

WANGARATTA.

Wangaratta, though not one of the largest towns of Victoria, is one of the most ancient, having been founded in the past ages of New South Wales domination, long prior to the great Australian gold discoveries, and the consequent rush of population, civilisation, and universal suffrage. This town, situate on the banks of the Ovens and King Rivers, 160 miles from Melbourne, lies upon the trunk line of road between Melbourne and Sydney, and is surrounded by several agricultural districts, the principal of which are those of Estcourt, or Docker's Plains, Oxley, Tarrawingee, and North and South Wangaratta. Upon these agricultural communities, the trade of Wangaratta principally depends, alike supplying their wants through its numerous stores, and converting their produce by its steam mills, &c., into merchandize available for the markets of Beechworth, the Jamieson, and Lachlan gold-fields, and other places more or less distant. Wangaratta possesses three steam flour mills, the two larger of which Messrs Dale, Allan, and Co., and Messrs Evans and Co., contribute largely to the substantiality of its appearance. The former, erected by Messrs Mackay and Reid about six years ago at a cost of £4000, is a very fine brick building. The latter, built by Mr Wm. Clark (the oldest in-

by Mr Wm. Clark (the oldest inhabitant), and the late Mr John Evans, of Whitfield, contains machinery for working four pair of stones, and is second to none in the colony. Of course the flour trade is the principal branch, although almost every line of business, from fiddling to preaching, not omitting potees-making, finds an exponent who carries it on, on a larger or smaller scale. A tannery has been lately established in Templeton-street, and but for the doubts entertained by the neighbors, as to its effect upon the already sufficiently dirty waters of the Ovens, would be hailed with satisfaction as an addition to local enterprise, although not a novelty, as a tannery has been in operation in North Wangaratta for some years. For many years, Wangaratta felt the proud and profitable duty of purveying beer for the thirsty souls and bodies of the Ovens gold-fields, and 'Meldrum's ale' was joyously quaffed through the length and breadth of the Murray Valley, permeating the bush in all directions; but, alas! for the mutability of human affairs, not only has Ovens water ceased to irrigate the stomachs of Beechworth and Albury, but Kerferd's entire has actually flooded the original article out of Wangaratta. It is to be hoped, however, that the brewery now, in new hands, will resume its pristine prosperity. As in all Australian cities, the public-houses of Wangaratta are a prominent institution, six in number; two of them well merit the title, 'Hotel.' arrogated by some ~~other~~.

'Hotel,' arrogated by five—offering good accommodation for man and beast, and equal to any Colonial inns for comfort and respectability. The Horse and Jockey Inn is noted as the favored resort of those sporting men who, wishing to combine 'the comforts of a home' (*vide* prospectus of Minerva House Academy) with the privacy requisite for training arrangements, look on it as *rus in urbe*. Having reviewed the temples of Bacchus, we naturally turn to the temple of Themis. This is represented by a building of brick, which, if Colonial bricks and mortar, and Colonial contractors, had done their work as well as had been hoped, or intended, would be an ornament to the town, and a convenient and comfortable establishment for its frequenters, whether J.P.s, inebriates, clerks, reporters, or policemen. As it is, the building is tumbling down. The progress of the town, although gradual, is very marked, and those buildings in course of erection are all brick, of which material the town principally consists. The antiquated structures of bark and slab have, by happy degrees, yielded to the ravages of time, and been replaced by more durable specimens of architecture; a conspicuous instance being the lock-up, a commodious erection, secure and well ventilated; spoken of in the highest terms by many of its 'habitués,' and recently substituted for a combination of green hide, bark, slabs, nails, and iron hoop; a structure which, having acted as

a structure which, having acted as kitchen to a former resident, was promoted to do duty as a lock-up for some six years, and was one time actually proclaimed a *Gaol*. On entering Wangaratta from the northward, the Ovens Bridge toll-house divides the traveller's attention with the Bank of New South Wales, which, standing on the high bank of the river, looks like the antitype of one of the famed castles of the Rhine. The Oriental Bank Corporation, and the Bank of New South Wales, simultaneously established branches at Wangaratta, about two years since, but after six months' competition, finding the commercial cherry would not afford a bite apiece, the Oriental shut up, and left the field to their opponents, who, doubtless, reap the reward they anticipated. Adjacent to the Bank, is the National Schoolhouse, lately rebuilt by the Local Committee from public subscriptions, aided by the late National Board. The National School was established by Sir Francis Murphy, Speaker of the House of Assembly, and other residents in the neighborhood, about eleven years ago, and has since been conducted with great success by careful masters, under the supervision of a Local Board, four of whom, Messrs Ryley, Clark, Dobbyn, and Cusack, have acted from its beginning.

In 1854, the Roman Catholics built a Chapel, but in 1856 the ruling powers of that Church saw fit to turn it into a School, but not without strong objections and loud protests from the pub-

tions and loud protests from the subscribers, most of whom had subscribed for a place of worship, and did not desire to establish a second school in opposition to the original one. These protests, however, were treated with sublime disregard.

In 1856, the Protestant community secured the services of a minister of

the Church of England (having been previously dependent on the ministration of the Rev D. Ballantyne, Presbyterian minister, of Albury), and headed by the Rev C. Searle, commenced the building of a Church, which, at the end of 1857, was completed at a cost of £1800. The Church is of brick, stuccoed, with cedar seats and fittings, is peculiarly ugly, and a most unsatisfactory piece of work ; having needed the proceeds of countless ' tea fights' to provide the never-ending repairs requisite. The trustees, however, have the satisfaction of being out of debt, so far as the Church is concerned. In connection with the Church, is the parsonage, in appearance and condition akin to it ; and needing all the taste and exertion of the incumbent to hide, and redeem its ugliness by external adornments, which have proved singularly successful.

The Presbyterians are beginning to build a Church in close proximity to the other two, the Rev D. Ballantyne preaching at present once a month in

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The Wesleyans enjoy the services of the Rev W. H. Walton once a month, in the Court-house.

The Rev C. Stack officiates monthly at the Roman Catholic Church.

The Government establishments at Wangaratta, consist of a Police Magistrate, Clerk of Courts, Coroner, Road Engineer, &c., and the townspeople are daily expecting an extension of Municipal Institutions to their town.

A County Court is held there three times a year.

Wangaratta being one of the Murray Boroughs, participates in the honor of returning to Parliament the Speaker, Sir Francis Murphy, a former resident in this district, where, by a long career of usefulness and good-neighborship, he has gained the respect of all, and the grateful affection of many. That gentleman's efforts on behalf of his constituents, have not culminated in the conventional logrolling, and plunder of the public purse, but have taken on many occasions a less vicarious form of generosity. The connection now subsisting between member and electors has lasted for some twelve years, and doubtless will endure so long as that gentleman pursues the career in which he has become distinguished.

A governing body that must not escape notice is the Wangaratta Jockey Club. Wangaratta has been famed for races from its earliest times, and the Racecourse, about a mile south-west of the township, is a very good little

the township, is a very good little course, and reflects great credit on the Jockey Club who fenced and cleared it. The land granted by the Government is vested in trustees.

The public Cemetery, about two and a-half miles south of Wangaratta, presented, till lately, a most deplorable appearance, the trustees having neglected their duties in a most gross manner. The only way of accounting for this neglect was, that so few people died it was not a paying concern. However, under a new Board of Trustees, matters have recently greatly improved.

The Cricket Club is rather a sickly affair, and at present does not threaten to do much in the play line. According to the *Wangaratta Dispatch*, it may be inferred that monastic institutions have taken root in Wangaratta, as the public are informed of a then impending cricket match between the 'Benedictines' of Wangaratta and the single men, who have not taken the cowl, &c.

The fourth Estate is represented by the local paper—*The Dispatch*—published weekly; set on foot during the current year, and established for the purpose of advocating the interests of the Murray Boroughs, and adjacent districts. Most of the papers published at Beechworth, Chiltern, Albury, &c., have agents at Wangaratta, who, also being the local correspondents, condense local news into a more legitimate form and style than formerly, when the papers depended on the exertions of unaided correspondents.

unpaid correspondents, whose discursive style and proneness to import personalities, and paul pry tattle into their effusions, tended to bring the press into contempt.

The Wangaratta Athenæum, though possessed of a name, has not yet attained a local habitation of its own. The members, however, have the use of a room in the Court house, as a temporary library and reading room, which is a convenient place of call for those who have a few minutes leisure through the day. Several lectures of varying degrees of excellence have been delivered in aid of the building fund, but until some little excitement, such as a set-to between the chairman and lecturer, or a grand wind-up with the gloves is added to the programme, lecturing will not become popular in Wangaratta. Tea meetings (of a sort) with music and dancing *ad libitum*, go down much better, and occasionally have been very successful.

The Wangaratta Amateur Dramatic Club have given several performances at the Victoria Theatre, and are in a flourishing state. The want of ladies to support female characters being the only drawback. The Victoria Theatre, duly licensed, forms a part of the Victoria Hotel, kept by Mr Stark, where, also the Melbourne and Beechworth coaches stop.

The inhabitants of Wangaratta were lately described as consisting of men and women, dogs, horses, cows, and babies. To a great extent, these are

babies. To a great extent, these are still the principal elements of the population, but, happily, some two years since, a war of extermination broke out against the dogs, which cleared the streets of one nuisance, and brought down the price of sausages. A gentleman connected with the Beechworth Press, suggested the extension of the process to the babies, as being a public nuisance, but as there was no prospective 2s 6d per tail, or head, hanging to them, the bobbies passed the suggestion over with contemptuous indifference. Meanwhile sausages becoming a drug in the market, a public officer bespoke the bodies of the slain, and succeeded in growing a new variety of apple (not the catshead) from the debris of tailless dogs. At the present date, the population consists of about 900 in-

dividuals (exclusive of cows and Chinamen), for the most part professing Christianity, though of a very muscular description. Their manners and customs are not far removed from those of other persons of the continent, although a careful observer may detect beneath the crust of modernised habits, an occasional outbreak of thought and feeling, remnants of a bygone age, when beaks were unknown, and policemen were not, when horse-stealing was a venial weakness; and no inspector of slaughter-houses troubled the minds of the butchers, who killed wonderful bullocks that yielded four or five heads

bullocks that yielded four or five heads for every hide that met the public gaze; when tap-room thievery met with instant punishment in the shape of un-premeditated *douche*. The Wangarattians are essentially a ' sporting' lot of people. Horse racing being their principal vanity, while all other branches of sport meet with ample support, so much so, that it is difficult for them to conclude any affair, however remote from the course, or the P.R.; whether it be a *fête champêtre*, or a mission, or tract society's meeting, without booking a bet, or seeing out a couple of rounds. But while keenly alive to any phase of fun, it must be allowed that this interesting people are literally free from vice. Nobblerising being now confined to one or two professional, 'shocking examples,' and all the thieving being done by strangers. The inhabitants generally, are characterised by close attention to business, that is to each others, indeed, so unremitting is the kind attention of some townspeople to their neighbor's affairs that events are frequently known and promulgated long before they occur. The want of an exchange, or some fixed point for the concentration of local intelligence, for some time avoided by the use of the Royal Hotel billiard-room, has, to a great extent, been met by the generous solicitude of the future mayor of Wangaratta; who, with unbounded liberality, has supplied the public, not only with a large expanse of calico verandah, but with a stool,

of calico verandah, but with a stool, commodious if greasy, forming a forum for those patriots whose impecuniosity debars them from the delights of the tap-room. Here do the master-minds and local magnates meet daily, and while listening to the impassioned oratory of their future municipal representatives, feast their eyes on the sausages and steaks disclosed in the shop behind.

Billiard playing, once the rage here, has given way to dancing, as being a cheaper amusement, and no opportunity or excuse for getting up a hop is lost by the adventurous youth of the place. As before-mentioned, almost every trade is represented in Wangaratta, but while butchers keep up their flesh, and drapers can afford to drape themselves in the choicest of their own goods, grocers get into a state of hot water that would better suit their tea, and tinsmiths come to grief. Of the latter trade, the first established became food for Ovens cod fish; his successor bolted, having literally, as well as metaphorically, outrun the constable, while the third, having made a pump which would not draw water up a height of 33 feet, like other men of genius became insolvent,—a bit of statistics that the Registrar-General may appreciate.

The products of Wangaratta and vicinity mainly consist of babies, of which the crop fluctuates, but is always large. Wheat and other cereals, wine, fruit of all kinds, cherries, figs, &c., arrowroot, vegetables of every description, and many other articles of food, —oil and milk will shortly be added to

—oil and silk will shortly be added to the list. The Rev. J. Docker, of Bontherambo, having planted both the olive and silk mulberry. The soil is peculiarly adapted for all fruits and corn, but does not suit potatoes or maize. Apples and pears grow to a fabulous size. The wheat grown about here is not surpassed by any in the world. Of this grain some 100,000 bushels were ground in Wangaratta during the last season, and both growers and millers are looking anxiously forward to some means of connecting this portion of the Murray district with the Melbourne and Murray Railway by utilising the river, which only requires assistance to become a most valuable means of communication. This assistance, demanded by the people of Beechworth, Chiltern, Wahgunyah, Wangaratta, &c., must be rendered, and will provide an outlet for their wines, corn-stuffs, and other produce, without which their prosperity cannot be maintained.

This sketch cannot properly close without reference to the Father of Wangaratta, Mr William Clark, the oldest inhabitant and premier inn-keeper, whose fortunes have for so many years been linked with this town. Twenty-three years have elapsed since Mr Clark first set up his gunyah on the banks of the Ovens,—then a wilderness.

BEECHWORTH COUNTY COURT.—
Tuesday, the 27th, will be the last day for serving summonses for the next

day for serving summonses for the next County Court, and the last day for paying money into Court, will be the 4th February.

THE *Belfast News Letter* of the 11th November last concludes an excellent article on this colony with the following remarks:—‘No one can examine the statistics before us [in the catalogue of the Victorian contributions to the Exhibition] without coming to the conclusion that Victoria has in itself all the materials of greatness, and that its future will be prosperous. It has a self-reliant population—it has a home and a career to offer to tens of thousands who find it hard to sustain life in older countries. With the energy of youth, it has the wisdom that experience can give; and in the extraordinary prosperity of its past years, brief as its history has been, it has the best guarantee that its prosperity will be still more marked and decisive hereafter.’

The *Bendigo Independent* of yesterday says:—‘In the window of Mr Jackson’s gold-office, on Saturday, were exhibited two or three nuggets of good size, thus ticketed:—‘Obtained from heap of tailings after the last rain.’ ”