which we happened to have up with us; and never thought about bushrangers till they were upon us. A most ferocious gang, however, had been haunting this very road for several weeks. They had committed some daring robberies, and the police from Bendigo had been constantly on the watch for them, but in vain. There is no doubt but they were the very same gang which since have made the audacious attack on the

escort near Kyneton, and so brutally murdered the troopers.

At the place where we had the company of the talkative boy and his noisy companions, we had camped in a close wood, because of a water-hole there. The wood was so dense, that we were obliged to camp near the road, and without a thought of bushrangers, but, to prevent any party turning suddenly off the road upon our tent in the dark, we felled a large tree between the road and the tent. In front burned, as was our invariable custom, a large fire, so as to enable us to see any one who came near. At midnight I was awake by the barking of our dogs, and heard at the same time a loud crashing and swearing in the boughs of the tree we had felled. I rose and looked out on that side, and beheld two ruffian-looking fellows on horseback and armed, dashing furiously through the trees. A third, a tall fellow, had posted himself in front, behind the fire.

I shouted to the fellows in the tree to keep back; they paid no attention, but still endeavoured to force their horses through, with the most hideous oaths. I was not very well pleased to be thus roused when I had scarcely got to sleep for the noise of our neighbours; and told them, as well as the clamour of the dogs and their own boisterous menaces would let me be heard, that we had plenty of firearms, and that if they came any nearer, we should give them the benefit of them. They swore at our firearms, and declared they had got plenty of those too. I had called up Alfred and Charlton, and apprised them of the sort of customers we had, and we could soon have given them a very effective salute from under the eaves of our tent; but at this instant, our neighbours, who had also been awake by the noise, called out with an oath,—“And we have got plenty of firearms too, and if you'll wait just a second, we'll put half a dozen daylight through you.”

On hearing this, and perceiving that there was rather a

populous neighbourhood, and not a solitary tent, the ruffians drew back, turned their horses and fled; the man at the front calling vehemently, "Come back! come back!" But as they did not think fit to come back, he quietly followed in their train. Thus, noisy as our neighbours had been, they did us very good service; and had the fellows dared to attack us, I don't believe that any of them would have been left alive.

Again, immediately after crossing the Campaspe, a tall, strong, active looking man, in a bright red jumper, mounted on a splendid black horse, and with a handsome riding-whip in his hand, rode past our tent four times, to and fro, evidently reconnoitring; and we made no doubt that he was a bushranger; but no attack followed, for we had other parties camping near. But a fortnight ago we camped between the Exe Creek and a coffee-tent by the road-side. We were a mile from the coffee-tent, and there was no fire of any party to be seen any where round. Soon after it was dark, a man called out to know if we would give him a warm. We said, yes, and immediately emerged from the darkness a fellow the most like a thief that you ever saw. He was only a middle-sized man, but he had a villainous look. He had no swag with him, and was merely dressed in a blue worsted shirt, cotton corduroy trousers, and a red muffler round his head, instead of a cap. He was one of those fellows who keep their eyes nearly closed, that you may not look into them, but that they may make their observations without your noticing the direction of their eyes. We gave him some tea, and, having got his warm, he very coolly stretched himself before the fire on the ground. I bade him get up, and get off to the coffee-tent, as he could not sleep there. He very coolly replied that there was time enough before morning.

I then gave him a kick in the back, telling him that he was not going to lie by our fire till morning, and that he

had better move off. He stretched out a leg, and said he had so sore a heel he could not move an inch. I told him if he had two sore heels, or no heels at all, he must move, and soon. He then said, he did not know the road. "It is there, only a hundred yards to the left," we said; "so, away!" But he would not move. I now recollected the Governor's route for the road in my memorandum book, and determined to try the effect of a *ruse*.

"My man," said I, "we are here by direction of His Excellency, and cannot be trifled with. Begone, this instant, or we will make free to arrest you."

These words had the most electric effect, accompanied by a sight of Alfred's revolver, which he had just stuck in his belt. The fellow sprung up, leapt nimbly over the trunk of a tree, against which our fire burned, and disappeared in the darkness. But, having just stuck a red-hot cinder in his pipe, to light his tobacco, we observed, by it, that he was not going towards the road, but in quite another direction into the bush, and towards some hills that we had seen ere dark. We called to him that that was not the way; and he replied, "I know the way well enough."

As there was no question what the villain was, we made all ready against an attack in the night, which we quite expected, as we had no neighbours here to back us. We were most apprehensive for the safety of our horses, and therefore brought them up near the tent, where any person's approach would instantly alarm our dogs. But no alarm came, for no doubt the rogues set us down for government agents, on the look out for them; and took care to keep clear of us. The dodge is a very common one of sending one of the gang to lie by your fire, and watch you all asleep, when he gives the sign for his comrades to advance and surprise you. That they took us for something official is the more probable, for the next day after we left, they stopped two ladies on that very spot,

and robbed them, and their servant. They were, without doubt, hovering near and keeping watch on us till we were off the ground; for, on starting in the morning, I observed that the Exe Creek was at a little distance along the right of our road, and I went down it, and followed its course, meantime speculating what sort of a stream it would be to cross. Suddenly, I heard a clash upon the gravel of the creek, a little way ahead of me, as if several men had jumped down upon it from the high bank. The place was bushy, and suitable for concealment, and it struck me that these fellows had been on the watch behind the trees near the road, and were surprised by my quitting the road, and coming where I should see them. I returned to my party, told them what I had heard, and consulted whether we should go and examine the spot. But, as our object was to get clear of them, and as they evidently looked on us as government agents, and were willing to be clear of us, we concluded to leave them alone, and proceed on our way. It could not be many hours after our departure that they robbed the ladies.

The morning after I arrived here, I went up to the Government Camp to get my letters; and while speaking with the Commissioner in front of his tent, we observed a troop of mounted police coming up with a bushranger in custody. We went and took a good survey of him. He was a great, burley, scoundrel-looking fellow, in digger costume, with a longish hooked nose, black beard, heavy overhanging eyebrows, and a horrid squint in both eyes. He was probably one of the midnight visitors to our tent, but he was not the scout of the other evening. On looking over the description of the three who had robbed the ladies, this fellow was clearly described as one, and our scout in the red muffler, blue shirt, and corduroys, was another. They were the same gang, and this brutal wretch was one who meant to have attacked us.

Immediately on the heels of this capture, comes the

grand *finale* of this diabolical gang, through which we so providentially passed in security. Last week, as the private escort was going down to Melbourne with the gold, and had just crossed the Campaspe, about fourteen miles from M'Ivor, it was attacked by a strong party of bush-rangers. There were twelve at least of them,—that number was seen,—while, I think, the escort consisted of eight. The robbers had planned their attack well. They had selected a narrow part of the road, with a high bank, covered with thick bushes on one side, so that the escort could not get out of the way on that side; and they constructed a mimi, or bower of boughs on the other, leaving port-holes amongst the boughs towards the road. They could thus see the approach of the escort without being seen; and could pour a deadly volley into it as it passed. This they did, when the escort was exactly between the high scrubby bank and their mimi, and shot down four of the men, and killed the shaft-horse. It then came to a regular fight, until only two of the escort, the officer and one man, were unharmed, and they defended their charge till they had no ammunition left.

The officer and private then gave spurs to their horses; the private, I think, riding back, and the officer taking the way to M'Ivor. As soon as the villains saw that he was off, they cried, "Down with him! he is going to give the alarm!" and they sent a volley of bullets after him. He had fourteen shots fired at him, but not one touched him, though they took away a part of the under-lip of his horse.

In forty-eight minutes after he reached M'Ivor, and announced the robbery, Mr. Brackenbury and another Commissioner, with a number of troopers, were on the ground, but, of course, the scoundrels had made off with the gold—2200 ounces. As soon as the officer was gone, a wounded man, lying on the ground, heard the fellows say, "Quick! quick! break open the boxes, there is no time

to lose ; the troopers will be upon us." And very rapidly they broke open the boxes, and made off into the bush with the gold.

The Commissioners found the wounded men lying on the ground, in their blood ; and on one of them they had perpetrated a devil's deed. One of them had gone up to him as he lay on the ground, put his pistol to his breast, pressing it against him till it fairly dented his flesh, and fired it through him. The ball passed through his lungs, and out at his shoulder-blade. Of course, he is not expected to live. Another was shot in the hip, another across the forehead, and another had the cap of his knee shot away. The bushrangers fired pistol-bullets out of their guns. Two of them were shot, and it is supposed mortally ; the wounded men saw their comrades carrying them off.

The robbers left four saddle-horses on the ground in their hurry, and some of their panikins, with their names marked on them. Six fellows are already in custody, on suspicion ; and 300 diggers from M'Ivor are out scouring the woods in pursuit of them. The moment the news reached M'Ivor, the diggers ran up to the camp, and desired to be sworn as special constables, in order to pursue the thieves ; and the bands that are out declare that they will Lynch them the moment they catch hold of them. I sincerely wish they may, for they are unquestionably some of the Van Diemenian convicts, who are hardened past recovery, and whom hanging is the only means here of securely dealing with. Reformation of such petrified brutes is hopeless. They have no regard whatever for human life, and the ordinary punishment here of putting them to work on the roads is considered by them as a certain means, one day or other, of escape ; and it generally proves so. This account I have received from the Commissioners ; as yet the newspapers have not arrived.

I shall conclude this letter with some little matters connected with our whereabouts, and in my next give you a general account of these great diggings of Bendigo. We are yet camped in a pleasant green valley at the foot of high, wooded hills, which shut out the diggings; so that, though we are close upon them, we see nothing of them till we pass over a saddle in these ranges. We have good feed for our horses; and they are hidden in the ranges so as not to be very obvious to horse-stealers, who abound here. As we approached this place from M'Ivor, we passed the Emu Creek, and another creek just below here, called the Sheep-wash, and could see where the diggers had been washing their gold in these brooks, in the summer when there is no water on Bendigo. Below us we have the green open meadows of the Sheep-wash, and above us these steep hills, the ridges of which are all bare, rugged stones, having those long chines of perpendicular strata running due north and south which indicate gold. These are chiefly of quartz and iron-stone, or clay-slate. The trees crowning these rocky hills, and growing out of the very stones, are iron-barks.

Here are two little girls, and sometimes three, who come to look up, morning and evening, their dingy, brownish, blackish, rough animals, that graze near our tent. I imagined them very happy, thus ranging in the woods; but oh! the deceitfulness of appearances, and the vanity of human wishes! On getting into talk with them, I said I supposed they enjoyed running about here. "No." "Did they not see the squirrels flying about?" "No." "Did they not see the opossums?" "No." "Did they not like to hear the birds?" "No." "What did they like?" "Being in Hobart Town, where they came from." Yet they seem so full of fresh, young life, that one can't pity them; and we have seen so much of them every day for a week, that we are grown quite fond of them. They are Jenny, Kitty, and Lizzy Ennis. Jenny is eleven, Kitty

nine, Lizzy six; and there is an elder sister of seventeen, whom we have only once got a glimpse of, as she is busy at the tent at home. These little girls afford a good specimen of girls brought up in the bush. Every morning and evening the two elder, Jenny and Kitty, come to hunt up the three queer-looking horses. If they are not near our tent with ours, where they endeavour to keep them, they set off up the wooded ranges, and soon find them. Often Charlton has seen their horses, and can put them on their track; and in a while you will hear loud laughter of young voices coming along the woods; and soon appear the two little equestrians, mounted astride on one of the horses, sometimes all three of them, one behind the other; and they only trouble themselves to bring up this, which is the old mother, and the others are sure to follow.

Up they come, often in a full trot, and sometimes crying out "Wo! wo!" interrupted by laughter, because the horse almost shakes them off. Jenny, the elder one, adroitly slides off and stops him, and the other, often Lizzy, the six-years-old one, drops off too. It is amusing to see Jenny put on the horse's hobbles again,—for they take them off, or fasten them round one foot only, while they ride, that the creature may go freely,—to hear her telling it to stand over, and lift its foot, and making it do as she wishes, just like an experienced groom.

Jenny is a round, fresh-faced, blue-eyed, blooming little lass; and Kitty, though two years younger, is nearly as tall, which Jenny says is because she eats more damper, at which they both laugh heartily. With their rosy cheeks and light brown hair, they are the very pictures of health. When they have seen their horses, they go gold-gathering amongst the stuff thrown out of the old holes; and they say they gather, on an average, nearly an ounce a week, or about 3*l.* worth. Thus these children do better than many diggers. Their little quick eyes can see the smallest particle of gold, and they often pick it out of the

gravel of the road as they come along. One day they had picked up in coming nearly a pennyweight; and another day I met them busily looking, and they showed me several pieces in their hands. Their father and brother are regularly digging all this time in Spring Gully, about a quarter of a mile off, and they say they hope, in two or three more years, to have enough to go back and buy a farm in Van Diemen's Land.

One day it was wet, and I dare say they could not gather gold, so I saw them with their frocks pinned up round their waists, showing their flannel petticoats, busy with a horse dragging timber home from the woods for the fire. They had a rope fastened to his harness, and drew along their great pieces of timber with as much judgment and adroitness as any men could. The other day they peeped into the tent, and asked me if I was going to set up a school. I asked them what made them think of that. They said because they often saw me writing. Such are little girls in the bush— all life and usefulness; these are merry companions we shall be sorry to leave, for we are going to camp on the White Hills, three or four miles off.

But I must give you another curious specimen of Australian life. A young man watching a flock of sheep came up as we were breakfasting; I thought he cast loving glances at our tea and mutton-chops; but he only asked if we had seen a person on horse-back inquiring for him and the sheep. He was ordered, he said, to keep them there till a Mr. Campbell came for them. An hour afterwards, as I went to cut some wood near the creek, he was there with his flock, and said he wished Mr. Campbell would come, for they had hurried him off without his breakfast. I told him I would give him some breakfast, which I did. While he ate his breakfast he told us that he was of a good family in Scotland, named A — r; that his elder brother had a fine place in Fife; a sister

had married a Polish Count; and I think another a Captain Stark of L——s. He said Captain Stark had built a house with not a single tree near it, and that somebody had proposed to call it “Stark-naked.” He had lived, he said, in Italy three years, and spoke Italian well. He had evidently travelled in Italy and France, and was well acquainted with those countries. Yet here he was shepherd-ing on the diggings, for the butchers, at 3*l.* 10*s.* a-week. He complained dreadfully of the false accounts which had brought him out to this country; and declared that when he had raised money enough he would see the last of it. He said that, out of his 3*l.* 10*s.* a-week, he paid 7*s.* 6*d.* a-week for a license, and 1*l.* 5*s.* for provisions; so that he had only 1*l.* 17*s.* out of which to purchase clothes and save money to get home. Digging he had tried without success; how far the fault might lie in himself I cannot say; but you are continually stumbling on scions of good families in such humble occupations.

He told a story which amused Charlton very much, and which he said his brother at the time sent to Chambers' Journal, where it made a very good article. It was of a Frenchman whom they saw on the Austrian-Italian frontier. He hated the Austrian police, and when they asked him what he had in this and the other package, he told them they could look and satisfy themselves. He had a bag in his hand, and the officers asked him what he had in that. “Oh!” said he, “you can feel.” And he added in great delight, in his broken English, as he told them,—“So he did put his hand in de bag, but he did poll it out vary moch quicker, for dere was a badger in de bag, and it did bite him vary moch.”

LETTER XXI.

Bendigo Diggings. — Their Appearance. — Vast Extent. — Beauty of Golden-wattle in Flower. — Bendigo's Seven Hills, like Rome. — White Hills. — Gold Company a Failure. — Diggers jealous of Capital and Machinery. — Strange Architecture of Diggers' Huts. — Winter Weather; Wet, Cold, and Heat. — Women and their Costume at Bendigo. — Descend a Digger's Hole in the White Hills. — Wild Rushes, and picturesque Groups. — Drunken Riot and Robberies. — Duty on Spirits in Victoria more than Half a Million per Annum. — Suppression of Grog-shops a Sham. — Inefficient Commissioners. — Intelligent Friends. — Scene at a Dinner Party. — Cry of "A Boy in a Hole!" — The Coroner's Ape. — Our large Dog stolen.

White Hills, Bendigo Diggings, Aug. 12th, 1853.

WE have quitted our quiet, green retreat in the outskirts, and have encamped in the very heart of the diggings at the foot of the fourth White Hill, and facing the Bendigo Creek. We have done this so as to be able to note more completely what is going forward on these great diggings. Below us runs the Bendigo Creek, whence the whole of the digging takes its name. The valley through which it runs is all dug up for at least ten miles. But this constitutes but a small part of the diggings. The greatest extent of these lie on the other side of the creek, in valley beyond valley, — the farthest, Myer's Flat, being said to be twenty-two miles from this spot, the White Hills; so that the diggings cover an area, at the very least, of ten miles square; and they are still extending themselves in a north-western direction.

On this side the creek, another creek, called the Back Creek, falls into it about a mile higher than where we are camped. It runs several miles to the south-west; and

it was near it that we were first encamped. The valley of the Back Creek is a fine, fertile, green valley, or rather was so; but now an enormous extent of it is dug up. These White Hills, of which I shall speak more particularly anon, are low, round hills, rising in a succession along this, the southern side of the valley, the last eastward, declining into a fertile plain still covered with wood, and still uninvaded by the diggers. Up the creek, at two miles distance, stands the Government Camp, on an elevation; farther up still lies Golden Gully, of golden fame, and beyond it Kangaroo Flat, all in Bendigo Valley, and on the direct road to Melbourne.

Coming back to the White Hills, and looking across the creek, you have before you the main field of the diggings. Were you to go on in that direction, you would cross low, stony ridges, covered with iron-bark trees, and come into Iron-bark Gully, a long valley wholly dug up; then a succession of such ridges, all of the same character; between which lie the successive gullies of Long Gully, American, Californian, the celebrated Eagle-Hawk, Peg-leg, Sailor's, Adelaide, and other gullies, and so on to Myer's Flat. Somewhere in that direction lies Gilbert's Gully, so named *in honour* of the popular Commissioner, and, oddly enough, placed between the Devil's Gully and Beelzebub's Flat. Thus does the digger to the man whom he delighteth to honour.

The country all round these diggings, except in the flat lower down the creek, and one or two green valleys, is as barren as possible. The ground is scattered with white quartz as with snow. There are the most enormous masses of quartz round here that I have seen anywhere. One hill-top up the valley beyond the Government Camp, and overlooking Golden Gully, has whole rocks of it projecting from its summit, looking at a distance like a cemetery, with a crowd of tall, white headstones. The woods are all of iron-bark, which gives them a peculiarly stern look,

with their almost black and deeply-ploughed bark,—these trees always growing in the most sterile and desolate ranges. The ground on these low ranges is, for the most part, bare of grass, but thinly scattered with a heathy vegetation, and in some places again with dense masses of shrubs, many of them prickly, but which would look beautiful in a conservatory. There are many very curious shrubs about here, and many of them beautiful. The golden wattle is now in flower, and is magnificent. It would be a splendid ornament of our gardens, if it would grow there. It something resembles a Portugal laurel, but has longer and slenderer leaves, and its flowers are in round balls about the size of a pistol-bullet, of the richest orange, and masses of these together. There is also a small prickly acacia, with round, white flowers, faintly tinged with yellow, as full of flower as it can be, and lighting up these barren woods with an incandescent radiance. The iron-bark tree is now in flower too, and its flowers are like white tassels an inch across; and the backs of them—not calices, for they have none—are exactly shaped like the backs of tassels, and are a fine yellow. These huge trees have their heads all snowy with blossom now; and the wattle-birds find honey, I suppose, in them, for they are by thousands busy in them, and fill the woods with their unceasing noise. The sweet acacia, the *Acacia fragrans* of our conservatories, is likewise full of bud, ready to burst open, though the nights are often keenly frosty. It is strange that it bears very sharp frosts here, but is killed by not very sharp ones with us. Our greenhouses must make them tender.

Bendigo is quite the metropolis of the diggings of Victoria; for though Ballarat and Mount Alexander were prior in date, Bendigo has been much more productive, and has yet a much greater number of people at work on it. These valleys beyond valleys which I have named are of immense extent, and all are perforated and turned up by the diggers to a wonderful degree. Hill also extends be-

yond hill, which are also bored with shafts forty and sixty feet deep, and undermined in quest of gold. Bendigo, like Rome, may boast of its seven hills, called the White Hills, from the immense quantity of snow-white stuff which has been thrown out of the mines upon them. It is a white, sandy sort of stuff, apparently triturated quartz mixed with pipe-clay, and makes the hills look as if covered with heaps of snow. It has its yellow creek, the Bendigo, yellower than any Tiber; and if Rome had its Tarpeian Rock, it has its Quartz Rock, huge and brilliant as the purest snow. If Rome had its Capitol, Bendigo has its capital; and instead of a Campus Martius, it has a Campus Aureus, and an army in tents numerous as any Cæsar ever pitched in field.

But, to leave badinage, there is an appearance of a more thorough mining population here than I have seen at any other digging. The White Hills have shafts fifty and sixty feet deep; and you see their windlasses standing aloft on the huge heaps of stuff that has been thrown out, and huts and people all busy amongst these hills, reminding you a good deal of the lead mines of Derbyshire.

There is also actually a horse turning a gin, which works a water-wheel, to supply a long-tom with water from the creek, for washing out what is called surface stuff,—that is literally the soil from the surface of some parts of these hills, which contains a good deal of gold. We had been saying that we wondered they had not introduced machinery, at least horse-gins, to do some of their work, and here is the first commencement of this movement. There is also a gold company here, which has leased a piece of land near the creek, on which to erect a steam-engine for washing out the refuse stuff. But this never can answer, as the steam power is not employed in the right direction. The earth will still have to be washed out by men, the engine only supplying a stream of water. Now, if the engine could be made to work machinery,

which would wash auriferous earth in much larger quantities than a number of men, it might answer; but in this case, there is the creek, at which companies of men can erect toms, and work out stuff as fast as the company can with its engine. The earth has to be carted from a distance, say from one to two miles, at 10s. a load; and all the labour, except the mere pumping of water, to be done by the company, as well as by parties of men. The company has, therefore, no advantage over the ordinary parties of diggers, for it must pay 20s. a day to each man, and 10s. a load for carting the stuff; and it will not answer, especially as the diggers will work twice as hard on their own account, as they will for any company.

Machinery, and companies employing it, may, perhaps answer, when the Government is prepared to lease out extensive portions of old gold-fields, where streams of water can be brought so as to make large sluices, and thus wash out immense quantities of stuff in a short time. It will, after a while, be the power of putting a very large quantity of auriferous earth through a sluice, and of puddling the stiff earth by machinery, that will enable companies to finish up the gold-fields, when the ordinary digger has left them. When he has got the large quantities, the smaller quantities left in the soil will only pay for the working by some plan which will wash out immense quantities in a little time, and with little manual labour. But that time is not yet come. In the first place, the digger is still probing his old grounds, and hunting between the holes for sound and unworked spots; clearing out the bottoms of old holes, very hastily and carelessly worked in the first eager search; and washing out such earth as was thrown out in heaps, in which he can find, by testing quantities in his washing-dish, enough to pay him. So long as he can do that, he is jealous of any interference of capital, of machinery, and of companies which would "monoplyse," as one of them

said, any larger claims than ordinary; and will undoubtedly resist, and successfully resist, all such movements. Therefore, in the second place, Government will not dare to grant such powers and monopolies to companies as will be necessary to ensure success. The era of companies has not yet arrived.

The diggers here seem, many of them, of a more steady and respectable character than at M'Ivor. They have, great numbers of them, their families here; and the voices of children at play are as loud and frequent as in a town. In fact, Bendigo is a large city, where a population of 40,000 lives in tents and huts instead of houses. Almost every tent has its large fire-place and chimney, constructed of logs, at one end of it; and there are many with an additional log-hut.

It is curious to see the various rude constructions of these huts and chimneys. Some huts are built of solid trunks of trees, laid horizontally, — in fact, the log-huts of America reconstructed here. The logs are notched into one another at the corners, and the interstices daubed up with clay. The roofs of these are almost flat, covered with sheets of bark, with logs upon the bark to keep it down. Other huts are made of slabs, placed upright, and the roof often covered only with canvass. Others, again, are covered with bullock-hides. The chimneys are extraordinary pieces of architecture; some built of horizontal, some of perpendicular timbers, up to the eaves of the tent, and then tapering away to some height, covered with bark, or sheets of tin which have lined packages. Others, again, are covered with bullock-hides, and some with sheepskins, and not put on in any very orderly style. A considerable number are surmounted by dry casks — American flour-barrels — which make the upper shaft of the chimney. You may generally distinguish the abodes of the natives of Ireland, by their picturesque resemblance to the cabins of the Green Isle, being more remarkable

for their defiance of symmetry than any others. They seem to be tossed up, rather than built, and are sure to have sundry black poles sticking out of the top, and pieces of sacking or old breeches hung up before them, here and there, to keep the wind from driving *all* the smoke down into the interior. I observe a female neighbour of ours, the mistress of one of these abodes, coming out with a pole, and shifting such protective garments from one side of the hut to the other, as the wind changes.

Our tent we have pitched on an open and rather elevated piece of ground, totally cleared of any standing trees, but not of stumps,—which are innumerable, of about a yard high,—nor of various huge trunks of felled trees, which lie along here and there, and which we shall cut up, as we want them, for fire-wood. If you could conceive a considerable number of well-like holes, now full of water, various old trees, heaps of leaves, and big stones lying about, with tents and huts of the character described, around us, you have a general idea of our *locale*.

Our tent itself is now accommodated with a substantial open fireplace, made of solid pieces of boughs, of about nine or ten inches diameter each, fitted together at the corners, and neatly plastered at the joints with clay. From this square frame springs an obelisk-like chimney of poles, covered with green bullock-hides, which, altogether, displays a degree of shapeliness and neatness that may be looked for in vain far around. Behind this, we have enclosed a yard of post-and-rail, with boughs drawn through, full of their leaves; so that we have a green, thick fence, within which to keep our cart, and fire-wood for the winter. Around the tent, also, we have put a rail fence, to keep off wandering horses, and wandering drunkards in the night; both of which species of beasts are apt to stumble up against your tent lines, and threaten the demolition of the whole concern.

You are not to suppose that this has all been done

without some trouble. We have had to go and cut timber, for our chimney and fencing in the woods, and to cart that and a good large stock of firewood home. There is not a blade of grass anywhere round here, for the horses; and we have sent them to a paddock, fourteen miles off. But we were obliged to keep them till they had done our necessary work; and Alfred and Charlton had to sleep out in the woods with them where they could get feed. Now, the weather has been almost continually rainy. The rain and wind have seemed to contend for mastery. Torrents of rain and frantic winds have not only pursued us in our labours, but have driven the diggers from their holes, and filled them with water.

One night Alfred and Charlton slept in the cart in the woods, and though the awning they had over it was but a bad one, they would have lain all the next day, for the rain fell in deluges all forenoon; but they could not see the horses, and, in going out to seek them, they had to wade through a scrub up to the middle, and were soaked through and through by it, in a very short time. They, therefore, came home at noon, like drowned rats; but as there was no feed or safety near here for the horses, Charlton had to take them off to our old camping-ground near the sheep-wash, six miles off. When he returned at night, he was in the most deplorable plight. It was all that we could do to get his clothes off him, which seemed, in their soaking state, to stick to him like a skin. But we got him into bed, and gave him a good hot supper and tea, and he was nothing the worse for it the next day. We were very thankful for this, for this winter rain produces extraordinary chill. Both of the boys complained of the deadly chill they felt; and Charlton, for an hour or two after he was in bed, complained, not only of the intense cold, but that his skin was so thoroughly soaked that it would not dry. Finally, however, we thought we were going to be turned out into the rain altogether; for in the morn-

ing we found the tent tumbling about our ears; the ground on which it was pitched, being only quartz gravel, had dissolved with the rain like sugar. Our tent-pegs, tent-cords, and poles, all had lost their hold; and the wind blowing, it was next to impossible to keep the tent standing. The water ran in streams under our tent, having swum over the tarpaulin in the night, and soaked many of our stores. There was nothing for it, but to turn out and dig a deeper ditch round the tent to carry off the drainage, and to drive down pegs a yard long to hold the cords. The creek below was swelled into a roaring torrent, carrying away the tools and toms, and filling up the holes of the diggers.

Yet, the moment the rain was over, out came the sun, and nearly melted us. Mark now, for a moment, this "Devonshire climate." It is winter. We are keeping a daily observation of the thermometer,—having a small, portable one, of the Messrs Bennetts, chronometer-makers, of Cheapside, which we carry along with us, and so have always at hand. Now it hangs outside the tent, and will show results different to any yet published.

On the morning of July 31st it stood at 31° , that is, one degree below the freezing point. It had been much lower in the night, for there was strong frost. At 7 o'clock, half an hour after sunrise, it had risen in the sun to 40° ; at 9 o'clock to 75° , or within one degree of summer heat; and at 10 o'clock to 78° , two degrees above summer heat. At noon it was at 81° ; and this, too, in winter: while the tables kept by Government, and published by writers who paint the climate and country not as they are, but as they wish people to believe them, never allow the mercury to descend lower than 45° ; so that there could never possibly be any frost; and, in fact, my brother, Richard Howitt, whose work on the colony I have found the most faithful yet published, was severely attacked in the colonial newspapers, for saying that he

had seen ice. On the other hand, they tell you that the thermometer rarely, and only in hot winds, ascends above 95° in summer! These statements are really disgraceful; for the mercury, you see, will rise in a winter's morning, in a few hours, to nearly that height, paying no regard whatever to Government, or to these writers. The cold from the Antarctic, and the sun, in these latitudes, cause, in their contest, these violent changes. To proceed, however, in our survey of the diggings.

The women on Bendigo are much more neatly dressed than you would expect; in fact, many of them come out in an afternoon as well dressed as they need be to walk abroad in London. There is no lack of handsome mantillas, polkas, smart bonnets, and parasols. I have seen some diggeresses going about here in a peculiarly tasteful costume: a white wide-awake hat, with broad ribbon; a neat-fitting polka or jacket, made like the body of a lady's riding-habit, and a handsome dress beneath. It is a costume which seems quite made for the diggings, and which, I expect, will become very popular. Yet, in a morning, you may often see these ladies—and very often, too, smart young girls, not more than fifteen—hanging out their wash, busy at their cooking, or chopping wood with great axes, which they do not seem to swing, but which rather swing them, as they cut splinters from the stumps which ornament this digger landscape. There are numbers of cocks and hens, too, kept here, and a considerable stock of goats. Life, in fact, has assumed a more fixed and stationary aspect. The men are seen going to and fro, in a regular daily routine, to work, and back to their meals, and to their homes at evening; nor does there seem such a constant rotation of new arrivals and departures. There are these, but there is a certain stationary substratum beneath the fluctuating surface.

There are shops and stores along all the main roads. Each different gully has its quota of tradesmen; but the street of

shops in this Bendigo Valley, is at least seven miles long, —the largest collection being gathered into a sort of town opposite to the Government Camp. Many of the tradesmen have large wooden warehouses; and the stores are distinguished by much larger tents and huts than ordinary, by their great signs, and by flags—here not always confined to a coloured cotton handkerchief on a pole, but many of them being quite dashing affairs—large bunting flags, bearing the stars and stripes of America, the insignia of Odd Fellows and Freemasons, with other recondite and gay blazonry.

August 9th.—The other day we descended the hole of a Scotch party on the fifth White Hill, the next to the one above us. I say a Scotch party, but it is a party of three Scotchmen and an American. Most of them have been in California. They are Messrs. Maclaran, Duncan, Laski, and Bouvie. They are a very well-informed company. Their hole is fifty-five feet deep, and you are let down by a windlass. The sinking is made through a hard quartz conglomerate, that is, pebbles of quartz cemented together by the powdered quartz which has been triturated to extreme fineness by being rolled about some time in water, all the pebbles being round. To cut through this conglomerate is an inconceivable labour, for it is so hard that it defies often the hardest tools, and their picks and gads, or steel chisels, are soon blunted, or rendered useless, and they are compelled to blast the adamantine substance. I suppose this obdurate stratum is twenty or thirty feet thick; when you come to a soft silky kind of pipeclay, or rather clayey sand, which lies upon a bed of real pipeclay; and in this white stuff lies the gold.

They had cut tunnels through this in various directions, high enough to sit upright in, leaving the gold-impregnated stratum over-head; and in it you could see the particles of gold glittering. They cut these tunnels as far as they can in the direction of the adjoining claims, so as to secure as much space as possible; for when two

parties meet under ground, each party stops there as their boundary.

This party had found a dip of the stratum in their hole, abounding with gold, and I have no doubt they will make a very good thing of it. The working of this stuff, when once down, is very easy, for it is quite soft; and they say it is very comfortable underground; for they have always an equable temperature, and know nothing of the weather above, however bad it may be. There have been dreadful stories of these tunnellings here falling in; and, according to one, seventy people were killed at once. This is all fudge! Here they say it occurred at Ballarat, and at Ballarat they say it occurred at Mount Alexander. But, a few days ago, they had a terrible fright in one of these hills. The whole hill being undermined, it cracked asunder, from one side to the other, with a terrible explosion, and the diggers came rushing out of their holes all over the hill, like rabbits out of burrows in a warren when there are ferrets got in. There was a busy turning of windlasses, you may be sure, and mustering of parties to see who was missing. But, strange to say, not a single person was hurt. However, the roof of the hole that I was in, a few days after fell in at the dip just mentioned, and buried Mr. Bouvie all but his head. They dug him out with all speed; but his chest was a good deal crushed, and he is still an invalid.

The product of some of these White Hill claims is said to be very considerable. But it is difficult to obtain reliable information. I have heard 1000*l.* stated as a very good amount; and again, of some of them realising 1000*l.* per man. There is one that has been worked now for sixteen months; and, from the mountain of stuff thrown out, the party must have undermined a very large space, and to good purpose, or they would not continue it so long. I have heard of a heap of working stuff at the

creek clearing 4000*l.*, but I am not sure that it belongs to this party, though I have been told so.

Steady as the population here appears, in comparison with other diggings, there are yet continual rushes to different places whence come golden rumours. There have been two of these just now: one to Jones's Creek, beyond the Loddon, forty miles off, to which one of the Commissioners, who was just come from there, advised us to go, saying that they were digging up nuggets like potatoes at only a foot deep; and that one party had brought in 900*l.* to the gold-office. But we were not at all disposed to make another journey of forty miles in winter roads, and to swim the Loddon with our horses. We staid; and the same Commissioner has since told us that he was glad we did not go, for it had proved a failure. Yet many hundreds have rushed off thither, and as many more to Whipstick Gully, beyond Eagle-Hawk, nineteen miles off.

It was curious to see them strike their tents in a few minutes, pack them up in a swag, and start,—some of them leaving their wives to wait the result. There were men going in parties, loaded like bees; some had huge packs, that they actually seemed to stagger under—enough, one would think, to satisfy them in a few hundred yards. There were others with huge swags suspended from a pole, with which they went on, like the Children of Israel carrying the gigantic bunches of the grapes of Canaan. Others had a loaded light cart; and while one man was in the shafts, half a dozen more, having a long rope fixed to the shafts, with sticks tied at distances across, ran on each side of the rope, holding the sticks, and thus hurried away at full trot. Others had nothing but pick and shovel; others nothing at all, intending, if the rush turned out well, to buy what they wanted there. These, you see, are rough fellows, who can live any how, and who can lie out of doors in winter pretty much like

horses and cows. The lighter they travel the faster they go; and indeed, in less time than you would imagine them getting there, numbers are already back, saying that the rush is "no go." These movements are always taking place.

Again, though I have said that there appears a more quiet, settled, and decent population here than at M'Ivor or Reid's Creek at the Ovens, yet I am sorry to say, on further observation, that there is a very large amount of a very different description too, and amongst them some of the worst scoundrels in creation. You cannot be on the diggings, indeed, without coming in contact with a very low, rude, vulgar, and base population, the scum of the earth, the most finished of the convicted felons of Sydney and Van Diemen's land, — men who "have left their country for their country's good," — some sent at the expense of Government, and swarms of others, as thoroughly depraved, from the low purlieus of our large towns. There are hosts of thieves everywhere; and not a night passes but a robbery or a murder takes place not far from our tent. One of these wretches was about this very neighbourhood a night or two ago, and one of the Scotch party fired at him twice, but unluckily missed him. His language was horrible; for he paid a visit to more than one tent close to mine, where he supposed there was only a solitary individual; for such characters are notoriously as cowardly as they are base and ferocious.

Grog-shops abound, notwithstanding the professed severity of the police; and we hear the noisy set of roysterers at them, night after night, singing, fighting, and shouting, generally till near morning. The police could not possibly miss them, if they only walked through the diggings at night. The noise would detect them at once half a mile off. But the police don't want to take them, they are much better pleased to take their money as bribes; and there is no question but this is done to a frightful extent.

I shall give you a few striking facts on this head presently. But the police here dislike the night-air still more than they do at home. There is a special night police, who march in file at dusk through the diggings, each carrying a musket on his shoulder; but, once past, they disappear, no doubt to comfortable quarters, for the night. And how can you expect that a government which professes to put down all drinking of fermented liquors on the diggings, will be in earnest to do it, while it is calculating on a large, a preposterously large, revenue from this very source. This year *the duty on spirits alone*, is MORE THAN HALF A MILLION, in a colony of 250,000 people!

Drunkenness, therefore, goes on in reality on the diggings uncontrolled. It is carried on in the most open, palpable, public manner possible. You could not avoid running your heads against crowds of drunken diggers, your noses against the fumes of vile rum, and your ears against the din and uproar of dozens of the dens of debauch, if you would. All pretence of putting it down, and of detecting sly grog-shops, is a SHAM, and the most impudent of SHAMS. You may imagine, therefore, what a hell-upon-earth this is. We are now camping in the heart of a digging for the purpose of buying gold; and what we saw of it, or heard of it, at an outside, where we have usually camped, was mere murmuring of bees to this. Here the discharging of all sorts of firearms, the barking of dogs, the din of drunken squabbles in grog-shops on all sides, the cries of murder, more or less every night, and through the night till daybreak, make a Pandemonian hubbub that has nothing like it on the wide earth. Nothing is silent, but—the Police and the Commissioners!

With very few exceptions, the Commissioners at the camp strike us as the most extraordinary collection of incompetent, empty-headed boys that we ever met with. They are, in fact, a burlesque of authority; marvellous,

indeed, when we recollect they are set to govern 40,000 people! How they all got there into one camp, and for such a purpose, Heaven only and Mr. La Trobe can tell! There are Captain Murray, a perfect gentleman, an unassuming man, of high family and intelligence, in a subordinate position, Mr. Wilkinson at the Gold Office, Mr. Reynell, of the Adelaide Escort Office, a mere resident there, and Mr. Gregory, the clergyman, an excellent man, but whom I never see amongst the Commissioners, and—who are the rest of the honourable exceptions?—I really do not know.

Meantime, we have discovered some not only kind, but intelligent friends here:—Dr. Roche, the Coroner, a ward of Father Mathew, and a friend of our friends the Jenningses of Cork, a genuinely kind, warm-hearted Irishman. Dr. Bachhaus, the Catholic Priest, who lives close to Dr. Roche, is a man of great liberality and learning. He is a German, as you may see by his name, but which you would not discover by his language. He has seen a great deal of the world, both in Europe and Asia, enough, in fact, to make him a man of the world, and not a bigot. We dined at Dr. Roche's the other day, with this gentleman and Mr. Maclachlan, the police magistrate, who by no means belongs to the lack-a-daisical juvenility of the Camp; for he has plenty of sense, however the public may deny him other requisites of a popular magistrate.

As we were at dinner, and it was quite dark, there was a cry outside of "A boy in a hole! a boy in a hole!" Seizing the candles from the table, out we rushed; and there, in a digger's deserted hole, close behind the Doctor's tent, was, not a boy, but a girl of eleven or twelve years of age. The hole was at least ten feet deep, and had water and mud enough in it to drown her. Luckily she had not gone down head-foremost, or she must certainly have been drowned, for she never could have extri-

cated herself from the mud; her voice would have been choked, and she could have given no alarm.

As it was, she was frightened enough. A rope was run for; but before it came a man put a pole down, and she got hold of it. "There," said Dr. Roche, "you are all right, now." "No! no!" cried the little girl, "I am not all right." "But you are at the bottom," added the Doctor; "you cannot sink." "No! no! I am not on the bottom; I am sinking every minute!" cried the little girl. But before the rope came, two men put down their hands as far as they could; the little girl grasped the pole firmly with both hands, and she was raised till the two men could seize her, and out she came. When asked how she came to fall in, she said, "Oh! it was that nasty brown goat that pulled me in." I believe she had been endeavouring to put the goat into its night's quarters.

You will say, why does not the Doctor have the pit filled up, so dangerously deep and close to his tent. Why, these dangerously deep holes are everywhere, and close to everybody's tent. The diggings are, of all places, a land of pitfalls. Pitch your tent where you will, there the diggers are almost sure to come, and dig up the whole ground round you. You generally live in the midst of a grand honeycomb of such pits and water-holes. For this reason it is our *rule* not to go out to dine on the diggings; and we make very rare exceptions, for they are only safe by daylight, on more accounts than one—but the pits are enough. That very day the Doctor had held an inquest on a Chinese drowned in one of them; and, in truth, they are really golden holes to him, as coroner; for there are generally two or three men a week, mostly supposed to be drunk at the time, drowned in them. The Doctor has an ape, a species of creature which I have no desire to possess; and the same little girl who fell into the hole, came one day running to Dr. Bachhaus, begging him to come, for Dr. Roche was out, and the ape was *aping* the Doctor

in burning papers. He had seen the Doctor thus employed; and in his absence he got to his table, and was very gravely committing one valuable paper after another to the flames.

I am sorry to tell you we have had our splendid dog BUFF stolen. A young man came here to inquire of some friends of his that he knew we were acquainted with. I told him that they were mentioned in some letters from home, which I would look out; and he said he would call on Sunday, to learn the particulars. We let out Buff while at breakfast; and sometime after breakfast I sat looking over my letters in waiting for this gentleman. When I went out no Buff was visible, though he had come and looked into the tent during breakfast-time. We commenced a search for him on all sides, but without success. Knowing that dog-thieves were as plentiful as any other sort of thieves there, and that the dog had been pronounced worth 20*l.*, and would be most readily sold for 10*l.*, we had no doubt that he had been taken away, for he never strayed of himself.

As we were inquiring for him in the neighbourhood, I saw Alfred suddenly set off at a quick pace along the street of tents down the valley; and supposing that he had got wind of the thieves, I hastened after him, but could not get sight of him anywhere. I supposed that he was going at full speed, and posted on till I came to the end of the diggings. There a baker said he had seen three or four men go down that way with several dogs, and one a large black dog, exactly answering Buff's description. Feeling now sure that Alfred was on the track, and would pursue to any distance, I became alarmed on his account; for the country in that direction is, as I have stated, a solitary, little-frequented bush. Yet it was the way the diggers sometimes took when going to the Goulburn Diggings. I went on and on, as fast as I could, but could see no single person on the road.

I was the more alarmed as I thought if Alfred overtook three or four sturdy scoundrels, and demanded the dog, they would be sure to do him some mischief; and he had no arms with him. I went on for three miles, and came to the tent of a fellmonger, who had seen no one pass; and the next tent was two miles farther. To make all sure, I hastened on there. It was another fellmonger's who assured me no one had passed there within several hours, as their dog regularly barked when any one went along the road.

I now felt that I could return; but, what was curious, feeling sure that I had seen the person at the last tent somewhere, I asked this young man who it was, and found, to my astonishment, that it was no other than Mr. Berkeley, the father of Mrs. Andrew Cross. I now learned that Mr. Berkeley was only camping there for the pleasant quietness and verdure of the woodland; and that a Mr. Duncan there was the fellmonger, as I imagined, but in reality only a collector of wool from the skins. Of this singular rencontre, more anon: at present I have only to say, that I found Alfred at home, his search having been quite in another direction, but equally unsuccessful with my own; and since then not a trace of the dog has been found.

LETTER XXII.

Digger Insurrection.—Digger Grievances.—Official Treatment.—A Model Police Magistrate.—Deafness of Government.—Herm-sprong, Inspector of Police, and his Doings.—Burns down Grog-shops and gets Rich.—His Brass-knobbed Whip “Green Apples.”—Burns the Widow’s Tent.—Character of Mr. Commissioner Gilbert.—His Mode of Action.—Obviates Riot.—Digger Testimonial.—Present Agitation.—Processions and National Banners.—Digger Monster Meeting.—A Republican Speech.—Disgusting Conduct of Foreign Red Republicans.—Spring Glory of the Woods.—Boy Shoots a Horsestealer.—Another Stabs a Bushranger.—POSTSCRIPT: News of Riot at Ballarat.

Bendigo, White Hills, August 15th, 1853.

A NEW phase appears in digger life,—a crisis has arrived. Those discontents which I spoke of some time ago, as to the amount of license for gold-digging, the mode of collecting it, the administration of justice, and the general treatment of the digger, which I foresaw would produce their fruits, have been steadily growing, and now stand forth to the day, in the shape of decided remonstrance. There is a general agitation of these questions, both here and on the other diggings. That which is put forward most prominently is the repeal of the gold license; but, besides this, there is a strong feeling against the arbitrary treatment of the diggers by the Commissioners and police, and for an elective franchise—the principle of the British Constitution being grossly violated in the persons of the diggers, who are heavily taxed, and totally unrepresented in the legislative body.

I have already stated the grievances of the diggers, as described by themselves, and I have admitted that they are real, substantial, and full-grown grievances, such as

no Englishmen should, or will long, tolerate. The diggers being far the largest class of the community,—the class which are at once the greatest consumers and the greatest producers of real solid wealth, coining 7,000,000*l.* a year from the earth, and paying in direct taxation more than half a million, while the great landholders and wool-producers only pay 20,000*l.*,—nothing can be clearer than that they should possess the franchise, and land also on which to base it; that they should have a voice in deciding the burdens which they are to bear; and that they should have their share of the soil on which they live,—land, and houses on the land,—and should not, while enriching the whole community, and enabling others to build palaces, be themselves vagabonds and rootless aliens in the country. These are principles so clear and unassailable, that we shall not even stop to discuss them here, but confine our attention to the two first questions, the license, and the treatment of the digger.

If it be true that the digger cannot pay the present amount of 30*s.* a month, owing to the increase of diggers and the decrease of gold, a wise government will reduce it to some more moderate sum; and there is every reason to believe that a more moderate license-fee would yield even a larger aggregate result than the present. Oppressive taxation is defeated by two causes, poverty and resentment: poverty cannot pay, and resentment will not. Wherever a tax is unjust, therefore, it declines; for it everywhere encounters an enemy, and every one schemes how to elude it. It is well known that not more than one-half of the diggers now pay any license-fee; it should, therefore, be reduced. But that Government will abolish it altogether, is not to be supposed. Neither would total abolition benefit the digger. The Government, without the income derived from licenses, could not maintain an establishment to receive and convey the gold, nor to support peace and order on the diggings.

Whether that establishment is the best and wisest that might be organised, is another question ; but Government could not protect the digger, if unsupported itself, and he would then be left to the mercy of the host of scoundrels, who even now are with difficulty held in check. No one would be safe in his tent or in his hole. If he found a rich claim, a swarm of desperadoes would rush in, turn him out, and possess themselves of it. Some *license* there must be ; and a moderate Government *license* is infinitely preferable to the *license* of the brutal men who abound on the gold-fields.

The mode of collecting this tax, however, has done more to make it unpopular than the amount of the tax itself. In levying it, the tax-gatherer and the tax-payer are brought too violently, and nakedly, as it were, face to face. In England, twice a year suffices for seeing the face of the tax-gatherer. The Government demands duly discharged on these two occasions, the tax-gatherer becomes for the rest of the twelve months invisible ; he exists still, but, except on these two days, not to you. You are not liable, any day and any hour, and for any number of times on any one day, to be called on by this not very fascinating character, and compelled again and again, and as often as he pleases to demand it, to show your last receipt.

But this is precisely the nuisance of the diggings, that you are always living face to face with the tax-gatherer, and exposed to his visits and peremptory demands every day and every hour. You are placed in violent juxtaposition with him, and are required to carry your receipt in your pocket day and night, and to produce it whenever and wherever, and as frequently as the policeman orders you to produce it. You may show it to one, and descend to the bottom of your hole of 50 or 100 feet ; and the next minute you may be called up to show it to another who may be wandering over the field. Nay, it

has frequently happened that one individual has been called upon to produce his receipt half a dozen times in the course of one day, to as many nomadic policemen.

Such being the case, it is obvious that the irritating and ungracious attributes of the tax should have rendered the authorities especially gracious and conciliatory in their necessary endeavours to collect it faithfully; that there should have been a spirit of fairness, of forbearance, and of kindness in carrying out the law, to deprive it as much as possible of its offensive features; and this the more especially, that the authorities were compelled to employ numbers of men in this capacity of whom they could know very little. There should have been at once a disposition in the Gold Commissioners to support these inspecting police in their duty, and vigorously to check and discountenance any spirit of harshness or insolence in them.

But unhappily this was not the case. A set of young, insolent, and imperious men were put into the Commission, who appeared to have no sympathy whatever with the people over whom they were set to rule. Their only animus seemed that of enforcing the payment of the tax, without any regard to the personal feelings of the taxed. The men employed as police to hunt after licenses were too often excessively ignorant and vulgar persons, who, never having before enjoyed the slightest shadow of power, not even over a cur or a donkey, exercised this now given, over men far their superiors, often men of birth and education, with a coarse brutality which was intolerable to generous minds. I have stated how men who were found without licenses on their persons, but who had them at their tents, were dragged off to the Government Camp, and allowed no explanation, but were fined from 3*l.* to 5*l.*; how, if they remonstrated with the police, they would probably be clapped instantly into handcuffs; how men who had showed their licenses time after time, were yet caught after all some day, and treated thus. These were common, everyday, everywhere occurring events;

and, in general, no attention was given by the Commissioners to explanations of this kind, or to indignant remonstrances against such treatment. No aid was given to the outraged complainant by a reference to the license cheque-book, which would have shown at once whether the person brought up had paid or not. That was too much trouble and too much courtesy. Men, again, on charges, however slight, were chained all night to trees, on the plea that there was no sufficient lock-up; as if any circumstances could warrant such treatment of Englishmen! This excited universal indignation.

I could name a police magistrate, on one of the very largest gold-fields, who, when a digger was brought before him on any charge, would say, "Well, man, what have you got to say for yourself?" On which the accused would say, "Why, your honour, I ——" "Ha! another word," would angrily interpose the magistrate, "and I will commit you for contempt of court!" Whereupon he would proceed, and sentence him according to his own pleasure.

I see it stated in the newspapers that this same magistrate, at a subscription ball on the diggings, at which, of course, all classes were admitted, seeing a well-dressed digger with his wife present, had him seized by the police on the strange ground that he had once been brought up before him on *some* charge, probably on account of licenses. He had him sent to the lock-up, and refused bail. But so arbitrary a stretch of authority created such a sensation even here, that at midnight he sent privately, and let him out.

Such things will not be easily believed in England; but they are so well known on the diggings, that thousands on reading this would instantly name the man. Nay, there are numbers who have seen a dozen men at once placed before this magistrate on the charge of being found without licenses. Placed in a row, he would ask the first: "Have you got a license?" "Yes, you worship." "Where

is it?" "In my tent." "Oh! you have not got it here?" "No, sir." To the second: "Have you got a license?" "Yes, sir." "Where is it?" "In my other trousers." "Oh! You, there, have you one?" to the third. "Yes, sir, lying in my waistcoat in my hole; but the police would not let me go down for it." This Rhadamanthus would go through the whole twelve, find every one pleading that he had a license, but, without giving any one of them opportunity to prove it, would say, "You are all fined 5*l.* apiece, and locked up till paid."

This, too, is a scene so usual that I have heard a Commissioner describing it as peculiarly rich and amusing.

By these means, and such as these, by a system of the most arbitrary, heartless, insulting conduct on the part of the Commissioners and police towards the general body of diggers, the whole management of the gold-fields came to be characterised, not as English, but as Russian. The system of hunting up licenses was styled "Man hunting," and the foot-police "Man-catchers" and "Bloodhounds." It was a system that raised the indignation of high-spirited freeborn men, and excited the universal hatred of the people, as a cold-blooded, un-English, un-Christian despotism.

The callousness and carelessness of the Colonial Government was at the bottom of this system, and to blame for it all. No cries of outrage aroused it—no appeals to its justice were answered. The Government of that time was, in this respect, a government of the most hopeless and invulnerable insensibility. It was its practice never to entertain any communications except through an official channel. Complaint, therefore, upon complaint was made, which it only noticed by calling for the weekly reports of the very parties accused, and deciding by them whether there were cause of dissatisfaction or not. This once perceived, became a tower of strength to all officials. They got up their reports as the Chinese mandarins are

said to do for the Celestial Emperor ; and all was right. No voice, however powerful or piercing, could touch the tympanum of Government ; and official injustice and insolence became gigantic in their proportions, and speculation and bribery walked openly hand in hand.

To what a pitch this grew, and how immoveable to the cries of the outraged were the nerves of Government, the career of such a man as I shall here name Hermsprong, will demonstrate. If I name him not exactly, there are ten thousand who can do it for me.

Hermsprong was originally a blacksmith, but he was appointed to the post of Inspector of Police on one of the chief diggings. The arm which used to smite iron, now smote men. Heads were now his anvils, and the metal that he welded was the gold of bribery. He was considered, for a long time, the most vigilant and efficient officer on all the gold-fields. Why ? Because he was continually hunting out and punishing the venders of spirits. Nothing was so frequent in the newspapers and police reports as the exploits of Hermsprong, in discovering, fining, and burning down the tents of sly grog-sellers. Not a week passed without some such records of the indefatigable and sagacious Hermsprong. You would naturally suppose that all sly grogshops, and sly grog-sellers would soon cease to exist on the field where this formidable officer exercised his talents and his spies. Nothing of the kind. On no field were more rum and brandy drunk ; and thus Hermsprong exterminated sly grogshops, and yet did not injure the Government revenue from the duty on spirits.

You will say, how did he manage this ? By the simplest means in the world ; and at once benefited the Government revenue, his own, and that of a select body of favoured tradesmen. Hermsprong's system was to destroy relentlessly the small grog-seller, and to allow and even protect the large one—for a consideration !

Hermesprong not only burnt down the small grog-tents, and fined the keepers of them 50*l.* each, besides confiscating all the liquor, but he set police at the ends of the diggings, to intercept drays coming up, and search them for spirits and wine. Yet, all this time it was well known where plenty of spirits were to be had, and where they could be drunk without fear of interruption from the police. It was at those large traders' stores who paid large sums by way of black-mail to Hermesprong; and the drays of these gentlemen were never searched at the entrance of the diggings, on the plea that they were too respectable to be suspected.

Hermesprong's mode of proceeding was as energetic in one particular as another. He was a huge athletic fellow, and as remarkable for the brutality of his disposition as for his love of a bribe. He had a riding-whip, famous all over the diggings, the thick end of its stock being terminated by a brass knob as large as a good-sized apple. This whip he called his GREEN APPLES; and this knob he exercised, without ceremony or remorse, on any skull that was audacious enough to question the propriety of his proceedings. He would knock down a man just as a butcher would knock down a bullock, for half a word, or for a look only. I have heard a Commissioner relate this fact amongst others. He and Hermesprong were called to settle some dispute on the diggings. While engaged in this business, a drunken digger, drunk at one of Hermesprong's privileged sly grogshops, came staggering up, with his hands in his breeches pockets, and said to Hermesprong, as he sat on his horse, "Who are you?" "Who am I?" said Hermesprong, "That's who I am," giving the man a blow on the head with his Green-Apples which felled him to the ground.

The unlucky digger lay there apparently dead. The Commissioner turned to an officer who was with him, and said, "I can't see this, for it will have to come before me

as a magistrate. Take notice of all that passes, for you must give evidence." The man, however, thanks to a stout skull, was not dead. His skull was not fractured but his head was frightfully bruised and cut open, and the poor fellow was carried away covered with blood to his tent.

Another incident, also related to me by a Commissioner, was this. A poor Irishwoman was left a widow with several children, the youngest of which was only a few days old. Hermsprong had discovered that this poor woman sold grog. He appeared before her tent, with his myrmidons, and, ill as she was, summoned her out. When he charged her with the sale of grog, she did not deny it, but said that her husband being killed by an accident, her countrymen had advised her, as her only means of support for herself and little children, to sell grog, promising to give her their custom; and the poor woman said, piteously, "What, your honour, was I to do?"

Without replying to her remark, Hermsprong turned to the police with him, and said, "Fire that tent!"

The poor woman shrieked out, "For God's sake, sir, spare my tent! spare my children!" The children were all at the moment in the tent; the infant of a few days old fast asleep. The police, accustomed as they were to execute many a barbarous deed at Hermsprong's command, refused to a man to execute this diabolical order. Swearing at them for what he called their "d—d nicety," and threatening their dismissal, Hermsprong leapt from his horse, stalked up to a fire burning before the tent, seized a flaming brand, and fired the tent with his own hand.

The poor woman, uttering a frantic cry, rushed into the tent, snatched up her baby, and, followed by her other children, came out, and stood shrieking and tearing her hair like a maniac, while her tent, and all that she had in the world, consumed before her eyes. That sufficiently

effected, Hermsprong rode away followed by his men, and by the execrations of the whole diggings in that quarter, expressed in the well-known cry of "Joe! Joe!"—a cry which means one of the myrmidons of Charley Joe, as they familiarly style Mr. La Trobe,—a cry which on all the diggings resounds on all sides on the appearance of any of the hated officials. The proceedings of this monster, the atrocities that he was continually perpetrating,—deeds that would have disgraced the emissaries of a Nero or a Caligula, and which were witnessed and related by thousands of astonished and indignant men,—were, from month to month, and from year to year, made known to Government, accompanied by the most energetic demands for his dismissal and punishment. These representations and appeals were unheeded! except in so far that he was removed from one digging to another. For two years he was permitted to continue his savage and corrupt career; when the public excitement against him became so desperate, that it could be no longer ignored. He was dismissed; and he retired with these memorable words, — his official salary, be it remembered, being only 400*l.* a-year, — "I don't mind being turned out; for in these two years I have cleared 15,000*l.*!!"

It is some consolation to the outraged feelings of humanity to be able to place in contrast to this Satanic portraiture, that of a man who was in office on the gold-fields at the same time — Mr. Commissioner Gilbert.

Mr. Gilbert was one of the first Commissioners appointed on the discovery of the gold. I believe he was the first Commissioner at Bendigo; at all events, he was, at a very early period of it, the Chief Commissioner there; and by him the present Government Camp was laid out, and the arrangements for the business of the field made. Mr. Gilbert is a man of superior education, of much reading, of an active and accomplished mind. He is a good artist, and devoted to the enjoyment of intellectual tastes.

But no sooner was he in office than he displayed the greatest tact for business, and an indefatigable zeal in its discharge.

He was one of those very rare men—one would not think that they should be rare, but they are the rarest of all characters (“*rarissimæ aves in terris*”)—who when in office do not forget that they are men; who do not come at once to think that official routine is everything, and humanity nothing; men, to whom the old hack-nied sentence of the Roman, — “*Homo sum,*” &c., — “*I am a man, and nothing which affects my fellow men can be indifferent to me,*”—is as fresh and vital as on the day that it was written; and not so because an ancient wrote it, but because the same principle is the life-spark of their own hearts. Mr. Gilbert was affable, courteous, active, looking about for himself, scorning no trouble which made him acquainted with the real facts of the field, and the condition of the people on it. He was always open to receive any communication, to examine its truth, and to redress grievances. Though he was an officer in authority, his intercourse with the people was as simple and devoid of official starch and so-called dignity, as possible. Yet no man was so readily and effectively obeyed. His decisions in all disputed cases were oracles. Every man had such an entire confidence in his judgment, his careful examination of conflicting statements, and his honest impartiality, that they acquiesced in his fiats with the utmost alacrity; and the laws never were so well obeyed.

So far from the rigorous, arbitrary, and harsh conduct, which we have described as since so general, Mr. Gilbert, while he would have the rules of the diggings fully enforced, and the interest of Government protected, heard patiently explanations, and gave opportunity for defence. In many cases where he found diggers unable to pay the license at the moment, he has laid it down for them; and

it is creditable to human nature, that he never lost one penny of such money; though I once heard him relate the manner in which a defaulter escaped him, to his own great amusement.

As he was one day walking about the digging, he found a man in a hole some ten feet deep or so, whom he asked if he had a license. The man said, no. "Then," said Mr. Gilbert, "you must come up and get one." "But," replied the man, "I don't want one; I do very well without." "But that," said Mr. Gilbert, "cannot be allowed; and if you won't come up, I must send down the police and compel you." "And any man," continued the digger, "that comes into my hole, I will strike through the head with my pick."

Without a moment's pause Mr. Gilbert dropped into the hole, and stood face to face with the fellow. The man gazed a moment at him, as in astonishment; the next instant, placing a hand on each shoulder of the Commissioner, he sprang up. The next moment his feet were where his hands had been; and the next he was out of the hole and away. By the time Mr. Gilbert could get out, the active fellow had vanished; and the Commissioner walked off highly diverted at the occurrence.

I could give numbers of anecdotes related to me on the gold-fields of this Commissioner; but I shall content myself with one, which bears more directly on the subject of this chapter, and which was told me by an official who was present on the occasion.

Mr. Panton, a very young man, and of whom we shall have further occasion to speak, was appointed an Assistant Commissioner on Bendigo. I believe the part of the field under his surveillance was about Kangaroo Flat. But wherever it was, he very soon managed to produce that state of feeling which has now grown, under his administration, to actual rebellion on Bendigo. The diggers, accustomed to the urbanity, tact, and acumen of Mr. Gil-

bert, became enraged and resistant under the management of Mr. Panton; and it was not long before that officer came riding in all haste to the chief camp, to inform Mr. Gilbert that the diggers in his quarter were up in open opposition to his authority, and in a riotous crowd defied his power; that he had determined to seize a certain number of the ringleaders, but that the crowd, armed with their picks, declared they would kill any one who attempted to lay hands on them. He called upon Mr. Gilbert to go with him, and assist him in reducing them to obedience.

Mr. Gilbert replied that he would go on one condition,—that he should be allowed to deal with the mob as he thought best, without any interference from other officers; and that he would, under these circumstances, undertake to bring up all the men he wished, without the aid of a single policeman, so that the case might be fully heard in the police court. Mr. Panton ridiculed the idea of such a proceeding producing such effect; but there was no alternative, and he consented. Mr. Gilbert rode back with him; and when they came to the enraged mob, he rode up to the front, and said, “What, my good fellows, is the matter? Ha, I see you there, Mr. —,” addressing a digger. “You are a clear-headed, straightforward fellow; now, tell me what is the reason you are opposing the authorities in this armed and extraordinary manner.”

The man told his story, and Mr. Gilbert said, “Well, I see that this will require a careful hearing. The Commissioner demands certain of you”—naming them—“to be given up and go to the Camp, where I assure you the matter shall be fully and fairly heard, and justice, wherever it lies, shall be done.”

In a moment the picks were flung on the ground, the men named marched out and placed themselves at the disposal of Mr. Gilbert, and accompanied him to the Camp, followed at a respectful distance by the crowd, in which

were many who would have to be called up for evidence. The matter was heard in Court, and settled to the entire satisfaction of the whole digging.

So long as Mr. Gilbert continued in the Commission, the state of feeling on the diggings where he was, was of the most cordial kind towards the Government. But, unfortunately for all parties, Mr. Gilbert's honourable conduct had made him so much beloved, that the diggers resolved upon presenting him with a testimonial,—a pint cup of solid native gold, filled with nuggets and gold-dust. The moment that the Victoria Government heard of this they interdicted it, as improper for an officer to receive, and as likely to bring his impartiality into suspicion. Mr. Gilbert acquiesced in this decision with fullest alacrity; but the mischief was done. From that day he was placed in a false position. The worst passions of his fellow-officers were excited against him. Envy and jealousy assailed him on all sides; his authority was undermined; his actions misrepresented; and, in a word, his office was made too hot to hold. He resigned; and Government thus lost the services of the most upright, able, and accomplished Commissioner that Victoria has ever possessed. From that day to this the discontent of the diggers has been steadily advancing; their story of outrage and official insolence has been refused a hearing; and, having sent a deputation to the Governor to detail them, the whole of the gold-fields are in a state of excitement awaiting the result.

Saturday, Aug. 14th.—Yesterday there was a meeting of the diggers, to receive the deputation on their return from Melbourne. The meeting was to be held at two o'clock, on View Point, an elevated spot opposite to the Government Camp. The diggers of the White Hills, that is, hereabouts, assembled at twelve o'clock, with various banners. Accordingly, about that hour, they began to draw off from their work, and were seen going in troops

to one central place. It was announced that they were to be preceded by a band of music. This band turned out to consist of a fife and a broken tambourine. Then came a troop of Irish, with their green banner of an immense length and of a gauzy material, with the harp and shamrock on it, accompanied by the pick and shovel. At a distance we could see advancing across the valley three or four men, carrying two banners, "schwarz-roth-und-gold," — German revolutionists ! Here and there we heard loud hurrahs, and we imagined that a grand demonstration was about taking place. But soon we perceived that a great number of diggers did not leave their work to join the procession. It was evident that the enthusiasm for this cause was not yet at its height.

Anon came the collected troop of the White-Hill diggers. There were only a few hundreds of them. First marched the Irish, — always first in every agitation. Then the Scotch ; and then, as if only third, instead of first in rank, the Union Jack of Great Britain. Close to it came crowding up the revolutionary flags of France and Germany, accompanied by the stars and stripes of America, with some other minor flags. On they marched in much admired disorder, loudly hurraing themselves, because the spectators did not raise that patriotic cry.

At two o'clock the deputation was to deliver the answer of the Governor. I, therefore, walked up to View Point, expecting, from what I had heard of the agitation, to find at least 10,000 diggers, out of the 40,000 of Bendigo, assembled. But to my eye, pretty well accustomed to scan the surface of a public meeting, there did not appear to me more than 3000 or 4000 persons at any one time there; and numbers were coming and going during the whole continuance of the meeting. There did not appear to me any decided evidences of high-wrought feeling in the people.

I found a tent pitched on the hill for the committee and the speakers; and around the platform in front were ranged the banners of the different nations; and in the centre the digger's flag, of which more anon. The scene presented a curious appearance, from the prevalence of the dirty cabbage-tree hats and dirty drab wide-awakes of the diggers. I could hear very little of what the speakers said, from the constant talking of the people, who seemed much more disposed for a gossip than for listening. One man, however, I heard distinctly, — a Mr. Dexter, whose wife, I understood, had figured in London amongst the lecturers on the Bloomer costume.

This man declared that he represented the French nation. He had been a deal amongst the French, he said, and hoped he should represent them faithfully. The only portion of that nation which he did faithfully represent were the Red Republicans. He declared that he preferred a republic to a monarchy, and hoped to see Australia a republic before long. He explained the digger's flag, which he said he had had the honour of painting, and never enjoyed such an honour before. Poor man! it did not seem as if honours had been very thickly thrust upon him. There were, he said, the pick, the shovel, and the cradle, — that represented labour. There were the scales, — that meant justice. There was the Roman bundle of sticks, — that meant union: "altogether, — all up at once." There were the kangaroo and the emu, — that meant Australia, &c., &c.

He then referred to the foreign flags. There were assembled, he said, English, French, Germans, Italians, Americans, Chinese, New Zealanders, and, he might have added, native blacks, for there were several. There were the Germans, always first and foremost in the cause of liberty!! The French flag, but not that which they ought to have; they ought to have had the blood-red flag which had waved over many a glorious battle at the bar-

ricades. But Lamartine had juggled them out of that; and now it was trodden on again by despotism.

He then made a grand onslaught on the British flag. What had *it* done for liberty? Wherever any people had risen against their tyrants, that flag had waved in the van of Englishmen who had gone to put the people down again. He did not like England better than any other country, though he was an Englishman. In fact, you would have thought that he liked it a great deal less, and would have been much better pleased to have been a Hottentot. He was a citizen of the world, and liked all nations—he might have said better than his own. He would vote for women having votes as well as men; and hoped to see the day when every man, woman, and *child* had a vote. I expected he would include the whole household, dog, cat, mice, and all.

“There now,” he exclaimed, pointing to the digger’s banner, “that is what I call a real spacement of what liberty his! I have seen,” he continued, “men on the diggings thrashing their wives. I don’t call that liberty.” For my part, it seemed to me taking a very great liberty indeed; and he might have added another species of liberty, of which there were some splendid spaciments going on, that is, the liberty of picking pockets. An old man came up to me, and told me that while listening in the crowd he had had his pocket picked of an order for 100*l.* on a Melbourne Bank, as well as 3*l.* in notes; and he wanted to know whether I thought a letter registered and posted directly, would be in time to stop payment. I told him that it would, if the thief did not steal a horse as well as his order, and gallop off to Melbourne, as he most likely would, and so outstrip the post.

But, to return to the meeting. I was glad to see that Mr. Dexter’s cosmopolitan doctrines, including the disparagement of the British flag, did not receive any

cordial response from the diggers, but the contrary. For a Mr. George Thompson, one of the delegates, immediately rose and gave three cheers for the British flag, as the ensign which had led the way to the pre-eminence of England over all the world, and to the liberty they were that day enjoying. To this there was a thundering response, in which I joined with all my might.

To me it was ineffably disgusting to hear an Englishman living under a system of the most entire personal freedom which the world ever saw,—spite of the defects of our Government,—a system which thus allows a man to stand and declaim against itself, and to fling filth on the bosom of that grand old mother-country which had suckled and raised him to man's estate,—a system which here was, with open hand and heart, permitting all people of all nations to enter and gather its gold on terms of perfect equality with its own subjects;—there was something, I say, peculiarly revolting to hear a man reviling that noble nation, which had not only given him birth, but had educated him in that love of freedom which he thus outraged and abused.

Scarcely less disgusting to me was it to see foreigners of all descriptions, — no not all, chiefly French and Germans, — putting themselves forward to denounce and oppose the Government of a nation which has shown them, on all occasions, the most unbounded hospitality; which has been their perpetual refuge when their own tyrants have sought to crush them; and which has opened its golden colonies to their picks and spades, as freely as to her own sons. Why, if these men had dared to whisper in a corner or a wood of their own countries, a tithe of the seditious language which they did on this public platform, they would have been at once snapped up by the police, and thrust into a dungeon, or shipped off to Algeria or Cayenne. Yet some of these men, coming from countries where there is not a spark of political

liberty left,—from countries where they have been defeated and driven out,—pointed to their red flags, and boasted that if the demands of the diggers were not instantly conceded, they were ready “to lead them on to blood and victory!”

Contemptible wretches! I longed to tell them to look at home! to see what they had effected there; how they had there led their forces against their own really despotic governments; to look and see how they had been beaten like hounds, and tricked out of their institutions and their republics; and had left their fellow men lying under the very hoofs of despotism, slaves to the most tyrannic governments in the world. And for these men to come forward and tell Englishmen that they would show *them* how to win their rights, was a sorry jest indeed.

The Americans behaved with the utmost modesty and propriety. It was quite legitimate for them, as for any other nation, to join the English in agitating for a reduction of the license-fee, and for obtaining a redress of grievances inflicted alike on all by the local authorities. But to stand forward and recommend bloodshed and expulsion of the British Government, as these men did, was what I am sure the enlightened public of neither France nor Germany would have heard with less indignation than myself. But these ultra-republicans, these maniacs of revolution, have something peculiarly repulsive about them. They are, oddly enough, generally infidels, materialists and atheists. They do not believe in *spirit*, and are essentially of the earth, earthy. They have no feeling of honour, no generous delicacy, no sense of gratitude, which would otherwise make them blush to rail at a government which treats them as no other government in the world would. Would any other European government, if it had discovered gold in its colonies, have allowed all nations to come without restriction and gather

it? Every experience is against it. The United States alone outgoes Europe, and stands side by side with England in this liberality.

You see, I found plenty of the ludicrous and of the ungenerous in this assemblage. But, after all, in such a population, including a large alloy of convicts and of unprincipled adventurers, that must be the case. The heart of the great body of the diggers was sound. It was clear to me, after seeing and hearing what I did, why so large a number stood aloof from the procession. They wanted necessary reform and not revolution. They had no thirst for blood, but rather peace and national liberty. I was delighted to perceive that the delegates confined themselves to the legitimate object of the agitation, reduction of the license-fee to 10s. monthly, and a reform of the authorities on the diggings. A Dr. Owen, Dr. Jones, Captain Harrison, and Mr. George Thompson, were, I think, the chief leaders of the movement, here and elsewhere. But, as to the result of the deputation, I could only gather that it had not been very successful.

While men have been in a state of agitation, Nature has been advancing calmly on her way. The weather is delicious; it is like early spring weather in England. The air is fresh, the grass is green; the birds begin again to make their lively summer cries; and the different kinds of acacias are kindling up the bush with their masses of gold; some of them, the larger ones, as the golden and the black wattle, resemble at a distance laburnums in full flower. Then, again, there are large expanses of them, mere shrubs, along the flats near the creeks, as golden as the larger ones. To-day I have made a long round, and have been pleased to see a good many of the diggers possessing so much poetry that they have planted whole trees of the golden and black wattle, and nailed them up about their huts and the chimneys of their tents. There were numbers of people, too, walking in the bush, and

bringing home large boughs of the wattles — masses of resplendent and most fragrant vegetable gold. There are also many species of wild-flowers already appearing.

We have sent our horses to Mr. Fenton's Station, about fourteen miles from here, where Mr. Gregory, the clergyman, has his, and where we believe they will be well cared for and safe. They are not safe here. Our large dog Buff has never been heard of again. Alfred saw a solitary grave in the bush yesterday, near the station where the horses are; and on inquiring whose it was, they told him it was a horse-stealer's. That a boy was some time ago tailing out the horses, that is, watching them in the bush, when this fellow came up, and endeavoured to take one. The boy told him that if he did not desist he would shoot him. The fellow took no notice, but proceeded to catch the horse, when the boy drew a pistol, and shot him dead: another proof of the boy acting the man at a very early age here. They sent word from the station to the Camp at Bendigo of what had occurred; and a police officer rode over with a man, and saw the horse-stealer buried. That was all the notice taken of such an event.

Again, the other day, a boy of about fourteen, being in Melbourne from the diggings, was seized by a great fellow in a solitary place at night, and ordered to give up his money. The lad put his hand into his pocket; but, instead of pulling out money, he drew out a sharp knife, and stabbed the fellow, who fell, crying he was killed; and the lad, in a very business-like way, went to the police office, and informed them what he had done. The man was found still alive; and, to the no little astonishment of the police, they beheld in him a most notorious bush-ranger, of whom they had long been in quest. He died the next day. The coroner's inquest found it a case of justifiable homicide, and the lad was discharged; but was told by the police that he must pay the expenses of the

man's funeral. But the boy was too knowing for them. He said, "What! pay for killing a bushranger? Not I, indeed. I'm the one that wants paying for the job. What's the reward?" This being a question that seemed rather to embarrass them, they showed him out, and he went about his business. This was told me by his sister.

POSTSCRIPT.

March 12th, 1855.— While this work is passing through the press, comes the news by the Melbourne mail, that one of those events, which have been but too frequently predicted in these volumes, has already taken place. The diggers at Ballarat, at the close of November, rose in insurrection, burnt their licenses, declared they would take no more, called loudly for their rights, and the affair ended by the Governor marching up a body of soldiers, who came to conflict with the diggers, and a number of men were shot on both sides. Will the Government now take warning, and disperse these crowds, who are treading on one another's heels on the gold-fields, by the only effectual, permanent, and healthy means,—that of putting cheap lands, and, of course, cheap houses, within their reach? Wonderful would be the healing, ameliorating, humanising influence of a fresh, wholesome, agricultural life on this, at present, homeless and landless population.

What deserves especial notice in these accounts is, that the *foreigners* were at the head of these disturbances. It was they who were foremost in the fray, and who chiefly were shot. This is as might be expected from the details given in this chapter, and marks the low, red-republican foreigners as a very bad element on the diggings,—a class of men far below the lowest English in a knowledge of

the principles of moral reform and progress, who have no ideas but of physical force, and the demolition of any existing authority. This class requires the closest attention of Government.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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